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No Habla Espanol: Are Monolingual Teachers Getting the Support They Need?

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Author Note

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### **Abstract**

For this Capstone Project, the researchers investigated how monolingual teachers view the support and resources they received to teach English Language Learners (ELL) and what they thought could be done to improve their teaching effectiveness. An evidence-based argument is offered that monolingual teachers were not being provided with effective support and resources. More specifically, three themes emerged from an analysis of the data obtained from interviews of monolingual teachers and administrators. Based on the emergent themes, an action was undertaken to help monolingual teachers better address the needs of ELLs. This is an important issue for monolingual teachers because the research provided options that the district could implement in order to increase their ability to successfully work with ELLs.

## **No Habla Espanol: Are Monolingual Teachers Getting the Support they Need?**

Almost my whole life I lived in a huge, diverse city with many cultures and identities. Growing up there it has made me a more open-minded person when I meet new people from different walks of life. In having this mindset, I was able to empathize with people and their struggles even though I may not know myself the struggle first hand. This mindset set me up to be a more caring and understanding future teacher. So, when I came to CSU Monterey Bay I was able to use that mindset in order to make friends and even understand the issues of others. Specifically, at CSUMB I have noticed there is a higher Chicana/o population and so I was exposed to the culture and the struggles of these people.

When I came to CSUMB I never realized the demographics of the school nor the area in which I live in. All I knew about the school is that it was close to the beach and it was a relatively new school. When I started at CSUMB I met my first friend who was Chicana. As I was hanging out with her more, I was exposed to the culture of being a U.S. born Mexican. She exposed me to the language, norms, and traditions of her culture. And then I met more Chicana students that have become great friends of mine and have made me look at the culture differently. However, I did not realize the struggles of Chicana/o and Mexicana/o people until I saw the movie *East of Salinas*. In the movie it talks about the struggle the little boy Jose goes through as a undocumented child in a migrant family. In seeing the story and the testimony it made me realize the extent of the struggles that some ELLs have to face. In being in a migrant family, they have to struggle to eat and pay the rent. For Jose, he had changed schools so many

times because his parents moved with the crop season. So, Jose knew that he could move any day because of the crops. He would sometimes go without dinner because his mom didn't have enough money to feed him dinner. That part made me cry a lot because it is difficult hearing about his struggle. And it is a story that is common among some English Language Learners. There is a higher percentage of migrant farm workers here than where I am from. So, in watching the movie I realized a part of the struggles some ELLs have to deal with. And even for other ELLs, they have to deal with being undocumented and the fear they have of being deported. In knowing this it makes me really sad for the children because of their struggles. In having to deal with these issues along with having a language barrier can make it very hard for these children to succeed.

Later on, I realized the full extent of the struggles of ELLs when I started taking a Latino/a issues class along with a class on how to teach linguistically diverse children. For the Latino/a issues class something that stood out was the Mestiza/o educational pipeline. This graphic shows how there are low numbers of Mestiza/o's who graduate from a four year college. There is even a very low number of these students who go on to a community college. The graphic overall showed low numbers for higher education which makes me sad for the students because I want every child to succeed. Additionally, in the Pedagogy for Linguistically Diverse Students class it teaches us as future teachers how we can adapt to ELLs and how we can incorporate their language and culture in the classroom. For a monolingual teacher like myself, gaining the knowledge of how I can incorporate their language might help the student feel more accepted. The knowledge gives me the tools to help students with different languages in the classroom. My professor mentioned that I can have students do lessons or assignments in

Spanish and then translate later in order to grade it. I think a tool like this can help students feel accepted and more comfortable to express deeper concepts in the language they are comfortable speaking. In conclusion, I think my background and my experiences at CSUMB have shaped my insights and mindset toward ELLs. I understand some of the struggles they face everyday. I do not know their struggles first hand, but I can empathize with them. Also in being a monolingual teacher it is important for myself to know what struggles they may face in their life so I can help them emotionally and with their education. Teachers are not just teachers anymore, we are there for students emotionally through any struggles they face.

## **Literature Synthesis & Integration**

### **What is the Problem?**

There has been increasing numbers of English Language Learners (ELLs) who are being educated in our public school system. “The ELL population is the fastest-growing population of public school students in the U.S. From the 1990-1991 to the 2000-2001 school year, ELL enrollment has grown by more than 105 percent in the United States...” (McKeon, 2015, para. 3). This increase in ELLs has made increasingly difficult for schools and teachers to figure out how to help them succeed. According to Menken & Antunez (2001), “half of all teachers nationally may expect to have a culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) student in their classrooms at some point in their careers” (Pritchard, 2011, p. 194). Therefore, it can be difficult for teachers who only speak English because they may not be able to communicate with ELLs effectively. One of the reasons for this lack of bilingual teachers may be societal attitudes towards bilingual education. For example, decades of English-only education, brought on by Prop 227, has immensely impacted our education of ELLs. This proposition told people who speak different languages that their language does not matter in rejecting the use of it in schools. Due to this teachers did not have the right resources and tools for many years in order to teach ELLs. All of their tools were geared towards specifically English language acquisition even if

students had a hard time acquiring the language. According to Collier & Cummins (1987), “Second-language acquisition research, however, strongly suggests it takes five to seven years for normal ELLs to achieve average grade level performance in subject-area classes” (as cited in Cho & Reich, 2008, p. 236). Furthermore, due to the immense growth of ELLs teachers may feel unprepared to educate ELLs. In order to help ELLs succeed we need to find solutions to the struggles of teaching ELLs.

### **Why is it an Issue?**

There are several reasons why this problem is an issue within our education system. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, “by the year 2030, over 40% of the K-12 population in U.S. schools will be children whose first language is not English” (Hallman & Meinke, 2016). In knowing this, there is a growing need for teachers to become educated on how to better teach ELLs in their classrooms. If teachers can better educate their ELLs in their class it can help the students meet the Common Core Standards. Although for the students it is difficult since they have to quickly master a language while also knowing the content. According to Olsen (2010):

English learners face the dual challenge of mastering all academic content in English while, at the same time, learning a new language. Although the courts have recognized this and have made it clear that school districts are required to address this challenge. English learners in California have not shown the desired academic achievement results. The result has been an achievement gap between native speakers of English and English language learners (as cited in Munguia, 2017, p. 92).

