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“I’m Sorry Can You Repeat That?” How Do Monolingual Teachers Find Success in Linguistically Diverse Classroom Environments

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Abstract

The focus of this Capstone Project is on monolingualism in teachers as a result of subtractive education who are or are going to be working in linguistically diverse classrooms. This is an important issue for monolingual educators or students whose selected career path revolves around education because diversity within California has been on a steady rise and more students are English Language Learners (ELLs) trying to adapt to the norm of English within schools. An argument is made that monolingual teachers are at a disadvantage when it comes to working in linguistically diverse classrooms and there is not enough support to allow them to work with these ELLs in a deep and meaningful way that also produces success in the learning environment. The three primary stakeholder perspectives chosen were bilingual and monolingual educators, because they have personable experiences with the issue at hand as well as real world experience combating the problem. Three themes/action options emerged from an analysis of the data and explored as ways to address the issue presented. Increased use of Para teachers in classrooms is argued to be the most effective way to achieve the goals of monolingual teachers in linguistically diverse classrooms successfully being able to teach cross-culturally.

“I’m Sorry Can You Repeat That?” How Do Monolingual Teachers Find Success in Linguistically Diverse Classroom Environments?

Growing up in a world surrounded by cultures and languages, there always seemed to be a part of me that was missing. Maybe it was the times when I was younger where my abuelita would give me a hug and kiss and ask, “*Como esta mi niñita?*” and me absently looking at my mother to translate, or the times working in food service during my college years and having someone walk up and the first thing they ask me is: “*Hablas español?*” and I would sheepishly shake my head no. Bilingualism seems just out of reach, as I near the end of my journey towards my degree. I had missed out on years of schooling, where I could have increased my understanding of the Spanish language.

Looking back at the home videos of the little girl who I have grown up to be, that small child speaking freely in a language that my now twenty three year old ears cannot comprehend -- it makes me wonder what happened? When did the Spanish just switch off, never to be used again? Mitchell (2012) discusses the relevant theory that applies to my unique situation: the “mythical” majoritarian story that immigrant populations tend to resist learning English (pp. 6). Growing up in Portola, South San Francisco, I was surrounded by many Latinx cultures that spoke the romantic tones of Spanish. My mother and father spoke freely and with much gusto to their three daughters in the language of Spanish, our mother tongue. Yet, moving to Concord, California and attending the private Pre-Kindergarten to 8th grade school of Queen of All Saints, it was encouraged to my parents that their daughters catch up with the rest of their classmates, by only practicing English.

Shortly after that, like many schools facing subtractive education, the idea that English should be the primary language taught in schools meant many language programs were cut.

Subtractive education is when schools or institutions remove programs specifically designed as

resources for culture and language. In addition to funding cuts, this was also advocated by English-only advocates that were guided by the view that the school's responsibility was to prepare children to be able to live and function within the 'dominant' society (Wright, 2000, pp. 63). The Spanish language was cut from my school and within our household we were only allowed to speak English, meaning that Spanish was soon forgotten. There was this critical division between English departments and other language departments where it showcased dominant languages versus minority languages (Schuck, 2006).

Now, as I begin to prepare myself to teach in diverse classrooms, I feel as though I am at a disadvantage, especially living within diverse California where there are many bilingual students as well as English language learners. It will be not only hard to communicate with them but additionally create personable relationships with them and their families as well as create a safe and welcoming learning environment, which I think is so imperative for the developing student. As someone who wants to one day have a class of their own, it is my job to overcome my monolingualism and the effects of subtractive education as a goal to myself and my identity as well as prepare to teach in a diverse classroom setting.

Literature Synthesis & Integration

Monolingual, [mon-uh-ling-gwuhl] is defined as, "*Adjective*; knowing or able to use only one language; monoglot; spoken or written in only one language," (Dictionary.com, 2021). Many classrooms face an issue that has been overlooked in the past few decades: monolingual educators leading the forefront of diverse classrooms, where English may not be the first language spoken by the majority of the class. This issue has many factors as to why it has become a problem: the issue of subtractive education (when schools remove heritage and cultural courses from the curriculum; i.e. language courses) which has produced monolingual students

and the issue of overcoming monolingualism -- how can educators get the support they need to support the students they are leading? According to US News (2015), "Today, more than 5 million students in the public school system are learning English, a number that has more than doubled since 1998, according to the Migration Policy Institute." The schools within the United States of America will continue to be linguistically diverse and it is imperative to discuss the issue and eventual options of monolingual teachers being able to provide that support and how it will be achievable.

What is the issue?

The issue this paper will focus on is monolingual teachers and how they will overcome their history of being the product of subtractive education in order to be able to work in these linguistically diverse classrooms and make these connections with their students. The effects of subtractive education has produced many monolingual students in the American educational system. For students wanting to become a part of the educational system as educators and teachers, working in linguistically diverse classroom settings might be difficult and a challenge they must overcome in order to create a culturally diverse and accepting classroom of their own. For students whose first language might not be English, going to school in a different language is an intimidating and daunting task and it is the job of the educator to make that personable connection with them, whether it be in that student's mother tongue or by incorporating a diverse curriculum.

