

5-2017

Supporting English Language Learners: Building Rapport by Using Native Language

Andrea Flores

California State University, Monterey Bay, andreaflores1212@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all

Recommended Citation

Flores, Andrea, "Supporting English Language Learners: Building Rapport by Using Native Language" (2017). *Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 97.

https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/97

This Capstone Project (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Capstone Projects and Master's Theses at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.

Supporting English Language Learners: Building Rapport by Using Native Language

Andrea Flores

California State University, Monterey Bay

Abstract

Due to an increase number of English Language Learners (ELLs), teachers must implement strategies to help close the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs. One way teachers can use to support academic achievement for ELLs is by building rapport with students using students' native language in the classroom. For this project, first-grade teachers were surveyed to see to what extent they incorporate native language as a way to build rapport with ELLs in order to support academic success. One teacher deems using Spanish to build rapport unnecessary, but the rest of the teachers agreed with using Spanish in the classroom under certain circumstances. The author recommends that teachers build rapport with ELLs by using students' native language so that they can achieve academic success.

Keywords: English Language Learners, native language, academic success

After four years at California State University Monterey Bay, Flores has been inspired to become an elementary school teacher for English Language Learners (ELLs). In addition, she believes that she has met the Major Learning Outcomes (MLOs) for Liberal Studies, especially MLO 1, 2 and 5, which have led her to her decision to work with ELLs. Flores plans to use what she has learned in her classes as an elementary school teacher soon.

Throughout the semesters, Flores has learned to be a developing educator (MLO 1). In the GVAR class, she wrote her Critical Analysis Paper on Bilingual Education. She researched and analyzed the different ways students learn English so that they can be successful in school. Some students learn best using bilingual classes and others in English-only classes. In addition, in the LS 398 service learning class, Social Foundations of Public Education, Flores learned about policies in public education, like the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Flores completed her service learning at Del Rey Woods Elementary. She worked with ELLs and tutored them in their reading and writing. She learned tips about being a tutor, like wait time and how to administer the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills testing for fluency. She plans to use her tutoring skills and the knowledge about bilingual education in her own classroom so she can better meet the needs of ELLs.

Flores also learned to be a diverse and multicultural scholar (MLO 2). In LS 394, Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults, the class read diverse texts, like *My Two Uncles*, *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote*, *My Diary from Here to There* and *Under the Mesquite*. Flores learned about choosing multicultural books that will be appropriate and meaningful for students. Also, she met MLO 2 in the LS 380 class, Teaching for Social Change. They discussed and read about students who are greatly affected by their gender, class, and race in schools. Furthermore, Flores evaluated her own experiences influenced by these social identities. As a

future teacher, Flores will apply these skills in her classroom. She will choose meaningful books so that students can be represented in them and learn about people who are different from them. In addition, she will take into consideration students' cultures and experiences and integrate their knowledge into lessons.

Lastly, Flores learned to be a subject-matter generalist through her Spanish Language and Hispanic Culture Minor courses. In her first Spanish course, Hispanic Children Literature, she read children's book, poems and dramas. The class created lesson plans for elementary students. In Spanish 301, Composition and Oral Practice, Flores learned the mechanics for writing essays in Spanish like in her personal narrative about her trip to Lake Tahoe. Flores practiced speaking Spanish participating in class discussions and on the final presentation on Argentina's art. In Spanish 315, English to Spanish Translation, she learned to translate a variety of texts, like advertisements and children's books. With Spanish language skills, Flores will better assist Spanish speaking ELLs. Flores will be able to communicate with parents who do not speak English and relate to and speak to students in their native language.

As Flores finishes her last semester as an undergraduate, she takes the time to reflect on courses and how they had led her to meet the Major Learning Outcomes for Liberal Studies. The experience has also the led her to her decision to become an elementary school teacher and work with ELLs. She will be knowledgeable of skills, dispositions, and responsibilities of a public educator, apply concepts of diversity and multiculturalism in the classroom, and have sufficient knowledge of the Spanish language so that Flores can meet the needs of ELLs.

Literature Review

Due to an increase number of English Language Learners (ELLs), policymakers and teachers implement different strategies into schools and classrooms to help close the

achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). ELLs are students who do not speak English at all or have certain limitations that do not allow them to be placed in mainstream English classes (Goldenberg, 2008). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016) and Barrow and Markma-Pithers (2016), almost 5 million ELLs were enrolled in grades K-12 in the United States for the 2014-2015 school year. That same year, one out of five children ages 5-9 was considered an ELL (Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016).