The achievement gap between ELLs and their English-only speaking peers can make ELLs feel alienated within their classroom. According to Sharkey & Layzer (2000), “...regardless of what track they are placed in, ELLs in mainstream classrooms are often “marginalized” and their lived experiences are “ignored” by their teachers” (as cited in Cho & Reich, 2008, p. 236). Another reason why it is an issue because teachers can be facilitators of the loss of their home language or known as subtractive bilingualism. When students are assimilating and teachers do not step in and try to encourage ELLs home language in class it can lead to a decline in using it. According to Contreras-Gonzalas (2016), “Once students begin to assimilate to the American culture and language they are susceptible to subtractive bilingualism, which is the loss of native language and culture while learning a second language. This is most common when native language is not

student’s reinforced” (p. 17). In subtracting a students home language is a by-product of English only attitudes many teachers, schools, and administrations hold to this day. But English-only attitudes can have a huge impact on the childs’ academic performance. Additionally, these attitudes lead to a lack of training needed to educate teachers about ELLs. There needs to be a training on what teachers can do for ELLs so they can be prepared to help those students.

According to Capps (2015), “...the impact of this lack of preparation is felt by everyone—teachers, administrators, and parents—but particularly by the ELLs who often exhibit a lack of academic progress” (as cited in Hallman & Meinke, 2016, p. 3). All these issues affect monolingual teachers educating ELLs in different ways that can have an impact on their success.

**What Should Be Done?**

One of the problems that has come up while researching is the professional development given to monolingual teachers educating English Language Learners. Teachers do get opportunities to take professional development to learn about educating ELs but for many teachers it is not a priority. According to RoterMund, DeRoche, & Ottem (2017), “ Teaching ELLs or LEP students was the least prevalent topic for professional development, with 27 percent of teachers participating” (p. 5).

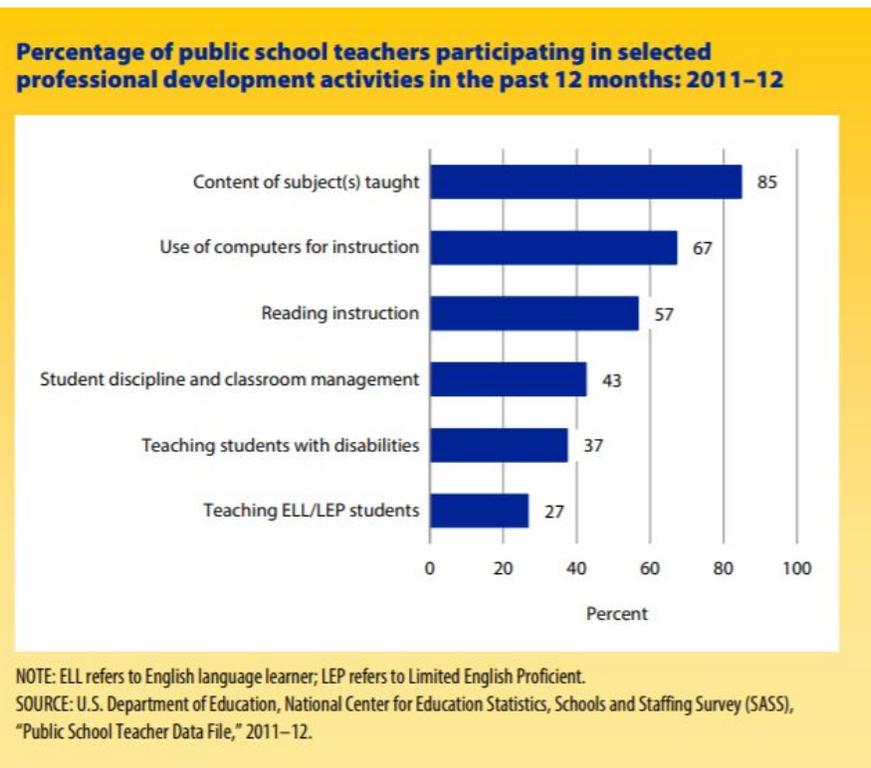


Figure1. Percentage of public school teachers participating in selected professional development activities in the past 12 months: 2011-12

In figure 1 to the left, it shows the percentages of professional development activities that teachers partake in. So, even

though teachers are required to take part in professional development days. There is a low percentage of them actually trying to learn about ELLs in their classrooms. Then if teachers are not taking these classes they are left feeling unprepared to teach ELLs. Additionally, deJong and Harper (2005), "... indicate that only about 13% of teachers who reported having ELLs in their classrooms received professional development to specifically help ELLs achieve in academics" (as cited in Turkan & Buzick, 2014, p. 224). Teachers are not getting the professional development they need. According to Giambo et. al. (2005):

There is a need for improved instruction for ELLs in the United States (Giambo, Szecsi & Manning, 2005; Hooks, 2008). This need is magnified by the growing number of ELLs as well as the amount of pre-service and current teachers that are unprepared to teach them. Zhao (2002) states, "general education teachers, especially those in states with recent increases in ELLs, are often underprepared to educate ELLs without additional support or professional development (as cited in Hallman & Meinke, 2016, p. 3).

The need for ELL focused professional development days is needed in order to teach ELLs. If teachers do not get the training they feel unprepared in teaching ELLs. So, if teachers have ELLs within their classrooms they should take ELL focused professional development days. Although teachers, schools, and administrators may feel indifferent about teaching ELLs because of the attitudes they hold.

This indifference of educating ELLs may arise from English-only education attitudes that people adopt. Then these attitudes were translated into English-only policies for several decades. Up until 2016, the state of California had a English-only education until the huge movement for bilingual education which defeated Prop 227. Although before Prop 58 a few states like California, Arizona, and Massachusetts may have felt that bilingual education attacked the integrity of the English language. According to Wiese & Garcia (1998) they argued that bilingual education, "...poses a threat to national integrity because of the use of languages other than English in education" (as cited in Wang, 2016, p. 106). This educational policy has affected those ELLs significantly throughout the years. It suppresses their ability to use their home language within the classroom because Prop 227 stressed English-only within the classroom. If the students then only use English within the classroom it could lead to a loss of their home

language also known as subtractive bilingualism. Although California now has enacted Prop 58 which allows parents to advocate for implementing a bilingual program within their child's school. Additionally, there has been research backing the encouragement of allowing students to use their home language. According to Cummin's Contextual Interaction Theory the first principle states that, "For bilingual students the degree to which proficiencies in both the L1 and L2 are developed is positively associated with academic achievement" (as cited in Lavadenz, 2010-11, p. 24). Therefore, it is important to not let English-only attitudes and policies impede the necessary use of a student's home language in the classroom.

