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

Growing up in a Latinx community, I was able to see firsthand that bilingual students were not always given the same opportunities as their counterparts. They were sometimes viewed as unintelligent and as if they did not belong. My mom moved to the United States at the age of nine and did not know English. When she started school, she was able to learn English quickly because she had bilingual teachers who understood her and could translate. She was motivated to learn English because she related with the teachers and felt like she belonged which is important for children. Because my mom grew up only speaking Spanish and then learning English, she felt like it was necessary to teach my sisters and I both languages. She valued both languages and felt that it was important for us to know both.

I grew up in a predominantly Latino neighborhood, meaning that the majority of my neighbors and classmates grew up speaking Spanish. Everyone around me knew Spanish, so I did not really worry about speaking English until I started going to school. At first, it did not seem easy because I was used to speaking Spanish. When I began to learn English, it became the language that I was required to use more than my native language which made things a little strange. If this was strange for me, I cannot begin to imagine what other students going through the same thing might be experiencing, especially because some schools in California are following an English only curriculum. I was fortunate enough to have the support from my parents, family, teachers, and school administration who looked out for English Language Learners. I think that the support coming not only from home, but also from school really helped me learn. I had the confidence and support that I needed to be successful and learn the new language and succeed. That is why I think that it is important for teachers to not only have the support they need to instruct students, but also to be able to allocate the resources necessary to help them teach their ELL students everything that they need to know in order to be more successful.

I was very fortunate to have been taught both languages but there are some children who are not as lucky to have someone teach them and practice with them. They simply rely on their teachers' instruction to learn English. In many instances, not many teachers are well equipped with the necessary support or resources to instruct bilingual students. If the teachers are not prepared to help their bilingual students, learning may become difficult for the students and make them feel as if they do not belong or are not smart enough, which is the opposite of what a teachers' job should be.

It is believed that bilingual students are not smart enough but in reality, they are just as capable of achieving greatness. All they need is someone who believes in them instead of singling them out and isolating them. The support that students receive from their teachers can help them feel like they belong and that they are somebody. It is important to provide monolingual teachers with the support and resources that they need in order to be well equipped to teach their bilingual students everything that they need to know and more. Being an English Language Learner (ELL) myself has made me understand the importance that a teacher has when teaching and instructing students. If the students know that the teacher is on their side and ready to teach them, they are likely to want to perform better in school.

Literature Synthesis & Integration

In this literature piece the reader will learn about the importance of equipping teachers, specifically monolingual teachers, with the resources and materials necessary to properly teach English Language Learners also known as ELL. Not many people see the importance of teachers having special training to help ELL students, but with being trained to teach ELL students, the students are likely to receive the most assistance and best education that they can by having a teacher who can not only understand them but who is also knowledgeable in assisting ELL students.

What is the Problem/Opportunity?

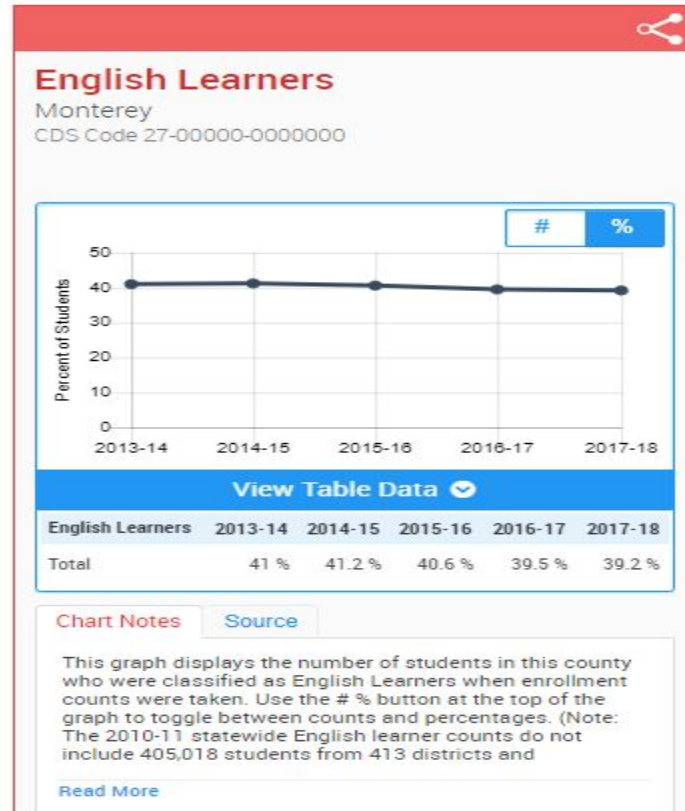
The main focus of this paper is to find the support that should be offered to teachers, specifically monolingual teachers, when working with English Language Learners. As stated in Pritchard (2012) there are some teachers who are teaching English Language Learners who are not well equipped with the tools necessary to helping the students succeed. There should be a

