

Home Language Literacy: The Crossing to Bilingualism

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Abstract

In recurring situations, teachers of heritage language students encounter a lack of vocabulary and knowledge of their language from an early age. This situation worsens as students grow older and move through the grades. Moreover, this situation implies negative repercussions of learning a second language. It is necessary to understand the cause for the gaps in knowledge to uncover teaching alternatives. Therefore, the main question is, how can bilingual teachers strengthen home language and cultural diversity through reading and vocabulary to facilitate L2 acquisition? According to studies conducted by scholars, sociolinguistic factors affect heritage language learning, which in turn cause attrition and incomplete acquisition. To ameliorate this problem, three professional developments are presented for primary grade bilingual teachers. The professional developments will focus on identifying a heritage learner profile that helps delineate reading approaches to learn Spanish and cultural awareness. In this way, the heritage learner should strengthen the vernacular within an environment of cultural acceptance. Unfortunately, the lack of empirical studies on heritage students' vernacular learning methods limits the development of new strategies. Finally, the heritage student who participates in a bilingual program is expected to become a bilingual and bi-literate person.

Keywords: Heritage language learner, heritage language, sociolinguistic factors, attrition, reading approaches, culturally responsive

Chapter 1: Introduction

All students should have the opportunity to learn and speak more than one language without losing their mother tongue. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. For some students whose native language is not English, this presupposes losing the native language due to lack of instruction or attrition due to social value. As a bilingual teacher, I have observed several factors that affect language acquisition and development in my second-grade students. One thing that strikes me is how limited their native language is for their age and grade level. To some extent, the loss of a native language is inevitable in the face of the acquisition and continued use of another language (Francis, 2005). However, this situation is exacerbated by language's value in a given society and by the lack of formal language instruction in the L1. Studies show that incomplete native language or attrition impacts second language acquisition (Levy et al., 2007). Therefore, this capstone examines the overarching question: How can bilingual teachers strengthen home language and cultural diversity through reading and vocabulary to facilitate future L2 acquisition? Although much emphasis and effort are constantly put into teaching the English language among our minority and heritage learners, it is time to value and cultivate the home language.

When I refer to heritage language (HL), I refer to a different and minority language from the country's dominant language or social group (Kelleher, 2010a). In this specific case, the HL is Spanish within a dominant culture and language, English. Similarly, when speaking of the heritage language learner (HLL), I refer to the learner whose native language and cultural ties differ from the dominant culture (Kelleher, 2010b). It is necessary to clarify that, no matter the heritage language level of mastery or proficiency; these students are still heritage language learners (Valdés, 2005). Valdés also includes students who are exposed to the HL and understand

it although they do not speak the language. In comparison, bilingual students are those who, in the broad sense, use two languages interchangeably regardless of the language proficiency level. As a second-grade teacher, putting students on the path to second language acquisition has been a great challenge. The problem stems from a first language that does not provide the necessary foundation for future second language scaffolding. I propose that first and second-grade teachers in a bilingual program strengthen the home language and the vision of cultural diversity through reading and vocabulary to facilitate second language acquisition.

Significance of the Problem

The absence of solid foundation skills, such as reading fluency and comprehension, and the lack of a grade-level vocabulary of our HLL presupposes that there is a heritage language problem. This means that there is a high expectation of the HLL who shows signs of an academic lag in their first language to become proficient in their L2 without significant setbacks. Putman and Sánchez (2013) explain that "comprehension and production processes" (p. 479) are affected in bilingual education due to heritage language attrition or incomplete acquisition. In addition, Hicks and Domínguez (2020) relate grammatical attrition to the "organization of language faculties" (p. 144). Therefore, assuring the academic acquisition of the HL could ease the road for the L2 acquisition.

Both first and second-grade HL students go through similar difficulties in terms of gaps in phonics, fluency, and comprehension in both languages. Therefore, when the HLLs reach third grade, they experience greater difficulty making an adequate transition to English, which presents more complex phonetics and affects comprehension. An aggravating factor is that HLL begins to be tested at the state level in reading and mathematics in third grade, requiring greater reading comprehension skills. The inability to obtain the desired scores on such tests casts doubt

on the intellectual capacity of HL students when it is a linguistic challenge. Additionally, the devaluation of the Spanish language socially negatively affects the desire to learn the language with dedication, as is to be expected. If the curriculum does not provide the space to explore cultural language valorization within their culture, language instruction becomes even more challenging (Gay, 2013). Nonetheless, the teacher's responsibility is to provide a culturally responsive environment to ensure inclusion, disregard discrimination, and facilitate learning while assuring the HLL identity.

Purpose

To help mitigate this problem, I propose to present the integration of texts and readings according to grade levels and culture in the home language, Spanish. Three professional development (PD) sessions will be offered for the first and second bilingual teachers to propose possible alternatives. These PDs will begin the second week after the start of school and will continue for the following two weeks. Teachers will develop a profile of the HLL based on the data collected to set achievable goals. We will revisit the phonics and the whole language approaches to consider the appropriate strategy for the grade level and the Spanish language. In addition, we will learn to evaluate books to incorporate readings that help develop reading skills and foster both vocabulary and cultural values. These sessions also serve to build vocabulary lists relevant to the general and specific culture of the students. This way, the heritage language, and its value are strengthened, and the bilingual student is nurtured.

Summary

As stated, HLLs in first and second grade often show an underdeveloped L1. Consequently, the L1 development affects the future L2 acquisition and the success of the HL student as a bilingual person. Hence, bilingual teachers will receive PDs to help identify texts

and storybooks to help close language gaps or build bridges to strengthen L1. The identified resources will support L1 learning while facilitating the future scaffolding of the L2 in a culturally responsive learning environment. In the following chapter, I will research HLL as multicultural and multilingual students as well as pedagogical approaches to literacy. I will also discuss the importance and impact of cultural valuing of language in the learning process.

Chapter 3 will explain the PDs for first and second-grade bilingual teachers. These PDs will help the teacher create an HLL profile, establish a reading approach as a team, and evaluate culturally relevant books to incorporate appropriate readings for the reading level. These readings will develop heritage language through fluency, vocabulary expansion, and comprehension. By evaluating texts and storybooks, teachers will build a resource bank or list culturally relevant to HL students. This process serves the dual purpose of reinforcing the foundation for scaffolding the new language and eventually developing the heritage student as a bilingual learner. Chapter 4 will conclude with a reflection on this capstone project. Finally, in Appendix A, I will include all the materials used in the PD sessions with the teachers to develop the workshops.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to understand early bilingual instruction, it is necessary to consider several factors that influence the learning of both languages. This chapter will compile evidence of factors that impact second language learning from educational, sociolinguistic, psychosocial, and academic perspectives.

Even when descriptions coincide, various authors name students differently. Baker and Wright (2017) recognize heritage language learners (HLLs) as bilingual infants. All, Baker and Wright (2017), Valdes (2000), and Kelleher (2010a) refer to the language spoken in the home to identify the bilingual student or heritage learner (HL). Baker and Wright's (2017) stance on the term is due to studies conducted in Sweden and the United States showing that infants or babies can discriminate or identify the mother's language. Therefore, it can be said that HLLs feel a particular 'attraction' to express themselves in that language. Interestingly, at about two years old, children can identify the language they can use with specific people (Baker & Wright, 2017). This way, it can be understood that HLLs can effectively learn more than one language. Thus, HLLs must not abandon their native language altogether to master a new language.

The development of bilingualism is not a process disassociated with factors related to the country's environment, among which are culture, social pressure, and politics (Baker & Wright, 2017). The big difference between belonging to a minority group that, in turn, is part of a privileged and, to some extent, admired group; or, on the contrary belonging to a minority that does not enjoy the exact status of privilege and admiration. Both minority groups face different academic challenges within social contexts when expressing themselves in their HL or learning process.

Sociocultural Theory

Learning takes place within a theoretical framework that explains its process; from there, methods can be developed to achieve the goals. This is also true for language learning. The socio-cultural theory is a valuable resource for bilingual learning. Leo Vygotsky is known for his socio-cultural theory, which establishes language as the means of culture and social development of a person, as well as a tool for the mental process (Ellis, 2015). One of Vygotsky's most outstanding contributions to cognitive development was the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). This concept is explained as the distance between what the learner knows and can do independently and the proximal knowledge that, in the first instance, the student will do with the assistance or help of a subject matter expert and then independently (Ellis, 2015; Gibbons, 2015; Lightbown & Spada, 2017; Shabani, 2016). The subject matter connoisseur can be both a teacher and a peer more capable than the student. Therefore, a Spanish-speaking HLL who is learning English needs the help of a knowledgeable teacher or peers with more excellent knowledge of the language. The same is true even if they are trying to learn more of their HL, as social interaction serves as both the setting and promotes learning. Conversations develops language, serving as the medium for learning other information (Gibbons, 2015). In addition, conversation promotes the thinking process by listening and responding as heard (Gibbons, 2015; Lightbown & Spada, 2017).