The last problem that teachers face is the lack of resources needed to effectively teach ELLs. Schools lack bilingual resources like books, worksheets, and other instructional materials because of decades of English-only instruction. According to the teacher Ms. Viewers, "...in schools, there are not enough books in the library. Most of the schools are in English, her students do not have a lot of options because there are limited bilingual books in the library (as cited in Palma, 2019, p. 16). Additionally another teacher, "Mr. Dunleavy mentioned that there are limited resources for teachers. If it's in English you can find a lot of resources, but for resources in Spanish, it is really hard to find. Teachers have to stay additional time after school to create the resources" (as cited by Palma, 2019, p. 16). This shortage of resources then limits the use of bilingual resources for teachers. Even if they want to use bilingual resources they may have to scour for them or they have to make them themselves. And teachers are already busy as it is so it would be a strain on them to try to seek bilingual resources. So, it is pertinent for schools to try to offer those resources in the languages that their students speak.

### **Recommendation**

There are a couple things that can be done to help monolingual teachers. I recommend though is specifically providing professional development opportunities for teachers that is focused for strategically teaching ELLs. For those professional development days I suggest teacher learn either about culturally responsive pedagogy. According to Ladson-Billings (1994), "Culturally Responsive Teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning" (as cited in The Education Alliance Brown

University, para. 2). Additionally, having ELL-focused professional development days could help teachers feel more prepared to teach their ELL students. According to a survey done by Gandara, Jolly, and Driscoll, “The survey data indicates that professional development makes a difference in how confident teachers feel meeting the challenge of teaching English learners” (2005, p. 12). So, there is a pertinent need for teachers to go to ELL- focused or culturally responsive professional development days in order to educate their students the best that they can. Additionally, according to Menken and Antunez (2001), “To close the achievement gap between ELL students and English-proficient students, research has indicated the necessity to improve education for ESL/bilingual teachers and to provide content-area teachers with training in working with ELL students” (as cited in Sheng, Sheng, & Anderson, 2011, p. 5). One way schools could do this is by providing teachers with professional development opportunities that can develop their cultural awareness. Representing ELLs culture and language allows them to be more comfortable in the classroom. Another way teachers can support their students According to Palma (2019), “...the teacher mentioned that she encourages her students to check out books in Spanish from the library in hopes that it will help her students retain the language (Maddison, personal communication, March 15, 2019). Additionally, when Palma interviewed five principals they mentioned, “that they encourage their teachers to use the Spanish language in the classroom” (2019, p.14). For California we already have a Bilingual Education law (Prop 58) set in place for schools, parents, and teachers but many other states do not have those programs because of English-only attitudes. A solution to that is to give people knowledge on how bilingualism can help their child in the future.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, monolingual teachers face many challenges when teaching English Language Learners. Some of those challenges include attitudes of English-only (EO) education brought on by people who believe in students only speaking English. Additionally, teachers face a lack of resources and support due to limited budgets. Lastly, teachers may feel unprepared to teach ELL students within their classroom. Although, teachers are faced with these challenges there are many solutions to these problems.

## Method

For this Capstone Project, the researchers investigated how monolingual teachers view the support and resources they receive to effectively teach ELL students and what they thought could be done to improve them. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, the researchers formulated an action that responded to the focus issue in a way that inspired, informed, or involved a particular audience.

### Context

Six schools were used as the community partners across four different school districts.

**Greys Elementary<sup>1</sup>.** Greys Elementary is located in Rose, California and is within the De La Rosa Unified School District. Greys Elementary is home to about 400 students with close to 50% being Hispanic/Latino. The students who identify as two or more races make up 16% of the student body and Caucasian students are 14% of the student body. Other ethnicities that can be found within Greys Elementary are African Americans (6%), Asians (5%), Filipinos (4%) and Pacific Islanders (2%). The main language spoken by the students classified as ELL was Spanish (14.9%). The English language Acquisition Status within Greys Elementary shows that in the 2017-2018 school year 21.1% were considered English Learner while 4.5% were considered Fluent English Proficient. Performance wise the English language arts/literacy results indicated that 39.58% of the students scored at Level 1, 26.04% were Level 2, 24.48% were Level 3 and 9.9% of the student body were considered Level 4.

**Stars Hollow Elementary.** Stars Hollow Elementary is a public TK-5 elementary school in Stars Hollow. It is one of four elementary schools in the district. Its goal is to teach students resilience, perseverance, kindness and good intentions, as well as the importance of academics. During the 2017-2018 school year there were 492 students enrolled at Stars Hollow Elementary. According to the Schools Accountability Report Card for Stars Hollow Elementary, the school consisted of a diverse group of students. The school was made up of students who were Hispanic

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms have been used in all people, places, and things to protect anonymity.

or Latino (90.2%), White (4.5%), Asian (2.6%), Filipino (0.8%), Black or African-American (0.6%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.2%), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (0.2%), Two or more races (0.2%), and there were 0.6% of people who choose not to share their ethnicity (Patronik, 2018). During the 2017-2018 school year, there were a variety of languages that were spoken by English language learners at Stars Hollow Elementary school. There were two students who spoke Arabic, three Filipino speaking students, one Hindi speaking student, one Mixteco speaking student, 224 Spanish speaking students, and four students who spoke a different language (Patronik, n.d.). According to Education Data Partnership, there were 238 English language learners at Stars Hollow Elementary school in 2017-2018 (Patronik, n.d.). There were also 65 students who were Fluent English proficient, meaning that they were English language learners but they passed their English acquisition test. Once they pass the test, the district labels the students as Fluent English Proficient.

**Sharks Elementary.** Sharks Elementary is one of the K-5 grade public elementary schools in the Waves school district. Waves school district can be found in Starfish County in the state of California. The unique location can be found inland of Monterey County and Silicon Valley. This small community is rapidly growing, making room for potential growth in school institutions (About Us., n.d.). According to Sharks Elementary school profile, the school serves 631 students. With so many students, a diverse group is formed. Based on the information given by California's Department of Education Sharks Elementary's student body is made up of Hispanic/Latino (62.6%), White (30.9%), Asian (1.4%), African Americans (1.1%), Pacific Islander (0.5%), Filipino (0.3%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (0.2%). Two or more races (1.3%), and there was about 1.7% that did not report their ethnicities (Education Data Partnership, n.d.). In connection to the diverse population a variety of languages come about. 95.7% of the population speaks Spanish, 2.15% Punjabi, 1.08% Urdu, and 1.08% Filipino (Education Data Partnership, n.d.). With this information, we also find that 93 out of the 631 students are considered to be English Language Learners, each scoring at different levels of proficiency. According to ELPAC test results, 21.43% of the students scored at Level 1. For

Level 2 none were reported. Level 3 there was 28.57% of the students at this level. Level 4 had the highest percentage as overall scores which was 38.1%.