bigger percentage of teachers who are ready and equipped with the necessary materials to teach ELL students. The teachers being prepared will not only help the students learn but also motivate them that they are not alone, and someone understands them. As stated in Palma (2019),” there is no official language”, meaning that someone cannot be forced to learn in a specific language except otherwise made aware of by a law/proposition”. Palma also said that Proposition 277 states that California must instruct students in English (p.8), this itself limits students who are English Language Learners (ELL) students. It puts them at a disadvantage. As stated in Rodriguez-Valls (2009), “oftentimes the absence of their first language, Spanish, eliminates the possibility of obtaining the brilliant future wished by their parents”. Forcing a student to learn in a language that they do not fully understand makes what they are learning less enjoyable and much more difficult. If the teacher is unable to connect with their students who are ELL, it becomes a much harder task for the teacher to ensure that the student is not falling behind. According to Hopkins (2017), “In 2016, 73.5 percent of California’s voters voted to introduce proposition 58 which was the California Multilingual Education Act of 2016. With this proposition classrooms began taking two different approaches. A submersion classroom approach and a submersion classroom plus ESL approach. In a submersion program the student sits in the class with native English speakers and is taught normally and may struggle understanding the teacher. In a submersion program plus ESL, the student is placed in a classroom being taught English but then the student is pulled out of the classroom and spends the rest of the day learning in their native language. This helps students understand that their native language is being valued and that they do not have to choose between their native language and English, rather both languages matter.

It is important to be aware of the support and resources that monolingual teachers are offered when working with ELL students. The students' success is the most important part, even when each student learns differently. It is important for educators to understand that patience and understanding when working with each student is necessary. Not all students are the same. As stated in Pease-Alvarez, Samway, and Cifka-Herrera (2010) and Pritchard (2012), teachers and districts are faced with having more English Language Learners and are having to find a way in

which to support those students. This graph shows the number of English language learning students there are in Monterey county.

Figure 1: English Learners in Monterey county



Note. This graph displays the number of students in this county who were classified as English Learners when enrollment counts were taken.

Districts need to find ways in which to support teachers and students. Either by providing more specialized instructions for teachers or by training teachers to be able to teach ELL students more effectively. As stated in Pease-Alvarez, Samway, and Cifka-Herrera (2010) , “...these programs do not take into consideration the specific learning needs of ELs and the related specialized pedagogical knowledge that teachers of ELs need in order to be successful. Making sure that schools not just implementing a program because it is the first one, they find, but making sure that the program will help bring success for students is important. Therefore, having a teacher who is well equipped with the proper resources and materials to teach ELL students everything that they need to know is important.

If an English language learning student is in a classroom with a monolingual teacher, it is likely that they will have a difficult time learning the material as they will not be able to understand one another. Being in a classroom with an instructor who does not know or understand their students and the students' first language can be a bit challenging for both parties because they do not have much common ground to help one another. That being said if there is support that the school administration provides teachers with to help them learn and be able to successfully teach their students it would be very beneficial for them to teach students.

Why is it an Issue/Opportunity?

It is important to know about the kind of support that teachers are receiving to help their English language learning students be successful. We as a society should care about the tools that teachers are being provided with in order to help their students learn. Teachers are the people who have the biggest impact on students as they are with them the majority of the day and therefore have a big impact on how the student will turn out to be. As stated in Moll, Diaz, and California Univ. (1983) the classroom atmosphere was a big determining factor as to how well a student comprehends an idea. That means that what the teacher and classmates of ELL students act like in the classroom, can and will make a difference in the ELL students' ability to learn. If the teacher and classmates are not open to helping them learn they will close off and not want to learn. If they are welcomed and encouraged to learn and make mistakes and made feel comfortable to learn they are more likely to succeed.