In addition, 50% of ELLs are in just five states and 23% of them are in California (Jost, 2008). Thirty-six percent of students enrolled in California from grades kindergarten to third are considered ELLs (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). ELLs usually speak other languages at home other than English (Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). Spanish is the most common language spoken at home (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). Most ELLs come from low-income families and low-educational backgrounds, therefore have potential for low achievement due to the lack of language and socioeconomic factors (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Kibler & Roman, 2013). The second largest group of ELLs are Asian who generally come from families with educational backgrounds and higher economic status (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016).

The Every Student Succeeds Act allows states to plan and choose the best program for ELLs so that they can succeed academically and be prepared for college and a career (“U.S. Department of Education”, 2016). Two main models of instruction that are used for ELLs are English Immersion and bilingual education (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). Other strategies use the students’ native language at the same time they are

learning English, but others aim to get students to learn English as fast as possible, ignoring the students' native language (Jost, 2009; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). ELLs typically struggle academically because not only do they have to learn the content, they must learn the language at the same time (Goldenberg, 2008). According to Goldenberg (2008), it is impossible to know how much support ELLs receive or how well the quality of instruction is. Nevertheless, teachers can support ELLs in a variety of ways so that students can be successful academically.

How can teachers support ELLs in primary grades to promote academic success?

Because ELLs struggle to be successful at school, teachers need to figure out what is the best way to teach and support ELLs. Many schools implement English-only instruction for ELLs (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). With English-only instruction, the goal is for students to learn English as quickly as possible (Jost, 2009; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). Separating them from their English-speaking classmates makes it harder for students to assimilate and learn English (Goldenberg, 2008; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). About 60 percent of ELLs are in English-only classes with little or no support in their own language (Goldenberg, 2008). According to Jost (2009), English-only instruction does not delay mastering English and helps students to assimilate. Yavuz's (2012) study indicated that one out of the seven teachers interviewed claimed that using the students' first language in the classroom interferes with learning the second language because it makes students lazy and unmotivated to learn English as soon as possible when they know they can be taught in their own language.

On the other hand, 40 % of ELLs are in classes where their native language is used, mostly in bilingual classes (Goldenberg, 2008). In bilingual education, ELLs are taught in two different languages (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; De Ramírez & Shapiro, 2007). Table 1 illustrates how curriculum is divided in a bilingual classroom from kindergarten to fifth grade

(De Ramírez & Shapiro, 2007). During primary grades, percentage of instruction is greater in Spanish and as the child moves up grade levels, Spanish is used less and the percentage of English instruction increases.

Table 1
Timeline for English and Spanish Instruction

| Grade | Percentage of Spanish instruction | Percentage of English instruction | Subject |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Kindergarten | 90% | 10% | |
| 1st grade | 80% | 20% | Read Aloud Poems, Every day Counts (Calendar) |
| 2nd grade | 60% | 40% | Read Aloud, Spelling Sight Words. Every day Counts (Calendar) |
| 3rd grade | 50% | 50% | Spelling Social Studies Everyday Counts (Calendar) |
| 4th grade | 30% | 70% | Spelling Social Studies Vocabulary Math |
| 5th grade | 20% | 80% | Spelling Social Studies Math Science |

With bilingual education, students receive support so that they can be proficient in their own language and proficient in English (Jost; 2009; Yavuz, 2012; Murphy, 2014; Welch, 2015; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). Research shows that skills from one language transfers to their second language (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost; 2009; Yavuz, 2012; Murphy, 2014; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). A study done with Spanish speaking ELLs from first to fifth grade, indicated that students reading fluently in Spanish were most likely able to read fluently in

English (De Ramírez & Shapiro, 2007). Overall, students in bilingual classes will benefit from being bilingual educationally, socially, cognitively and potentially economically (Goldenberg, 2008).

Additionally, teachers support ELLs by building rapport and integrating the students' first language in lessons so that they can succeed academically (Nguyen, 2007; Yavuz, 2012; Kibler & Roman, 2013; Welch, 2015). Building rapport is creating a positive student-teacher relationship to them to trust and learn from each other (Nguyen, 2007; Welch, 2015). Nguyen (2007) and Welch (2015) found in their research that teachers can lead classroom instruction with positive relationships and conversations with students. ELLs are usually reluctant to participate in classroom when they do not feel comfortable with their English (Yavuz, 2012; Kibler & Roman, 2013; Welch, 2015) In an English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom, students feel more relaxed and comfortable when the teacher talks to the students and shows interest with being interpersonal with them as the role of a teacher is still there (Nguyen, 2007; Kibler & Roman, 2013; Welch, 2015). In Welch's (2015) study, one teacher for ELLs interacts and keeps a positive relationship with her students, therefore, is aware and understanding of her students' life experiences and can connect their knowledge to the lessons. In addition, when students are exposed to texts with content they are familiar with, their comprehension improves (Goldenberg, 2008).

