

Qualitative Research Proposal  
Strategies to Support Elementary English Language Learners  
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## [Lit Review](#) Spreadsheet

In many school settings, there are students who are participating in lessons in a language that differs from their first language (de Araujo et al., 2018), and To et al., (2012) celebrate this situation by sharing that learning more than one language does not have a detrimental effect on students growing in their first language, even if students have a diagnosed language development disorder. When looking at the reasoning behind educator or school system choice to solely use English as the Language of Instruction (LOI) (de Araujo et al., 2018), Guiterrez (2013) found that the choice to use a student's nondominant language reflected socio political ideology around immigration policy and colonial histories. Vomvoridi-Ivanovic (2012) mirrors that hesitation to acknowledge and integrate languages beside English could be detrimental to students developing English Language proficiency. With 80% of the English Language Learners in the United States speaking Spanish as a home language (McFarland et al., 2017), it calls to question how young learners are participating effectively in math classrooms. English only classrooms are called into question by Bautista Verzosa and Mulligan (2013) who share that students' proficiency in first language (L1) *and* second language (L2) is related to mathematical success and performance in the classroom. Having a teacher who only communicates in a student's L2 creates a sense of emotional disengagement for both student and teacher alike (Kasule & Mapolelo, 2005), and the mathematical identities of learners are impacted, just as their racial and linguistic identities are as well (Zavala, 2014). As educators begin to disengage from pupils, it calls into question professional commitment, and has been shown to reduce tolerance for learners who are not grasping concepts at the same speed as peers (Kasule & Mapolelo, 2005).

As English Language Learners (ELLs) or Language Minority Students (LMS) (Edele & Stanat, 2015) are entering school settings, it is vital for educators to develop skills in effectively teaching mathematics, even if students do not proficiently speak the LOI. In a 2013 study, Razfar found that open ended tasks that allowed students to use their L1 facilitated greater meaning making, and contributed to mathematics success in problem solving. This peer to peer collaboration is validating for learners, and a powerful tool in the classroom, so when is it developmentally appropriate to use L1 in the mathematics classroom versus the student's L2 of English as the LOI? Additionally, what are current teaching practices that contribute to the success of ELLs or LMS?

## Context for Research

In August 2019, I had the honor of moving to join the Pine Spring Elementary School community in Falls Church, Virginia. As a first grade teacher, I have the privilege of teaching 23 tiny humans who show up to school each day eager to learn. In my classroom, I have students who speak English, Spanish, Pashto, and Telugu. The students in my class who have exposure to Pashto and Telugu at home primarily speak in English, but have exposure to the language from their family customs and traditions. For the majority of the students in my class who speak Spanish at home, this is their first language or primary language. With limited English language exposure, and English being the language of instruction (LOI) (de Araujo et al., 2018), this has presented some roadblocks in our classroom. As the school year has progressed, we have welcomed students to our classroom from multiple countries in South America who have spoken no English upon arriving in the classroom. As a teacher, I have felt helpless, but have been inspired by the care and consideration of peers in the classroom who offer to translate and work together to problem solve, and grow. My concerns were validated by Gablasova (2014) who outlined common educator uncertainty around if students are struggling with the content, or are just not understanding what assessments are asking of them due to the context.

In January 2020, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) held a professional development for secondary World Language educators. Within this session, the educators were asked to watch two videos about the newest system for assessing students. Teachers listened to a passionate teacher, Maureen Hunt, an educator at Annandale High School discuss the importance of assessing students in English within her foreign language class. Following this video, the professional development included a video from Foreign Language Association of Virginia (FLAVA) 2019 teacher of the year, Eric Jaworski. In the interview, Mr. Jaworski said, “if we include questions in the target language, we muddy the waters and don’t know with any certainty whether the student didn’t understand the text or didn’t understand the question. In order to eliminate the variable of the question hindering comprehension, the questions are in English,” (*Pyramid Session*, 2020). Following this statement, he went on to explain that, “in upper levels (4, 5, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate) classes we would expect that the questions would be in the target language, since the students have much more control of the language at those levels. The same would be true about Fluent Speakers classes,” (*Pyramid Session*, 2020).