**Sydney Elementary.** Sydney Elementary is located in Tormund, California which is located in the Tormund City School District. The district is located inland from the Monterey Peninsula being about 20-30 minutes from the coast. The school district in which the school resides has almost 9,000 students (ED Data, 2017-18). The majority of the student population is Latino at 90%. The next highest category are white students at 5.46%. The next is Asian and Filipino at 1.93%. The next is Pacific Islander at 0.13%. The next lowest is American Indian at 1%. And the lowest percentage is African American at 0.73% (Tormund City School District, 2015). At Sydney Elementary, there are a total of 933 students. The student body is 98.8% Latino. The next highest category is white students at 0.4%, American Indian at 0.4%, and then Asian at 0.2 percent. Additionally, about 80.3% of school are English Language Learners and 97% of the student population is socioeconomically disadvantaged (CA Dept. of Education, 2017-18). Additionally, 54% of the student population are English Learners with 34% being English-only. Also, 80% of the population are socioeconomically disadvantaged (Tormund City School District, 2015).

**Cougar Elementary.** Cougar Elementary School is located within the small agricultural region known as Cougar County. In particular, Cougar Elementary resides within Cougarville, California and is a part of the Cougar School District. Cougarville provides the comfort of a small town with its surrounding hillsides and open meadows, however, short drives both North and West allow convenient escapes to much more hustle and bustle with the city views of San Jose, California and the beautiful beaches in Monterey, California. According to the California Department of Education (2019), Cougar Elementary School serves nearly 500 students ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade with 96.3% Hispanic students, 1.6% White students, 0.4% African American students, 0.2% Asian students, 0.2% Pacific Islander students, and 0.8% of students identified as two or more races. Cougars is also considered a Title I school with 53.5% of students being English Language Learners and 72.2% receiving free or reduced lunch (California Department of Education, 2019).

**Sea Breeze Elementary.** Is located in Ocean, California in the Sea Breeze School District. The school is home to 413 students this year ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade. Sea Breeze Elementary is not a Charter school, but a public school. Sea Breeze elementary does however fall under the Title I bracket. Of the 413 students, 91.0% receive free and reduced meals. The number of English Language Learners are 64.9% of the student body (California Department of Education, 2019). Students typically speak Spanish at Sea Breeze, but there are a few that speak Arabic as well. There was one child that spoke Tongan (EdData, 2018). The student body was made up of 85.0% Hispanic or Latino students, 6.5% White students, 3.6% had two or more race students, 1.7% African American students, 1.5% Pacific Islander students 1.0% Filipino students, 0.7% Asian students.

### **Participants and Participant Selection**

We interviewed six teachers from the Sea Breeze, De La Rosa, Stars Hollow , Tormund City, and Cougar School Districts. This group of prospective participants provided insight into different methods provided throughout the districts, as well as other resources that teachers have found on their own that they deemed relevant and/ or important to help ELLs succeed with language acquisition. This group provided knowledge on both a district and classroom level, that gave us a broader idea of the issue at hand.

**Researchers.** The research group consisted of six different individuals in order to have a broader understanding of the resources that are being provided to monolingual teachers throughout the tri-county area.

**Rosa.** I believe that I am not the only one that can solve providing monolingual teachers with resources to help English Language, but I feel that I would be able to use my personal experiences coming from a predominantly Latinx community and being an English language learner. I remember having teachers that could not help us because they did not know the language or they themselves can not understand what I am asking or struggling with. I think that myself, as an upcoming teacher, would be able to use my previous experiences to help other current teachers and new upcoming teachers to have

the appropriate tools to help English language learners. With the majority of the population changing dramatically, all teachers will encounter an ELL at some point in their careers. My experiences within the educational system has provided me with real connections that I experienced first hand being an ELL. The first couple of years in school I was in the ESL program. I feel that as a future educator it is important that I draw from these real connections that will allow me to be a more knowledgeable educator. Not only from an experience standpoint but resource wise, acknowledge that their students come from different ethnicities and have different language repertoires within my future classroom will allow me to make better connections with my students that will also help them succeed throughout their academic experiences and overall future lives. That is why I think that it is important to learn about the resources that are already being used in classrooms to help ELL students. I am different from the targets because I am not an educator yet. In addition, I am also different because I am not a primarily English speaking teacher. Growing up my parents always made sure to imprint in us that we should not judge someone based on their race, ethnicity, social class, education. I have also worked with children for over 4 years in different communities such as those considered “middle/upper class,” as well as working with students who are considered socioeconomically disadvantaged. This allows for me to have a diverse community understanding having worked with different communities.

*Alisha.* I personally find this topic meaningful because when I enter the educational field I will be going in as a monolingual teacher. I feel as though being monolingual will challenge me in many ways especially depending on the area I begin my career in and whether that community has a substantial number of ELL students. For this reason, I would like to be knowledgeable, beforehand, about the resources that are available and also ways I can help support other educators who may be monolingual as well. By teaming up with Bendy Well at Cougar Elementary School, I hope to learn about the resources and support she has found helpful to her as a monolingual teacher who works with English Language Learning students. If at the end of this research there are few resources available, I hope our group can be knowledgeable enough to help

establish new ways to aide monolingual educators in their classrooms with ELL students. In the past, the only personal experiences I have with this topic is when I worked in an after school program and was given a new student who only spoke spanish. It was very difficult to build a connection with such a large language barrier, however, we used a lot of body language, as well as received help with translations from other students in order to communicate. I feel as though this experience closely aligns with the research question and, therefore, will give me motivation to find the resources and ways I could have gone about the situation so the student had the best outcome. Currently, I am different from the “targets” because I grew up as a monolingual student who did not have to overcome language barriers within my educational process. I am different from the “influentials” because I am going to also be a monolingual educator and will have to overcome the language barriers with future ELL students.

*Selena.* This project connects to me on a very personal level due to the fact that I will become a monolingual teacher within the next couple of years and will have students in my classroom that do not speak English. Current monolingual teachers face many challenges when it comes to teaching students who are ELLs and these challenges are ones that I will soon face myself. As a future educator I would like to feel secure, supported, and prepared before entering my classroom. The students I will have, I will be responsible for their understanding of several concepts throughout the school year. There have been several times in my life where I have seen or been put into situations where I am the monolingual individual having to communicate to an ELL. You see, in my community I am more than just a resident, I am a coach and an active volunteer within the school district. There have been times where I have experienced difficulty communicating with ELLs in the community and with no support other than relying on technology to help translate my words. The lack of resources and support given to me now as a noneducator can reflect to the current monolingual teachers. Being an active volunteer in the schools has allowed me to witness a few monolingual teachers deal with an ELL; the teachers become irritated with the student but more so with the lack of resources/support they had to deal with while trying to teach that particular student.