Vygotsky's theory is ideal for the process of teaching and learning a second language. Dialogue or conversation is generated within the context of learning skills and concepts. In order to achieve these goals, support or assistance, scaffolding, is needed. The expert or teacher is the indicated person to delineate the support and scaffolding of a temporary and gradual progress in difficulty that the HLL will receive and then be expected to perform independently, according to

socio-cultural theory (Gibbons, 2015). Under this theory, it is understood that each student's learning starts from what is already known to that student, that is, their language or the HL (Shabani, 2016). HLLs could use resources such as code-switching, translanguaging, and cognates that allow them to express themselves, establish bridges, and communicate more effectively. It can be concluded that once the HLLs knowledge is appropriately documented, that information can be used to establish the path that will help the HLL gain better skills and expand their knowledge.

Sociolinguistics Factors

Several factors external to the student's capacities at the moment influence the abilities of HLLs, which HLLs cannot control, to learn both L1 and L2. The first factor that appears in the life of the HLL or early bilingual children is the parents' decision as to which language their children will use to communicate most of the time. Although it is not a decision that is formally made, a routine is being created about the use of one language over the other language or the use of more than one language simultaneously. This is the moment when the value of the home language is identified. Schwartz and Verschik (2013) determine the choice of language that will be spoken in the home as a 'family language policy.'

Interestingly, this decision reflects the importance of the cultural identity one wants to project or be identified with (Baker & Wright, 2017). The decisions about the chosen language respond to internal and external factors. Eventually, the HLL also decides on the language with which the HLL intends to communicate and identify. For this reason, not only the HL is considered, but the language with which the HLL socializes outside the home environment is also taken into account. His friends and environment may present additional language. Thus,

language selection is impacted by the emotional value each language carries. The following section will discuss the sociolinguistic aspects that affect HLL learning.

The emotional charge of a language is indisputable and responds to several factors. As already mentioned, there is a direct relationship between the language and the identity of the HLL. However, it must also be recognized that there are HLLs who belong to a minority group within a more significant or macro community with a different cultural identity and economic inequality. Therefore, it is inevitable to study language and HLLs within a sociolinguistic context that establishes the relationship of language with other factors such as social classes and ethnicity, among others (Baker & Wright, 2017). Studies have been conducted on different bilingual groups (Chinese-English, French-English, and Spanish-English) in addition to the monolingual group (in English) to measure performance according to the group in various tasks. It was shown that socioeconomic differences favored the results of the groups with better economic status but without creating significant differences (Barac & Bialystok, 2012). Barac and Bialystok's (2012) research focused on cultural background, the relationship between languages in the bilingual set, and educational experience. Monolingual and bilingual groups performed various tasks. Some groups excelled slightly over others on specific tasks, but in the end, Barac and Bialystok (2012) concluded the results were pretty even. It would be necessary to corroborate or conduct more similar studies to substantiate that bilingualism does not impact the language development process.

It should be noted that languages represent power, status, or both simultaneously. Among the factors that stand out most because they affect the teaching and learning of the vernacular is the status of the country's majority language, which in this case is English. This language-related burden makes specific languages enjoy a particular prestige compared to the language of

minority groups within a society. Languages such as English enjoy the privilege of being considered 'lingua franca' in current globalization; therefore, it represents a prestige to know or master the language (Baker & Wright, 2017; Dorambari, 2021). This privileged status puts the minority language at a disadvantage, even creating a negative stigma with which no one wants to be associated. Suppose the HLL belongs to a minority group whose language has no status, prestige, or power. In that case, it will undoubtedly seek to assimilate with the majority language to enjoy privilege and status. The reputation that a language holds often rests on the function of the language in matters of importance at the collective level (Baker & Wright, 2017). If a language is used by a country's government to make relevant economic transactions or to request and deliver essential services, then that language acquires a unique distinction. The language functions of the majority of the population denote high status within a social group (Baker & Wright, 2017). Thus, once a language has status, a social value is created that exerts pressure on the minority population.

There are many ways to force or manipulate a minority group to leave their HL. Suppose a minority group is deprived of participating in or exercising cultural, political, and economic functions because of limited language options. In that case, that group is forced to use L2 to communicate (Dorambari, 2021). If the language is culturally loaded, then under these circumstances, there may be mere participation in culturally related activities, thus promoting assimilation.

The encounter and contrast of two languages within the value system of languages may lead to the revaluation of the first language. Consequently, there may be the manifestation of subtractive bilingualism. The presentation of subtractive bilingualism occurs mainly when a minority language group in a country of a different majority language requires learning the

majority or dominant language (Baker & Wright, 2017; Dorambari, 2021). As a sociolinguistic factor, this learning responds to the previously mentioned value and status of the L2. The dominant language obtains its status because it directly relates to education, culture, and social life but much more for the possible economic benefits in the short or long term (Baker & Wright, 2017). Subtractive bilingualism is not exclusive to immigrant groups, although these groups are where subtractive bilingualism manifests itself the most. The immigrant minority group often experiences social pressure to assimilate into the new majority culture. Dorambari (2021) suggests that it is from the educational centers that one can advocate for additive bilingualism, which implies adding another language, but never at the expense of HL. Among his more concrete suggestions is to strengthen vocabulary between L1 and L2 and to allow the use of translanguaging and code-switching. If action is not taken and HL is not maintained, social pressure (which responds to political pressure) and the linguistic value of the majority language or L2 versus L1 can lead to a devalued image of HL that can lead to disuse and attrition of HL.

Another sociolinguistic phenomenon associated with subtractive bilingualism and typical of L2 acquisition is language shift, in which the number of speakers of a language in a place is reduced, and another replaces one language in its entirety or certain areas (Baker & Wright, 2017). Baker and Wright (2017) propose a list of twenty-five factors (p. 69) that describe L1 maintenance and loss. Basically, the authors conclude that the list can be summarized as political, social and demographic factors, cultural factors, and linguistic factors. At the same time, these authors recognize that no order of importance can be established since there is an interrelation between the factors. In examining the list, one could identify the same factors that cause the attrition of HL across generations. While Spanish as a language is not in danger of extinction, it must be recognized that the disuse of this language by minority groups creates a

fertile environment for HLLs not to develop it and lose the opportunity to be bilingual. It could be assumed that bilingual education is a possible alternative to nurture HL because of the many circumstances beyond the control of HLLs or a minority group. Therefore, language attrition is a gradual decline in HL proficiency that a person experiences as HL enters disuse (Yuka & Bayodele, 2017). Yuka and Bayodele (2017) further identify HL attrition as the loss of language skills as a consequence of L2 influence. Specifically, they attribute such language interference to four processes: lexical borrowing, restructuring by including L2 elements, the convergence of the two languages, and the shift from HL or L1 to L2. However, Yuka and Bayodele (2017) also ascribe linguistic attrition to the lack of stimulus for a prolonged period. Both justifications presented by Yuka and Bayodele (2017) are consistent with some of the factors in the list submitted by Baker and Wright (2017) and lead to language attrition.

Language conflict is another socio-cultural factor that must be considered because it establishes many differences that generate discord (Baker & Wright, 2017). Rejection of language different from the majority language causes friction or conflict. However, rejection of minority languages is only one manifestation of more severe problems such as racism, cultural differences, religious differences, or ethnic discrimination, among others (Baker & Wright, 2017). Ideological conjectures or assumptions about races or ethnic groups contribute to environments where HLLs avoid speaking their HL (Tseng 2021). Tseng (2021) explains that prejudices ascribed to minority groups restrict the freedom of HLLs to express themselves in their native language for fear of judgment while recognizing their linguistic limitations and, therefore, not wanting to be judged. After conducting 22 interviews (11 men and 11 women) with Latin American descendants, Tseng (2021) explains a complicated socio-cultural and ideological situation regarding using and preserving HLL. In addition, he warns that assuming

that Latinos are deficient in speaking both languages can have severe consequences because it can increase the insecurity of the most vulnerable. Another danger that may emerge from this research is that one may have a limited view of the minority group's performance expectations instead of creating alternatives that promote overcoming these ideologies.