Living in one of the most diverse states in America, teachers of California can expect to have a diverse classroom with students from all different cultures and languages. "As of 1999, 14 million Americans aged 5-24, or 17% of that age group spoke a language other than English at home," (Slavin, 2005, pp. 247). Besides learning how to fulfill the duties of a teacher, it is

their responsibility to teach beyond the curriculum, to build upon moral education and cultural education. Monolingual teachers are just as capable as bilingual teachers in terms of producing a productive learning environment, but they are at a disadvantage when it comes down to these cultural connections. The question really is, as educated adults how can teachers overcome being the product of subtractive education to give the next generation of learners the attention and acceptance of their culture and language and other cultures and languages that were lacking in the previous era of education?

Why is it an issue?

Monolingualism in teachers wanting to work in diverse classrooms is an issue for multiple reasons. The first being is that within an era of cultural acceptance and love, many students are embracing their races and ethnicities and no longer hiding behind the things that make them unique from other students. Being bilingual and biliterate is not only acknowledging the roots that make them who they are, but it is also them attempting to function in a dominant society where the majority speak English. The issue of monolingualism in teachers goes back to the idea of subtractive education. It is now the next generation of leaders and educators who did not have the experience of language programs and immersive education of other cultures, where they come up short and are unable to make that connection with English Language Learners or even in the diverse classroom setting. “A second barrier to multilingualism is the bilingual teacher shortage. In California, with the passage of Proposition 58 in 2016 halting restrictive English-only policies for our multilingual learners, there has been a resurgence of dual-language immersion programs and a shortage of bilingual teachers.” (George, 2020). French & Armitage (2020) discuss why some sort of multilingual development is important for up and coming educators who will be working with diverse classes, “A key to success is that multilingual

pedagogies are developed from and respond to students' existing multilingual practices," (pp. 91). Educators who have been the victims of subtractive education may not understand the significance and importance of the need for multilingual education because it was not a part of their curriculum growing up. It is the past ways of thinking emphasize the importance of English that is no longer relevant today: "The irony of this majoritarian story that emphasizes English and fundamentally overlooks the importance of biliteracy, multilingualism, grade level content learning, as well as the development of critical perspectives and thinking skills, lies in that fact that while emphasizing English it is simultaneously limiting opportunities for multilingual learners to gain high levels of academic English proficiency" (Mitchell, 2012, p. 11).

This additionally is an issue, because not only are the students unable to receive the support they need in order to succeed in school, but it can be mentally challenging for educators. Former CSUMB student Miranda (2019) discusses within her own Capstone work, how the confidence with educators working in diverse classroom settings may fall short when it comes to English Language Learners when they themselves are monolingual. Educators are responsible for the preparation and eventual success of their students. Seeing their students unable to succeed when it comes to assessments and tests due to their inability to communicate and make personable connections with their home languages and cultures takes a toll on the confidence of their own teaching abilities. Which in turn has an effect on student morale -- seeing the role model of the classroom's lack of confidence can make the students uncertain. "Students entering schools experience a variety of conditions that place their social-emotional development at risk," (Witte & Mosley, 2014). It is this chain reaction of events which can take a toll on the entire classroom system's mental health.

What should be done about this issue?

There are two significant solutions to this issue. The first solution presented is going back to the roots of the developmental phase of children and reversing subtractive education. “EB [Emergent Bilingual] toddlers exhibit smaller cognitive gains and lower pre-literacy and mathematics scores than their White and English-speaking peers,” (DeMatthews, 2018). This means that language programs during the elementary school years should play an integral and fundamental part of the curriculum. Although it is not a part of the core subjects (English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Physical Education, and Art), exposure to foreign languages challenges the growing brain as well as provides multicultural awareness and education at a younger age, which is more important than ever in the diverse world everyone is a part of. This solution combats eventual monolingualism in both Caucasian and children of color; caucasian students are getting exposure to other cultures rather than the dominant white culture and children of color are able to more easily navigate the world of education in English while not being forced to withhold their mother tongues, but embrace them. DeMatthews (2014) further proves this by stating, “The outcomes of these actions should ultimately lead to a consensus around the school's strengths and weaknesses, a shared sense of responsibility for all students, an inclusive and transparent approach to decision making, and a recognition that cultural and linguistic diversity is an asset that should be further developed through the adoption of DL. [Dual Language]”

The second solution to this issue would revolve around monolingual teachers already within the parameters of a bilingual classroom. To overcome their monolingualism and better prepare themselves for teaching beyond a single language, they should be properly certified to be eligible to work with English Language Learners. “Principals, teachers, and families should consider the value of Spanish and other languages, how segregation impacts achievement and

student well-being, the ways hiring practices support or limit the school's ability to meet the diverse needs of EBs, and whether or not curriculum, student discipline, and teaching practices reflect the same values and beliefs of families and the community,” (DeMatthews, 2014). This certification would allow them more time to prepare with classes that can expose them to these cultures and languages. It would be very imperative for the educators to know the basics of the language and culture, or at the very least, words and phrases that pertain to the lesson in which they are trying to teach.