Outside of my community and in another, as a YMCA after school leader, I have also had difficulty helping my ELL students understand their homework or enrichment concepts I was trying to teach. These situations were difficult, uncomfortable, and also left me feeling unaccomplished. Aside from the “targets” and “influentials” existing with this issue, I am different because I am a monolingual Latina who hopes to become a 4th grade elementary school teacher. Being an English only speaking Latina itself has its own challenges with how society sees me. I have worked with youth groups/ youth sports in my community and others for about 10 years. The experiences I have had working with people who struggle to support ELLs at all ages allows me to have an open perspective; being a monolingual Latina makes me eager to see how to develop skills and gain resources that will help support others.

*Megan.* This topic is personally meaningful because I am a monolingual future teacher and I have always wanted to be able to speak different languages so that I do not have a barrier with my students. I want my students to be in a safe environment where they can express themselves. So, finding out what resources or support is out there can give me an idea what may be lacking or what I change in the classroom. My experiences back up the topic because I have grown up in an area with ELLs who speak Spanish and I have wanted to speak Spanish in order to communicate and relate to them. Knowing the language would break down another barrier. I want my students to be able to come to class and have no barriers when I teach, I try to be open-minded so that I can help ELL students in my class. While some teachers try to cut out a student’s home language, I believe in additive bilingualism. I want to try to encourage students to use their home language in their writing and reading. Throughout my college career I have become more aware of what my biases are because I have self-reflected and saw what I need to change. Social media has also helped me reflect on how to change my biases. I have also been a person who is open-minded and tries to understand people’s points, I think I can welcome students’ differences, especially students who are ELLs because I understand that English is a hard language to grasp.

*Natalie.* I found this topic meaningful because I grew up in a predominantly

Latino community where the majority of my classmates, along with myself, were English language learners. At my elementary school I remember that there were some teachers who did not speak Spanish and struggled with communicating and understanding their students. This caused some stress for the students when they were trying to learn, because their teachers were not able to understand them and help guide them. When students felt supported, they did better in school and had motivation to continue studying. Being an ELL student myself, I felt the support from my teachers which encouraged me to keep studying. That is why I want to know what resources are available for monolingual teachers to help their ELL students. I hope to gain insight as to what resources my interviewee's school provides her with in order to support her when teaching her ELL students. What makes me different from the "target" is that I am a bilingual individual and have a bit of insight of what ELL students need because I was one. What makes me different from "influential" is that I am able to separate/accept someone's beliefs and not use them against them. I am able to set those beliefs aside from who they are in order to just view them as an individual. I think that this ability will help me teach students no matter what background they come from to be successful.

*Cristina.* This topic is personally meaningful to me because I am currently attending college to become an elementary teacher. I want to be as prepared as I can be when I enter a classroom with a variety of students. I feel like this topic will allow me to see what materials and techniques are offered to teachers now in an elementary setting. I have done service learning for the elementary school that I am going to be interviewing my teacher at and have seen first hand that ELL students have a difficult time communicating in the classroom. I feel it is important to include ELL students in the classroom. For me, being a future bilingual elementary teacher, I feel like I have an added quality because I will be able to understand ELL students if they are struggling in an area in the classroom. My group and I are qualified to take on this topic because we are all future teachers and we are all trying to bridge the gap between ELL students and teachers. I feel that I am different from "targets" because my physical appearance does not match my racial background, for that reason I do not feel like I am a target. I feel that

I am different from the “influentials” because as a future teacher I have been taught to look past race, social class, education, sexual orientation and gender identity. When I have my classroom full of students I need to be able to teach them and not judge them on their appearance. I need to be able to help them succeed in school. As a result of my appearance not resembling that of most Mexicans, it has often been assumed that I do not speak Spanish or know any of the Spanish traditions. I now have a better understanding of not judging people by the way they speak, look, or act. This Capstone will allow me to better connect with English Language Learners in my future classroom.

### **Informants.**

**Rosa.** Meredith Shepard is a second grade teacher at Greys Elementary School in Rosa, California. During her 9 years of teaching, she has had to implement many resources and skills to help the ELLs she has had.

**Natalie.** Angela Merici is a third grade teacher at Stars Hollow Elementary school. She has been teaching for 17 years. She is also bilingual which makes working with ELL students easier.

**Selena.** Cody Dawson has been a teacher at Sharks Elementary for 12 years. He is a Caucasian man who has picked up some Spanish from his years of teaching, but not enough to where he would consider himself bilingual.

**Megan.** Heather Hopkins is a first grade teacher at Sydney Elementary. She has been teaching for 24 years. She has worked at the school she is currently at for two years. She is a Caucasian woman. Though she only speaks broken Spanish, she can understand Spanish pretty well.

**Alisha.** Bendy Well is a third grade teacher at Cougar Elementary School in Cougarville, California. During her 13 years of teaching she has had to overcome working with ELLs as a Caucasian monolingual educator.

**Cristina.** Emma Smith is a kindergarten teacher at Sea Breeze Elementary School in Ocean, California. She has been teaching for 25 years as a monolingual Caucasian teacher.

### **Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions**

1. What kind of support and/or training is given to monolingual teachers who need to interact/teach ELLs?
2. What do you see as the problem with the support or training that is provided to monolingual teachers who need to interact/teach ELLs; or What are you concerned about when it comes to the support/training given to monolingual teachers who teach ELL student(s)?
3. What is currently being done to improve the interactions between monolingual teachers and ELLs - by whom - and do you think this is good, bad, or indifferent? Why?
4. What do you think can be done to provide better support for ELLs and their monolingual teachers?
5. What obstacles prevent providing more support or training to monolingual teachers teaching ELL students?
6. Besides what is already provided by your school (if there is anything), are there outside resources that you have found to be useful? Is there a personal preference or order you follow in the situation of helping monolingual teachers teaching ELL students?
7. Is there anything else that you would like to say about supporting/training monolingual teachers who have ELL students and/or the improvements that could be made to support their efforts?