Thus, language can also be seen as an emblem of the national identity of a group of people. Language can also produce conflict as an emblem because it is interpreted as a symbol of loyalty. However, language is not indispensable for developing or preserving national identity, for other countries have language diversity and a single national identity (Baker & Wright, 2017). There are also people without HL proficiency who identify strongly with their culture. Studies have revealed that language ratifies identity within any person's culture (Nieves, 2015). Therefore, to prohibit or limit the use of HL, in this case, Spanish, to HLLs is to send a message that their culture has a low value from the majority culture (Nieves, 2015). The effects of this situation are predictable as they lead to school dropout and eventually further stigmatize and marginalize the minority group. For these reasons, Baker and Wright (2017) and Nieves (2015) consider language as an element somewhat of power. Because language serves to establish social control, this social control translates into a country's political and economic control. Of course, this reveals the reason for the constant struggle and advocacy of minority groups to have access to bilingual programs in their school communities. Bilingual programs should not only offer a fair opportunity to learn the L2 but also promote HL enrichment.

Finally, English as a global language becomes a socio-cultural factor that impacts learning any other language. The English language is considered of a worldwide nature because of its dominant position and relationship in international economic and political transactions (Baker & Wright, 2017). Moreover, even despite all variations and regionalisms within the

language, it is considered a language that implies prestige and power (as mentioned above); and is also considered a universal language. This situation presupposes a general desire to learn and master the language by most speakers of other languages. As more people identify themselves as proficient in English, many others begin to identify English as their second language. Today more people speak English as a second language than the number of people who speak it as a first language (Baker & Wright, 2017). Although the image of English always seems optimistic, others see English as a universal language and an imperialistic and colonizing language (Baker & Wright, 2017). As an imperialistic language, it is credited with displacing other languages. However, it is not the language that displaces but the people who speak it that might adopt that attitude. Baker and Wright (2017) conclude that in the face of such fears, it is necessary to consider that beyond the status and prestige of the English language, bilingual and multilingual people will have the most significant advantage in globalization.

Research, Attrition, and Incomplete Acquisition

Although attrition was briefly mentioned previously, it is necessary to discuss essential elements that directly affect HL and L2 acquisition and maintenance for HLLs. Inheritance language attrition and incomplete HL acquisition can be considered in parallel; both present an HL limitation in one way or another. Silvina Montrul (2018) has extensively researched the topic of incomplete acquisition and recognizes that HL learning is a phenomenon that occurs in a sociolinguistic environment. Montrul (2018) also emphasizes that, as expected, HL is acquired in the first instance through the home during the early years. She also suggests that HL acquisition is a process that occurs simultaneously or sequentially; the child either learns and is exposed to both languages simultaneously or learns one (HL) and then learns the second language (L2). Specifically striking are the gaps in the adult HLL heritage language compared to

the majority language. Montrul (2018), among other researchers, understands that this may be primarily due to insufficient initial input or poor or non-existent formal high-proficiency learning of HL. Many theories that could explain and determine possible causes for this situation need to be tested by empirical studies spanning from childhood to adulthood of HLLs (Montrul, 2018). However, the most significant difficulty is precisely the scarcity of this type of research in this field.

To investigate the causes of language impoverishment, some studies were conducted in Europe, Canada, the United States, Hong Kong, and Australia. These studies concluded that when HLLs can distinguish that the home language is a minority, then HLLs decide to take on the majority language (Montrul, 2018). Usually, that occurs around age 5 to 6 when the heritage speaker, as identified by Montrul (2018), begins attending school. In other words, students who started as bilingual become HLL or heritage speakers but possibly with limited HL proficiency.

Of equal concerns are incomplete acquisition and HL attrition when attempting to develop bilingual learners. Levy et al. (2007) investigated the L1 attrition process during the L2 acquisition using English speakers and Spanish speakers. The research exposed students to a series of pictures that the students had to name often in the home language. Among the findings, Levy et al. (2007) claim that the students showed phonological inhibition and repeatedly forgot the word in the students' L1. These findings may justify that when exposed to immersion programs, elementary students begin to show signs of attrition for interlingual competence. Levy et al. (2007) conclude that the disuses of the specific vocabulary in HL can contribute to attrition. However, what is most curious about the results is that frequently used HL vocabulary is likely to be the most easily forgotten since it is the exact words that the HLL will use in L2. Such

forgetting is suggested to be both due to L2 interference and as part of the adaptation process (Levy et al., 2007).

Other studies coincide with the age (5 and 6 years old) of the groups studied by Montrul (2018) because this is the age at which attrition becomes more noticeable. These investigations revealed that children at an early age have the ability to acquire the basic grammar of their first language, and the same occurs within a bilingual setting (Francis, 2005). For this reason, it is essential to consider the degree or level of attrition or incomplete input of the HLL since, as mentioned above, the HLL goes from what it is known to learn the 'new' according to Vygotsky's ZPD. A learner with no solid grounding of the vernacular language may have difficulty connecting with the L2. Nevertheless, this situation is not indicative of any inability to learn skills.

Francis (2005) proposes questions to consider when considering L1 attrition and the future search for language development or teaching. One of the questions the author suggests is that, considering that equal teaching of both languages is offered, why then might one end up developing only one language over the other. In his conclusion, Francis (2005) acknowledges that sociolinguistic factors related to rapid and constant assimilation may lead to the choice of the majority language as L1. Put another way, sociolinguistic and socio-cultural factors significantly impact language teaching, specifically HL retention or bilingual learner development. Ignoring or teaching without considering these factors would result in teaching that lacks cultural, ethnic, and racial equity.

Cultural Diversity

Culturally responsive teaching is one possible response that should be developed in parallel to the academic objectives. Through this technique, the ethnic diversity and previous

experiences of the students who participate in the lesson are used to have an educational experience that is relevant to their reality and, therefore, more effective (Gay, 2013). When the student is considered holistically, it can be recognized that the teaching-learning process cannot exclude elements that allow students to identify themselves, feel included, or learn from a culture different from their own. Academic development must go hand in hand with developing social awareness that recognizes ethnic diversity without discrimination (Gay, 2013). Using the growing cultural diversity in the United States as a starting point, Carreira and Kagan (2011) surveyed HLLs of different languages. Findings on Spanish-speaking students point out that they mostly use their HL informally or at home. Most respondents acknowledged that they had never received formal instruction in their HL but still classified themselves as intermediate in their literacy skills compared to native speakers. The collected answers respond to the easy phonetics of the Spanish language learned at home even earlier than English (Carreira & Kagan, 2011). As alternatives to offering a proper education, the authors emphasize that education should include differentiation to accommodate linguistic needs but also affirm the recognition of their cultural identity (Carreira & Kagan, 2011). Once again, among the suggestions given from the results, Vygotskian principles to promote learning within the community context of their culture and through communication are pointed out. The authors conclude by providing suggestions that revolve around the importance of the culture to which the students belong. Gay (2013) insists that an educational change must be more inclusive and makes connections to build students' self-confidence. Therefore, consideration and inclusion of the socio-cultural factors of the cultural group should be included when planning curricula and lessons.

Spanish Language Methodology

During the primary grades, HLLs show different levels or stages of HL literary and linguistic development despite being able to communicate effectively. In many cases, HLLs are required to learn Spanish (their native language) as a foreign language if they have the opportunity. In other words, there is a need to nurture language learning to preserve the student as a bilingual person with all the benefits of a bilingual status. The idea should be to eventually maintain and develop the HL to facilitate learning and transfer to the L2.

No matter what level of language development the student presents, teaching should be differentiated, and scaffolding should be used to support the learning process. These strategies are part of the alternatives that transition oral communication skills learned at home to an academic language (Sanjuán-Álvarez & del Moral-Barrigüete, 2019). The most straightforward academic expectation is that the HLL can comprehend and produce oral and written texts in Spanish. The academic curricular objective seeks to bring the linguistic skills of HLLs closer to the linguistic expectations of native speakers used as a reference (Sanjuán-Álvarez & del Moral-Barrigüete, 2019). For the authors, Sanjuán-Álvarez & del Moral-Barrigüete, (2019), the pillar of learning in Spanish is the lexicon because vocabulary is an integral piece of comprehension. Therefore, one of the main goals should be to increase lexical knowledge quantitatively and qualitatively in a gradual manner.

Generally, two types of methodologies are referred to when teaching reading, the phonics or the whole language approach. The debate between the two methods is ongoing among those in favor and detractors. Those who favor the whole language approach understand that phonics instruction is integrated into reading and writing activities; those who prefer phonics use materials that are methodically designed to learn to read and write (Dahl et al., 1999). After

examining both methodologies in elementary classrooms, Dahl et al. (1999) concluded that phonics is taught within the whole language approach but is limited to consonants. The same study also examined phonics teaching and concluded that they are not very flexible since these are systematic programs. However, it can be seen as a positive aspect of a dynamic learning process that caters to the varying needs of the learner. It should be noted that many studies about the English language on both methodologies have been conducted and that more research is needed on these methodologies exclusively for the Spanish language. With the findings on the methods, teachers in the classroom should use the procedure that best serves their students and should not be surprised if a hybrid method is used to accommodate the needs of HLLs.