More tests and assessments might seem redundant to a teacher who already must adhere to the many other tests and certifications in order to just be an educator, but looking at the bigger picture, there are no teachers out there teaching math who have never taught math before. So why should there be educators out there teaching students whose first language may not be English, if they do not have the proper education or exposure or experience to do so? There is this hurdle ELLs, also known as English language learners, have to overcome in the United States of America navigating the language they are most comfortable with using at home versus the language that their entire education system is taught with. It feels as though there is, “Like a pendulum swinging between opposing ends, US schooling has historically approached linguistic diversity with alternating restriction and tolerance” (Menken, 2014, p. 13). That being said, there should be a piece that holds those two together and is eligible to make the connections and transition between one language and another--which is what educators can strive to do. Being prepared is one of the fundamental principles in being an educator. This solution is taking one step further for the minority students so they can have equal access to education, as they deserve.

Conclusion

Although the issue of monolingualism in teachers due to subtractive education and its effects in the modern day classroom has a personal connection to it, it still has significance towards other students striving to become educators. California and many other states will continue to grow in diversity and it is important that educators are able to grow with them linguistically, culturally, and educationally. This issue is not calling for educators within the system to become bilingual overnight but it does call for action against subtractive education as well as attempting to be more culturally relevant to create a more diversifying and welcoming classroom environment.

Method

For this Capstone Project the researcher investigated how teachers or educators view subtractive education and monolingualism and what they thought could be done to improve it. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, the researcher used what they have learned to formulate an action that responds to monolingualism in diverse classrooms in a way that inspires, informs, or involves a particular audience.

Context

One of the community partners for this particular Capstone project was from Celadon¹. Celadon has a population of about 129,000 people. It is a smaller school in comparison to the neighboring schools. The school where the first participant works is a small middle school designed for English Language Learners as well as children that have a more difficult time in the traditional school environment. Many families and students that go to this school are below or at the poverty level.

¹ "Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations."

The second participant is from a town called Lavender². This town only has a population of only 673 residents, much smaller in comparison to Celadon. Lavender is considered to be a company town, home to two major agricultural companies and many farm workers. The school in which the second participant works for is an elementary school with a small student body, many of which are English Language Learners. This participant works one on one with students and their families to promote language development and growth.

The third participant is from a place called Ambrette City³. Ambrette City has a population of nearly 11,000 people. Ambrette City is located at the foot of a large mountain, Mt. Daphnes⁴. This city was historically known to be a coal mining town. The school in which the third interviewee works for is a high school with a predominantly Caucasioan student population. This participant works as a Spanish teacher.

Participants and Participant Selection

I invited 3 teachers to participate in this study. This group of prospective participants was invited to participate because of their relevant experience/expertise/knowledge/membership in teaching or being a part of the educational environment.

Nicole A. A white female parent and teacher for Mount Daphnes Unified School District⁵. This person is a family friend and has helped me with decisions in regards to my educational career. They have received their teaching credentials from a California State University, and are working in a school setting where many of the students are from lower income families and families that speak a language other than English at home.

² Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

³ Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

⁴ Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

⁵ Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

Laura M. A white female teacher working for Kakariko Unified School District⁶. She teaches a range of grades between first and fifth with fellow co-teachers. Much of her work revolves around working with English Language Learners (ELLs), specifically focusing on practicing English more in the school setting one on one. She is one of the service learning teachers the researcher has had the opportunity to assist in with classes.

Caroline B. A Latina female teacher working for Mount Daphnes Unified School District. She teaches high school Spanish I and II. Her work is culturally relevant to the Latinx community as well as to bilingual education. Her Master's degree is in Cross-Cultural teaching. She is a former teacher of the researcher.

Researcher

This topic is important to me because I am the product of subtractive education: I lost my ability to speak Spanish because the language program was cut from the school I attended, and now I am at a disadvantage because I want to work in a diverse learning environment. I am similar to my participants because the participants are working in diverse and bilingual classroom settings. However in a sense I am different because my participants are already teachers, whereas I am still learning and training to be one. For my particular issue, I need to be mindful and respectful of the many different cultures I may encounter, as well as the fact that some teachers may be against the idea of bilingual education.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

The following questions will be asked to no fewer than 3 teachers / educator participants.

