

First Language Use in the Classroom
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Abstract

There is an increasing number of English language learners (ELLs) in public schools across the United States. These students are bringing an influx of language barriers when learning in English-speaking classrooms. It is important for teachers to understand best practice when teaching ELL students. The information in this seminar paper was compiled by reading other current studies to conclude the following results: ELL students who are able to use their first language to support their second language will achieve higher academic results.

Keywords: English language learners (ELLs), first language, second language, native language, bilingual

Statement of the Problem

The increasing rate of English language learners (ELLs) in the United States is posing a problem of how to best teach language and content in the classroom. The debate has been controversial between the usage of programs and is left extremely unresolved in this country. Gil and Bardack (2010) note as this problem exists, “ELLs continue to have disproportionately high drop-out rates, low graduation rates, and low college completion rates” (p. 1). What type of program would increase the likelihood of English language learners to achieve higher academic success: bilingual or immersion? Should ELL students be expected to completely diminish their native language in school?

Purpose of Study

Darlington Community Schools continue to see a rise in the number of English language learners enrolled from year to year. As stated by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), over a six year span from the 2012-2013 report card to the 2017-2018 report card, data shows the amount of Hispanic/ Latino students has doubled in Darlington- growing from 9.6 percent to 20.2 percent. Within the demographic of those students, 11.6 percent are considered “limited English proficient” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2018).

If this number continues to increase, leaders at Darlington Community Schools need to recognize that while sporadic meetings, general sources or tips, and an ELL team have been put in place for elementary, middle, and high school teachers, there is still a large disconnect with the way English language learners are being taught. There are little to no indicators that this demographic will significantly change, so in order to move forward with educating ELLs, teachers and staff need to be aware that using a students’ L1 will support learning in L2.

Significance of Study

The education of ELLs is one of the most important issues facing educators in the U.S. ELLs are a large and growing proportion of the school-age population - according to National Center for Educational Statistics, in 2007, about 10.8 million (or 20%) school-aged children in the U.S. spoke a language other than English at home (Planty, et. al., 2009, as cited in Genesee, 2016). This situation is not likely to change because ELLs are currently the fastest growing population in U.S. schools (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004), with the number of ELLs expected to increase another 50 percent by 2025 (Passel & Cohn, 2008, as cited in Genesee, 2016).

The issues of educating English language learners goes far beyond the increasing number of ELLs. It has been shown, on average, ELLs trail behind their English-speaking peers in terms of academic achievement (Sanchez, 2017). This statement holds true in the Darlington Community School District. According to the district report card for the Darlington community, as a whole, English learners are scoring lower on student achievement than their English speaking students (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2018). Based on the data shared out, ELL students show lower academic achievement. When looking at students that scored in the “below basic” category: White students (English speaking) only had 11.5% score in the below basic compared to English learners who scored 40% of their population in below basic. The table below shows the percentage of each group, based off students’ English language arts standardized test scores, from the 2017-2018 school year.

English Language Arts Supplemental Data- Darlington Community

Group	Total Tested	Percent Advanced	Percent Proficient	Percent Basic	Percent Below Basic
White	339	10.3%	44.8%	33.3%	11.5%

English Learners	65	4.6%	26.2%	29.2%	40.0%
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This information is released yearly by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

As illustrated in the table above, ELL students struggle academically in comparison to their English speaking peers. The data presented was consistent for prior consecutive years within this school district. This shows how important and “...clear [it is] that educators need all the resources at their disposal to meet these challenges” (Genesee, 2016).

The work of educating English language learners is important because they make up a significant percentage of the overall enrollment of school-age students. While best practice remains debated, “there is undeniable and growing evidence that the home language of ELLs is of considerable benefit to their overall academic success” (Genesee, 2016). By using the students’ knowledge of their own native language in the classroom, even monolingual teachers can help improve students’ language development in both English and the language spoken at home.