### **Procedure**

Participants were interviewed. All interviews were done individually. When it was not possible to interview participants in person, they were invited to complete a phone interview or paper and pencil survey of the same questions. Face-to-Face interviews took less than one hour, were audio-recorded (with participant consent), and took place in Ocean School District, Tormund City School District, Stars Hollow School District, and De La Rosa School District. A semi-structured interview was used for face-to-face interviews, to allow for follow-up questions to unclear, interesting or unexpected responses. All interviews/surveys were scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee and took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

**Data Analysis**

Transcribed interviews were coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

**Results**

For this Capstone Project, six monolingual teachers were interviewed to see what they thought could be done to improve the educational experience for English Language Learners. This is important because teachers who do not speak another language can have a hard time communicating effectively with their students. In addition, students with language barriers, who are categorized as ELLs, are less likely to achieve academic success or have the ability to master the English language. Due to the inability of the English language learner to fully master the language, all other subject areas are affected. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature three themes emerged (see Table 1). Evidence-based decision making required evaluating each potential Action Option by the following criteria: time, cost, and effectiveness. Based on the evaluation of each action option an action will be recommended and justified.

Table 1 *Evaluation of Action Options*

	Time	Cost	Effectiveness
Professional Development Day(s)	Moderate	High	Moderate
Language Classes for Teachers (the predominant language of ELLs)	Low/Moderate	High	Moderate/High
Instructional Aide Specifically for ELLs	Low	High	High

The table above represents the three options that emerged after interviewing six monolingual teachers. After thorough consideration and extensive research on the resources that monolingual teachers would need to support English Language Learners, we found that teachers would benefit from EL focused professional development days, language classes for teachers based on the predominant language within their districts/schools, and having a bilingual instructional aide per grade level who is there to primarily focus on ELLs.

All three options will be evaluated based on time, cost, and effectiveness. The amount of time taken for each of the options will be at the discretion of each district's academic calendar. Additionally, the cost of all options will need to be based on the specific school's budget. Lastly, effectiveness will be based on the participation that is given from all teachers and can help determine which action will be the most successful.

### **Professional Development Days**

After extensive review of our interviewees' responses, we noticed that English Learner professional development days for teachers would be an appropriate option for schools to consider when looking for new ways to support both English Language Learners and monolingual teachers. Our interviewees Heather Hopkins and Angela Merici (personal communication, November 2019) both shared how they wanted to learn different strategies to teach their ELLs. According to Molle (2013), "In the past decade, U.S. schools have become increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse and there is no indication that this trend will change in the near future" (p. 206). Therefore, providing professional development days in order to prepare teachers to work with students of all linguistic abilities is beneficial for the teachers and English learning students. When evaluating this option it is important for school personnel to take into consideration the time that will be required for this, the cost of the personal development, and the effectiveness of the development day.

When evaluating the action option based on time we found that it was a moderate aspect on Table 1. That is due in part to busy school days and not having enough time to have more training. Teachers get a lot of training in a short amount of time (E. Smith, personal

communication, November 2019). There is simply not enough time in the school day or academic year to provide multiple professional development days focused on helping teachers learn how to teach their English Language Learners effectively.

Cost was the next criteria examined when evaluating our options. Most teachers will do whatever they can to improve their student outcomes, but the perennial shortage of money for programs, and the time to properly implement them are always going to be an impediment to success (C. Dawson, personal communication, November 2019). Districts are given a budget and often times there is not enough money to do multiple professional development days because they are very costly, and therefore, do not happen often.

After looking at the time and cost of professional development days, we also looked into the effectiveness of the professional development days. Although very costly and moderately time consuming professional development seems to be moderately effective, as many of the interviewees stated, teachers were open to attending professional development days to learn more. According to Karabenick and Clemens Noda (2004), the need for teachers to acquire more knowledge related to the use of the home language and its effect on school achievement in academic content areas is very important and with a professional development day this could be accomplished. Hiring well-qualified teachers with a diverse background who have a skill set that can provide essential strategies to help our ELLs succeed in the classroom and beyond would be ideal. However, that may not always be an option, therefore, providing professional development days for teachers can be a great alternative for schools to consider.

### **Language Classes for Teachers (predominant language of ELLs)**

In order to have strong relationships between monolingual teachers and English Language Learners, there should be some common ground between the two parties. One way to establish a good relationship is by sharing a common language with one another. Emma Smith, who has been a teacher for 25 years, highlighted that, “Having basic communication skills in the ELLs home language can be very helpful” (personal communication, November 2019). With that being said, one option that can be taken into consideration for monolingual teachers is the use of language classes, in the predominant language of their students, for teachers who work with English Language Learners.

One aspect of this option that should be taken into consideration is the amount of time that the option may take in order for all teachers to access and complete the language classes. Heather Hopkins (personal communication, November 2019), who has been teaching for 24 years, mentioned how she was required by her school district to take High Intensity Language Trainings, also known as HILT, before being able to work in a classroom. Through this program, individuals are given the opportunity to take a weeklong immersion day camp throughout the summer. This program would be a reasonable option and ranked as low to moderate, in terms of time, since it is 30 hours over the course of five days (San Joaquin County Office of Education, 2017). Since the program is also taken over the summer, the number of teachers that are able to attend a program like HILT is raised significantly seeing that most teachers have summers off. As a result, this option can be completed by many teachers in a reasonable amount of time. As noted above, the program is only a week long and, therefore, is not strenuous on a teacher's schedule outside of the classroom environment. However, this option can also be considered moderate because not everyone will be able to absorb the information as quickly as others and may have to repeat, or take additional, programs in order to fully master the language.

Another criteria that language classes can be evaluated by is the cost of the class or program the teachers would be taking. Emma Smith (personal communication, November 2019) noted that teachers should be allowed to have the language classes paid for since it is specific training for teachers in order to work with diverse student populations. With the approval by the district, this option could be considered high since there would need to be significant amounts of funding provided for all monolingual teachers to complete the classes or programs. Similarly, if the district is not willing to pay for these programs and classes for their teachers, it would still be a large financial responsibility for the teachers to complete on their own. Regardless of the type of class that is provided for teachers, such as Rosetta Stone or online classes, the cost can be a great deal for districts and teachers alike.

The last criteria that language classes can be evaluated by is the effectiveness that would be seen through the program or classes teachers complete. All six monolingual teachers that were interviewed shared that they would like to see some kind of language class be provided to them in order to be able to confidently work with English Language Learners. Meredith Shepherd, a

teacher of nine years, stated, “Honestly, I feel like the best thing for me to do would be to enroll in Spanish courses through a university” (personal communication, November 2019). This option can be considered moderate to highly effective because the classes would be directly related to learning the foreign language. However, the effectiveness does depend on the individual teacher’s willingness to put in the effort to learn the language. If a teacher is pushing for language classes to be provided, then s/he is hopefully willing to put in the effort that comes with learning a new language. These teachers know that bilingualism will help them form a deeper relationship with the English Language Learners they work with by being able to help the students’ academic successes.