Although this change has been made in terms of assessment in secondary level World Language classes in FCPS, my thought was that there must be benefits to honoring and speaking in a students’ first language (L1) as opposed to only using English as the LOI (de Araujo et al., n.d.). Specifically, I began to wonder if I should be altering the mathematics assessments given in class to ensure that the content was being assessed, not the decoding of English. After consulting with the English Language Learning (ELL) teacher assigned to my grade level, she shared the students’ with ELL supports’ World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) scores with me. These scores give insight into the instructional levels of student’s

Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing abilities in the English language (*WIDA Screener*, n.d.). The WIDA Screener (n.d.) informational homepage states, “If a student is identified as an ELL, proficiency level scores from WIDA Screener can be used by educators to compare across ELLs and to plan differentiated levels of support for each child.” After students are assessed on the four areas of literacy, they receive a score on a scale of 1 to 6. A score of 1 indicates that students are just entering the English language, and have emergent skills, where as a score of 6 indicates that students are able to think, synthesize, infer and communicate efficiently and effectively in English.

The students in my first grade class fall within the 1 to 2 range on their WIDA assessments in all four areas (*WIDA Screener*, n.d.). When posing inquiry to peers, and administration as to what I should do to assess students in their first language and ensure the content was known, I was told the district policy is to keep English as the LOI. The low proficiency level of the students ELL ability was inconsistent with the FCPS Pyramid Sessions’ (2020) message that students should be assessed in their foreign/second language, or L2, until at the proficient level. Within the de Araujo et al. (2018) article *English Learners in K–12 Mathematics Education: A Review of the Literature*, the authors posit that ELL proficient in both their first language (L1) and L2 contribute to their success in the math academic setting. This discrepancy leads to the study of L1 and L2 use in educational environments. Personal interest around language use in an early childhood education mathematics setting is the root of this study, but a spectrum of information across grade levels in language learning was considered. de Araujo et al. (2018) shares that 80% of ELLs in the United States have Spanish as the identified L1. I am in a public school setting with English as the LOI, and students who speak Spanish at home, many of the articles read focus on English Language Learners, and Spanish as the language of LMS. However, I am interested in how teachers utilize students’ L1 or home language whether it be Spanish, another orally spoken language, or non-verbal communication (Sign Language or the Picture Exchange Communication System). As some students communicate non-verbally, it is vital to incorporate the use of non-verbal language in this study (Cihak et al., 2014; Sulzer-Azaroff, 2009).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Within the constructivist theory, there are three types of knowledge that humans learn: physical knowledge, logico-mathematical knowledge, and social knowledge (Branscombe, 2013). Physical knowledge is explained as the way in which humans learn through and with movement, interaction and manipulation of objects, and exploration of the world. Logico-mathematical knowledge is the term used to describe information that is heard, seen, or experienced and solved or made sense of, internally. Social knowledge is the learned coding that develops human interactions with one another across time. Branscombe (2013) posits that human development does not only occur during social interaction, but must be constructed through a logical mathematical framework paired with physical movement in the learning experience.

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What led me to my current educational environment in FCPS is my administration's core belief in social constructivism. Within the social constructivist theory Sivan (1986) explains the validity of cognitive development (logico-mathematical knowledge) through the development of cultural knowledge, tools and signs, and assisted learning. The socialization among humans at different stages of life, and coming from a variety of backgrounds, allows for the exposure and development of understanding around a plethora of cultures, tools, and communication styles. This development of understanding allows for participation within society (Sivan, 1986). This ties into L1 and L2 or LOI as August (2018) explains that based on a study of 36 elementary schools, a teacher's incorporation of instructional routines that draw on home language, and culture and support literacy development in English.

Understanding that social constructivism as a core belief is for students to learn from each other, as well from the school structure as a whole, is important to note before moving forwards through the literature. There are multiple models of school based social constructivism when it comes to teaching and learning with students who are speaking a language other than the LOI: immersive practice and bilingual education are two of these models. Students placed within a fully immersive L2 environment as the LOI is done in order to learn holistically from the context of interaction and instruction. A weakness in this system is addressed by Kim and Plotka (2016) who explain that being immersed in the English language for speaking and listening development will help students develop contextual knowledge and understanding, yet as young students have not yet mastered their own L1, it is an added challenge to try to translate the experience being had in an L2, and search the developing vocabulary of the L1 to process the event. August (2018) explains a fully immersive experience does develop students with content based vocabulary, and proficient academic language in English, yet if a student has learned a mathematics concept in their L1, it is not necessary to reteach the entire concept, but rather teach the LOI academic content vocabulary associated with the topic. Gorlewski (2012) explains that if learners experience or are involved in an event while using their L1, then it is appropriate for the learner to communicate the experience in the language of experience. Within Gorlewski's (2012) study around student motivation, writing in the L1 does not deter students from learning a new language (L2), which in some cases is the LOI. The advantage to having a system that incorporates dual-languages is that deficiencies in one area can be supported by drawing on strengths of another (Brevik et al., 2014). In respect to the bilingual of education Goldenberg et al. (2013) share that students being taught academic language in their home language concurrently with acquiring the same skills in English has benefit academically and psychologically that one-hundred percent immersion cannot offer.