Assumptions

The information found in the collected sources is accurate and honest. The data displayed about ELL students is a genuine representation of all ELL students.

Delimitation of the Study

The review for this seminar paper was conducted June through December 2018. It appears that most current sources are found online; therefore, a majority of the sources used within this seminar paper were navigated through the search engine for University of Wisconsin libraries.

Methodology

I reviewed and analyzed sources (online, print) on my particular topic in order to inform myself on current knowledge and substantial findings. With the collected information and data, I

have supported my hypothesis; which stated, English language learners who continue to use their native language while learning English will achieve higher academic success. With looking through research, it was important to find studies that reinforce both sides of the argument. This was done by looking at both qualitative and quantitative research.

Definitions of Terms

English language learners: Students whose first language is not English and who are in the process of learning English. (ELL Glossary, Colorin Colorado)

ELLs: an acronym for English language learners

Bilingual education: An educational program in which two languages are used to provide content matter instruction. Bilingual education programs vary in their length of time, and in the amount each language is used. (ELL Glossary, Colorin Colorado)

L1: a students' first language, or native language (Morehouse, 2017)

L2: a students' second language, or foreign language... "if you have an L2, you are a non-native speaker of that language" (Morehouse, 2017)

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

History of Bilingual Education in the United States

There is a disarray; yet, rich history of bilingual education and language instruction in the United States. Since the beginning there has been a continuous debate on how “children with little fluency in English should be taught academic content in their home language as they learn English” (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015). Bilingual education has existed in the United States dating back to when the first settlers arrived. As the number of immigrants that entered the U.S. increased, so did the number of languages being spoken across the country; thus compelling bilingual education to exist. According to the “American Community Survey” data collected from 2013-2019, put out by the U.S. Census Bureau, “at least 350 languages are spoken in American homes” (Castillo, 2018). It is well known that the United States is “labelled a nation of immigrants” (Nieto, 2009) leaving it very diverse in its culture and languages. However, children coming from these various backgrounds has triggered many debates, politically and socially, on how to instruct academic content to ELL students over recent decades.

Starting in the 1920s, the “sink or swim” method, also known as English immersion, was seen as the most popular method of instruction for ELL students. Little to no services were provided for limited English students while using this pedagogical approach. As the “English only” method remained a means of instruction in some states, several legal decisions lead to a switch in perspective and a return of bilingual instruction. In 1968, the Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA), known as the Bilingual Education Act, provided funds for public schools to have a second language spoken in the classroom (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015). Although, it was encouraged through monetary value, it is was not yet required by law. Shortly after in 1974, the case of *Lau vs. Nichols* was taken to the Supreme court in

understanding that equal is not equate when discussing opportunities for students. Through Section 106 of the Civil Rights Acts, it stated that “federally funded school systems [hold] the responsibility of rectifying students’ linguistic deficiencies to make instruction accessible for such students (Bon, 2014). This made it mandatory for schools to provide all students with an equal opportunity to learn, but showed that this doesn’t mean that all students should receive their education in the same way. English language learners will need further language support in order to do so.

The bilingual education pendulum continued to swing back and forth as more recent political decisions were made. Title III of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) used language to support English as the primary language, leaving students’ native language as secondary. Simultaneously, the “English Only Movement,” Proposition 227, and “English for Children” were all forcing bilingual education to be banned in certain states across the country (Kim, Hutchison & Winsler, 2015). This was seen to be done, in order to create “a central purpose of the new “common” schools to “Americanize” students as part of broader efforts to assimilate new immigrants...” (Bybee & Henderson, 2014, p. 139).

Supporters of bilingual education continued to use Civil Rights Acts to show English immersion programs violate the rights of ELL students in public schools. Advocates conducted a five year, longitudinal study for 600,000 students. The results showed the gap continued to grow between English speaking and ELL students in all academic areas. The results showed that 11% of English learners were showing low academic achievement compared to 36.4% of ELL learners. (Kim, Hutchinson & Winsler, 2015). This helped minimize these immersion programs and ensured ELL students received appropriate services and support to help them succeed

academically. From here, many types of programs for ELL students emerged, but understanding what is best practice remains heavily debated.