Unin and Bearing's (2016) study suggests that giving ELLs the opportunity to brainstorm boosts student confidence to participate more in class discussions. Students seem especially excited to participate when using storytelling to brainstorm because it allows them to share their own life experiences, hence, are more confident and motivated to learn (Unin & Bearing, 2016).

Small group work also motivates students to participate more in whole class discussion (Goldenberg, 2008; Yavuz, 2012; Unin & Bearing, 2016).

In Kibler and Roman's (2013) study, two monolingual teachers were interviewed and observed in their English-Only classrooms to find out how they supported their ELLs by using the students' first language. The first teacher has her students tell her good morning in their language and teach her new words in their language. She also has bilingual books in class available for her students. She says that using native language validates their language and it reassures participation in an environment they feel comfortable in. The second teacher interviewed has parents come into the classroom to share their culture and teach the class their native language. In addition, the second teacher has a bilingual aid in her classroom to further support her students (Kibler & Roman, 2013).

Teachers supporting ELLs encourage students to speak their language in class (Kibler & Roman, 2013; Unin & Bearing, 2016). Welch (2015) says that teachers who encourage ELLs to maintain their language and create lessons that will meet their individual needs, will be more successful at supporting their learning. Integrating native language into curriculum and instruction makes learning meaningful and motivating (Goldenberg, 2008; Kibler & Roman, 2013; Welch, 2015).

Teachers also empower ELLs to use their native language so they can appreciate it and not be embarrassed about it (Kibler & Roman, 2013; Welch, 2015). When students can use their native language in the classroom, they learn from each other (Murphy, 2014; Welch, 2015). Overall, ELLs learn the same way as non-ELLs; the only difference is the language. It does not matter the language they are thinking about as long as they understand the material (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009). Hakuta (as cited in Jost, 2009) comments about bilingual education versus

English-only instruction and says, “Any well-implemented program can work. The issue is giving kids access to academic content that sparks their curiosity. The fundamental piece is that education isn't pouring knowledge into empty vessels. You must get kids interested and excited in the content of what you're teaching”. A teacher in Welch's (2015) study says that students will learn when teachers work with the whole child and encourage embracing students' languages and bilingualism. Having good classroom quality is important because whether the class is Bilingual or English-only, if the teacher is not qualified and the teaching quality is not great, learning will not happen (Goldenberg, 2008; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016).

What teaching strategy works best for first-grade ELLs?

When it is time to choose the best way to support ELLs, teachers need to take into consideration the time it takes and how effective and feasible each option is.

When English-only instruction is chosen, it is effective because ELLs will be expected to learn English as quick as possible (Murphy, 2014; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). This method is very feasible because teachers available will have knowledge of the English language and schools will not need to look for and hire bilingual teachers. According to Goldenberg (2008), ELLs will need instruction modifications because ELLs will have a difficult time understanding the curriculum. As a result, more time from teachers will be needed to support ELLs to be successful academically (Goldenberg, 2008; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016).

Another option is to implement bilingual education in the classroom. Usually, ELLs stay in bilingual classes for one to two years or even longer, depending on the child and the environment (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). Even though it takes a while for ELLs to learn English, being proficient in their native language will help them be proficient in English. Bilingual education is effective (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Barrow

& Markma-Pithers, 2016). ELLs can transfer their skills from their native language to English (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Yavuz, 2012; Murphy, 2014; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). Unfortunately, bilingual education can be expensive and there are not enough qualified teachers to teach bilingual classes (Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). In addition, ELLs speak a variety of languages; therefore, it can be unfeasible to acquire bilingual education for each individual language (Goldenberg, 2008; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016).

The last strategy discussed is teachers using students' native language to build rapport with students. This strategy does not need specific time since it can be done anytime during an ELLs academic career. As research states, positive student teacher relationships are effective because it will create a safe environment for ELLs to be motivated and interested in learning, promoting academic success (Nguyen, 2007; Yavuz, 2012; Kibler & Roman, 2013; Welch, 2015). In addition, integrating native language into lessons can positively affect learning for ELLs (Goldenberg, 2008; Kibler & Roman, 2013; Murphy, 2014; Welch, 2015). Finally, building rapport and allowing students to use their native language in the classroom is feasible because even teachers who are not bilingual can incorporate students first language in the classroom as seen with the monolingual teachers in the study discussed above (Kibler & Roman, 2013; Welch, 2015).