Another reason as to why it is an issue is because according to Pease-Alvarez, Samway, and Cifka-Herrera (2010), ELL students are being forced to use a one size fits all model. That means that teachers are being told what curriculum to use for each student even though they all learn differently and at different speeds. It is not allowing each student to learn at their own pace which is sometimes necessary for students to be able to better understand something. They each learn differently therefore their learning plans are different and cannot be fitted to what a book says each student should be learning. Some students need extra time to fully understand a subject.

That being said, when teachers have a better understanding on how to help each of their students fully understand a certain topic students are able to learn everything that they need to be successful. When teachers take into consideration what students are interested in, the teacher is likely to get a student who is ready and excited to learn instead of a student who has shut down and does not feel heard. If the teacher is able to understand the student, the student is likely to enjoy being in class and feel free to be who they please without fear of judgment. Therefore, it is important for teachers to try and learn about their students. As explained in Gainer and Larrotta (2010) it is important to expose pre-service teachers to different situations, cultures, and languages so that they are able to connect with their students later in life especially if one day they have English Language Learners in their classrooms, they will be able to connect with their students and make them feel more welcome.

Although not all teachers feel the same way about teaching a student English while also teaching different subjects, many students feel either encouraged or discouraged depending on the teachers' actions at that point in their life. A teacher's attitude toward a student's abilities and inabilities can make them feel comfortable and confident or discouraged about themselves. Teachers have a big impact on the lives of their students. Therefore, being well prepared to teach each student no matter what they are like is important.

What Has and/or Should Be Done?

Like stated above in Gainer and Larrotta (2010) a teachers' pre-service or credential program courses can really help them understand different cultures and languages. By providing credential courses centered around English language learning can help prepare teachers for teaching English Language Learners. Those programs would still be beneficial even if teachers do not have English Language Learners. As stated in Lanson-Billing (1995), "schools should strive to have more culturally responsive teaching." When schools are culturally responsive, they are helping create a more welcoming environment for students. They are showing them that people are different, and it is okay to be different. The sooner we help make people aware of other cultures and that people are different, we can help create a more compassionate group of people. When creating a culturally responsive environment teachers can also implement the

sociocultural learning theory. According to Lavadenez (2011), the sociocultural learning theory, is “Learning is influenced by social, cultural, and historical factors. Learning takes place within social interactions...Teaching occurs through meaningful interactions between experts and novices.” It goes to show that we can learn from one another. Just by communicating with people who are of a different ethnicity or culture. If monolingual teachers or teachers in general take some time to become aware of who is in their classroom, they are likely to get a better result from their students. When students feel welcomed and that they have a purpose they are likely to enjoy being there. So, implementing a sociocultural learning theory into ones teaching style would be beneficial.

Like stated in Rodriguez-Valls (2009) when students are placed in English only programs they begin to shut down. They do not always try their best because they are afraid to mess up. There are times where they are not allowed to use their native language which could really benefit them and help them learn a new language. They then become intimidated by the language that they are trying to learn which makes them lose hope and self-confidence that they will ever learn. That is why it is important for teachers to have some idea of student’s background or culture so that students feel welcomed in their classroom and not like someone who does not belong. Making each student feel included can help their motivation to learn. This idea is also supported by Mejía Vélez, Bhattacharya, Kakali, Augustine-Shaw, Donna, Herrera, Socorro, Peter, Lizette, & Thompson, David (2017).

Conclusion

In conclusion ensuring that teachers, monolingual teachers, are well equipped with the tools necessary to teach their English Language Learners is important for student success. A student can only succeed if their teacher is well prepared to teach them everything that they need to know. As previously stated, each student learns differently, therefore a one size fits all model would not be relevant in students achieving academic success. Preparing teachers to teach all students no matter what the student brings with them to the classroom will help everyone succeed not only in the classroom but in life.

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 Elementary¹. 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

¹ 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 cannot 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 firsthand 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 firsthand 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 weeklong 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 criterion 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, a teacher 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.

