

Meeting the Educational/Emotional Needs of ELLs

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Abstract

English Language Learners (ELLs) in United States public schools face barriers that limit their ability to have the same educational and social opportunities as their peers. Research shows the primary factor contributing to this issue is the lack of preparedness among teachers. Teachers are often underprepared in areas such as assessment, instructional methods, material accessibility, and knowledge about the social-emotional needs of ELLs. To address the problem of lacking educational and social opportunities for ELLs, a professional development opportunity is proposed for any public school where staff need more knowledge about ELLs. The goal of the professional development is to allow school faculty to challenge their own previous beliefs regarding ELLs and equip them with the requisite knowledge and resources to create a school experience that nurtures the academic and emotional growth of ELLs. Suggestions for future research and improvement include implementing an annual professional development program focused on exploring best practices for supporting ELLs and their teachers in addressing behavioral challenges.

Keywords: English language learners, L1, basic interpersonal communicative skills, cognitive academic language proficiency, professional development

Chapter 1: Introduction

Think back to when you were a child in school. At some point you probably made friends with other kids that were like you. You may have even looked up to a teacher that shared similarities with you. If this sounds like your childhood, imagine those relationships you made and how those relationships helped make school a better place for you to learn. Now, imagine that you never had any of those opportunities. Many English Language Learners (ELLs) do not see anyone at their school that looks like them or shares the same language. Often, they share no commonalities with teachers or administrators either. Instead, they are thrown into schools, often as a minority.

At my school, Lowville Elementary School, in rural Lewis County New York, 92% of the student population is white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Like many schools in the United States Lowville Elementary School has mostly grown in ELL population. In fact, the ELL population from many racial backgrounds increased from 9.2% (or 4.5 million) to 10.3% (or 5 million) ELLs from 2010 to 2020 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Hispanic populations are growing at the fastest rate. Hispanic populations are expected to account for 60% of the population of the United States by 2050 (Neel, 2017).

However, our country is not capable of providing equal educational and social opportunities to all of these ELLs due to a lack of teacher preparedness (Hutchinson, 2013; Stairs-Davenport, 2023). Teachers are unsure how to provide instruction to ELLs and assess their learning (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Stairs-Davenport, 2023). Teachers and school staff are also unsure how to meet the emotional needs of ELLs (Cho et al., 2019; Li et al., 2021; Meng, 2020; Watkinson et al., 2022). These problems are evident throughout the United States, but especially prominent in small rural schools similar to the one I work at.

Looking at my school's current level of preparedness in teaching ELLs, I see the devastating effects that lack of trained teachers has on not only the education, but social well-being of ELLs. My school has seen the ELL population increase first hand but has not taken any steps to appropriately support them. Our ELLs are currently taught by a reading specialist with no background in TESOL. No teachers in my school have been appropriately trained in how to be inclusive of culturally and linguistically diverse populations of students. I am the most trained teacher in my school, and I do not even have my degree in TESOL yet. In fact, many teachers reported a lack of knowledge and understanding when it comes to working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations and the inadequacy of their teacher-training programs in preparing them to teach ELLs (Kolano et al., 2014; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Stairs-Davenport, 2023). Overall, an equal educational opportunity cannot be provided when there is no trained professional to provide it.

Without teachers that have such training in diverse populations, the students in my school that grew up speaking only English have no adult in the school that has effectively taught them about diversity. Many of the English-speaking majority students make comments in my school that are very inappropriate towards ELL students and minority students/staff. Most students in my school are respectful, so I do not think this is intentional. The inappropriate remarks that students make instead come from a lack of knowledge. One of the biggest comments I hear from our non-ELL students to ELLs is the phrase "that's weird". This is often in response to any aspect that an ELL shares about their life. I have heard ELLs share about their language, culture, and beliefs for their peers to respond, "that's weird". This can and does hurt the emotional well-being of ELLs (Cho et al., 2019; Watkinson et al., 2022). The students saying those words are

trying to say “that is different from what I am familiar with” but because they are not knowledgeable about how to approach diversity, the words come out negatively.

It is essential that the social-emotional needs of students are met before they can adequately learn. Social and emotional wellbeing has a large impact on the ability to learn (Fisher & Frey, 2019, Watkinson et al., 2022). All students, including ELLs, are more likely to learn when their emotional needs are being met. The purpose of this project is to further discuss the problem of lacking social and educational opportunities throughout our country and give a means to solve this problem through professional development opportunities that could be provided not only at my school, but schools throughout the nation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to discuss the literature regarding the lack of appropriate educational and social opportunities of English Language Learners in public schools. As mentioned in Chapter 1, many ELLs' social and emotional needs are unmet, and one of the contributing factors to this problem is the lack of teacher preparedness (Kolano et al., 2014). Indeed, lack of teacher preparedness may also create an inequitable educational opportunity gap (Fisher & Frey, 2019). In this Chapter I will first explain how Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory plays a role in the social and academic experience of ELLs. Then I will elaborate on how Jim Cummins' (2000) idea of BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) supports the learning of ELLs. Next, I will discuss teachers' lack of preparedness, ELLs social and emotional difficulties, and the role of school counselors in supporting students with these challenges. Finally, I will highlight the importance of professional development in closing the academic and social gaps between ELLs and their peers.

Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT) posits a student's beliefs and social interactions have a role in their ability to learn. That is, students learn best with the support of both peers and adults around them (Sarmiento-Campos et al., 2022, p. 2). When considering ELLs, their peers and adults (teachers) can provide support in addressing their academic, social, and emotional needs. Sarmiento-Campos et al. (2022) described this supportive role as "students needing a guide" (p. 2). This is particularly important for minority populations such as ELLs, who may not always have someone readily available to provide guidance. Watkinson et al. (2022) state that

some ELLs do not have support at home as they may have been separated by family members through deportation.

For students that have parents at home, there may be a huge difference between the culture at home and culture at school, leaving ELLs uncertain about what to expect when they walk through the door of a school (Watkinson et al., 2022). However, these students require explicit instruction (Sarmiento-Campos et al., 2022) and without someone trained to provide guidance through the school day to help them adjust to the academics and cultural aspects of an American school, they may fall behind (Vygotsky, 1978).

A key concept in Vygotsky's (1978) SCT is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the difference between a learner's current developmental level (what they can accomplish independently) and their potential developmental level (what they can achieve with the assistance of a more knowledgeable other (e.g., often a teacher or a peer)). That is, the ZPD occurs when a person with more expertise works with someone of less expertise in order to achieve a reasonably attainable outcome (Sarmiento-Campos et al., 2022). For ELLs, ZPD provides the opportunity to make progress without putting them at a level of frustration as they have someone with higher knowledge to guide them with a task. This way and peer collaboration are examples of scaffolding methods that can further support ELLs in their learning journey.

Thus, teachers need to make sure that they present themselves as kind and non-judgmental because ELLs will not benefit from collaborating with others if they feel threatened (Sarmiento-Campos et al., 2022). Teachers should also guide students in how to interact with each other in a kind and accepting manner because as mentioned in Chapter 1, not all students know how to kindly interact with other students. A simple way to help ELLs to not feel threatened or overwhelmed is to also use student-centered learning (Sarmiento-Campos et al.,

2022). Overall, SCT offers advantages in improving ELLs academically at their own pace, fostering the development of their social skills, meeting their specific needs (Albaram, 2020).

BICS and CALP

Jim Cummins' (2000) BICS and CALP are concepts related to language proficiency in bilingual and multilingual individuals. BICS is Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills, and CALP is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. These concepts suggest that there are distinct language proficiencies for social communication and academic tasks. In other words, an ELL might possess the ability to interact socially with peers, but may still struggle to comprehend the language used in academic settings.

However, in some cases students can also achieve CALP before BICS (Cummins, 2000; Khatib & Taie, 2016). That implies that some students may learn the vocabulary needed for academic tasks and grasp the language necessary for casual conversations with friends. Recognizing this idea can help teachers in providing the appropriate support ELLs need to succeed in school. Cummins (2000) expressed concern that some ELLs had their support removed too early because they could have high quality casual conversations, leading teachers to believe they were proficient in English. However, these students may have been proficient in casual conversations but lacked the academic language proficiency necessary to fully access their education.

In essence, understanding the concept of BICS and CALP can be beneficial for educators in supporting the academic and social needs of ELLs in several ways. By tailoring instruction to address both language proficiencies, educators can better support ELLs in various learning contexts (Brown, 2004). In other words, differential support is needed to ensure students receive appropriate interventions and resources that can develop both social and academic skills. In

addition, Khatib and Taie (2016) assert that understanding these concepts can help educators assess and monitor ELL's language development, facilitating accurate evaluation of language proficiency and ensuring appropriate support at each stage of language acquisition.

Overall, SCT and the concept of BICS and CALP provide educators with valuable insights and tools to create more effective and targeted language support strategies for English Language Learners (ELLs). By understanding that language development is influenced by social interactions and cultural contexts, teachers can design learning environments that better cater to the linguistic needs of ELLs.

However, lack of teacher preparedness and inadequate materials can pose significant challenges when trying to draw upon the concepts of Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in the classroom. Next, I will discuss how lack of teacher preparedness and inadequate materials play a significant role in hindering the successful implementation of strategies to support ELLs.

Lack of Teacher Preparedness and Materials

According to Hutchinson (2013), "The time to develop the understanding and knowledge for working with ELLs is during teacher preparation programs." (p. 51). It seems like common sense that to have good teachers we must train good teachers, yet there is still a lack of preparation for teachers. Stairs-Davenport (2023) discussed a situation of a school district that often did not have any teachers with training to work with ELLs. In that district often the ELLs were pulled out to work with an untrained paraprofessional for no more than 30 minutes daily. Considering that ELL populations are on the rise as mentioned in Chapter 1, if schools have no

trained teachers with current populations, increasing populations will only put ELLs at a greater disadvantage if districts do not ensure that they have trained teachers.