### **Instructional Aide Specifically for ELLs**

The interviewees expressed a need for instructional aides specifically for ELLs. Some schools have an instructional aide, but the instructional aide may not work a lot with them because they have to help other children in different classrooms. Therefore, teachers have to try to help ELLs as best as they can even though some students may sometimes need more one-on-one help. The teacher Megan interviewed had a large number of ELLs in her class. But the school only provides one aide to work with the students for 20 minutes every day. The aide comes and helps the lower performing students with their math skills in the morning (J. Gabber, personal communication, November 2019). As the research was conducted there was sufficient evidence found that there was a need for an English as a Second Language (ESL) aide within the classroom (J. Gabber, personal communication, November 2019). Having an ESL aide to provide additional assistance for the cognitive development of the English learner would contribute greatly to their language acquisition. Not only would the student be getting additional resources to work on language acquisition it would also provide the teacher with a different approach on how to better facilitate learning for the student. In addition, according to Ferlazzo (2017), “Depending on the race of the ESL aide, they may be able to provide relevance in the materials such as local content or issues, as a result contributing to the use of the child’s native language to further their cognitive development” (p. 1) While having an ESL designated aide per grade level would benefit English Language Learners, the cost would be one to consider.

After analyzing the evaluation of the action options, the time aspect of the table indicates that having aides within the classroom would be low on the spectrum. In fact, having ESL/ELL aides in the classroom would not take away any time from the teacher, but instead would help the teacher with the children who are not performing well in English Language Arts. If the aides can help with that then the teacher does not have to worry about the student.

The next aspect that we need to examine is how much money it would cost to hire an instructional aide or multiple aides within the school. The salary of an aide is different within some school districts. The cost would be high because they have to pay them salary plus benefits. We recommend multiple aides per school in order to help the students as much as they can. According to GlassDoor (2017), the average cost of an ESL instructional aide is \$31,000 per year. On top of that many districts give aides benefits, like medical and dental, so the cost would be high for the school.

Effectiveness would be the final aspect that would need to be considered when pushing to have an instructional aide within the classroom. Based on the interviewees' responses, as shown in Table 1, they would be considerably higher on the action option based on our criteria. As mentioned by Heather Hopkins, "The only obstacle there is not having enough people to help in the classroom. Having an extra set of hands would help a lot in the classroom with ELLs" (personal communication, November 2019). Therefore, bringing up the need to have an instructional aide that could focus on supporting the learning of those working on language acquisition is highly needed. Furthermore, having instructional aides to focus on the English learner would make the effectiveness of the action option high.

### **Conclusion**

This section will justify the action we recommend to improve the resources monolingual teachers receive in order to work with English Language Learners. We will also discuss some of the concessions, limitations, and possible negative outcomes of our recommendation.

**Recommendation.** Of all the three action options that became apparent from interviewing the monolingual teachers, we strongly recommend that school districts increase the number of professional development days in order to provide additional resources and strategies to monolingual teachers who work with English Language Learners. We are confident that this

will work because it is something that the majority of the teachers stated would help them be more successful in their classrooms.

**Concessions.** The two other options, language classes and having an instructional aide, are also good options because they both help the teacher in the classroom with ELLs. The language classes specifically help the teachers' knowledge of the language so they can better communicate with the students. However, if the school does not offer those language classes aides can be helpful in the classroom. Having multiple aides can benefit the teacher in terms of time management because an aide can help students who are falling behind in certain content areas then give them the support they need. In addition, teachers can use more of their time helping the other students or many other things they have to do around the classroom. Therefore, providing aides or opportunities to take language classes supports ELLs in the classroom.

**Limitations.** The professional development option also comes with a few limitations. One of the biggest limitations with this option is having access to the funds that would support this. When organizing a professional development day it is important for administration to consider the cost of paying all teachers and staff members involved with the event, as well as the supplies, location, and the trainer/guest speaker that will be in attendance. Another limitation would be finding resources specifically aimed towards teaching monolingual teachers how to teach the different levels of ELLs. The topic at hand deals specifically with monolingual teachers and this could limit what type of professional development workshops can be implemented. Along with budgeting and establishing appropriate workshops for these developmental days, finding the time in the school year can be a constraint. Within the 365 days of the year, 180 of those days are spent in a typical public school. During those 180 days, one school year, teachers are not only teaching but have to participate in other school activities, achieve state standards/exams, complete parent teacher conferences, make lesson plans, attend meetings, and so much more. In order to gain insight and knowledge from a professional development day teachers may have to step away from their normal teacher duties and add on a workshop. Although this option comes with limitations, professional development days could highly impact both teachers and students, as well as the academic outcomes for the entire school.

**Potential negative outcomes.** Professional development days may cause teachers to spend less time with their students and or their own family. Due in part to professional development days being planned before school is back in session but, in some cases there are some professional development days conducted during the school year. If teachers begin to miss class time to attend the professional development days, their students will begin to feel a disconnect from their teachers and can eventually lead to behavior issues. Teachers and staff may also be overworked which leaves teachers drained and without energy to teach. In addition, the financial aspect of how these programs will be funded should be something to consider. Although schools are state funded, in recent years there have been budget cuts that have impacted the access to resources that administration can provide to their staff.

**Conclusion.** Despite the limitations stated, we strongly recommend that school districts implement or increase the number of professional development days which would provide different strategies, prepwork, language training, and professional development workshops in order for monolingual teachers to support their ELLs. Hiring qualified teachers to teach ELLs is ideal, but can sometimes be unattainable. Providing monolingual teachers with professional development days would allow them to have the basic skills they need to teach ELLs. Another option would be requiring teachers to take language classes to allow them to have a common understanding of the language. This can also allow for teachers to connect with their students on a deeper conceptual level. However, the time it would take for teachers to master the language and the cost of putting the teachers through the language classes led us away from this option. In addition, having an instructional aide in the classroom can be beneficial for the students that need extra support, but requires substantial financial resources. This is an unrealistic option as most school districts would not have the funding to allocate instructional aides to classrooms. Overall, teachers receiving training on how to teach ELLs is the best option because it allows the teachers to learn new skills and support their students in their own classrooms. This option allows for multiple teachers to gain the needed skills at once, cutting back on time while still maintaining effectiveness.