Summary

There are 55 million ELLs in the United States and every year, the numbers keep increasing ("U.S. Department of Education", 2016). Because their first language is not English and curriculum is taught in English, teachers must implement ways to scaffold and support ELLs so that they can reach academic achievement (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; "U. S. Department of Education", 2016; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). There are many programs used to teach

ELLs, including English-only instruction and bilingual education (De Ramírez & Shapiro, 2007; Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). Both pathways have their benefits but they do not always work for all students (Goldenberg, 2008; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016).

In addition to these programs, teachers use a variety of strategies to support their students. One strategy teachers can use to support students is by building rapport using the students' native language in the classroom (Nguyen, 2007; Yavuz, 2012; Kibler & Roman, 2013; Welch, 2015). When students know that their home language is welcome, they do not have to hide who they are (Kibler & Roman, 2013; Welch, 2015). Building rapport by using their first language creates a safe environment where the student can feel comfortable to learn and be successful (Yavuz, 2012; Kibler & Roman, 2013; Welch, 2015).

Considering all the options and the criteria for bilingual education, English-only instruction, and building rapport by using native language, the author wants to find out to what extent teachers in English-only instruction build rapport with their first-grade ELLs by integrating native language in their classrooms to support their academic achievement.

Research Question

The research question for this study is: To what extent do teachers incorporate native language as a way to build rapport with first-grade ELLs in order to support academic success?

Significance of Study

The study is significant in today's educational system because the number of ELLs in the United States is continuously increasing. According to the U. S. Department of Education (2016) and Jost (2009), there are 400 different languages students are using and this can be a challenge when it time to teach them in a language they do not know. Programs, like

bilingual education and English-only instruction, are used, but do not always work for all ELLs (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). As a result, teachers need to find strategies that will help support the education and success of ELLs. Building classroom rapport is one way to support students. Rapport building is important because it creates a positive environment for students to learn in, especially for ELLs (Nguyen, 2007). One way teachers can build rapport with their ELLs is by using the students' native language in the classroom (Kibler & Roman, 2013). If a student does not feel comfortable in the classroom because of their language, they will have a hard time learning and being successful.

On the other hand, research suggests that using native language could harm the learning for an ELL because they will not master English fast enough or using two languages will just confuse the student (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Yavuz, 2012; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016) For these reasons, this study takes into consideration teachers' opinions about using native language in their classrooms. The study will also find to what extent teachers use or not use native language in the classroom to build rapport with students in order to promote academic success for their ELLs.

Context

The study took place at different schools in Salinas and Seaside, California. Both cities have a great deal of Hispanic populations; therefore, the schools in those districts are impacted with a high number of ELLs with Spanish as their native language.

Research Design

To conduct this study, Flores created a survey in a Google form, with a variety of questions related to teachers using native language in the classroom in order to build rapport with ELLs. In this case, the native language used is Spanish.

Sample

The participants of this study consisted of nine first-grade teachers who work with Spanish speaking ELLs. Eight of the teachers were bilingual and one of them was monolingual. An email with the Google form was sent to Flores's Mini-Corps coordinator. Flores asked to forward the email to other tutors so that they could give the survey to the first-grade teachers they work with. Seven teachers replied and took the survey. In addition, Flores asked the four first-teachers in the school she works at to take the survey. Only two of the four teachers at that school took the survey.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for the study was an eight-question survey with multiple choice and three short response questions in a Google form (see Appendix A). The first question asked to what extent teachers agree or disagree with the benefits of using students' native language in the classroom. The answers to choose from included strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. This question was asked because, according to an abundance of research, using native language can be beneficial for ELLs when they are learning a new language (Nguyen, 2007; Goldenberg, 2008; Jost, 2009; Yavuz, 2012; Murphy, 2014; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). After answering the first question, teachers were asked to explain their answers to see if they listed any benefits found in the research.

Question two asked how frequently in a day they used Spanish in the classroom to enhance student learning. The answer choices were: very frequently, frequently, sometimes, rarely, and never. Then, the teachers were asked to explain their answers to see when they use Spanish, if they use it at all. The third question asked teachers to what extent they agree or disagree with the importance of providing opportunities for students to use their native language.

This question was asked because according to Nguyen (2007), Kibler and Roman (2013), Murphy (2014), and Unin and Bearing (2016), teachers who encourage students to speak their language in class are supporting ELLs so that they can be successful academically. The answer choices were the same to question one and will be for the rest of the questions in the survey.

Question four listed seven strategies that teachers in the research have used as ways to use native language in the classroom. Teachers surveyed were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the strategies listed. According to Kibler and Roman's (2013) study, teachers can say hello to their students in their native language when they come in to class. Goldenberg (2008) and Kibler and Roman (2013) mention that having bilingual books for the students is essential. Kibler and Roman (2013) also suggest that teachers can seek opportunities to bring in parents or speakers of Spanish to share with students and seek professional assistance for ELLs, for example, having bilingual teacher aid. In addition, according to Nguyen (2007), teachers integrate Spanish in the classroom by letting students speak to each other and to the teacher in Spanish. Lastly, another strategy used by teachers in the research allow students to teach them Spanish so that students can feel that teachers care about them and their language.