Teacher preparation programs have many certification requirements, but many do not focus on working with diverse students. Hutchinson (2013) conducted a research study of 25 preservice teachers to determine what teacher preparation programs are lacking and found that teacher preparation programs often do not give enough opportunities for preservice teachers to challenge their own beliefs and assumptions regarding ELLs. Hutchinson's research also revealed that teacher preparation programs do not give enough preparation in working with ELLs, particularly in differentiating instruction and understanding second language acquisition. Learning to work with diverse students is no easy task if there is not enough exposure to ELLs.

A study conducted by Okhremtchouk and Sellu (2019) showed that many teachers feel that their practical experience given in their teacher preparation program did not sufficiently give exposure to ELLs and diverse populations of students. A total of 444 teachers participated in Okhremtchouk and Sellu's study that was completed through Survey Monkey. The results showed that 37.7% of the teachers encountered ELLs daily as part of their preservice education, while currently 83.8% encounter ELLs daily as in service teachers. The results also indicated that 18% of the teachers never had exposure to ELLs during their preservice education. The teachers that did indicate that they had frequent exposure to ELLs in their practical experience reported that they feel adequately prepared to teach, while teachers with less exposure did not report as many feelings of preparedness.

Likewise, the 25 preservice teachers in Hutchinson (2013) reported that they are underprepared to teach ELLs. These participants took a course where they learned about ELLs, and they were assessed on their ideas towards ELLs pre and post course. The survey showed that

the teachers already had many opinions on ELLs without having exposure to them. Many of these opinions were of a negative nature towards ELLs such as that they should only speak English, and that ELLs claim that they are discriminated against solely because they need an excuse for doing poorly in school. After the course, the participants showed positive changes in their beliefs about ELLs and the idea came to be that preservice education regarding ELLs is important to challenge the beliefs and misconceptions that preservice teachers may have regarding ELLs.

In the context of teacher preparation programs, it is important to consider not only those specifically focused on preparing teachers for ELL instruction but also other certification areas that may involve working with ELLs. Even if a teacher has only one ELL in their class, they should be trained to teach them and give them the best learning experience possible. Without a properly trained teacher, ELLs will feel even more isolated and unsupported, especially if they are in a classroom surrounded by peers that teachers know how to teach (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Stairs-Davenport, 2023; Watkinson et al., 2022). In their phenomenological study, Watkinson et al. (2022) to gain a better understanding of the experiences that school counselors have with ELLs, one counselor shared in the study that teachers do not know how to engage ELLs in the classroom, and with the trauma that many ELLs have experienced, “it just seems like the odds are stacked against them” (p. 13).

If teachers had better preparation to teach ELLs, then they could use school counselors as a supplementary resource rather than the only option to engage ELLs in the classroom. Okhremtchouk and Sellu’s (2019) study highlighted that lack of teacher preparation is an issue as they found less exposure to ELLs in preservice teaching experience has caused teachers to feel unprepared to teach ELLs. Similarly, Stairs-Davenport’s (2023) study of 169 teachers revealed

most of the teachers were unable to ask questions about teaching ELLs. This finding suggests that these teachers do not receive sufficient knowledge and training on ELLs during their teacher preparation programs.

Furthermore, teachers feel that they also have a lack of materials available to them to adequately support ELLs in the classroom. According to Andrei and Northrop's (2022) research, all states have information online regarding ELLs, but not all of them offer a sufficient quantity of materials and resources for teachers. Even in states where resources are available, the quality of those resources is not always adequate (Andrei & Northrop, 2022). This shows a disconnect between teachers and states, and that training teachers to adequately teach ELLs is not a priority for every state and that has a negative impact on teacher preparation programs, but more importantly the students that need the opportunity to have a quality education. A study by Gomez and Cisneros (2020) took a closer look at the positives and negatives of dual language programs in Arizona. 24 dual language program stakeholders were interviewed and one of the results found was that it was difficult to find resources and curriculum materials in a student's L1 (Gomez & Cisneros, 2020). Materials in a student's L1 are often necessary to provide an appropriate educational experience. Fundamentally, insufficient teacher preparedness and lack of appropriate materials can result in a lack of quality instruction for ELLs, which I discuss below.

Quality Instruction

Teacher preparation programs often do not support teachers in the instruction of ELLs and what this should look like. For example, in a study on literacy skills, Mancilla-Martinez et al. (2021) showed that when it comes to reading comprehension, ELLs may perform lower than their peers, but their ability to improve is the strongest at the beginning of the school year. This study involved 52 Spanish speaking second and fourth grade students. The purpose of this study

was to give elementary teachers more insight into word and vocabulary knowledge of ELLs. It would be helpful for our preservice teachers to know that as this is a good time to expose students to multiple methods of accessing and expressing their knowledge of the language. This should involve reading, writing, speaking, and listening as these all support the development of vocabulary. It is also a good time for introducing vocabulary since ELLs need extra vocabulary support and it is essential for teachers to understand that the vocabulary knowledge of ELLs may be different from that of other students and may even be different between ELLs.