Kim and Plotka (2016) explain that not being able to fully communicate in the LOI is a source of anxiety and fear for both students and families, and it is advisable for teachers and schools to bring the home language into school as much as possible. If at all possible, it is recommended to hire a teacher who speaks the specific L1 of students in order to build rapport, and minimize a sense of cultural isolation (Kim & Plotka, 2016). Using tools and applications

like Google Translate, among other translation apps, are a method for integration and validation of student L1, but Kim and Plotka (2016) suggest using these tools for a few words at a time, as opposed to extended lessons. Kim and Plotka (2016) assert that it is the social characteristics of confidence and shyness are the factors that decrease a student's interest in learning a new language. In order to prepare students for schooling, infant and toddler programs are majoritively done in a complete immersion of the LOI to ensure that whatever environment students go to next, they will have a solid foundation of language to translate from if necessary.

### **Theory and Principles When Instructing English Language Learners**

Methods for including a student's L1 could be the integration of a picture based bilingual glossary, used specifically with English and Spanish definitions for the key vocabulary words (August, 2018). Having these keywords as a reference point ensures that LOI remains, and the development of new vocabulary is present. By providing the new word in English and the student's L1, students are able to hear the two terms connected and create a connection between hearing the word or phrase in their L1 and their L2 (August, 2018). Kasule and Mapolelo (2005) refer to this brain-based language translation and connection between the L1 and L2 languages as 'code-switching.' Following the introduction of a new word or concept, August (2018) advises teachers to use the strategy of providing a sentence starter to scaffold the challenge of developing an initial phrase in the LOI and then elaborating on content in the student's L2, thus aiding the code-switch (Kasule & Mapolelo, 2005). Goldenberg et al. (2013) emphatically state that regardless of English development, ELLs require scaffolding and support to access learning activities in English. For students with low levels of oral English, Goldenberg et al. (2013) suggest pictures for story vocabulary be present during explanations. The activation prior schema through visuals promotes connection between a concept experienced in L1 to new English vocabulary. Accommodations in classrooms, and on standardized tests are meant to minimize factors that relate to ELLs being unfairly assessed due to decoding or comprehension of assessment questions (National, Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, et al., 2018).

Teacher effectiveness is driven by utilizing strategies that make learning enjoyable, joyful, and engaging, and by acknowledging student L1 and to using English to teach during these joyful moments is what promotes learner success (Kasule & Mapolelo, 2005). Engagement in mathematics lessons can be driven by multisensory approaches to learning, projects that provide authentic application to students or the community, as well as interaction with tools or stimuli (National, Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, et al., 2018).

By maintaining and developing the student L1 and L2 capabilities through joyful and rigorous instruction, culture is being validated and cross-cultural understandings are being developed or strengthened (August, 2018). Kasule and Mapolelo (2005) explain this as the learner's mother tongue being the key to the world, and the tool necessary to unlock the abstract nature of learning in an L2 environment. Kasule and Mapolelo (2005) explains that modeling

code-switching is a powerful teaching resource that explicitly shows students how the concept in their L1 looks and sounds in the L2 or LOI. As a teaching tool, code-switching can most impactfully be done with peer-to-peer interaction. By using the student L2 as the LOI, and providing students opportunities to communicate, collaborate, and discuss in L1, Kasule and Mapolelo (2005) found positive connections to academic growth, social behavior, school based attitudes, and self-esteem. Murphy and de Larios (2010) explain that training students to respond to peers has been viewed as a non-negotiable practice in educational settings, not just with ELLs. The effectiveness and fluency in oral communication is dependent upon a student's ability to express them self. Marx et al. (2015) references the theory that rate of decoding must be fluent in order to support comprehension. Gablasova (2014) supports the teaching strategy of allowing students to collaborate in L1 in context of a new content as the faster students are able to express thoughts on the content, without the cognitive load of translation into L2 or LOI, the more apt students are to retain information. Vocal reformations, and restarts of phrase hinder students from grappling with content, and moving forward in instruction (Gablasova, 2014).