Question five positive student teacher relationships are effective because it will create a safe environment for ELLs to be interested in learning. In Nguyen's (2007) study, when the teacher used Spanish to enhance learning for her ELLs and build rapport with them, her students were actively participating and interested in their learning because they were able to connect to the language. As a result, the safe environment that teacher created was effective in her students' learning. For question six, Flores took into consideration Goldenberg's (2008), Kibler and Roman's (2013) and Welch's (2015) research that indicated that integrating native language into

instruction makes learning meaningful and motivating; therefore, teachers were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with that statement.

Question seven asked to what extent teachers agree or disagree with Unin and Bearing's (2016) findings that giving ELLs the opportunity to brainstorm boosts student confidence to participate more in class discussions. Question eight asked to what extent teachers agree or disagree with Murphy's (2014) and Welch's (2015) findings that ELLs learn from each other when students are given the opportunity to use their native language in the classroom. The last question asked teachers to leave any comments about incorporating native language in the classroom as a way to build rapport with first-grade ELLs to support their academic success.

Results

After reviewing the results of the surveys and observations (see Appendix B), teachers typically tend to use Spanish in the classroom to support ELLs as they reach for academic success. Some teachers will either only use Spanish when necessary or not at all. Their responses will be described below as teachers one through nine.

For the first question, seven out of nine teachers strongly agreed with the benefits of using students' native language in the classroom. Seven teachers also explained their answers in the free response section. Out of the seven, only one does not see using native language useful in the classroom. Teacher one and three commented that it is good for students to continue to practice their native language while they learn another language. Teacher three also commented that it is very important for students to not feel alienated in school so promoting the use of their language for communication is important. Teacher three and seven mentioned that they teach standards in English but scaffold and support their students in Spanish. Teacher number five says that it is difficult for her to not use Spanish because her students are just learning English.

Teacher number six said that native language does not intervene with learning another language and, like teacher seven says too, it gives students confidence and motivation to perform well.

Teacher nine comments that it is very important for students to continue to learn their native language so they can connect with their parents and grandparents. Being bilingual will benefit students when they become adults and are looking for a job. On the other hand, teacher eight said that students should use their native language at home, but at school, where they are trying to get better at English, it is important to continue to practice English. The teacher said it does not hinder her rapport with students when they must speak English to her when that is not their native language.

For the second question, five out of nine teachers use Spanish very frequently in their classroom to enhance students learning. Two rarely use Spanish, and one never uses Spanish in the classroom. Just like in the first question, seven teachers explained their answers. Teacher one says that because most of her students only speak Spanish, that is the language she mostly speaks to them. Teacher three commented that her students in her school district are English language learners and their parents do not speak English; therefore, they only use English at school. Also, she says that she uses Spanish in the classroom depending on what time of the year it is. At that beginning of the school year they are mostly speaking in Spanish. Students come to first grade and are not comfortable with speaking in English. Her job is to scaffold in their native language but not all year long. By now, her students are speaking in English. Teacher number four says she rarely uses Spanish because her class are mostly fluent speakers. Teacher number six uses Spanish when they are teaching English when a student does not understand the directions or the activity. Teacher eight never uses Spanish in the classroom because she does not feel it

necessary. Teacher nine commented that she teaches an English-only class, but when her students do not understand something, she gives them support in Spanish, their native language.

For the third question, seven teachers strongly agree with the importance of providing opportunities for students to use their native language. Teacher eight disagrees with the statement. For question number four, the teachers were given strategies as a way to use native language in the classroom and they decided to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the strategies. First, five out of nine teachers strongly agree with saying hello in Spanish to students when they walk into class. Six out of nine teachers allow their students to speak to them in Spanish. Five out of nine strongly agree with allowing students to speak to each other in Spanish. Six out of nine strongly agree with allowing students to teach them their language. Five teachers strongly agree with having bilingual or Spanish books available for students. Five teachers strongly agree with seeking opportunities to bring in parents or speakers of Spanish to share with students. Four teachers strongly agree with seeking professional assistance for ELLs, for example, having bilingual teacher aid.

For question five, eight teachers strongly agreed with the statement that positive student teacher relationships are effective because it will create a safe environment for ELLs to be interested in learning. For question six, five teachers strongly agree with integrating native language into instruction to make learning meaningful and motivating. For question seven, four teachers strongly agree with giving ELLs the opportunity to brainstorm boosts student confidence to participate more in class discussions, especially when they are learning a new language. For question eight, six teachers strongly agree with the statement that when students can use their native language in the classroom, they are able to learn from one another.