Teachers need to account for these differences in vocabulary in order to best support ELLs vocabulary knowledge (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2021). Here, Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD is also beneficial to know about when learning how to instruct ELLs because these theories support social development while also creating a student-centered learning environment where ELLs can feel safe to learn and avoid frustration. Teachers should also be taught in preparation programs that it is important to allow students to use their L1 to assist in their L2 learning. Howard (2022) conducted a case study of a 7-year-old Japanese girl. The girl was proficient in Japanese but did not like to read in English. Howard decided to find a translation to the English story online so the student could have a copy of the story in both languages. The girl, with some encouragement, read the Japanese book first. Then, without asking, she picked up the same book in English and started reading it while simultaneously making connections to the knowledge she gained from that same book in Japanese. This shows that allowing the use of L1 can help students gain confidence in the use of both L1 and L2, as Cummins' (2000) theory of BICS and CALP suggest.

Just because a student can have a great conversation with peers at lunch or recess, does not mean that they understand the academic language that is being taught in lessons. It is

important for any teacher with exposure to ELLs to know the importance of L1 and L2 during instruction, as well as the difference between academic and social language proficiency.

Students need to feel a sense of community to learn best. Many teacher preparation programs also lack in teaching their preservice teachers how to determine the difference between a language barrier and a learning disability (Stairs-Davenport, 2023). The study by Stairs-Davenport (2023) showed that the question of how to determine the difference between disability and language proficiency was common among many teachers when asked about their wonderings regarding ELLs. This could cause ELLs to be either over or underrepresented in special education programs. The most detrimental scenario is when an ELL has a disability but is not identified due to lack of teacher training, so they suffer the consequences of not having the appropriate resources to have access to an education. Teacher preparation programs need to make sure to teach all these concepts to preservice teachers. An interview of 18 child study team members conducted by Becker and Deris (2019) indicated that overrepresentation and underrepresentation in special education programs may stem from the assessments given to students, as well as the training of those evaluating the assessments given to identify students for special education services. Proper assessment is important to be able to identify ELLs that need special education services, and to identify those that do not, so teachers can know how to best provide instruction for these learners.

Inappropriate Assessments

Teachers are often unsure how to administer assessments to ELLs. Assessment and instruction should be connected but this is often not the case because of the fast growing population of multilingual students in our country (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2021). If assessment is not directly related to what is taught, then it has no purpose. This is true for mainstream

students, but especially true for ELLs. The study regarding assessments conducted by Mancilla-Martinez et al. (2021) concluded that ELLs differ from their peers only regarding their developmental experience, but they do not differ in cognitive ability. When given assessments properly, ELLs have just as much achievement potential as their peers. Research by Okhremtchouk and Sellu (2019) showed that many teachers do not have confidence in their own knowledge about how language is acquired, or how language learning should be assessed. In Okhremtchouk and Sellu's (2019) survey of 444 teachers, assessment scored one of the lowest when it came to the teachers' own confidence.

If teachers only assess a multilingual student in one language, then they are not allowing the students to use their entire knowledge base to answer questions and show what they know. One language only tells part of their story. The study by Mancilla-Martinez et al. (2021) even showed that when bilingual, English and Spanish, speaking students were given an assessment in English, Spanish, and then both, students scored below average in the single language assessments, and above average on the bilingual assessment.

Many undertrained teachers do not understand that multilingual learners should have the opportunity to use all their knowledge of language, even if it is not all in English. The research by Stairs-Davenport (2023) also showed a lack of understanding regarding the assessment of ELLs. Of all the questions teachers posed about ELLs, assessment was the category that made up the highest percentage of questions asked (Stairs-Davenport, 2023). If teachers are asking these questions, then they most likely did not gain enough experience with ELLs during their teacher preparation programs.

Lack of Social Inclusion

ELLs face many social challenges along with academic ones. Many teachers without adequate training for ELLs do not always understand where certain behaviors come from. If ELLs have a different culture and set of expectations at home than at school, then they often come to school with no idea what social norms exist within the school (Cho et al., 2019). Cho et al. (2019) conducted an interview of kindergarten, first grade, and ELL teachers to further understand the social-emotional competencies of ELLs. This interview process resulted in multiple ideas of skills that ELLs need more support in developing. The teachers believe ELLs need more support with social awareness, relationship skills, self-awareness, responsible decision making, and self-management. Watkinson (2022) believed that ELLs often feel stuck between two different worlds, school culture and home culture, or culture of their home country and American culture.

The concepts of social awareness, relationship skills, self-awareness, responsible decision making, and self-management may be different in the home country and/or culture of students, so they need to be taught these skills along with language. Some ELLs may feel apprehensive in learning these new norms if they differ from what they have grown up with. Many ELLs also face a great deal of trauma at home and may have seen members of their family get deported. Sometimes they are separated from the family for so long that some of their relatives pass away and they are unable to see them because they are back in their home country while the student is in America. ELLs may have also experienced violent situations. If a student does have family at home, they may be busy working multiple jobs just to keep a roof over their head (Watkinson et al., 2022). These are some heavy situations that without proper training, teachers may not feel comfortable supporting students in these situations. Due to their life experiences, ELLs often feel

negative emotions and are down on themselves feeling like they will never be good enough (Cho et al., 2019). It is our job as teachers to help these students have more confidence in themselves. Situations in life that have a negative effect on ELLs mentally also have a negative effect on their academic performance (Li et al., 2021).