Program Models for English Language Learners

With best practice continually being debated amongst political leaders, it was clear that schools were in need of a program to help ELL students academically succeed. With the rise of ELL students in schools and the academic gap growing between their native English speaking peers, most schools developed their own programs. Many local circumstances influenced a school district's decision to use specific instruction with ELL students. These variables include the demographics of the school, population of ELL students who have the same native language, student characteristics, resources instructional content and certified teachers (Hakuta, n.d.). These all play a role in deciding what program is the best fit for a certain school.

Hakuta (n.d.) stated most existing models for ELL students can be broken down into five broad categories (as cited in American Federation of Teachers, n.d). These five categories include:

1. *English as a second language (ESL)*

Instruction is directed at advancing a students' English-language skills through communication, vocabulary, and grammar. Students with the same or different native language can be included in this program, as primary instruction is done in mainstream classes. In some cases ELL students receive support from qualified teachers, if they are available.

2. *Sheltered instruction/ structured immersion*

Students are in mainstream classrooms and are provided with modified content matter. Similar to what is given to students with learning disabilities and have limited comprehension or vocabularies in English. In this case, little to no support is received in this model.

3. *Transitional/early-exit bilingual education*

Students receive instruction in their native language while simultaneously making a transition to English-language instruction as quickly as possible. The goal would be to make a full shift to English in approximately two to four years.

4. *Maintenance/late-exit bilingual education*

Students receive instruction in their native language, but make a gradual transition to English-language instruction while developing academic proficiency in both English and the native language. This could take an extended period of time lasting seven or more years.

5. *Two-way bilingual education/ dual-language immersion*

Within a classroom, half of the students are native English speakers, while the other half are ELL who speak the same native language. In this model both groups of students would obtain instruction in both languages. With the intent, that all students would develop academic proficiency in both languages.

As mentioned previously, factors of a given district will provide certain guidelines as to what program is used within that school. Stated by the American Federation of Teachers (2002), one major problem relates to “schools nationwide [have reported] shortages of certified bilingual, ESL, and foreign language teachers, as well as a shortage of teachers who are both certified in a specific academic content field and fully proficient in more than one language” (p. 10). This leaves most schools with English as a second language and transitional bilingual education as a popular means of choice.

Although, many bilingual experts state the most successful models are the ones that promote both the use of a students’ home language along with English instruction. Bridging the two languages throughout the school day “foster[s] bilingualism, biliteracy, enhanced awareness

of linguistic and cultural diversity and high levels of academic achievement...” (Dual language education of New Mexico, n.d.).

A study done by Rolstad, Mahoney, and Glass (2005) was conducted to gather information on the effectiveness of bilingual programs on English language learners. From the results, they concluded that bilingual programs have “a positive effect for bilingual education of .23 standard deviations, with outcome measures in the native language showing a positive effect of .86 standard deviations” (p.7). When looking at standard deviation, a number closer to zero shows no effect on student learning. The closer the decimal gets to one, indicates a more efficient method of teaching. Therefore, this study concluded that bilingual programs are effective in increasing academic achievement for ELL students. This also helps promote the idea of allowing an ELL student to use their native language in the classroom.

Another study was done by Thomas and Collier (2004) to investigate the effectiveness of bilingual programs compared to English mainstream classes. This study was conducted over a five year span in five different school districts (one inner city district, one medium and one large urban district, and two rural districts) focusing on academic achievement. After the study was concluded, the results showed a huge difference between the students who participated in the immersion bilingual program compared to their peers in the mainstream classes. Fifty-eight percent of students in the immersion bilingual program, by the end of fifth grade, met state standards at grade level. On the other hand, students that were taught solely in an English mainstream class actually showed decrease in academic achievement. A majority of students scored in the 12th percentile or below on standardized testing (p. 2-3). In conclusion, “[a] well-designed and carefully implemented bilingual education programs can have a significant positive

effect on student achievement both in English literacy and in other academic core courses when compared to English immersion” (Thomas & Collier, 2004).