Lastly, teachers were given the opportunity to comment on incorporating native language in the classroom as a way to build rapport with first-grade ELLs to support their academic success. Only four teachers responded. A clear theme throughout the comments was that it is fine to allow students to use Spanish in the classroom, but at the same time, students need to be pushed into using English so that they can master it. Teachers will use Spanish when it is extremely necessary to scaffold for their students and support their academic success.

Summary, Limitations, Discussions, and Implications

Nine teachers of ELLs were surveyed. During the study, some limitations arose. Discussions need to be made about the results of the study and implications for practice need to be taken into consideration.

Summary of Study

For this study, first-grade teachers of ELLs were asked to take a survey about using native language in the classroom to build rapport with students and their opinions on it. The purpose of the study was to see to what extent teachers used Spanish to promote academic success for their students.

Summary of Findings

Overall, seven teachers who responded agree with using Spanish in their classroom when teaching ELLs. They speak Spanish when students need more support and allow students to speak Spanish with each other. Teachers agree that there are benefits to using the native language in the classroom, for example, it helps the student feel welcome and increases self-esteem, enabling them to learn. Seven of the teachers will use Spanish depending on their students. If they need extra support, they will use it to explain directions or to translate words they do not know. If their class is already mastering the second language, the teacher will not use Spanish,

but will still build classroom rapport. One teacher believes that using Spanish will not benefit the student when they are learning Spanish. Students need to be challenged and pushed to practice English so that they can succeed academically since tests and course work will be in English.

Limitations

Flores sent an email with the Google form to her Mini-Corps coordinator asking to forward it to the other tutors so they can give the survey to the first-grade teachers they work with. Seven teachers replied. Flores does not know how many teachers received the email with the Google form. In addition, Flores asked the four first-teachers in the school she works at to take the survey. Only two of the four took the survey. The other two teachers might not have had time to take the survey or were not willing to participate. Overall, Flores would consider asking more teachers to take the survey. Interviews might have greater impacted the study, but because of busy schedules, spring breaks, and time constraints, interviews were not able to happen. In addition, teachers surveyed were mostly bilingual teachers and the author wonders what other strategies monolingual teachers would use for their ELLs.

Discussion of Findings

Seven teachers strongly agree with the benefits of using native language in the classroom because integrating native language in the classroom can positively affect learning for ELLs. Teachers agree that integrating native language into curriculum and instruction makes learning meaningful and motivating (Goldenberg, 2008; Kibler & Roman, 2013; Welch, 2015). In addition, the teachers lean towards Unin and Bearing's (2016) findings that giving ELLs the opportunity to brainstorm boosts student confidence to participate more, especially when learning a new language. Just like the first teacher in Kibler and Roman's (2013) study, five of the teachers surveyed strongly agree with students saying good morning in their language.

In Kibler and Roman's (2013) study, the teacher they interviewed agrees with students teaching her their language and has bilingual books in class available for her students. The teachers surveyed also agreed with those strategies as ways to use native language in the classroom. The second teacher interviewed in their study, has parents come into the classroom to teach the class their native language and has a bilingual aid to further support her students (Kibler and Roman, 2013). The teachers surveyed also agreed with those strategies.

Teachers surveyed encourage ELLs to use Spanish so they can appreciate it and not feel alienated or be embarrassed about it (Kibler & Roman, 2013; Welch; 2015). The teachers agreed that when students can use their native language in the classroom, they learn from each other (Murphy, A. 2014; Welch, 2015). One teacher commented that skills from one language transfers to their second language (Goldenberg, 2008; Jost; 2009; Yavuz, 2012; Murphy, 2014; Barrow & Markma-Pithers, 2016). Like Goldenberg (2008), one teacher commented that bilingualism will benefit students in their education, social life, cognitive development and potentially in the career world.

Furthermore, just like in Yavuz's (2012) study, in this study, a couple of teachers commented that using the students' first language does not challenge students enough to learn the second language. Therefore, Spanish should only be used when it is extremely necessary or not at all.

Implications for Practice

Teachers of ELLs need to take into consideration that their students will need extra support in order for them to succeed academically. Creating a relationship with them will be beneficial in any type of class, whether it be a bilingual class or an English-only class. Teachers can incorporate their students' native language into the classroom to create rapport and a positive

environment where students do not have to be embarrassed of their native language or hide it. If a teacher notices that using native language is not necessary, there still needs to be a positive relationship with students so that they can be motivated to learn and achieve academic success.