The differences in culture, as well as the hardships faced by ELLs lead to an increase in negative behaviors at school. Many ELLs exhibit behaviors such as name calling, saying hurtful things to other students, tattling on others, and putting hands on others. But, when explicitly taught why these behaviors are unacceptable and how students should act instead, many ELLs change their behavior. To explicitly teach a change in behavior, the teacher needs to actually practice the expected behavior multiple times with their students (Cho et al., 2019). One of the best strategies to explicitly teach social-emotional skills to ELLs is to teach them, tell them, and say exactly what to do. Eventually, once ELLs get into a routine of how to behave, then their behavior improves (Cho et al., 2019). Structure and routine are very beneficial to ELLs.

Many negative behaviors tend to occur when ELLs do not have structure (Cho et al., 2019). If an ELL begins to engage in an inappropriate behavior it should be corrected immediately, and the desired behavior should be taught and modeled immediately as doing this in real time helps ELLs learn how to act by getting to practice that skill (Cho et al., 2019). While teaching behavior to ELLs it is especially important to do this with kindness and the understanding that they are not always misbehaving on purpose. It is important to create a positive atmosphere for ELLs to learn. The academic environment that a student learns in can positively affect social skill development. Meng's (2020) study of 2,938 students from Head Start programs in various states found that classrooms with more language diversity had a significant positive impact on the development of social skills in students. This effect was

observed in all English Language Learners (ELLs), regardless of their level of English proficiency. In other words, students in classrooms where multiple languages were spoken experienced better social skill development compared to students in classrooms with less language diversity, and this benefit was observed consistently among ELLs, regardless of their proficiency in English.

In essence, creating a linguistically diverse classroom is one way to create a positive learning atmosphere for ELLs. The creation of a positive learning atmosphere can also be supported with collaboration with families, other teachers, and students (Cho et al., 2019). This helps not only make a positive classroom learning environment but can also help the school be a more positive place for all learners. It is very important for teachers to be trained to use kindness and understanding in the classroom because many students, especially ELLs, may be going through hardships or just have a lack of understanding of behavioral expectations. Teachers need to be trained to give these students extra support.

The Role of School Counselors

It is very important that school counselors are also provided with enough training to be able to support ELLs. Often when teachers are underprepared to teach ELLs, they turn to school counselors for support. Some counselors provide academic support when teachers do not know how to do so. Teachers need to become better prepared so counselors can have more time for their own important role in the school. Since ELLs often face traumas, school counselors are essential to support them emotionally throughout the school day. ELLs also need help adjusting to new cultural expectations (Watkinson et al., 2022). Teachers and counselors should both have enough training to provide support to ELLs. Teachers and counselors should collaborate on the best ways to approach the student as a whole and be on the same page with student needs. Then

teachers can support students academically while being mindful of emotional challenges, and counselors can provide social/emotional support with the knowledge of what is expected of students in the classroom.

Student language barriers often make it difficult for them to receive academic instruction or counseling services, but trained professionals should be able to navigate these barriers (Watkinson et al., 2022). National, state, and local policies also make it challenging for ELLs to receive the support they need. Counselors often feel as if it is their job to advocate for their students and feel tension when policies go against what is best to help ELLs (Watkinson et al., 2022). School counselors worry about repercussions if they go against the state policies, but they also worry about the disadvantages that their students will face if they follow the policy. They are stuck between what the county, state, or nation requires them to do, and what is best for the families of ELLs (Watkinson et al., 2022). However, ELLs need teachers and counselors to advocate for them as many students do not have a strong ability to advocate for themselves.

Need for Professional Development

Since the major problem in giving ELLs access to the same educational and social opportunities as their peers seems to be lack of teacher and counselor training, schools need to strongly consider professional development opportunities for their teachers. According to Mancilla-Martinez et al. (2021), “At a minimum, educators should be provided with ongoing professional development opportunities on multilingual language development” (p. 360). Until the idea of teacher preparation programs giving their preservice teachers adequate training regarding ELLs becomes a reality, schools need to pay close attention that they are providing their staff with professional development that better prepares them for diverse student

populations (Stairs-Davenport, 2023). In the next chapter, I will further discuss what professional development should look like within a school district, and how it should be implemented.

Summary

Through this research, I have found plentiful ways to give ELLs the same social and educational opportunities as their peers, but sadly this does not often occur in schools. Research showed that teacher preparation programs play a large role in the academic and social success of ELLs in schools. These programs, if successful, should give teachers a vast knowledge of ELLs and plentiful in person exposure to ELLs. Teacher preparation programs should provide insight into the instruction of ELLs. This insight should include Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory as well as Cummins' BICS and CALP. Teachers should know to teach within a student's zone of proximal development to avoid frustration. Teacher preparation programs should also discuss the difference between academic and social language acquisition with the effects these have on student learning. Also, teachers should know that the use of a student's L1 can benefit their L2 learning and overall academic achievement. The use of multiple languages should be implemented for assessments, with English Language Arts assessments being the only exception. The use of multiple languages allows a student to show their full knowledge of a subject.