⁶ Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

1. What do you know about monolingualism ? What do you see as the challenges with being a monolingual teacher in a linguistically diverse classroom with monolingualism in the classroom?
2. What is currently being done to help monolingual teachers combat the issue of monolingualism to teach effectively in linguistically diverse bilingual classrooms - by whom - and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts?
3. What do you think should be done to help monolingual teachers teach more effectively in linguistically diverse classrooms?
4. What do you think are the challenges to doing something about supporting monolingual teachers?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to say about supporting monolingual teachers and/or the improvement of subtractive education in terms of educating teachers who are able to effectively teach in diverse classrooms?

Procedure⁷

Participants will be interviewed. All interviews will be done individually. When it is not possible to interview participants in person, they will be invited to complete a phone interview or paper/electronic survey of the same questions. Face-to-Face interviews will take less than one hour, be audio-recorded (with participant consent), and take place over the phone/video call. A semi-structured interview format will be used for face-to-face interviews, to allow for follow-up questions to unclear, interesting or unexpected responses. All interviews/surveys will be scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

⁷ <http://my.ilstu.edu/~jhkahn/>

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews will be coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

Results

For this Capstone Project, three educators who were or are involved in linguistically diverse classroom settings were interviewed to see what they think could be done to support monolingual teachers working in classrooms that are linguistically diverse. This is important because in many schools across the country, many children grow up being monolingual. In a country where hundreds of different languages are spoken, those teachers who were the byproduct of subtractive education do not have the experience needed to be able to teach beyond the means of their native tongue. Now more than ever, it is important to incorporate different cultures within the classroom setting and to be able to make that connection with students who may be struggling to learn and adapt to English. 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, Effectiveness and Collaboration. Time as a criteria is based on how fast each action option can be implemented. Effectiveness as a criteria is based on how successful the action option would be if it were implemented as a solution to the issue. Collaboration is based on how smoothly this solution can be implemented with all parties involved. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option an action will be recommended and justified.

Table 1

Evaluation of Action Options

	Time	Collaboration	Effectiveness
Provide additional funds to support programs for monolingual teachers	Low	Low	High
Increase language programs in early childhood education years	Medium	Medium	High
Increase Para Teachers in classrooms	High	High	Medium

Provide Additional Funds to Support Programs for Monolingual Teachers

One of the most consistent themes within the interviews surrounded the idea of funds for support. Like many issues in schools, a lot of our campuses' are underfunded in many departments, including this one. "Support for increasing school funding is widespread in the United States, eroding only slightly in the past decade and a half," (McClellan et al., 2018). The government and other bodies of power have the support backing additional funding, it is the matter of implementing it into a course of action. One of the interviewees brought out the point that the school she particularly worked for needed resources other schools already have, "They don't need what we need," (Nicole A, 2021). This was in reference to the

fact that she worked for a school that does not receive a lot of funding or donations and is not in the wealthiest of neighborhoods in comparison to schools that are. Another point brought up by a different interviewee was the fact that additional funds if provided, were from their own pockets. This means that if they needed to attend a training or night class, the person who would cover the costs of this would be the teachers themselves.

Time would most likely be a key factor in getting this solution implemented into the classroom. Change would not happen overnight but slowly overtime the increase of funds would greatly benefit monolingual teachers looking for support in their classrooms and with their students. This would give them more opportunities to be fully invested in a multicultural classroom environment without hesitations or struggles because they are better off more prepared. Time was evaluated as having a lower score because although the implementation of the action can be completed the amount of time it would take for this implementation is not sufficient. Once again, the change will happen but the time it would take for that change would be over a longer period of time. Collaboration for this solution would be difficult, as many schools feel the need for funds to go elsewhere within the school system. In addition to this, there is already much debate outside of the administration (ie. school community) on how and where money should be allocated and spent. Therefore, since the disparity, collaboration for this solution would be difficult. The final criterion in which this solution is evaluated is effectiveness. Overall, the effectiveness of having the additional funds to provide support for these monolingual teachers working in linguistically diverse classrooms gives them more opportunities to reach each and every student regardless of their background and regardless of their students' ability to speak English. It would help already struggling monolingual teachers find their own support through conferences and classes whilst not hindering them with the expense of gaining access to these resources.

Increase Language Programs in Early Childhood Education Years

The second theme that emerged with the three interviews was the need to incorporate more language programs in the earlier years of development for the growing child. The personal significance towards this action project surrounded the idea that I am a monolingual student about to become a teacher

and due to subtractive education I have stayed monolingual throughout my educational journey. The first interviewee referenced the fact that many of her colleagues are also monolingual due to cutting language programs in their childhoods. The fact is, other countries around the globe incorporate second languages as a requirement of the curriculum, so it does not make any sense as to why at some point in California, language programs were cut. "...For language teachers who, in order to teach more effectively, should clearly be not only aware of their instructional practices and their beliefs about those practices but also cognizant of the extent to which different instructional options fit in with learners' individual profiles or contextual considerations," (Dypedahl, 2018). This stresses the importance of why learning cannot be simply communicated within one language when universally there are hundreds. The third interviewee agreed with the other data presented by the other interviews that language education promotes and stimulates the developing child's brain as well as has a positive impact on the learning environment when students and educators are able to teach cross-culturally and make it linguistically relevant as well.