A more recent study by Mohapatra (2016) shows the same conclusions when looking at the effectiveness of bilingual programs and academic achievement. The data was collected using standardized test scores of 870 school age students. From the 870 ELL students, 732 of them attended a school that was taught using mainstream English classes only, and the other 138 students attended a school that implemented an immersion bilingual program. After the data was accumulated, the results show, “that bilingual students scored 2.815 standard deviation higher English score as compared to single language medium school students. This is significant at 1 percent level and the performance is 31% better than monolingual students” (p. 23). This yet again, proves that immersion programs do have a positive effect on ELL students’ academic achievement in schools.

What is the Bridge and Bridging?

“The word “bridging” recalls the idea of putting two ends that don’t naturally meet, creating a mediated space usually informed by, and devoted to, communication” (Zamboni, 2014, p. 18). This definition can represent an ELL student trying to connect their L1 to L2. In schools, the bridge is designed to instructionally use the strength of both languages to further academic success. Beeman and Urow (2013) in their book, Teaching for Bilingual Literacy: Strengthening Bridges between Languages, define the bridge as “... the instructional moment when teachers purposefully bring the two languages together, strategically guiding bilingual learners...” (p. 4). The bridge can be simple, yet very effective if implemented correctly in the classroom.

Teachers need to strategically plan how to use the bridge to help students reach their highest level of success. While there is no right or wrong way, there are three elements (Beeman & Urow, 2017) that should be pre-planned for a well-implemented bridge by any teacher:

1. *Transfer the academic content they have learned in one language to the other*

For example, once students have learned a list of academic terms in their first language, the teacher will provide support to transfer that knowledge to learning the same list of terms in their second language. The transfer is done bidirectional, knowing this information can go back and forth. This can be done using the next main focus of comparing and contrasting the two languages side by side.

2. *Engage in contrastive analysis of the two languages*

One way to form a contrastive analysis of the two languages is to create a T-chart with the terms from the students' L1 on one side and the comparable terms from their L2 on the opposite side. By placing the words next to each other, students will be able to analyze the similarities and differences between the two.

3. *Develop metalinguistic awareness*

A metalinguistic focus is then chosen by the teacher to help the students understand a deeper meaning of the two languages. A few things that can be focused on is syntax, word order, meaning of the word, or cognates. The students, with guidance from the teacher, then highlight and markup findings they have discovered between their L1 and L2. "After beginning with examples from the Bridge, the metalinguistic chart becomes a living chart with a permanent place in the classroom, inviting students to add additional examples of this difference between [the two languages]" (Beeman & Urow, 2017).

These three elements create a guideline for teachers, but the ultimate focus of the bridge is language. The students should understand how the two languages are similar and different and use this information to increase their knowledge in both languages. A key factor is that a bridge functions two ways- instruction goes from English to non-English and non-English to English. It recognizes that bilingual and ELL learners need to be able to transfer academic content from one language to another.

Benefits of Bridging in the Classroom

There are many advantages to allowing ELL students to reach a level of bilingualism. As teachers implement the bridge between a student's L1 and L2, they are also increasing the number of benefits for that student cognitively, social-emotionally, and academically (Billings & Walqui, 2017).

1. Cognitive benefits

Cognitive benefits is referring to “the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses” (Oxford Dictionary, 2018). Research has shown many cognitive benefits for ELL students who use their L1 to support learning of L2. For example, the student will have higher cognitive flexibility, which is the ability to transition a thought of one task or concept to another. The student will be able to show the ability to shift quickly from their L1 to L2 when using both languages. “The quicker you can make mental shifts, the greater your level of cognitive flexibility... [it also] allows one to adapt more easily to unfamiliar or unexpected situations” (Billing & Walqui, 2017, p. 3-4).