In order to understand phonetic learning in Spanish in greater depth, there is a clear need for more language-exclusive research on the decoding system. The Spanish language has, unlike English, a transparent orthographic system, which with certain letter-symbol and homophone exceptions, can generally be written as it is pronounced or read (Bravo-Valdivieso & Escobar, 2014; Kwok et al., 2017). Like any learning process, one starts with simple phonetics to more complex phonetics as stipulated in ZPD. Many words in the high-frequency group can be read in Spanish with the same speed and accuracy as non-high-frequency words (Kwok et al., 2017). However, this should not be confused with increased comprehension, as it only refers to decoding and word reading mechanics.

Perhaps the most comprehensive information about phonetics and HLLs is presented by authors Rao and Kuder (2016). These authors begin by recognizing that not all HLLs have the same linguistic strengths or weaknesses. Examples of this include immigrant HLLs from various Spanish-speaking countries and their location and population concentration within the United States. The importance of this information lies in the fact that not all Spanish speakers accent in

the same way or produce pauses that respond to their native controls. Differences are more noticeable for consonants that require breaks than for vowels, but even so, distinctions can be made according to the native group to which the HLL belongs. Beyond the phonetic behavior of each group and the diversity they present, this is not indicative of linguistic impairments (Rao & Kuder, 2016).

Lexical knowledge as a fundamental basis for reading and comprehension continues to be necessary. There are two main roads for lexical knowledge, which are phonological skills and orthographic skills already mentioned above. Phonological skills enable reading and vocabulary enrichment; with orthography, the mental and logical organization of vocabulary is generated, which can then be taken up and used in an academic context (Sanjuán-Álvarez & del Moral-Barrigüete, 2019). An important detail pointed out by these authors is that vocabulary is taught and learned within a context, not in isolation. This assertion responds to the fact that an HLL can be a good reader and decode effectively, but it does not mean that there is comprehension.

Finally, an added value to HL learning and development is the transfer of metalinguistic processes between languages. There is increasing evidence that knowing two or more languages at an early age is not a factor that justifies language deficiencies, nor does it affect intellectual development. Pollard-Durodola and Simmons (2009) explains that there is research showing that proficiency and high levels of ability in a language such as Spanish facilitates the acquisition of an L2, especially if they share the same alphabet.

Evaluating Classroom Books

Previously, the importance of cultural awareness was introduced, and the need for it is even more so when there are HLLs in the classroom. Many Spanish-speaking minority groups in the United States have variations of the Spanish language. The nationality diversity poses a

challenge finding texts that accommodate the uniqueness of a heterogeneous group.

Consequently, it is the teacher's responsibility to consider, at a minimum, the majority nationality of the HLLs and provide literature in a culturally responsive way. Briceño (2016) writes about a story of a student who could not make sense of a book she was reading because the Spanish word for 'monkey' from the book was unknown to her. The situation repeats itself constantly. Spanish texts or books often use vocabulary that HLLs of certain nationalities cannot understand and therefore the reader cannot relate.

Through bilingual literature or literature directly related to the cultural identity of the group of HLLs, we should seek to establish cultural and language valorization parameters. Attending to cultural diversity is a challenge during the planning time. However, at the same time, there is evidence that taking into consideration the culture and language of HLLs through relevant literature has benefits that lie mainly in the value of the culture and language of HLLs (Rodriguez, 2014). Specifically, the benefits derived are greater engagement, indirect participation, increased parental support, the encounter with their cultural identity that allows them to have a voice to validate their experiences, develop a sense of belonging, and ultimately improve their reading comprehension. The benefits mentioned by the author also respond to the previously mentioned sociolinguistic factors that impact HLL learning. Rodriguez (2014) points out that HLLs should be able to establish a connection between the language used in reading and their language. Of course, the possible effects of language attrition and its manifestations are not being considered at this time. Evidently, this will increase the workload for the teacher but will produce remarkable gains.

The difficulty or challenge of finding suitable texts and books should never discourage a teacher. Still, it should motivate teachers and other related personnel to promote the production

and support of such resources. Research shows that emergent HLLs can catch up with their English-only peers as early as fifth grade, thanks to reading development, but even more impressive is that they can surpass them in the following two years (Nieves, 2015). This improvement is partly due to the transfer, as mentioned earlier, that occurs while learning in a bilingual environment with all the conditions favoring the process. Therefore, the higher the level of teaching, the higher demand, the more refined the acquisition and the content of the vernacular, the greater the chances of a bilingual and bi-literate HLL.

The teacher's responsibility demands that the socio-cultural reality of the student is included in the teaching environment. Such commitment starts with preparing the future teacher, who must know the importance of the student's cultural background to become familiar with the HLL and its culture (Rodriguez, 2014). The research conducted by Rodriguez (2014) consisted of placing prospective teachers in classrooms with a Latino HLL presence, reading a book to them, and asking questions related to reading comprehension and other open-ended questions to the students. The results showed that students found reading relevant in all aspects of the questions. Moreover, the HLLs reported knowing the traditions in the readings and could identify with the characters. In the end, the students wanted to read more culturally relevant books. Therefore, all of the possible benefits mentioned earlier were manifested during this study.

Sotirovska and Kelley (2020) suggest how to evaluate books that include immigrant groups based on Rudine Sims Bishop's essay, *Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors*. In the study, the authors focused on books with anthropomorphic characters to present how books can be evaluated to showcase the topic of immigration. The characters introduced in children's books establish paradigms, stereotypes, and mental ideas that shape the student's worldview (Sotirovska

and Kelley, 2020). The same book evaluation process can be used to assess whether it is a book that meets the interests, culture, identity, and academic needs of HLLs. Some scholars and organizations have created evaluating tools or questionnaires for books like Learning for Justice (2016), and Fleming et al. (2016). In short, the importance of the book's evaluation lies in the fact that students can receive the message of multicultural acceptance, the reaffirmation of their identity, or on the contrary, an incorrect input that leads to rejection, low self-esteem, and marginalization.

Furthermore, it is necessary to remember that the importance of lexical knowledge and its close relationship is related to decoding skills and reading in context. HLLs increase their vocabulary and comprehension during literary reading (Nieves, 2015). Pre-analysis of a book used with HLLs should be done carefully to establish the necessary scaffolding (Nieves, 2015). In conjunction with culturally relevant books, cognates must be considered an essential part of the process HLLs undergo toward bilingualism. Moreover, during the oral analysis, there will most likely arise moments when translanguaging and code-switching manifest as part of the process. To sum up, the role of the teacher as described by the ZPD can be valued and appreciated, as it serves as a resource for the student to establish the necessary connections to the new knowledge.

Conclusion

Bilingual education has many challenges. HLLs are an essential part of bilingual programs, and for that reason, their needs and particularities must be considered of great importance. For HLLs, there is a double migration. HLL's physical migration from one country to another is also the migration from a community and family with its customs and culture to a new culture within the school system. The pressure to succeed falls doubly hard on HLLs

because of the barriers they must overcome. Language can become a significant asset during the process or a major problem when it is not developed. However, it is precisely the HLLs who are at an advantage when developing two languages and becoming bilingual. The goal of education for this particular group of students should be to offer alternatives so that bilingual people can contribute to the country and not turn the HLL into incomplete monolinguals with low self-esteem. The bilingual offer should be reinforced throughout all school years and levels. In addition, Vernacular learning methods must be of high quality. The lack of specific studies that reveal the educational gaps still prevents the proper matching between the educational offer and the needs of HLLs. It is essential to look for tools that promote learning and academic goals but within a framework of viable means. The ZPD accommodates many of the needs of HLLs by providing the standards for the various appropriate transition processes.

To summarize, HLLs present a different picture as learners than native speakers. Their status as a minority means several factors must be considered when developing lessons for HLLs. Although education focuses on academic goals, education is also a holistic process that has to assess psychosocial factors that directly impact the educational process and its outcomes. Human beings seek to belong; during that search, they either do or do not reaffirm their identity. While many factors that affect their development are beyond their control, those in charge of their education have a responsibility to provide a safe and socially and emotionally equitable environment.

In the following chapter of this capstone, I present a professional development and tools to address the overarching question: How can bilingual teachers strengthen home language and cultural diversity through reading and vocabulary to facilitate future L2 acquisition? In chapter 3, I will describe the three PDs topics for first and second-grade bilingual teachers.

Chapter 3: Description of the Product

The previous chapter showed that students could learn more than one language at an early age (Baker & Wright, 2017). In addition, it presented that students can transfer knowledge between languages (Pollard-Durodola, 2009). Therefore, to address this capstone's overarching question, the evidence shows the need to strengthen the HL to facilitate the learning of the L2. However, HLLs present a different picture than most mainstream learners. Rao and Kuder (2016) remind us that there are a variety of strengths and weaknesses among HLLs. Their historical and family background affects their learning, making each HLL a unique and special case. For that reason, it is imperative to get to know each student well. It is the best way for a teacher to understand each student's difficulties and challenges. While differentiation is a tool to address individual challenges, it is also true that it is necessary to have a frame of reference from which to start when teaching HLLs to read.