Furthermore, another important key concept that should be taught in teacher preparation programs is the social-emotional well-being of ELLs, and how to address this in the classroom. ELLs all come from different backgrounds and experiences. Teachers may experience behavior difficulties from ELLs in classrooms, but with proper training would understand that these behaviors may just be cultural differences. ELLs need to be taught the school culture and the appropriate school behaviors should be modeled and practiced with them. School counselors should be utilized to support the social emotional needs of students and should not be utilized

just because teachers are unprepared to teach ELLs. All these concepts should be shared with schools as part of a professional development opportunity to give ELLs the best school experience they can, both academically and socially.

Chapter 3: Description of the Product and Tools

In this Chapter I will describe an idea for professional development, and the rationale behind giving ELLs the same academic and social opportunities as their peers. I have personally seen ELLs have difficulty gaining access to the same experiences as their peers. ELLs often lack the appropriate academic support that they need to be successful in school. ELLs may also have difficulty socially due to a language barrier, adverse life experiences, or because students and staff around them do not understand how to be inclusive to ELLs. Schools like the one I work at that have limited understanding of ELLs need to have a professional development opportunity that informs all the faculty about best practices involving ELLs. The goal of this professional development opportunity is to inform the faculty of the school how to give ELLs academic and social opportunities that are the same as their peers.

This professional development is meant to be implemented at any school that has ELLs but feels as though the faculty is not prepared to support them. All faculty of the school should be involved in this professional development. Faculty includes everyone in the school that has contact with students. This includes but is not limited to teachers of all areas, support staff, administrators, school nurses, bus drivers, etc. Any staff member that has contact with students can make a positive impact on the life of an ELL. ELLs of all ages need the support of school staff to give them equal educational and social opportunities.

Description of the Professional Development

Ideally, this PD would take place at the beginning of the school year. The reason for this timing is that school staff will have a better understanding of ELLs before the school year begins. If I were to do this professional development at my school, it would take place in the cafeteria as this is where we do professional development before students have their first day of school. It

would be two sessions that are one hour each. The first session would be for only teachers and academic support staff, and the second session would be for all school faculty. My school already has separate meetings for teachers every school year. Teachers for this professional development get an extra session to focus on instruction for ELLs. The first session will discuss what quality instruction and assessment looks like for ELLs. This includes ideas such how to give quality instruction to ELLs, and best practices for assessing ELLs. The second day will focus on the social-emotional aspect of ELLs. This includes the importance of school counselors, social inclusion, and how to best support ELLs emotionally, especially the ELLs that are processing trauma.

The professional development will be given in the form of a Google Slides presentation. There will be various handouts for faculty that will address BICS and CALP, Sociocultural Theory, best instructional practices, assessment, and ELL social-emotional needs. The intent of these handouts will be to guide the school faculty through the presentation, but to also give them helpful information that they can keep and refer to throughout the school year if needed.

BICS and CALP

ELLs may have different levels of language proficiency depending on if they are using social language or academic language (Cummins, 2000; Khatib & Taie, 2016). Currently, many teachers do not know that there is a difference between acquiring academic and social language. This part of the professional development will be presented at the meeting for teachers and will give them the opportunity to brainstorm with each other what vocabulary would be considered academic vocabulary, and what would be considered social vocabulary. After the brainstorming activity, teachers will pay attention to the Google Slides presentation where I would discuss Jim Cummins (1999) concepts of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive

Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2000). Teachers will follow along with the BICS and CALP handout where the biggest takeaway will be that teachers should tailor their instruction to support both academic and social proficiencies (Brown, 2004).

Sociocultural Theory

Students learn best when also supported by the teachers and peers that they spend the school day with (Vygotsky, 1978; Sarmiento-Campus et al., 2022). This idea stems from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory (SCT). There are a couple ways that teachers can support students by keeping SCT in mind. The first way will be presented to the teacher's only professional development session. is that instruction should be within a student's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which is a part of SCT. This means that students should be instructed at a difficulty level that is not too easy, but also not at a level of frustration for the student. As an activity for this part of professional development I will give the teachers the chance to experience work at a frustrational level by giving them a very difficult math problem with not enough time to solve it.

They must solve this problem while imagining that they are a student trying their best to do well at school. A student that has only been in the country for a year and is still learning the school culture, English, and just wants to pass and move onto the next grade level. The teachers in the professional development activity will imagine that this is what assignments feel like for this student and if they can't solve it, they will not move to the next grade level. The teachers will have a moment to try and solve their math problem then discuss with those around them how it made them feel to do an assignment that is out of reach for them. The goal of this activity is for the teachers to realize how teaching outside of a students ZPD can negatively impact them both academically and emotionally.

The professional development session for all faculty will also include SCT but the more social-emotional aspect of it. Students can learn best if others around them are kind and lacking judgement (Vygotsky, 1978; Sarmiento-Campos et al., 2022; Watkinson et al., 2022; Albaram, 2022). All members of a school can give ELLs this kind and safe environment which has positive effects on their ability to learn and succeed. Both professional development sessions will have Google Slides for SCT and a handout that staff can keep to reference when needed, and school faculty will take away that the social experience of a student has a big impact on their academic performance, and that all school staff can make that difference for a student.