Studies have shown that bilingualism also increases the creativity in problem solving skills. This is due to their ability to go back and forth between languages, allowing them to approach a task from multiple perspectives. In addition, ELL students can increase their

metacognitive development and metalinguistic awareness. These refer to a high order of thinking and can be applied by manipulating both languages at the same time. When a student can show how two languages relate to one another it has been linked with a higher intelligence. Billing and Walqui (2017) provide an example of metacognitive and metalinguistic recognition...

“[which] is the understanding that a Spanish bilingual has that “tomato” is the English word for “tomato” and further, that these two words are cognates (i.e., they share similar spelling, meaning and pronunciation). It is believed that through the process of learning two or more languages, each with their own forms and grammatical structures, bilinguals develop an explicit understanding of how language works because they see the variance between two different language systems” (p. 5).

Finally, there are lifelong effects as well. These areas of the brain will slowly decline with age, but bilingualism can delay age-related mental decline. Schroeder and Marian (2012) have found that “recent research that examines the impact of lifelong bilingualism reveals that bilinguals not only tend to maintain better memory as they age, but the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's is delayed by four years in functional bilingual adults” (as cited in Billings & Walqui, 2017, p. 5).

A study was done by Marian and Shook (2012) to show how being bilingual can protect against age related decline, like Alzheimer's disease. The study was conducted looking at 200 bilingual and monolingual patients who were diagnosed as having Alzheimer's. The results showed that “bilingual patients reported showing initial symptoms of the disease at about 77.7 years of age—5.1 years later than the monolingual average of 72.6. Likewise, bilingual patients were diagnosed 4.3 years later than the monolingual patients (80.8 years of age and 76.5 years of

age, respectively)” (p. 4-5). This proves that cognitive benefits will last far beyond a student’s success in the classroom.

2. Social-emotional benefits

Using an ELL’s L1 to support L2 also has many social-emotional benefits on the student. A student’s native language is a huge part of their self identity. “When a teacher provides the space and support to develop and maintain the L1, s/he conveys to the student that his/her culture and heritage is valued” (Billings & Walqui, 2017, p. 6). Deussen (2014) states that “for immigrant families and communities, raising bilingual children who can speak the language of their family and friends back in their country of origin preserves important relationships, traditions, and identity.” When a student is not allowed to continue developing in their native language, they can potentially cut ties or diminish relationships with their families in their country of origin. Being bilingual can help preserve and connect this generational division.

This also leads to a stronger connection to their family, community, and culture. A native language links the relationship between other home language speakers and results in positive social interactions. These types of interactions will increase a student’s chance of receiving a job or career when they get older. Billings and Walqui (2017) state that “speaking two or more languages not only offers obvious practical benefits but it is also an asset in an increasingly globalized world. The ability to speak, read and write in two or more languages is a unique advantage to the job market, as local and global demands for employees who speak two or more languages continue to increase” (p. 6). Allowing L1 to support L2, and for ELL students to remain proficient in both languages, leads to benefits both socially and emotionally.

3. Academic benefits

Supporting both languages in the classroom also results in academic benefits. There is increasing evidence that knowledge of L1 can transfer many skills to support learning of L2. “Extensive research... has found that children who are learning to read in a second language are able to transfer many skills and knowledge from their first language to facilitate their acquisition of reading skills in the second language” (Genesee, 2016, p. 3). This shows that as students can show higher proficiency in their L1, it will lead to higher proficiency in their L2.

A recently published long-term study by two Stanford University researchers found that students enrolled in bilingual programs since elementary school were, by high school, more likely to be deemed proficient in English compared with similar students who had been in all-English programs. A likely theory to explain these results is that students develop their academic skills most readily in their home language while acquiring English proficiency, and then, as they learn English, transfer what they have learned into their home language to their new language (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015, p. 4).