The first two criteria, time and collaboration, would yield about the same results as considered by the data. Language programs being incorporated into the curriculum would take a lot of time to adjust for the other necessary courses in early childhood as well as finding an educator who would be able to be that bilingual support system for the school system. In addition, collaboration on this solution would yield the same amount of support for it as against it. There are likely to be parents and even educators who oppose forced learning of other languages or those who even think that these courses are unnecessary and that time and effort should be placed elsewhere. However, the growing support for diversity within schools has also increased the likelihood of parents and the community welcoming the incorporation of these language programs within schools. The final criterion, effectiveness would present very successful results if the option were to be implemented. Over the longer period of time, the language programs have a greater chance of producing more bilingual graduates meaning that in professions such as teaching, the

educators would not be at a disadvantage in diverse language classrooms when students not proficient in English need more support.

Increase Para Teachers in Classrooms

The final emergent theme that was presented within the interviews was the need for Para teachers in classrooms. Para teachers, or paraprofessionals are: "...not certified teachers, but they are vital members of a school's support staff. They are credentialed education professionals who work alongside and under the direction of a certified teacher or school professional," (Viestra, n.d.). All three teachers interviewed had or have experience with para teachers and have described them as an increasingly beneficial and useful solution to the classroom environment. Para teachers could be beneficial to all the parties involved and can be proved to be a low cost and effective temporary solution to the issue presented. One of the interviewees has stated that without para teachers, her first year at the school she works for would have been monumentally different and more difficult. Para teachers can provide comfort in the classroom if a student is uncomfortable speaking the majority language, they might feel more open to speaking in their native language to the para teacher until they are adequately prepared to speak outside of their mother tongue.

In regards to the criterion of time, getting para teachers in the classroom can be easily managed and have a fast turnaround time. Para teachers would be a matter of getting the parents to volunteer their time and then figuring out a schedule that works best for them and for the classroom. In terms of collaboration, it was found that this solution would be successful and beneficial, especially to those linguistically diverse classrooms and monolingual teachers. In addition, para teachers would increase parental involvement in the classroom which can be beneficial to the child and to the learning community. The final criterion for which this solution was evaluated was effectiveness. It was found that para teachers could be beneficial in some classrooms, but also not needed in others. Translating does not require much of a specific degree or level of higher education, just knowledge of both the foreign language and the majority language, therefore it is something that parents could easily do. However, the only issue with this

solution is finding parents available to do this at the pace in which para teachers are needed in classrooms, meaning that there might be more of a demand for para teachers than the actual amount of para teachers readily available.

Conclusion

Of all the options available listed above to the stated issue, I recommend that there should be an increase in para teachers in the classroom. This will allow monolingual teachers to get the support they need as well as learn from the para teachers as a resource. Additionally, this solution would increase the successes of a linguistically diverse classroom for the plethora of cultures California classrooms see on a day to day basis. Through three interviews with both monolingual teachers and bilingual teachers, all of whom have worked in a linguistically diverse classroom I can conclude that this is the most realistic approach to combating monolingual teachers and linguistically diverse classrooms and the challenges that arise from that.

Concessions. Although increasing para teachers in classrooms ultimately was the solution to which I backed my support, the other two options presented highly of themselves as a way to address the issue at hand. Increasing funds for monolingual teachers and linguistically diverse classrooms in itself is a great way to be straightforward with finding the solution. The additional funds would be eligible to go towards night classes or conferences in which a monolingual teacher can get support and even learn a little of other languages. This would prevent the teacher from paying out of pocket. The funds could additionally go towards resources in the classroom that promote and encourage diversity. As for implementing more language programs during the earlier years of education, this was also another solution that in the long run, could have worked over time. While students are learning throughout their educational journeys in more than one language, they are more likely to retain this information and be able to

use it as a tool for success in their latter chosen professions -- especially with the increasingly diverse world we live in today.

Limitations. Although I have ultimately decided to go with increasing para teachers in classrooms as a solution to monolingual teachers working in linguistically diverse classrooms, there are limitations to this solution. It does not provide a long term solution to the issue at hand, just a temporary solution. Sooner or later, para teachers might not be as available to come in for that added support or maybe their child has moved on from the grade in which the para teacher had been working in and they decided to follow them to their next classroom. Para teachers are an excellent way for the monolingual teacher to get exposure as well as support for these other languages but the teachers should also be making and taking active steps to improve their own proficiency.

Potential negative outcomes. For the solution to the issue, there are potential negative outcomes. One of the main negative outcomes that I think could potentially be an issue is monolingual teachers feeling helpless. Many monolingual humans are the product of subtractive education and for those who have moved on to become educators, having to rely on someone else in order to make a connection with their students could potentially make them feel helpless. One of the most important things teachers need to establish is this connection and inclusivity with their students where there is this mutual understanding of trust, reliability and respect. Teachers who need and rely on paraprofessionals might soon enough end up feeling helpless if they in turn are not making the necessary steps to understanding and developing their knowledge of other cultures.