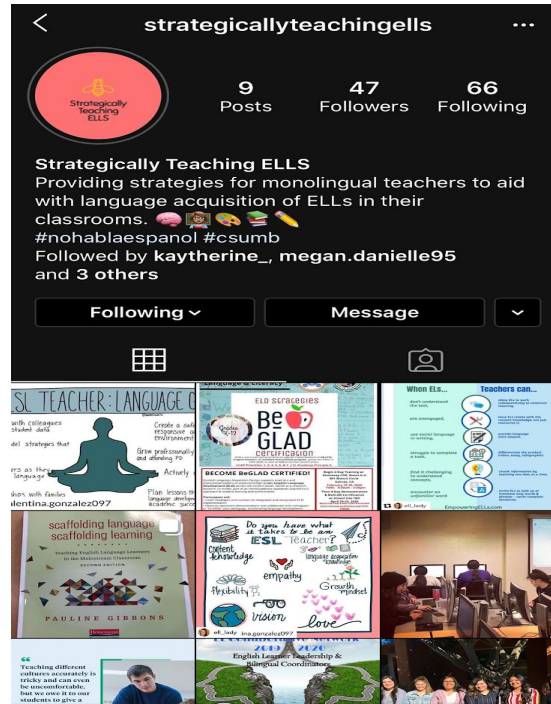
Potential negative outcomes. Professional development days may cause teachers to spend less time with their students and or their own family. Due in part to professional development days being planned before school is back in session but, in some cases, there are some professional development days conducted 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, prep work, 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.

Figure 2. Strategically Teaching ELLs Instagram Page



Note. This image shows a few of the posts from the Instagram page we have created.

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 *StrategicallyTeachingELLs* 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.

Our Instagram page, @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 that will arise this social media platform.

I wish that I had known from the beginning how important this topic really was. I assumed that many people had researched and knew all of the ways to better assist ELL students. I was shocked at how very few resources were available for teachers who teach ELL students. I thought that there was more being done to help ELL students as the number of ELL students in California is only continuing to rise.

The important next steps would be to continue to post about different strategies and information that EL teachers can use/attend. Spreading the word about different events and strategies can really motivate teachers who work with ELL students on a regular basis learn new strategies to help them better assist their students. Inform teachers of such events can help motivate them to continue learning so they are better prepared to educate their ELL students.

I learned that I was a bit hesitant to inform people about my group and I's resource because I was worried that people would not understand what our resource was about. After talking to some people about it they agreed that it was helpful and said that they would use some of the tips that were discussed. I was able to understand that change is not easy for everyone and helping create this resource to help teachers create change in their classroom was a good idea as times have changed and many people spend a lot of their time on social media, it was a great way to spread the word about the resources available. Teachers as well as students are always learning therefore providing teachers

with this resource helps them learn new strategies that are around them in which they can later implement into their teaching and help their students learn. We hope to inform, inspire, and educate educators of this issue and how they can help minimize it and create change.

Synthesis and Integration

The Liberal Studies MLO2 and MLO3 have positively impacted my professional development. That is because as stated in MLO 2, students critically examine the value of diversity and multiculturalism. As explained in this project I was able to learn more about English Language Learners. I learned about who they were and what was being done to help them. I was also able to learn about the laws and propositions that have gone into effect to specifically help English Language Learners and the difference that these laws made for them. I was able to see the different languages that are spoken by English Language Learners and learn that they are not all speaking the same language therefore not all students are being provided an equal education. As stated in MLO3 I was able to use technology effectively to help create interview questions and send them out to my community partner. I was also able to learn more about English Language Learners and what is being done to help them. My group was also able to create an Instagram page in which to tell more people about this issue and what they can do to help create change.

The necessary next steps that I need to take in order to become the professional that I envision being is to continue to be caring and open about learning about people's cultures and where they come from. I hope that I will always be excited to learn who my students are and what they believe in. As that is a great way to help students feel welcomed in the classroom. I want all of my students to feel welcomed and excited to learn and be in school. Having a positive and inviting environment for students to be in helps improve the learning experience. To become the professional that I envision I would also like to continue learning. Especially learning alongside my students. There are always new things that need to be learned. Being open to always learning new things is important to keep up to date with the fast changing world and ensuring that our students are receiving the best education that they can.

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