Goldenberg et al. (2013) echoes this by sharing that instruction in home language strengthens not just the home language, but also provides a solid foundation for the cognitive demands of hearing a concept in the L2 or LOI, and subsequently comprehending the information. Access to grade level content in the LOI, although it may be a learners' L2 is critical for future achievement with the academic settings, and future English proficiency (August, 2018). Unlike reading in L1, reading in L2 requires the use of both languages; the language that is being decoded, and the language that thought is being comprehended in (Brevik et al., 2014). Brevik (2014) explains that if a student's second language proficiency falls below a certain level, the transfer of reading strategy L1 to L2 is hindered.

### **Constructs with Educational Settings**

With English Language Learners making up 9.5% of the public school population, or 4.8 million students (Lee, 2019), Odowd (2010) outlines the process for standardized testing and accountability in this day. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act of 2001 mandates standards based accountability and testing to show the progress for all students (Odowd, 2010). Although students may receive ELL services during instruction, these same scaffolds, supports, and educational structures are not visible during standardized testing. This comes with challenges when testing, as Native English speakers are familiar with colloquial phrasing, idioms, and stock phrases that have been a part of conversational language throughout their schooling (Odowd, 2010). Students who enter the country have one year of immunity to the testing demanded through the NCLB Act of 2001, and then must participate in the same testing as Native English speakers (Odowd, 2010). August (2018) explicitly states that districts that utilize standardized performance benchmarks should use the same standards for ELLs and English proficient students in early grades. However, if ELL students are not making sufficient progress, then instruction should be adjusted (August, 2018). This educational adjustment in the classroom is vital as Marx

et al. (2015) indicate that not speaking the LOI at home was linked to an achievement disadvantage of a quarter standard deviation, even if the students were performed comparably to socially and emotionally to Native English speaking peers. Marx et al. (2015) shares that even after 5 years of L2 immersion in elementary school, student's skills were still insufficient to access grade-level instruction unaided.

The WIDA standards were developed to help provide insight into how ELL students were progressing towards language mastery. As shared in the personal vignette, the WIDA standards are assessment indicators in listening, speaking, reading, and writing range from a Level 1 student ability, seen as 'Entering' the English language, to a Level 6 or 'Reaching' grade level performance. When student scores indicate a Level 6 on the WIDA assessment, then students are considered as performing on grade-level, and ready for the generalized instruction without language support (Odowd, 2010). Theoretically, if a student is meeting the Level 6 WIDA Model Performance Indicators (MDIs), they should pass standardized assessments (Odowd, 2010). The MDIs provide concrete descriptions of student ability at each level, and provide teachers with explicit support in order to scaffold instruction for students at each level of L2 development (Odowd, 2010). With English being the LOI, the standardized assessments are provided in English as well; meaning that students have one year after entering the country before being expected to participate in high-stakes testing in their L2 or LOI. de Araujo et al. (2018) explains that in postcolonial countries, language policies are often tied to colonial histories and are intertwined with social justice and political issues such as race, social class, and immigration policy. Teachers who choose to code-switch into student's L1, or facilitate code-switching in order to support students in their understanding, might be viewed as challenging language policies, or participating in a political act of defiance (de Araujo et al., 2018). In the United States, the sociopolitical perspective of use of L1 and nondominant language in public schools mirrors the country's struggle to support historically oppressed communities (de Araujo et al., 2018). Even outside the United States, de Araujo et al. (2018) notes that post colonial countries are still working to disconnect language use in school settings with social hierarchies and immigration patterns; English is being used as the LOI at school, yet the community solely operates on the use of local language.