Conclusion. Even though there are potential negative outcomes to the solution provided as well as limitations, I still wholeheartedly support the idea of para teachers in the classroom.

This solution is the most realistic to be implemented in the learning environment as well as one that can be implemented at a faster and more effective rate. Not only do I like the fact that a monolingual teacher like me can get the support from a potential parent of one of my students, but it shows students that it is okay to ask for help when you need it and that even as an educator, I am still learning everyday myself. This option additionally increases parental involvement which is important for the developing child and school community. One of my family friends, who was an interviewee for my research, was the first to explain para teachers to me. I was pleasantly surprised when the other two interviews that followed also mentioned para teachers as an increasingly important resource for the monolingual teacher. This solution is one that I can look forward to potentially working with, as a monolingual student myself attempting to become an educator in the diverse classrooms of California. I can confidently say that this solution would be the best option to combat the presented issue.

Action Documentation

The focus of my issue surrounded the idea that monolingual teachers are at a disadvantage when it comes to working in linguistically diverse classrooms due to the fact that there is this lost connection between educators and ELLs who have a more difficult time adjusting to the cultural divide. For this project, I interviewed three bilingual educators who work in elementary, middle and high schools. Each of these educators had similar opinions when it came to the linguistic divide among majority teachers and the students that they lead. My first interviewee first brought up the ideas of the three courses of action that should be implemented in order for there to be a resolution to this problem. Interestingly enough, without having any connection to each other, the second and third interviewee came up with almost identical solutions to the first interviewee. The three action options that emerged were: increase of funding

for additional support programs for monolingual teachers, increase language programs in early childhood education to produce more bilingual people, or increase para teachers in classrooms.

Ultimately and after much consideration, the action option that I decided to implement as a solution to the issue was to increase para teachers in classrooms. I picked this specific option because of how realistic it is to implement in comparison to the others. It would take a shorter amount of time to recruit and then implement para teachers within classrooms as well as the fact that it is most likely the least expensive option and program. Para teachers can increase engagement within the classroom whilst additionally providing context and knowledge to the monolingual teacher. One benefit to having para teachers within classrooms is that for the school community, it also increases family involvement.

Action Research Project Documentation and Reflection

For this project, I had to come up with a way to collect the data I needed whilst still following Covid-19 safety precautions. Out of the three interviews, two I was able to create a survey for and send to my interviewees, as it was too difficult to find an allotted time where we could connect via Zoom or over the phone. This survey is pictured below (Figure 1). The survey included a brief introduction that explained the research I was conducting as well as how I will change personal information to pseudonyms to protect identity. The survey itself consisted of five open ended questions that they had the leisure of answering however they wanted. I was able to collect interesting data from this. Figure 2 is documentation of me reaching out to my second interviewee.



Monolingual Teachers Working in Linguistically Diverse Classroom Settings

This survey is for the Senior Capstone paper of Janine Bandayrel, a candidate for the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies at California State University, Monterey Bay. Your responses to this survey will be incorporated towards the research surrounding monolingual teachers wanting to effectively teach cross culturally in linguistically diverse classroom settings. Any information provided, including names and school districts, will be changed to pseudonyms to protect identity.

* Required

Email *

Your email

1. What do you know about monolingualism ? What do you see as the challenges with being a monolingual teacher in a linguistically diverse classroom ? *

Your answer

2. What is currently being done to help monolingual teachers teach effectively in linguistically diverse classrooms - by whom - and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts? *

Your answer

3. What do you think should be done to help monolingual teachers teach more effectively in linguistically diverse classrooms ? *

Your answer _____

4. What do you think are the challenges to doing something about supporting monolingual teachers ? *

Your answer _____

5. Is there anything else that you would like to say about supporting monolingual teachers and/or the improvement of educating teachers who are unable to effectively teach in diverse classrooms?