References

- Barrow, L., & Markman-Pithers, L. (2016). Supporting young English learners in the United States. *The Future of Children*, 26(2), 159-183. doi:10.1353/foc.2016.0017
- De Ramírez, R., & Shapiro, S. (2007). Cross-language relationship between Spanish and English oral reading fluency among Spanish-speaking English language learners in bilingual education classrooms. *Psychology in the Schools*, 44(8), 795-806. doi:10.1002/pits.20266.
- Goldenberg, C. (2008). Teaching English language learners: What the research does and does not say. *American Educator*, 8-44.
- Jost, K. (2009). Bilingual education vs. English immersion. *CQ Researcher*, 19, 1029-1052.
- Kibler, A., & Roman, D. (2013). Insights into professional development for teachers of English language learners: A focus on using students' native languages in the classroom. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 36, 187-207. doi:10.1080/15235882.2013.820226
- Murphy, A. (2014). The effect of dual-language and transitional-bilingual education instructional models on Spanish proficiency for English language learners. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 37(2), 182-194.

- Nguyen, H. (2007). Rapport building in language instruction: A microanalysis of the multiple resources in teacher talk. *Language and Education*, 21(4), 284-303.
doi:10.2167/le658.0
- Unin, N. & Bearing, P. (2016). Brainstorming as a way to approach student-centered learning in the ESL classroom. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 224, 605-612.
- U.S. Department of Education Releases Guidance on English Learners. (2016, September 23). Retrieved from: <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-releases-guidance-english-learners>
- Welch, I. (2015). Building interactional space in an ESL classroom to foster bilingual identity and linguistic repertoires. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 14(2), 80-95.
doi:10.1080/15348458.2015.1019784
- Yavuz, F. (2012). The attitudes of English teachers about the use of L1 in the teaching of L2. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 4339-4344.

Appendix A
(Survey Questions)

Supporting English Language Learners: Building Rapport by Using Native Language in the Classroom

Hello, my name is Andrea Flores and I am a senior at CSUMB. For my Capstone project I am focusing on supporting and teaching English Language Learners. I am especially interested in building rapport with students by using their native language in the classroom. With the help from first-grade teachers, I will like to answer the following question:

To what extent do teachers incorporate native language as a way to build rapport with first-grade ELLs in order to support academic success?

In advance, I thank you for your time.

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the benefits of using students' native language in the classroom?

Strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

Please explain your answer:

2. In a given day, how frequently do you use Spanish in your classroom to enhance student learning?

Very frequently frequently sometimes rarely never

Please explain your answer:

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the importance of providing opportunities for students to use their native language?

Strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with strategies listed below as a way to use native language in the classroom?

Say hello in Spanish to students when they walk into class.

Strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

Allow students to speak to you in Spanish.

Strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

Allow students to speak to each other in Spanish.

Strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

Allow students to teach you their language.

Strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

Have bilingual or Spanish books available for your students.

Strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

Seek opportunities to bring in parents or speakers of Spanish to share with students.
Strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

Seek professional assistance for ELLs, for example, having bilingual teacher aid.
Strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: Positive student teacher relationships are effective because it will create a safe environment for ELLs to be interested in learning.

Strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: Integrating native language into instruction makes learning meaningful and motivating.

Strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: Giving ELLs the opportunity to brainstorm boosts student confidence to participate more in class discussions, especially when they are learning a new language.

Strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: When students can use their native language in the classroom, they are able to learn from one another.

Strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

Any comments you will like to share about incorporating native language in the classroom as a way to build rapport with first grade ELLs to support their academic success?

Appendix B

(Survey Answers)

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the benefits of using students' native language in the classroom? (9 responses)

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| strongly agree | 7 |
| agree | 1 |
| neutral | 0 |
| disagree | 1 |
| strongly disagree | 0 |

Please explain your answer: (7 responses)

It is good for the students to continue to practice their native language.

It is very important for students to not feel alienated in school. Promoting the use of their language for communication is important. Teaching 1st grade it is crucial for them to learn another language by using their own language. Teaching an SEI class (Structured English Immersion) I am teaching the standards in English but scaffolding and supporting my students in Spanish.

When I am teaching my student, it is very difficult for me not to use the language they are used to since they are nearly learning English.

Native language use does not intervene with learning another language. Keeping native language gives students confidence to perform well and learn a new language. Young individuals can learn as many languages at once.

Students feel supported when you use their native language. It builds their self-esteem and increases motivation.

I feel like students should use their native language at home, but at school where they are trying to get better at English it is important to practice. I feel like it doesn't hinder my rapport with students when they have to speak English to me when that is not their native language.