The outcome this study reaches help reach a consensus that ELL students who receive support in L1 to assist learning in L2 achieve higher academic standards, compared to those who do not. Along with metacognitive and social-emotional benefits, academic benefits are also proven existent.

Support in the Classroom

Understanding how to use a student’s L1 to bridge knowledge with their L2 can be overwhelming for teachers, especially those who can not communicate with them in their L1. This can also lead to a feeling of fear and guilt. Teachers do not have to be expected to learn a foreign language themselves to be helpful; they have to have the mindset to “view students’ L1 as a resource, as opposed to a problem, they can [then] leverage their ELLs’ use of native

language as a learning resource in the classroom” (Ruiz, 1984, as cited in Billings & Walqui, 2017, p. 2). Another way to look at a student possessing two languages was quoted by Dr. Ofelia Garcia, “Treat bilingual children as bilingual individuals, not as two monolinguals in one” (as cited in Natalya Seals, n.d.). This quote shows that if teachers can recognize the benefits of using the two languages together, rather than separate entities, students and teachers will be able to foster stronger academic achievement.

Along with changing a teacher’s perspective, there are strategies that can be put in place to help bridge the two languages. Short and Echevarria (2005) put together a list of strategies that can help teachers promote bridging in the classroom. One strategy is for teachers to identify the language demands within their curriculum. In order to do this, teachers need to look at the academic vocabulary, common classroom tasks, and other oral and written English concepts to be successful in the classroom. By reflecting on the language demands necessary, teachers can help support ELL students in learning the features of academic English.

This can be done through a variety of activities; for example, word walls, semantic webs, graphic organizers, sentence starters, illustrations, and using the words both orally and in print. These techniques will help develop ELL students’ academic vocabulary and help them acquire literacy skills necessary to be successful. “Calling attention to language use in content lessons will be valuable to ELLs as they work to develop academic language proficiency” (Short & Echevarria, 2005).

There are four different areas that teachers can show ELL students how their native language is similar and different to their learned language: phonology (sound system), morphology (word formation), syntax and grammar (sentence structure), and language use. Again, bridging the two languages will help support higher levels of academic success. Beeman

and Urow (2013), in their book, provides an example comparison of how to demonstrate to ELL students the proper use of bridging. The table below was adapted from Ch. 10, “The Bridge: Strengthening Connections between Languages.”

Sample Contrastive Analysis Areas of Focus

Element	Spanish	English
<p>Phonology (sound system)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on sounds that are different in the two languages and that need to be explicitly taught. Highlight sounds that are similar. 	<p>Students may use the letter “k” to represent the /k/ sound in Spanish in words such as <i>quitar</i> which they may spell as <i>kitar</i>.</p> <p>Both Spanish and English have silent letters. The “h” is a silent letter in Spanish that occurs at the beginning of words (<i>hormiga, hermano</i>)</p>	<p>Students may use the /d/ sound from Spanish to represent the /th/ sound in English since this sound does not exist in Spanish, spelling <i>brother</i> as <i>broder</i>.</p> <p>English has many silent letters that appear throughout words (<i>chrysalis</i>)</p>
<p>Morphology (word formation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on word formations that exist in Spanish and not in English and vice versa Focus on cognates (words with similar origins) 	<p>Words are formed in Spanish with suffixes that are pronouns: <i>Llámame</i>. This does not occur in English.</p> <p>Both use similar prefixes and suffixes:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Informal</i> – Informal <i>Socialismo</i> – socialism <i>Amoroso</i> – amorous <i>Preparar</i> – prepare <i>Profesión</i> – profession <i>Institución</i> – institution <i>Educación</i> - education</p>	
<p>Syntax and Grammar (sentence structure)</p> <p>Both languages have rules for punctuation, grammar, word order, etc.</p> <p>Identify the areas that are similar and highlight the areas that are different.</p>	<p>Punctuation rules are different; <i>Me encanta!</i> - I love it!</p> <p>Articles have gender <i>El título</i> – The Title <i>La revolución</i> – The revolution</p> <p>Accents change the meaning of words:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>El papa vive en Roma.</i> <i>La papa es deliciosa.</i> <i>Mi papá es muy</i> 	<p>There is only one way to refer to articles in English (the).</p> <p>English has a different noun-adjective/order agreement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Squared centimeters vs. <i>centímetros cuadrados</i>. <p>English contains possessive nouns whereas Spanish does not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> My grandmother’s house - <i>La casa de mi abuela.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>trabajador.</i> • Spanish has reflexive verbs: <i>Se me cayó</i> 	
<p>Language Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each language reflects underlying cultural norms. • Identify different cultural norms or contexts that are reflected in language use. 	<p><i>¿Cuántos años tienes? (We don't ask people in Spanish how old they are; instead, we ask how many years they have).</i></p> <p><i>Students may use figurative language from English in Spanish:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Estoy encerrado afuera (I am locked out!) instead of "Me quedé afuera".</i> 	<p>How old are you?</p> <p>Sayings are culturally bound: Students may use Spanish constructs during English:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My fathers win lots of money (<i>Mis padres ganan mucho dinero</i>). <p>In Spanish we refer to parents as "<i>padres</i>", the plural of father; to win money means to earn it and it also means to be victorious.</p>