The reading approaches mentioned in chapter 2, whole language and phonics, are two of the most frequently used and referenced among many others. We must acknowledge these options to address the group's diverse needs while combining them with scaffolding and differentiation. Since there is no homogeneous group of students, especially HLLs, integrating more than one literacy approach (whatever it may be) should be accepted. Another particular situation of the HLL population is the majority ethnic group of the specific school's bilingual program groups. Most, if not all of the Latino population of the school where the professional development will take place is of Puerto Rican descent or recently arrived from Puerto Rico. However, most culturally inclusive Hispanic literature refers to Mexican traditions and vocabulary. While students learn about other cultures, they fail to identify with their own culture precisely when they may be most vulnerable in developing their cultural identity.

The following Professional Development (PD) topics will help to know the HLL more in-depth and describe possible alternatives for teaching reading at the elementary level, specifically first and second grades in Spanish. Through these PD sessions, the first and second-grade bilingual teachers will also obtain ideas that can facilitate the teaching of reading to their HLLs. This experience will allow them to compare their teaching techniques and contribute to enriching the ideas proposed. Teachers will access materials created for the PDs from the PowerPoint printouts and other handouts. All the handouts for every PD sessions are labeled as a figure and placed in the Appendix of this capstone.

First Session

The agenda for this session will be presented to the participants (see Figure 1). The learning targets for the day are: to analyze Vygotsky's ZPD theory as part of the process of second language acquisition, establish the dual-language characteristics of the school program, and identify the possible sociolinguistic factors that most impact language development in HLLs. The goals of the first session are to help the participants focus on the HLL factors that impact their language learning and to consider the ZPD theory and the dual-language programs as options to help address the problem.

The first activity will be the presentation of Vygotsky's theoretical framework, as it will ensure that learning something new starts from what is already known with the assistance of a knowledgeable person. Participants will watch a video explaining the theory of ZPD with a note-taking handout (see Figure 2). In addition, participants will receive an additional video by email to learn a little more about the history of this theory. A discussion will follow to share thoughts. During the discussion, we will inquire about the direct relation between the ZPD and language acquisition; and the acceptance or refusal of the theory as part of the alternative for the HLL's

language acquisition. Next, the dual-language program will be presented as an option to preserve and expand the HL knowledge while learning a new language.

In the second activity, we will briefly review the characteristics of a dual-language program. There will be a brief presentation about how the dual language program responds to the intention of educating students to develop as bilingual individuals. Participants will share what they know about the dual-language program and how it works in the school; and then they will fill out a spider graphic organizer (not all the spaces will be filled out) (see Figure 3). After sharing answers with the group and discussing the converging points and disagreements, the participants will watch two videos about the benefits of being bilingual. One video explains the cognitive flexibility that comes with bilingual education with Karina Chapa (only a few pre-selected minutes of the video), and the other with Dr. Potowski reviews the benefits of dual-language programs. While watching the videos, participants will draw a star next to the confirmed ideas by watching the videos, if any. In fact, they will add any other ideas that catch the participants' attention. After watching the videos, there will be time to discuss what they wrote and why. This discussion seeks to promote self-evaluation of whether the dual-language program's expectations are met according to the program's characteristics and to evaluate the effect on the HLLs. Once the importance of an effective dual-language program is established, we will explore the multiple factors that affect language HLL learning.

The third activity will be the sociolinguistics factors. During the presentation, we will learn and summarize the sociolinguistic factors that may affect the students' HL. The link for the list of factors from Baker and Wright's (2017, p. 69) will be shared so that everyone can select the factors that affect the HLLs in their classroom. Then, using a graphic organizer (see Figure 4), participants will write down the three most essential elements. Teachers will avoid selecting

only factors from a single classification (such as choosing only cultural factors). Using this list will eventually make it easier to create a profile of the HLL while having alternatives for working with each difficulty.

The closing will be the fourth activity. An assignment will need to be completed prior to the next session. The participants will gather information about each student's family background (including the HLLs) using the questionnaire (see Figure 5). The teachers can also add any other questions during the student or person in charge interviews. The teachers will also have the benchmark reading information as instructed by the district. For the exit ticket, participants will present any questions or concerns they would like to address related to the data received (see Figure 6).

Up to this moment, participants obtained information about how the HLL can learn an L2 and expand the HL through the ZPD theory and the bilingual program that facilitates both languages acquisition. In addition, the teachers explored the sociolinguistics factors that affect HL and L2 acquisition. With the information collected as an assignment for the next session, the participants will be prepared to create an HLL profile.

Second Session

Based on the literature in chapter two, it is necessary to identify and elaborate on the approximate profile of the HLLs who are part of the daily enrollment in the first and second-grade classrooms of the dual-language program. Only by knowing the students can a teacher plan lessons that focus on the student's needs. Although the same first and second-grade teachers will participate, this session will focus mainly on first-grade teachers. This second session will also present literacy approaches most commonly used in teaching reading in Spanish.

First, the agenda for the session will be presented (see Figure 7). There will be a time to answer questions from the previous session and review the exit ticket comments. There are two main objectives for the second session. The first one is to develop an approximate profile of HLLs in the classroom enrollment according to needs and strengths in the area of Spanish reading and the sociolinguistic factors. The second is to identify strategies for teaching reading according to student needs and strengths.

The first activity is the creation of the HLL profile. The teachers will create an analytical profile of a typical HLL in the first and second grades of the dual-language program. At this time, the participants will use the information gathered from the first PD (handouts) about the HLL language and family background, the benchmarks (as instructed by the district) information, and the analysis of the sociolinguistics factors to create an HLL profile. The teachers will receive a handout (see Figure 8) to write the names of their students who belong to the emergent level (cannot write or read), the beginner stage (decoding and writing attempts stage), or the instructional stage (independent readers). The participants will present the collected and summarized data on HLLs. Participants can provide observations that will help to build a rough prototype of the actual HLL based on their experience and information obtained from family background research. They will work with their grade teammates to have the most accurate analytical details. Therefore, profiling the HLL is the beginning of developing an education that meets their needs and challenges fairly and equitably.

The second activity will present the language acquisition approach, where whole language and phonics are compared as possible alternatives to teaching reading. Gómez Soler and Fuentes (2019) acknowledge a significant lack of research and evidence on teaching Spanish as a heritage language. Most of this research has been conducted in higher education. The study

conducted by these authors focuses on high school, revealing the paucity of recent empirical studies on how to teach Spanish as a heritage language in primary levels. Nonetheless, findings will be presented, and a Venn diagram handout (see Figure 9) will be given to the teachers. The Venn diagram will be used as a note catcher during the presentation and for the two videos about whole language vs. phonics. After the participants have watched the two videos, a discussion will take place to comment on both language approaches. We will share whether they have used them, with which language, their teaching approach preference, and why. With this activity, the teachers can re-evaluate the approach they have been using to teach Spanish so far and either ratify their choice or explore a new approach that satisfies the HLL needs.

The third activity is the ordering phonemes for the phonetical language learning approach. Using the given document (Figure 10), the participants will place the letters of the alphabet (vowels first and then consonants) according to the order in which they teach them in the case of using phonics as a methodology. Then, together they can explore alternatives that might differ from the participants' responses. Either way, everyone will justify their answers in a specific order. At the end of this activity, the participants can jointly establish patterns to be followed as a team in teaching Spanish and English in the immediate future. In this way, the product of this activity will be a sequence and homogeneity established for the Spanish phonics that will also serve as a review in subsequent grades.

The closing will be the fourth activity. Participants should also complete the exit ticket (see Figure 11), by documenting any questions or concerns that should be addressed related to the topic. In addition, they will write which approach they are choosing and why they selected it. As a bonus, participants will be invited to collect tongue twisters and songs composed to exchange vowels in Spanish as part of the phonemic awareness ludic activities (as suggested by

Yopp & Stapleton, 2008). Finally, the participants will have to bring a culturally responsive book of their preference for the next PD session.

Third Session

The third session will present a procedure for evaluating children's books that help develop reading, vocabulary and, simultaneously, consider socio-cultural factors of HLLs. Again, although first and second-grade teachers will participate, this session focuses primarily on second-grade teachers. After introducing the agenda (see Figure 12), the objectives will be presented. The goals are: To identify the importance of culturally responsive texts in reading sessions and the classroom library, examine and analyze a book to see if it responds culturally to the needs of HLLs and review the book's lexicon quantitatively and qualitatively by grade level to add vocabulary words to the word wall. In short, the third session will examine the socio-cultural context of a book to determine if it is a valuable resource to work the culturally responsive HLL situations.