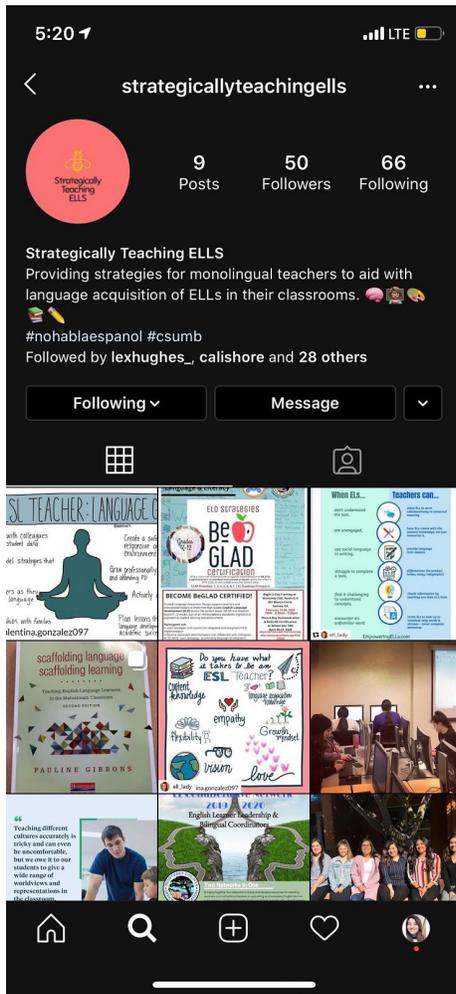
## **Action Documentation and Critical Reflection**

English language learners are the fastest-growing population within the state of California (Hopkinson, 2017). Due to this growth, teachers are tasked with helping them learn English as their second language. This may be overwhelming, especially for monolingual teachers, because they may not know the best way to support their students. After assessing our options, we decided to create an Instagram page in order to help monolingual teachers with ELLs. We chose to name the Instagram page *StrategicallyTeachingELLs*. We decided to use Instagram as our platform in providing resources for monolingual teachers because a lot of people, including teachers, use this as a tool in navigating their classrooms. In addition, Instagram has a large teacher community that commonly shares ideas with one another. In researching ideas we came across a book that specifically gives teachers different scaffolds to help ELLs. According to *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning* book by Pauline Gibbons, it gives different strategies for teaching English Language Learners in mainstream classrooms. Some strategies from the Gibbons book include using a student's native language to introduce a topic or key concept Another strategy is using pictures, diagrams, and graphic outlines in order to illustrate complex ideas. Another strategy that can be utilized is simply slowing down the conversation for ELLs. Allowing a little more time for the learner to respond can help them think out the question or problem. (2015, pg. 25, 40-41). In addition, we looked at various tools that teachers had access to in a multitude of subject areas but found that professional development opportunities are available statewide.

In order to accomplish creating a social media platform, there were several components we had to consider. The most important consideration was identifying a name that represented what our goal was; to provide strategies for monolingual teachers, as well as bringing awareness to ongoing professional development days. After several deliberations, we decided to continue with the name *StrategicallyTeachingELLs* because we felt that it represented the purpose of the page the best. One alteration that we decided to make was a name change. We found that there was no substantial interest in our page due to it being named *BridgingGaps*, since no one knew what our goal was. Changing the name to *StrategiciallyTeachingELLs* helped by getting other pages similar to ours, or with the same goals, to follow us. In our first post we found that our reach was not significant with just a caption. As a result, decided to incorporate hashtags such as

#nohablaespanol, #teachingells, and #monolingualteachers. As we reflected on how to have the biggest impact on our communities we decided to primarily focus on the community closest to us, which was Monterey County. By doing so, we were able to determine professional development days focused on English language learners within the tri-county area.

Figure 2. Strategically Teaching ELL's



Our Instagram page shown on the left, @strategicallyteachingells, is still in its beginning stages and has not made a huge impact on the public to measure the outcomes just yet. We posted an introduction about ourselves, another post that gave information about an EL Collaborative Network event, and a supporting quote. On our first post we had two different comments, which was great. One was from another user who is a science teacher and looks forward to seeing what else we have to share. What was a great surprise for us was to see how supporting our friends, fellow peers, and other teacher/education instagram users were so quick to follow us and show their support. It is with high hopes that our numbers in followers grow, with growth comes more outreach opportunities will arise this social media platform. The important next steps would be to continue to post about different strategies and informationals that EL teachers can use/attend.

From this research and data collection I know that teachers do not take enough professional development focused towards educating ELLs.

Originally, I thought teachers would take more of an interest in those days because many schools across the nation have ELLs. Additionally, I wish I knew exactly how fast the number of ELLs has grown throughout the country to know that as a future teacher I will someday teach ELLs. Additionally, I did not know that we had a bilingual education law set in place, Prop 58, in which I can request along with other parents from the school.

Moving forward from what I learned an important next step would include awareness. As a group we are making people more aware with our Instagram page. It is my hope that people will follow us and engage with the content we have posted. Additionally, I want to keep posting on the account because it can make teachers more aware of the strategies used to help ELLs. The next step after that would be in the future when I am a teacher I would take more ELL professional development days. Additionally, use different strategies like the ones in our Instagram posts. As a future teacher, I know that I can always learn new things about the types of students schools come across. In learning those things can help me understand students on a more compassionate level then incorporating that into the curriculum.

### **Synthesis and Integration**

The Liberal Studies MLOs impacted my professional development by making me evaluate my own social identity and how it impacts my interactions with students in K-12 classrooms. When I understand both my students and my own cultural differences and how that can affect my interactions then I can be a more culturally responsive teacher. In researching ELL education gave me a different perspective on the struggles ELLs face within the classroom. Where I grew up, there were not many ELLs within my classes throughout the years. So, in observing and doing research about ELLs gave me a better understanding on what I can do as a future teacher. Especially, since I am an English-only speaking teacher it was pertinent to find out where the gaps in preparation and support lie.

Additionally, it made me evaluate as a teacher where I need to seek out injustices and then try to correct them in my future classroom. There are many students whom the education system works against. There are many students who are not advocated for and so they are not accepted within the school. As a future teacher it is my responsibility to have a fair and equitable classroom where everyone is accepted. In my research I noticed that when working with ELLs some states have negative attitudes towards students becoming bilingual. In finding the truth behind the evidence that bilingual education helps ELL students helps me understand as a monolingual teacher that English-only is not the way to go for many bilinguals.

In order to become the professional I aspire to be I need the knowledge of being a

culturally responsive teacher. This would mean I need to expose myself to different cultures that would broaden my understanding of them. Whether that would be having students from different cultures in my class teach me about their beliefs, traditions, and norms. Or going to professional development days about understanding different cultures and then trying to incorporate them into the classroom. Additionally, as a teacher I need to be aware of my own biases that can affect my interactions with students. I have previously reflected on my own biases and then changed those notions throughout my college career. But I need to keep breaking down those stereotypes and stigmas I may subconsciously hold in order to make every child feel accepted in my class.

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