Your answer _____

Figure 1. Survey

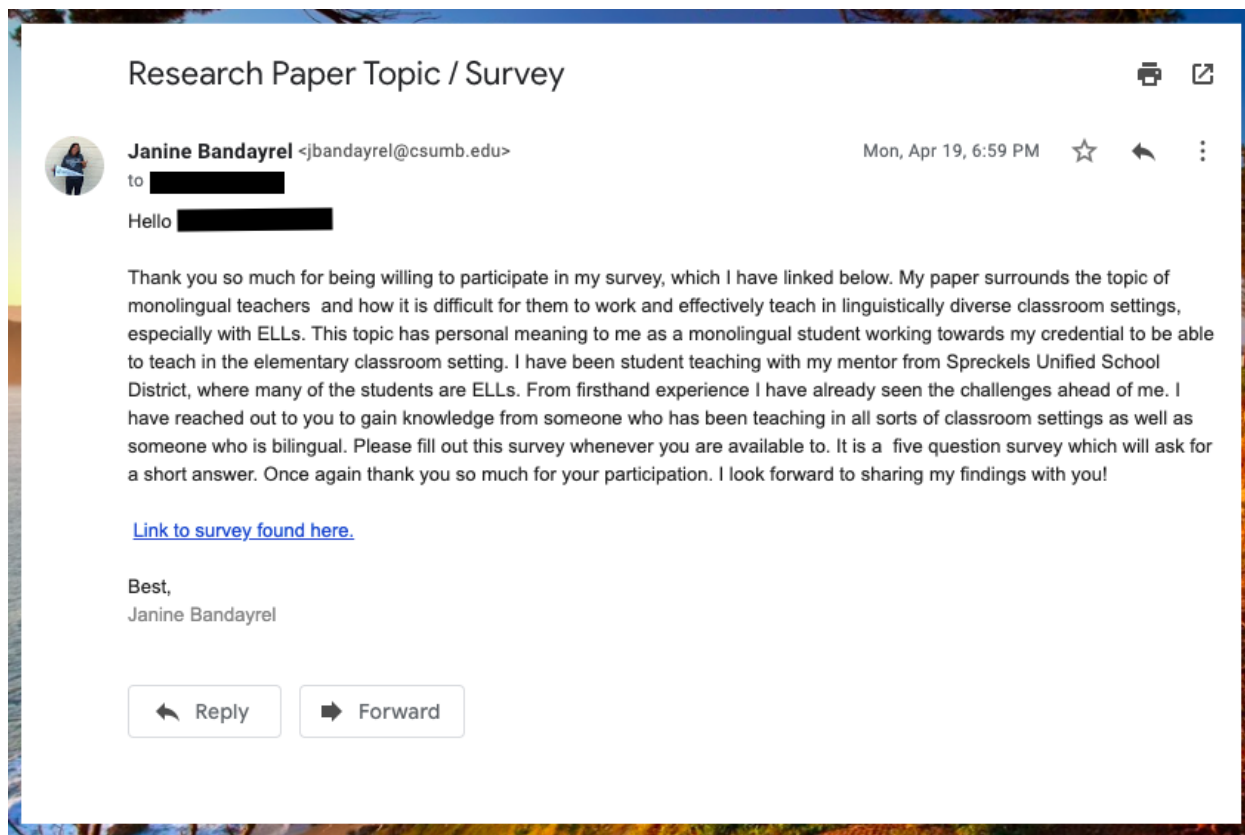


Figure 2.

The other interview which was not conducted with the survey took place over Zoom. This interview actually extended past fifteen minutes, which was what I was anticipating, and was nearly an hour long. During this interview, I asked the same questions listed on the survey. This way seemed more personable in the sense that the interviewee and I were able to talk face to face and had more of a connection as well as the fact that this interviewee is a family friend who is really passionate about this issue. Figure 3. documents the downloaded audio from the interview.

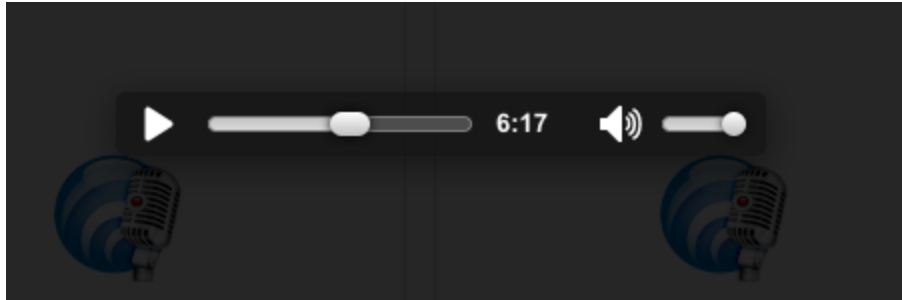


Figure 3.

Something that was surprising for me was how widespread this issue actually was. The three educators that I had the pleasure of working with are all from vastly different locations and of different school types. This really helped with getting diverse perspectives from different communities. What was really unexpected was the simultaneous agreement with what the solution should be to the presented issue. As stated before, the three interviewees had no connection or collaboration whatsoever yet the solutions they each individually presented were nearly identical.

Initially, something that I really wanted to do in regards to this project was recorded interviews over Zoom or some sort of similar program. It was found very quickly that two of the three interviewees had extremely busy schedules as they were in transition to returning to their physical school campuses for in person learning, so a solution that I had to come up with was to somehow still interview them but at their own time. My solution to this was to create a survey where they could answer the questions I wanted to ask at their own leisure. Although both parties wanted to do the video interview, this was just the easier and more convenient solution. The overall response to the proposed issues and solutions has been very receptive. For me as the researcher it was comforting to know that there is already awareness of this issue. Although this issue primarily affects a certain community, there is still awareness for the issues and the need to find a solution for it; with my project, I hope to be a part of the awareness of this issue as well as

a part of the driving force behind the need for change. One important thing that I learned about myself because of this project is how important and personable this issue is to me, which has inspired me to become the best teacher I can be for the future students that I lead.