It is very important for students to learn their native language so they can connect to their parents and grandparents. Also, they will have better opportunities when they become adults and are looking for a job. Also, other countries learned more than one language and it became beneficial when they are conducting business transactions. What I am trying to say it that is a great thing to have.

2. In a given day, how frequently do you use Spanish in your classroom to enhance student learning? (9 responses)

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Very frequently | 5 |
| Frequently | 1 |
| Sometimes | 0 |
| Rarely | 2 |
| Never | 1 |

Please explain your answer:(7 responses)

Most of my students only speak Spanish, so that is the language I mainly speak with them.

This depends on where we are in the school year. At that beginning of the school year we are mostly speaking in Spanish. Students come to first grade and are not comfortable with speaking in English. Teaching for the Alisal Union School District our students are English language learners, their parents don't speak English, and they only use English at school. My job as an SEI teacher is to scaffold in their native language but not all year long. By now, if you walk into my classroom, my students are speaking in English.

My class is an ELC so most of my students are fluent English speakers.

I use Spanish very frequently in my bilingual classroom. Though, when I am teaching in English, I still use Spanish in case a student did not understand the directions or the activity.

I am a bilingual teacher.

I don't feel it is necessary.

I teach and only English class, but when student does not understand something I give them support in their native language which in this case is in Spanish.

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the importance of providing opportunities for students to use their native language? (9 responses)

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| strongly agree | 7 |
| agree | 1 |
| neutral | 0 |
| disagree | 1 |
| strongly disagree | 0 |

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with strategies listed below as a way to use native language in the classroom?

Say hello in Spanish to students when they walk into class. (9 responses)

| | |
|----------------|---|
| strongly agree | 5 |
| agree | 1 |
| neutral | 2 |

disagree 1
strongly disagree 0

Allow students to speak to you in Spanish. (9 responses)

strongly agree 6
agree 2
neutral 0
disagree 1
strongly disagree 0

Allow students to speak to each other in Spanish. (9 responses)

strongly agree 5
agree 2
neutral 0
disagree 1
strongly disagree 1

Allow students to teach you their language. (9 responses)

strongly agree 6
agree 1
neutral 2
disagree 0
strongly disagree 0

Have bilingual or Spanish books available for your students. (9 responses)

strongly agree 5
agree 1
neutral 2
disagree 1
strongly disagree 0

Seek opportunities to bring in parents or speakers of Spanish to share with students. (9 responses)

strongly agree 5
agree 2
neutral 2
disagree 0
strongly disagree 0

Seek professional assistance for ELLs, for example, having bilingual teacher aid. (9 responses)

strongly agree 4
agree 4
neutral 0
disagree 1
strongly disagree 0

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: Positive student teacher relationships are effective because it will create a safe environment for ELLs to be interested in learning. (9 responses)

Strongly agree 8
Agree 0
Neutral 1
Disagree 0
Strongly disagree 0

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: Integrating native language into instruction makes learning meaningful and motivating. (9 responses)

Strongly agree 5
Agree 3
Disagree 1
Neutral 0
Strongly disagree 0

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: Giving ELLs the opportunity to brainstorm boosts student confidence to participate more in class discussions, especially when they are learning a new language. (9 responses)

Strongly agree 4
Agree 4
Neutral 1
Disagree 0
Strongly disagree 0

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: When students can use their native language in the classroom, they are able to learn from one another. (9 responses)

Strongly agree 6
Agree 2
Neutral 0
Disagree 1
Strongly disagree 0

9. Any comments you will like to share about incorporating native language in the classroom as a way to build rapport with first grade ELLs to support their academic success? (4 responses)

I believe it is important for students to feel that they can speak in Spanish in my classroom. However, if I always speak to them in Spanish, or if I always let them speak to me (and each other in Spanish), then they will not be challenged. My job is to teach my students the state standards in English with support in Spanish. So I am all for students feeling comfortable speaking their native language, but if I want them to really do well, they need to be pushed outside of their comfort zone to learn.

Fostering the students native language helps develop L2. The skills transfer over to the second language.

I feel that when students are in a classroom it is important for them to use academic language when discussing topics. I do not feel like they need to use Spanish more than English to understand things. I feel like if it was just conversational and playground talk I do not care whether they want to talk to me in English or Spanish, if they want to teach me their language, that would be fine. But I feel like in the classroom it is important to keep the environment focused on academic English conversations. I provide them with all the supports necessary to help them be successful and I feel like I have a great rapport with my students and their parents.

I feel that the curriculum should be taught in English if the students will be tested in English for the SBAC Test or any government test. If the test are giving in their native language, than it would be great to given the opportunity to become proficient in their native language. That is learning to write, and read in their native language.