This table uses a side-by-side approach of the bridge. This can be very purposeful in helping support ELL students. In each of the four areas, the teacher is showing how L1 is the same and how it is different from L2. Showing specific examples in phonology, morphology, syntax and grammar, and language use guides students in understanding how to use one language in better understanding the other. One example shows how to use morphology, or the formation of words, to help support ELL students. A simple way to do this is to focus on cognates (words with similar origin). Between 30-40% of words in both English and Spanish are related to one another (Using cognates, Colorín Colorado). Using cognates is an obvious way to bridge the two languages. Within this process, ELL students should be active participants in the bridge. The strategies should also be developed to optimize the transfer between both languages and reduce redundancy of what they already know. Finally, the teacher should pre-plan when the bridge is going to take place to clarify concepts for students (Beeman & Urow, 2017). Many English language learners receive their core instruction from regular education teachers with

little to no training in those students' native language. With that said, these strategies can be implemented more efficiently and successfully with the support of a bilingual teacher or assist.

Summary

According to Breiseth (2015), the number of ELL students attending schools in the country has grown rapidly over the past decade. The population has grown at 60% and now represents the fastest-growing population in the United States. This group of students is very diverse in culture, language, and needs to succeed in the classroom. Because of this unique set of needs, ELLs are at a higher risk of dropout; in spite of, in most cases, being academically strong enough to be capable.

“Though teaching English only (without teaching or making connections to the native language) was once thought of as the most efficient language acquisition technique, multiple studies have shown that learning two languages does not harm a student's academic achievement in the long run” (Seals, n.d.). ELL students need to be shown how these two languages, L1 and L2, are connected through comparing and contrasting and how this knowledge can be transferred between the two. This can be done through a process called the bridge.

The bridge has multiple benefits on ELL students exposed to the process; this includes, cognitive, social-emotional, and academic (Billings & Walqui, 2017). These three working simultaneously will help build confidence, with schools being the center of this study, academic benefits are imperative to showing an increase in content areas. The bridge allows students to learn faster by transferring knowledge between the two languages, rather than reteaching or learning certain vocabulary words or concepts. It is important to include all features of language; such as phonology (sound system), morphology (word formation), syntax and grammar

(sentence structure), and language use (Beeman and Urow, 2013). Allowing these features to be put side by side creates opportunities for students to utilize the bridge.

Overall, when ELL students are able to use L1 to support L2, they will achieve higher academic success. With the number of ELL students increasing in schools, it is important to understand best practice in bilingualism.

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