After all the data was collected and analyzed, I had to figure out what to do next with what I had. The first interviewee, is a close family friend of mine, going back nearly fifteen years. For my call to action, I asked the first interviewee if I was able to sit in on one of her classes where I was able to see para teachers at work within an actual classroom environment. Due to the fact that she was in transition from distance learning to in person learning, it was not allowed for me to be within the classroom but I was able to be there over Zoom to see the para teachers at work. This inspired me to reach out to the campus in which I am doing my service learning, at Kakariko Unified School District and ask them if they would consider implementing or increasing the amount of para teachers within their campus community. For this, I reached out to the school board:

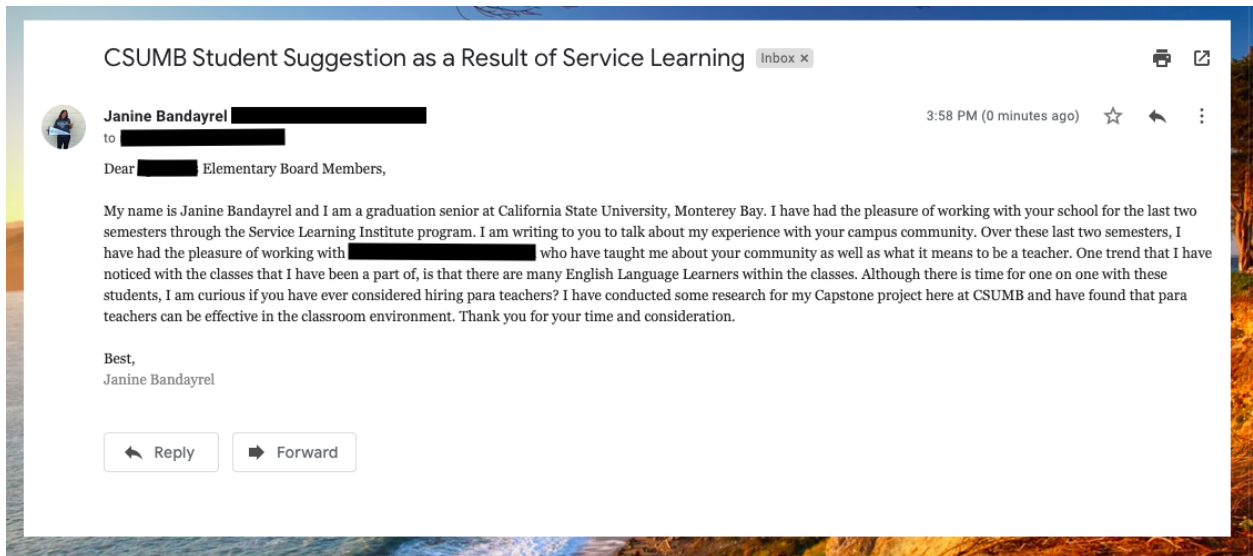


Figure 4.

Although I have not heard back from the school board, I am excited and happy to have suggested the opportunity for change.

Critical Reflection

Synthesis and Integration

The Liberal Studies program and the required coursework of this degree has challenged me each and every succeeding year. Coming up to this Capstone project, I had to go beyond my comfort zone and dig deep within myself as a woman, student, and future educator. This action research project has given me exposure to the school community and allowed me to get perspective on the way our classrooms work with the linguistically diverse families that make up our school. It has furthered my understanding of what it means to be an educator in our ever changing world, specifically within diverse California. This project has allowed me to critically think about the issues within other social identities and cultures that I may personally not be a part of, however can encounter during my time as a leader in the classroom.

As a researcher during the Covid-19 pandemic, I have had to find a way to overcome the challenges of social distancing and taking protective measures in order to collect my data. This means going completely virtual with my interviews and data collection when normally these parts of the action research project would be done in person. I have had to learn to use technology to my advantage in order to complete this project, which has furthered my skills with technology that I can use in the future with my classroom. In addition to this, my project has allowed me to think critically about the issues within our community and allowed me to become an agent of change.

The Liberal Studies program here at California State University, Monterey Bay has changed me as a person. Each course has broadened my horizons on what it means to be an

educator in my community as well as deepened my knowledge on the many issues surrounding education and its system. I hope to continue my educational journey by continuously learning every single day not only from my peers but also from my friends, family and most importantly my students. For me, being a teacher means I have to continuously allow myself to be taught by the experiences we know and the experiences of all those I encounter. I hope that this project has inspired me to be the change I want to see within myself, my community, and in the world.

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