The first activity is a presentation of culturally responsive books and their importance. Independently, participants will watch two short videos. The first video highlights dual-language programs and their cultural benefits. The second video by Nancy Cloud is about the considerations when choosing texts for ELLs or HLLs. Then, the teachers will be allowed to share briefly about previous experiences, if any, related to the video. At this moment, the expectation is to recognize the transcendental importance of culturally relevant books and the intrinsic relation with sociolinguistics factors. Participants will receive a note catcher that can be used during the presentation and while watching the videos (see Figure 13).

The analysis of a book for cultural responsiveness is the second activity. First, a brief biography of the author will be presented. On their own, teachers will watch a video of the

reading of the book *Pelo Bueno* by Yolanda Arroyo Pizarro. This will be followed by a presentation on analyzing a book to see if it meets culturally responsible expectations. The participants will have a note catcher while watching the video and during the evaluation as a group of the book *Pelo Bueno* (see Figure 14). After a brief discussion, teachers will receive a link to access a list of guiding questions to do a cultural analysis of the pre-selected book on an individual basis. Upon completion, each teacher will share their analysis and the rationale to determine if the selected book meets the cultural needs of the HLLs as expected.

The third activity will be the importance of the lexicon. Sanjuán-Álvarez and del Moral-Barrigüete (2019) insisted that the importance of the lexicon of language learning relies on the vocabulary to ensure text comprehension. After a brief presentation on the significance of vocabulary comprehension, the teachers will use the given handout (see Figure 15) to select and classify vocabulary words from their pre-selected books. The vocabulary words will be classified according to the levels/stages (emergent, beginners, and instructional) considering scaffolding and differentiation if the chosen book is suitable. Eventually, the selected words will be part of the word wall to enrich the reading's vocabulary and comprehension. As a bonus, the handout will provide enough space to write possible reading comprehension questions if the teacher desires to do so. An additional activity benefit can be the exchange of shared resources and analysis with other teachers outside one's grade level.

The fourth activity is the closing. The session will close with an exit ticket (Figure 16) in which participants will answer the following questions: What socio-cultural topics would you like to include in your classroom library? How would you use a book like *Pelo Bueno*, during guided reading, read out loud, etc.? Any questions or concerns that should be addressed related to the topic?

To sum up, teachers will feel more confident in evaluating any possible cultural resource to be used in the classroom, added to the classroom library, and as a resource to continue to develop reading mechanics, fluency, and comprehension through new vocabulary.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I compiled research information to suggest alternatives to the challenges presented by HLLs as bilingual prospects. The focus on the Spanish language responds to the ability to transfer between languages and the cognitive flexibility to achieve metacognition (Pollard-Durodola, & Simmons, 2009). All alternatives are based on strengthening the vernacular to facilitate L2 learning. Gómez Soler and Fuentes (2021) acknowledge a lack of research and information on the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language. Although, their studies focused on high school, there is still much to be examined in the primary grades. In the absence of accurate information, it is challenging to establish a somewhat generic plan to address the difficulties of learning to read for HLLs. Of course, the situation is reflected in the development of viable alternatives to address the challenges.

After studying the literature, it is possible to summarize areas that may offer alternatives to mitigate HL deficiencies. Baker and Wright (2017) insist on the effects of the sociolinguistic factors. Therefore, it is crucial to know the HLLs as much as possible. There are immense benefits of dual-languages programs, meaning that they can be the alternative to cultivating the HL while learning English (Barak & Bialystok, 2012; Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Ellis, 2015). Language development can be achieved by using different approaches such as phonics or whole language (Dahl et al., 1999; Ellis, 2015; Pollard-Durodola & Simmons, 2009; Rao & Kuder, 2016). These areas must occur within a culturally responsive context that validates the HLLs culture. To fulfill this requirement, the use of culturally responsive literature is crucial. As a

result, three professional developments (PDs) sessions are suggested, during which the proposed areas are presented as alternatives to help teachers understand and organize viable options as a team

All the elements presented are intrinsically connected. One cannot attend to one and leave the rest unattended. The need to develop the mechanics and fluency of reading is not disassociated from the particular and general needs of HLLs. It is encouraged to investigate their reading level without leaving behind their cultural background. Furthermore, it is precisely their cultural background that frames the entire learning process. Knowing where each student starts academically and culturally provides teachers with the tools to develop alternatives that can make them bilingual and bi-literate.

In chapter four, I will explain and summarize how all the researched information explains the general question about strengthening and the HL to ensure better L2 acquisition taking culture into account. Similarly, I will provide implications for student learning, for teaching, recommendations and final thoughts.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The road of an HLL to bilingualism and biliteracy is still challenging. The HL should always be considered an asset; there should be no obstacles to prevent the development of the HL to its full potential as a minority group. However, there is a constant devaluation of certain HLs (some more than others) and a great effort to establish English as the L1 in HLLs. Another factor contributing to the HL loss is attrition and incomplete acquisition. These factors ultimately respond to the language devaluation and its culture in the face of the global value of English. Consequently, we have HLLs who may very well take advantage of knowing two languages deeply, yet we have HLLs struggling. The possible denial of their HL, in turn, puts HLLs in a problematic situation in learning the L2. The lack of vernacular reading and cognitive skills impoverishes the possibilities for sequential development in the L2. Therefore, the overarching question for this capstone was, how can bilingual teachers strengthen home language and cultural diversity through reading and vocabulary to facilitate future L2 acquisition?

Conclusions

Through the literature review, revealing information about elements that affect the teaching and learning process comes to attention. After considering various peer-reviewed articles related to most of the learning factors that influence the HLL, I can conclude that more HLLs have great potential as a scholar or a professional if all the conditions affecting their learning are in their favor. Otherwise, the weight of many factors related to the HLL learning process can limit or delay the success story. It is crucial to acknowledge the capacity, the skills, and the previous knowledge that the HLLs have in their HL, as it is the ground base to build upon. On the contrary, the slow process of acquiring the L2 should not be mistaken for a learning disability (Tseng, 2021).

First, it is evident that if you are an HLL, the learning process will include transition as part of L2 development (Shabani, 2016). For this reason, the ZPD theory is coherent with the HLLs' learning processes. Shabani (2016) emphasizes that the HLLs starting point is their knowledge of their HL. Meaning that the HL has allowed the HLLs to understand and communicate, and then the teacher (or expert according to the ZPD) will use their previous knowledge to move forward and obtain the new information (Gibbons, 2015). Thus, the need to strengthen the HL with the dual purpose of facilitating the transition to the L2 is reaffirmed as equally important to retain HL and become bi-literate.

Another undeniable aspect is the weight of sociolinguistic factors in language development and acquisition (Baker & Wright, 2017). The value of the majority pressures under many circumstances the HL. Sociolinguistic factors, in turn, are closely related to attrition patterns (Francis, 2005). The process of attrition means much more than the loss of language. Attrition, incomplete acquisition, and every other language impoverishment are related to some degree to the newly introduced language or interlingual competence, and its implications.

The teaching and learning process cannot exclude intrinsic aspects of the human being, such as their culture and the need to own their identity. Gay (2013) states that academic growth is not a process disassociated from social development. The HLL recognizes ethnic, social, cultural, and even power differences in academics and everyday life. Education is accountable for providing all students, including HLLs, an environment free of discrimination, where inclusion promotes self-confidence that allows everyone to learn (Gay, 2013).

Implications for Student Learning

The combined literary finding of all these factors should presuppose benefits and new opportunities for HLLs. For example, the HLL should be guaranteed additional learning time

because of the transition process. This 'additional' time could manifest itself in various ways, from more time to read a text or answer an oral question to possible considerations on state tests. Examples of the multiple sociolinguistic manifestations range from pronunciation and intonation to cultural expressions. As the HLL undergoes a process of inevitable acculturation, the HLL culture must also be validated. When the HLLs feel appreciated and culturally valued, their identity is reaffirmed, and therefore their self-esteem is reiterated. How students feel in the classroom will allow them to participate more actively and frequently, increasing his chances of learning. Class participation and academic conversations may involve translanguaging and code-switching, which should be used freely and without negative pressures. Finally, an HLL who feels emotionally secure adopts a positive attitude towards the learning process.

Implications for Teaching

Congruently and in parallel, the implications of the learning process for HLL mirror the implications of the teacher's teaching process. Working within the theoretical framework of the ZPD makes the teacher the bridge facilitator between the two languages to promote HLL learning (Gibbons, 2015). However, this may mean that the teacher must understand some of the HL or at least seek out resources to which they can refer to understand the HL linguistic process. It may even mean that the teacher has to establish partnerships with bilingual teachers to facilitate the understanding of the linguistic process. At the same time, the teacher should offer support during the transition process through scaffolding and differentiation so that the HLL can gradually reach the outlined linguistic goals. According to ZPD, conversations are a powerful means of language development (Gibbons, 2015). Translanguaging and code-switching will be frequent and should be considered as part of L2 development.