Best Instructional Practices

Research has shown that teachers do not learn enough about ELLs in teacher preparation programs (Hutchinson, 2013; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2021; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Stairs-Davenport, 2023). In the professional development teacher session, I will go over multiple key ideas for instruction of ELLs that may have been missed during preservice teacher experiences. Many preservice teachers do not get the chance to challenge their own beliefs and assumptions about ELLs (Hutchinson, 2013). So, I will give the teachers a chance to write down all their beliefs or knowledge they feel they have about ELLs. This will be the opening of professional development for teachers. At the end of the PD session, the teachers will be going back to their assumptions, and noticing if any of their beliefs changed after the presentation.

Another concept that teacher preparation programs lack is to give teachers the knowledge that a student's L1 is very important in supporting L2 development (Howard, 2022; Cummins, 2000; Mancilla-Martinez, 2021). This concept is essential to be introduced during professional development. I will address the concept to teachers with a Google Slides presentation. I will present to the teachers Howard's (2022) case study of a 7-year-old Japanese student, and how the

use of L1 supported this student's attitude towards her L2 learning and helped it flourish.

Teachers will be given a handout that includes multiple ways to incorporate a student's L1 in the classroom including but not limited to books, allowing students to respond to questions in their L1, and incorporating a student's L1 into the classroom environment.

Assessment

During and after instruction, teachers need to assess if students have grasped the concepts that they have taught. But research shows that many teachers feel unprepared to assess ELLs (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Stairs-Davenport, 2023). Therefore, it is important to give teachers more knowledge of how to assess ELLs, as they may have an ELL in their class at any point in their career. One important key idea for teachers to remember is that ELLs are no different in cognitive ability than any other student, they just need the opportunity to share all their knowledge (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2021). The ability for ELLs to share all their knowledge on an assessment comes back to the ability to use L1 in the classroom. A study conducted by Mancilla-Martinez showed that ELLs score lower on monolingual assessments than they do on bilingual assessments. This concept will also be on the Google Slides presentation for teachers as well as a handout.

Social-Emotional Needs

ELLs often have social emotional needs that are different from those of their peers (Cho et al., 2019; Watkinson et al., 2022; Li et al., 2021; Meng, 2020). All school faculty can have a role in supporting ELL emotional needs. It is essential that school staff understand that ELLs come from various backgrounds, and their cultures may be completely different from the culture of the school. This means that ELLs may not understand the social norms of the school, and what behaviors are appropriate (Cho et al., 2019). These students also may feel conflicted between

their home culture and the culture of the school, unsure how to meet the requirements of both cultures (Watkinson et al., 2022). Some ELLs also experience adverse life experiences that may have a harmful effect on their mental health, causing a decrease in academic performance (Li et al., 2021). Since these students often are unaware of how they should be behaving in school, desired behaviors need to be explicitly taught (Cho et al., 2019).

So, for a professional development activity for the school staff, staff will work in small groups to roleplay the teaching of a decided behavior to an ELL. Staff can pick from different scenarios displayed in the Google Slides presentation. Staff will practice the strategy presented by Cho et al. (2019) where to teach an ELL a skill you must teach them, tell them, then demonstrate exactly what to do. The skill should be practiced multiple times. Overall, staff will take away from this part of the professional development that we need to be understanding of ELLs and realize they are not typically trying to cause trouble, they just need a little support to learn school norms.

Summary

The activities discussed previously are designed to help school staff have a better grasp on how to support ELLs both academically and emotionally. This professional development can make the school of which it is presented in a safer and better place for ELLs to learn. The Google Slides presentation will aim to dispel misconceptions about ELL such as the belief that should be English, only, that ELLs are intentionally causing issues, or that they have lower learning capabilities than their peers. At the end of the professional development, staff will reflect on their previous feelings and knowledge towards ELLs and discuss how their attitudes have changed after completing the professional development activities.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to identify the barriers that prevent ELLs from having the same educational and social opportunities as their peers in United States public schools.

Effective teacher preparation programs can give ELLs an equal opportunity at an appropriate educational experience by giving teachers the knowledge of how to instruct, assess, and support the emotional well-being of ELLs. Without adequate teacher preparation programs, the likelihood for ELLs to have adequate educational and social opportunities at school is greatly reduced. In this Chapter, I first summarize the major findings of the research reviewed in this project. I then conclude with implications and offer recommendations for further research.

Summary of the Reviewed Literature

The overall conclusion derived from research is that ELLs are not able to have the same educational and social opportunities as their peers due to a lack of teacher preparation (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Stairs-Davenport, 2023; Watkinson et al., 2022). The lack of teacher preparation causes teachers to be unaware how to instruct ELLs (e.g., Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2021; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019), assess ELLs (e.g., Hutchinson, 2013; Stairs-Davenport, 2023), find materials for ELLs (Andrei & Northrop, 2022; Gomez & Cisneros, 2020), or understand the emotional needs of ELLs (Cho et al., 2019; Li et al., 2021; Meng, 2020; Watkinson et al., 2022). Theories such as BICS and CALP and Sociocultural Theory can help teachers understand the difference between academic and social language (Cummins, 2000), as well as how social interaction affects learning (Vygotsky, 1978). After reviewing the literature, it is apparent that schools need professional development opportunities to be better prepared to give ELLs the best learning experience.