Edele and Stanat (2015) begin *The Role of First-Language Listening Comprehension in Second-Language Reading Comprehension* by explaining that listening comprehension is the most important factor in determine student's subsequent reading comprehension, and that a student's L1 decoding skills transfer to ability to decode in L2. As comprehension of written text is mandatory for students to be successful in the classroom, Language Minority Students (LMS) have an uphill battle in the classroom (Edele & Stanat, 2015). The language-transfer hypothesis and states that LMS who are fluent in their decoding skills in their L1 will be more apt to be able to decode in the L2 or LOI (Edele & Stanat, 2015). However, languages that resemble each other in their morphosyntactic structure allow the content-based information to be transferred across languages (Edele & Stanat, 2015). Laski and Yu (2014) explain this in a mathematics setting;



*“In Chinese and other Asian languages, multi-digit numbers are expressed by consistent rules for combining the primary numbers (e.g., 12 is ‘ten-two’) that transparently reflect the base-10 system. In contrast, English and other Western languages use inconsistent rules and arbitrary number words to express teens and other multi-digit numbers (e.g., 12 is ‘twelve’).”*

Laski and Yu’s (2014) explanation sheds light on the struggle students face to connect numerical words in mathematics classrooms, and exposes why cultures with transparent base-10 systems outperform students coming from languages with more obscure language structure to describe quantity. The one to one correspondence may be there when counting, but the translation of English words into L1 does not match the literal definition, which gives credence to the use of math manipulatives in the classroom. Fleckenstein et al. (2019) notes that often the quality of math instruction is going to be higher in the student’s L2 than L1, and that effects on performance were highest when L1 and L2 were linguistically similar.

When it comes to ELLs and LMS in mathematics classrooms, de Araujo et al. (2018) outlines that there is a lower cognitive-processing load due to the frequency of base-10 numbers being used across educational settings in the world. However, Bailey et al.’s (2015) study of 62 elementary ELLs and their ‘language for mathematical understanding’ and found that the fluency of student’s mathematical strategies contributed to the sophistication and complexity of student phrasing. As language acquisition is a cognitive and social process, it can be distinguished from mathematics learning when it comes to numeracy based problems (de Araujo et al., 2018).

The National, Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, et al. (2018) states that when “language is the means on which assessment is delivered - test scores are dependent on the language proficiency,” and that “language of testing is a negative factor in performance.” The legal mandates of assessment, and limited effectiveness of assessment procedure in only the LOI are hindering educational systems from evaluating students’ comprehension (National, Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, et al., 2018).

As educators become aware of the discrepancy in student ability based on language fluency, de Araujo et al., (2018) notes that certain mathematics activities better promote students to draw from the cognitive skills that were developed during the use of their L1, or pull from the academic vocabulary already accumulated in the LOI. Specifically, the use of open ended tasks that promote collaboration and use of student L1 showed marked engagement in Razfar’s (2013) study of EL instruction (de Araujo et al., 2018). Halasa and Al-Manaseer (n.d.) refer to the use of learning from peers by communicating in L1 or L2 during lessons as Community Language Learning. Rinsveld et al. (2016) shares that neuro-imaging studies on Chinese-English bilinguals showed the verbal coding of the L1 is used to perform initial calculations when presented, but extra language processing is required to fully communicate the idea back into written or oral form. A study conducted with ELs in Kindergarten by Turner and Celedon-Pattichis (2011) indicated that Kindergarten teachers who provided time and opportunity for students to engage in mathematics tasks that allowed students to discuss in their primary language, as opposed to only

the LOI, the students performed similarly to their Native English speaking peers. It should be noted that the Turner and Celedon-Pattichis (2011) study was studying the effects of low-income non-white ELs utilizing their primary language in the Kindergarten setting, and the outcomes of assessment using primary language were on par with their white, middle-class peers.

de Araujo et al. (2018) addressed the understanding that ELLs and LMS students may perform at a higher level when able to utilize L1, quality of instruction is still paramount: Lessons should not simply rely on procedure and numerical equation (Rinsveld et al., 2016).

From a social equity and justice lens, Turkan (2016) highlights the importance of supporting LMS, validating language and culture in the classroom, and providing high-quality instruction. Halasa and Al-Manaseer (n.d.) contribute that this high quality instruction includes feedback cycles claiming that testing rubrics, explanation of assessment criteria, as well as testing instruction should be provided in the LOI, but also in the student's L1.

### **Research Questions**

The review of literature around the area of supporting LMS and ELLs paints a picture of inequality and injustice in the classroom settings and assessment practices in education. FCPS has begun the challenging district wide work of changing testing criteria in foreign language assessments, which shows that there are districts that are flexible in their practice after identifying bias in how questions are being posed. Native English speakers participate in general education without the heavy cognitive task of code-switching, and choose to select an elective that trains their brain to do just that. Young LMS who enter the country do not have the luxury of opting into a chosen language immersion experience; it is simply hoped that teachers honor student L1 and incorporate their language and culture as much as possible to validate student presence.