Another essential factor that an HLL teacher should remember is knowledge of the HLL's linguistic background (Lightbown & Spada, 2017). This data yields information about the value of the languages they represent and the support they might receive from home. Knowing and profiling each student allows for a proper alignment of linguistic steps and goals. From this knowledge of the student's background, knowledge of the student's culture follows, making the teacher culturally responsive during the teaching. Again, this implies that it is the teacher's duty to pay attention to socio-cultural factors, be culturally inclusive and avoid any sign of discrimination. The weight of culture in learning is undeniable. There is a lot of need for literature that responds to the need for HLLs to identify with reading and see their culture's value through literature. Assuming that all literature in Spanish is appropriate for any Hispanic group is a mistake. The teacher must evaluate books that respond to the specific cultures in their classroom. Offering books HLLs can identify with requires evaluating books that serve as mirrors and doors to other cultures. Rodriguez (2014) demonstrated with the research that students find this kind of reading relevant and motivating.

There is a need to also evaluate the most appropriate reading approach to use while developing reading skills. These approaches can be adjusted according to the HLL's background knowledge. The goal is to maintain the HL, not discard it with poor delivery and low expectations. Initially, the focus is on the mechanics of reading, but it is also essential to include vocabulary that leads to reading comprehension and analysis. As a result, teachers should ultimately become advocates of the bilingual teaching processes and programs, in other words, advocate on behalf of the HLL. As teachers, we should not want HLLs to abandon their HL or switch languages because of the devaluing of their language and culture; we want and need them to be bilingual and bi-literate.

Recommendations and Final Thoughts

Much research shows the interest in learning about and improving the learning conditions of HLLs. All classroom teachers, as a first step, should know as much as possible about their students, and research should be directed to understand all aspects of HLLs. There is a gap in the HLL acquisition process. Assuming that HLLs learn their vernacular academically as native speakers do in their home country may be a mistake costing opportunity for success. Maybe not all languages can be taught or learned with the same approaches. Studies need to document and eventually develop alternatives for HLLs who exhibit attrition of the HL upon arrival at school. In addition, there is a need to update the research on the phonics and whole language learning approach in Spanish for HLLs. It may seem that what should be an excellent quality or advantage is often considered a problem. HLLs have a HL that should not be missing. As presented at the beginning of this capstone, bilingual teachers can advocate and contribute to the evolution of the HL to ensure that HLLs have a real opportunity to become bilingual and bi-literate. The target is developing the reading skills in the HL and increasing the vocabulary within the culturally responsive environment to ensure comprehension and metacognition. The HL should not be silenced as a result of acculturation or an immersion language program. HL should be nourished to achieve an academic and emotional balance in each HLL.

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Appendix**Figure 1***Meeting Agenda 1*

Day:

Time:

Location:

ZPD, Dual-language and Sociolinguistics Factors

- Presentation of learning targets
- Topic 1
 - Presentation of Vygotsky' ZPD theory
 - ZPD Video
 - Group discussion
- Topic 2
 - Presentation of the Dual-language program
 - School overview
 - Karina Chapa (video) – cognitive flexibility
 - Dr. Potowski (video) – benefits of DL program
 - Group discussion
- Topic 3
 - Presentation of the Sociolinguistics factors
 - Finding alternatives
- Closing
 - Questionnaire
 - Assignment
 - Exit ticket