Implications for Learning

A professional development opportunity for all school faculty directly impacts student learning. It ensures that any adult that an ELL may encounter during the school day would be better prepared to support them. It ensures that ELLs will have proper instructional opportunities that support their language, culture, and beliefs. Professional development will also ensure that ELLs are being assessed fairly and in a manner that allows them to show their full potential. Students will also find that school staff is understanding of any emotional challenges and how to support the students through it. With academic and social-emotional needs met, ELL students will have a better school experience.

Implications for Teaching

The professional development is beneficial for all teachers who might encounter ELLs for multiple reasons. Teachers will have the opportunity to challenge their own beliefs regarding ELLs which is essential as their previous beliefs or assumptions may not be the best to support ELLs. Teachers will have the opportunity to learn different instructional strategies such as the use of L1 and the Zone of Proximal Development. The use of L1 is very beneficial for giving students access to the content and allowing them to use their full knowledge base. The Zone of Proximal Development will help teachers avoid placing expectations on students that are too easy or too hard for them. L1 can also be utilized for assessments except for ELA assessments to help teachers be able to see what ELLs have learned. Teachers will also get to learn about the emotional needs of ELLs. Teachers will learn how it is important for the language and culture of a student to be a part of the curriculum so the student can feel included in the classroom. Emotions have a big impact on the ability to learn and teachers will learn that if the emotional needs of a student are not met, then the student may not be able to learn as well.

Recommendations for Future Research

While professional development opportunities for school faculty can improve the educational and emotional opportunities for ELLs in schools, there is more that can be done to support school experiences for ELLs. There are many topics regarding the academic and social opportunities of ELLs that were not addressed in this professional development opportunity. One way that the effectiveness of the professional development could be improved is to host it at the start of each school year and have it include different topics each year. Potential topics that could be used in the future include how to identify what ELLs need special education services, how ENL teachers can best collaborate with other teachers, parental involvement, and supporting ELLs through trauma. During the professional development would also be a great opportunity to ask the faculty what topics they wish to know more about regarding ELLs. Then, those topics could also be added to the next yearly professional development.

Final Thoughts

It is crucial that ELLs are given the same educational and social opportunities as their peers. Lack of teacher preparedness appears to be the biggest cause of a lack of educational and social opportunities for ELLs. Lack of teacher preparedness creates teachers working with ELLs that are unsure how to teach them, assess them, find materials for them, or support their emotional wellbeing. Creating a professional development opportunity for teachers and other school staff can help all school faculty to be better prepared to teach ELLs and support them through their school journey. Improved preparedness of teachers and other school staff to teach and support ELLs emotionally can give ELLs the same educational and social opportunities as their peers.

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Appendix A

Beliefs Handout

Day 1: List 5 beliefs you have about teaching ELLs.

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-

Day 2: List 5 beliefs you have about the emotional needs of ELLs.

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-

After the professional development, how did your beliefs change, or what new concepts did you learn about English Language Learners?

Appendix B

BICS and CALP Handout

BICS and CALP

BICS

Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills

Social Proficiency

The ability for ELLs to be able to have a conversation with peers.

CALP

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

Academic Proficiency

The ability for ELLs to be able to have academic conversations about content.

BICS and CALP can be developed at the same time, BICS can come first, or CALP can come first.

Just because a student can have conversations with peers doesn't mean they understand when you teach.

Just because a student is doing well academically, doesn't mean they can have conversations with peers.

Appendix C

Sociocultural Theory Handout

Sociocultural Theory

Key Points:

- A student's social interactions have a role in their learning.
- Students need a guide.
- Zone of Proximal Development
 - Instruction beyond the independent level
 - What student can achieve with help of teacher or peer
 - No instruction should be given at a level of frustration

Appendix D

Instructional and Assessment Practices Handout

Best Instructional Practices: Why use a student's first language (L1)?

- L1 learning supports L2 learning.
- Increases student comfort level.
- May decrease negative classroom behaviors such as work refusal.

How can I incorporate L1 in the classroom?

- Books in a student's L1
- Posters
- Allowing responses in both languages

How to assess ELLs

- Understand they have the same cognitive ability as their peers.
- Allow student to use both languages, with the exception of English language arts tests.

Appendix E

Social-Emotional Handout

Why is this English Language Learner misbehaving?

- Adverse life experiences
- Difference between home and school culture
- Student does not understand school norms/unaware how to behave in school

How can you correct an undesirable behavior?

- Teach them the desired behavior
- Tell them what the behavior should look like
- Show the student **specifically** what to do

Appendix F

Google Slides Presentation

<https://brockport.voicethread.com/myvoice/thread/23335879>