Figure 3

Dual-language Program Characteristics

Session 1: ZPD, Dual-language and Sociolinguistics Factors

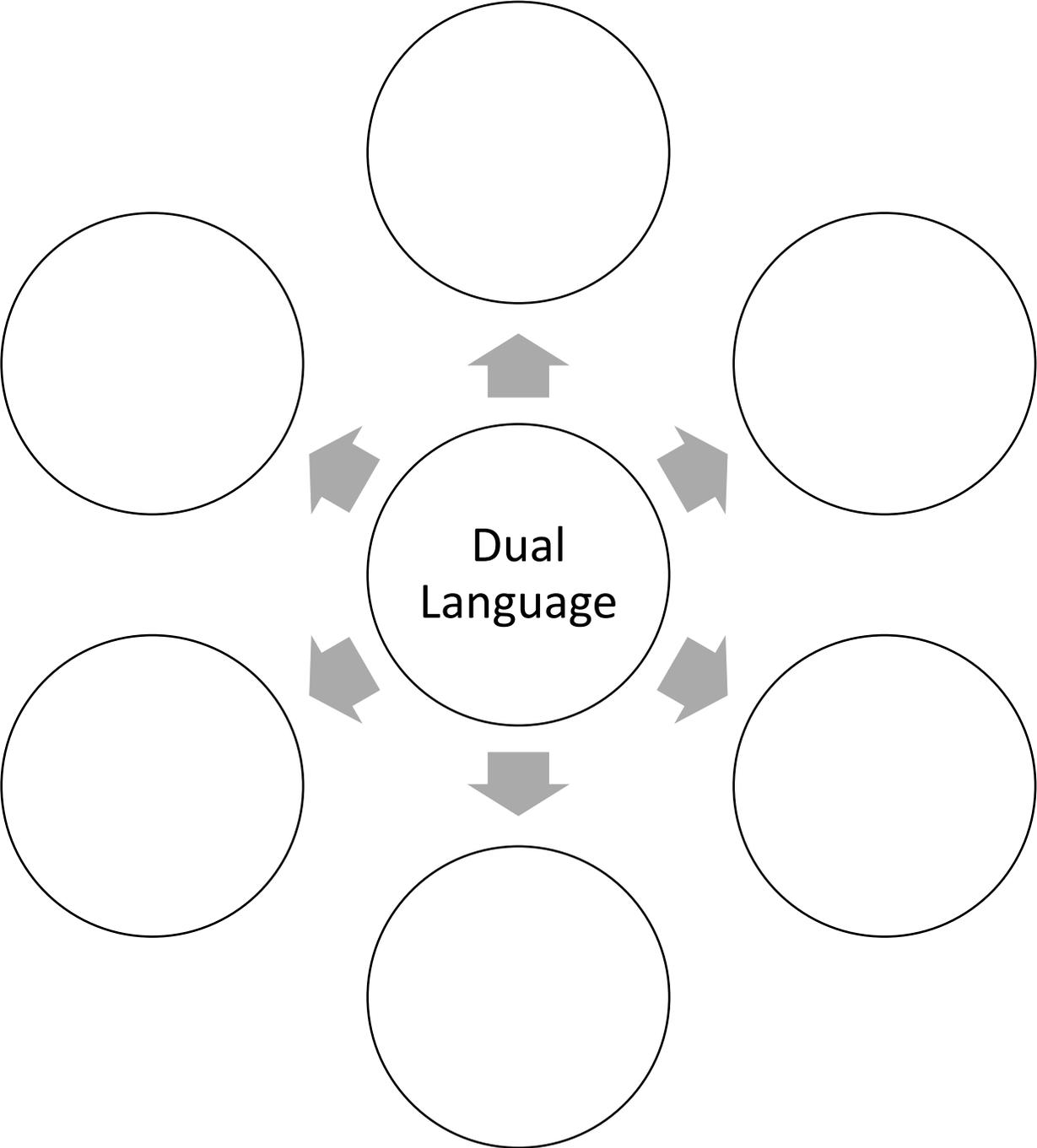


Figure 4

HLL- Sociolinguistic Factors

Session 1: ZPD, Dual-language and Sociolinguistics Factors

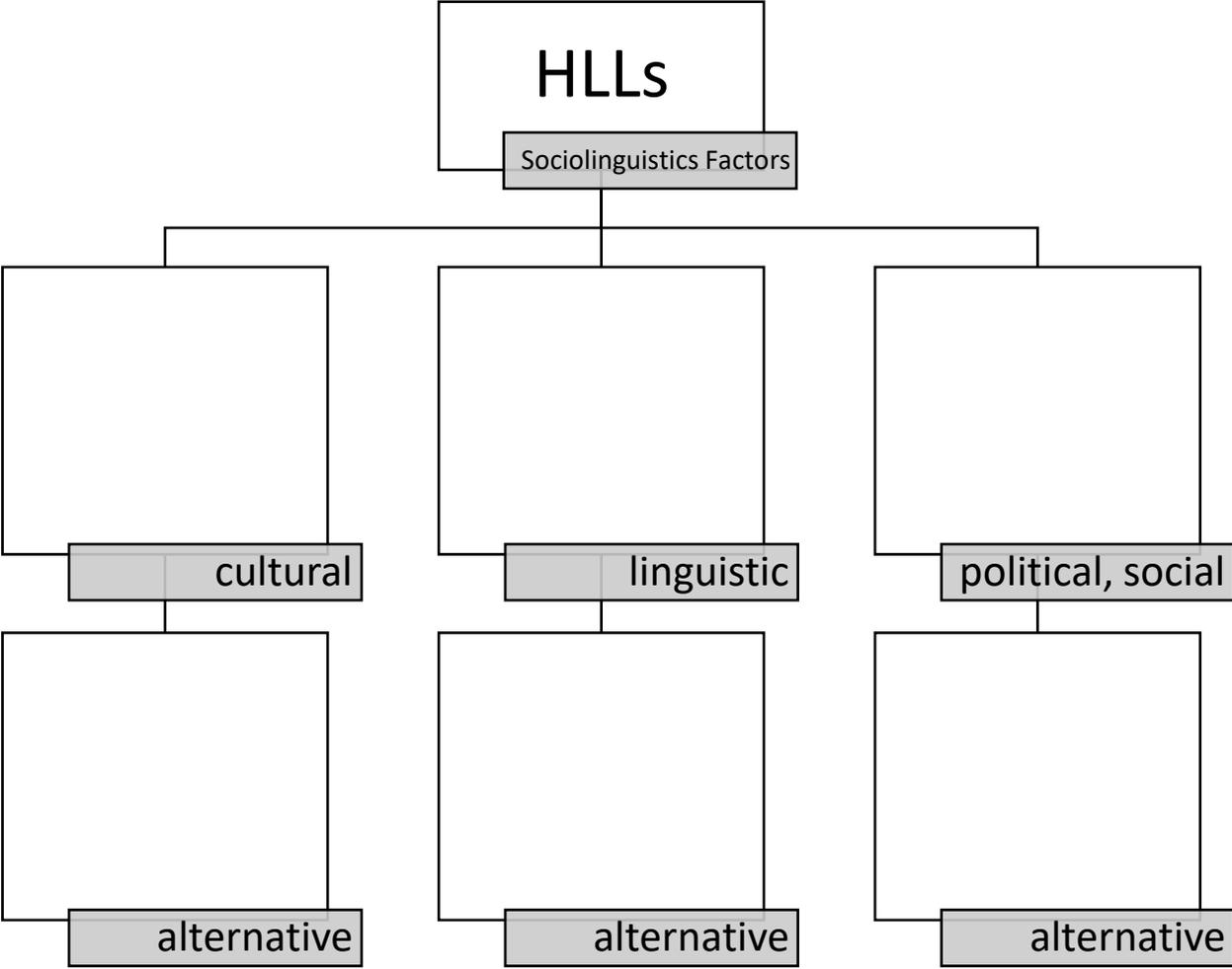


Figure 5*Student and Family Questionnaire*

Session 1: ZPD, Dual-language and Sociolinguistics Factors

Use the following question with your students and during parent interviews. Note some questions are only for the parents or person in charge.

Please add any other questions that will help to get to know your student.

1. How many adults live with you?
2. How many other kids live in your house?
3. Where were you born? (Parent only) And your children?
4. When did you arrive in this country/school?
5. What country are you from?
6. What do you care about the most?
7. Which language do you like to use more, Spanish or English?
8. Which language do you want to use when you talk to your family?
9. Which language do you like to use when you talk to your friends?

Figure 7*Meeting Agenda 2*

Day:

Time:

Location:

Session 2: HLL Profile and Spanish Language Acquisition Approach

- Presentation of learning targets
- Q & A from Session 1
- Topic 1
 - Create the HLL profile
 - Presentation by grade of HLL profile
 - General observations concerning both grades
- Topic 2
 - Presentation of the language acquisition approach for the Spanish language
 - Videos comparing the whole language and phonics approach
 - Evaluation of language approaches by the participants
- Topic 3
 - Ordering phonemes for the phonetical language learning approach by the participants
 - Exploring other order alternatives
- Closing
 - Exit ticket
 - Bonus: video of tongue twisters as part of the phonemic awareness

Figure 9

Whole Language and Phonics

Session 2: HLL Profile and Spanish Language Acquisition Approach

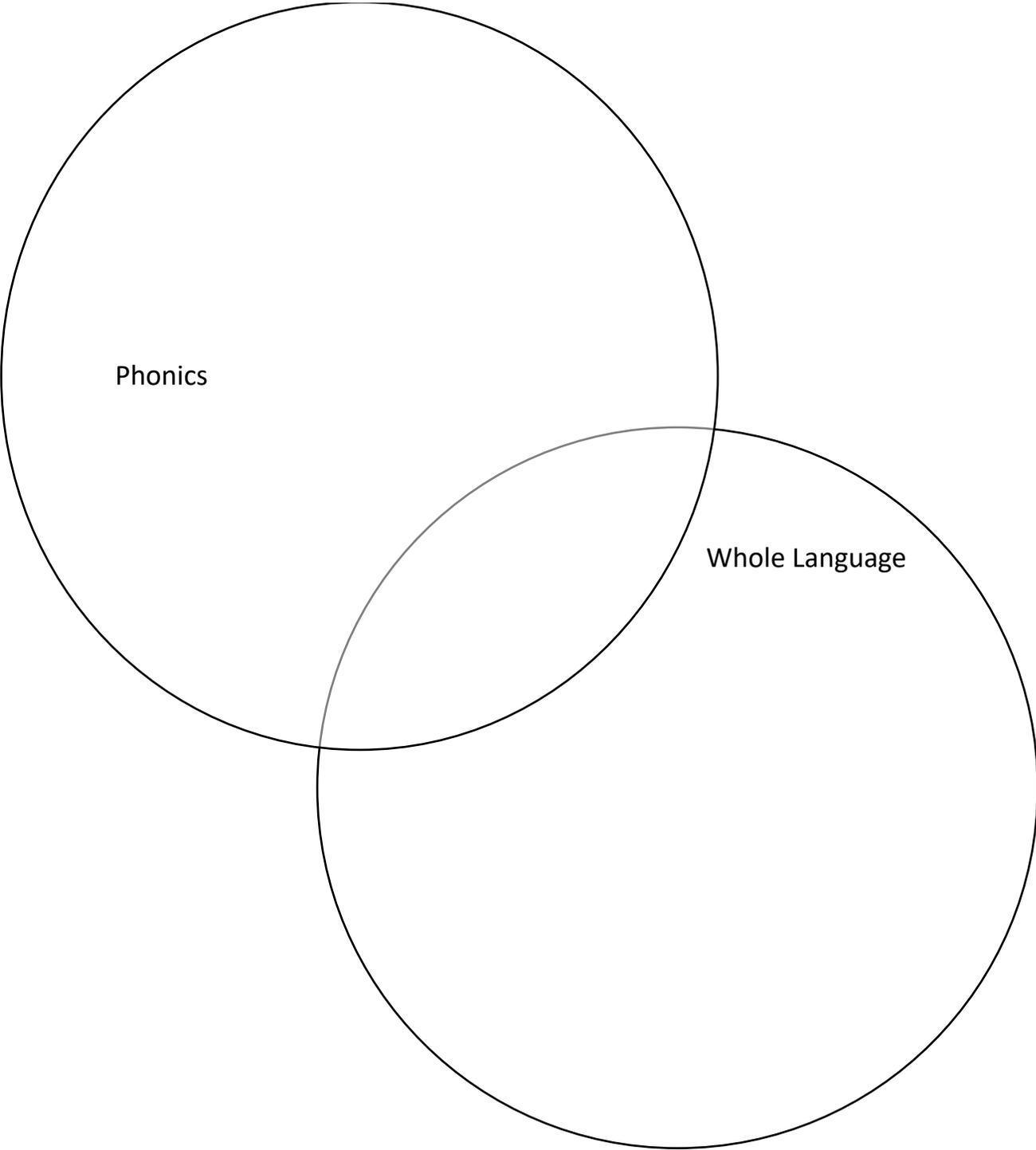


Figure 11

Exit ticket

Please write any comments, concerns, or questions you would like to address during the next meeting/session related to the received information.

Please answer and explain why:

My preferred language approach to teach Spanish is

Figure 15

Classification of the Vocabulary Words by Level

Session 3: Culturally Responsive Literature

Emergent	Beginners	Instructional

Comprehension questions I will like to add:

Figure 16

Exit Ticket

Session 3: Culturally Responsive Literature

Please answer the following questions:

1. What socio-cultural topics would you like to include in your classroom library?

2. How would you use a book like *Pelo Bueno*, during guided reading, read out loud...?

3. Any questions or concerns that should be addressed related to the topic?

Thank you!