Until district level assessments across all subject areas are assessed with an accessibility and social justice lens, this researcher turns to the educational professionals in the classrooms and seeks to know, what practices are put in place to support and validate LMS, or those students who have a different L1 to the LOI?

### **Value Claims**

If educators are unsure of what content scholars comprehend due to a language barrier, then teachers are operating with a limited understanding, and will be unable to effectively access the student's zone of proximal development. Research by de Araujo et al. (2018), highlighted that schools in the United States have served English language learners poorly based on assessment scores, patterns in coursework, and high-school graduation statistics. The barriers to learning include task terminology, grammar, syntax, and content being put into unfamiliar contexts (de Araujo et al., 2018; Rinsveld et al., 2016). The implicit bias in educational material and pedagogy of instruction creates a system of gatekeeping, holding English language learners back from academic success. The misalignment of educational tasks and student's LOI comprehension

does not only affect student academic achievement, but also contributes to poor self-esteem and negative self-perception (de Araujo et al., 2018). Even with five years of immersion experience in elementary classrooms, Marx et al. (2015) found that this amount of time was still insufficient for children to develop the complete syntactical skills necessary to participate on the same level as their monolingual peers who were raised in the LOI.

With the Supreme Court ruling in *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) stating that ELLs have a constitutional right to learn in an equal manner to native-English speaking students, districts were mandated to take appropriate action to remove language barriers that hinder student participation based on language (Haas & Gort, 2009). This mandate affects millions of school aged children. Batt (2009) explains that during the 2003-2004 academic school year, 5.5 million students in the United States had limited English language proficiency. Between 1999 and 2009, the number of students in Kindergarten through 12th grade who identified as English language learners increased by 51% (Gomez & Diarrassouba, 2014). Despite the rising numbers of students who are English language learners, a national survey conducted by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) in 2011, a survey of teachers found that less than 20% of colleges offered professional development and training around working with English language learners, and that 57% of the teachers surveyed indicated that they felt they needed additional training to support students learning the LOI (Gomez & Diarrassouba, 2014). The wording of the 1974 Supreme Court ruling is vague in the actions states must take in order to support teachers

The amount of students who have a first language other than the LOI is growing rapidly each year. Claiming ignorance in how to teach these students is not an ethical option. With such a large number of teachings citing a lack of training at the collegiate level, and teachers who are currently in the workforce identifying themselves as uncomfortable, and in need of additional training to support English language learners, it is important for school districts to identify what their educators currently know. Gauging where educators are in their knowledge of best practice in order to determine what district wide next steps would look like in relation to training, and pedagogy.

### **Overview of Proposed Study Methods**

This qualitative study would take place in the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) system in Virginia. The survey based study would be completed during the first quarter of an academic school year with elementary aged educators and school staff that supports elementary aged students. As FCPS has a strong emphasis on teachers meeting weekly to plan and drive instruction, survey results could be used to drive collaborative learning team's (CLT) learning around literacy and math instruction that supports all students. Breaking down the data collected by school and grade level would personalize the action steps necessary for teams to take, and elements of instruction for English language learners that teachers can develop in to support their communities.

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In order to participate in the study, teachers must be currently employed within FCPS and instruct or support classrooms in preschool through fifth grade. This survey would be conducted online via Google Forms with any eligible employee that fits the teaching requirements outlined above, and who has an FCPS email address. This survey of educators would not include substitute teachers who serve within this grade level band. The survey would be provided to administrators of elementary schools, and distributed to staff electronically. The intention in providing the survey to the administration is for them to choose to opt in, or opt out of the survey, as the results would be compiled into a strategic learning plan for their teachers. Teachers would be allotted the first six weeks of school to complete the survey, with weekly reminders and progress updates sent to the administration to share teacher progress in the completion of the survey.

The survey would include questions directly from the United States Department of Education's English Learner Toolkit for State and Local Education Agencies (SEAs and LEAs), with references from the Kappa Delta Pi Record (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010), and World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA). Using these resources as a guide stone, grounded theory would be utilized to organize participant data into categories of pedagogy and understanding of English language learner progress. The four major categories of instruction being surveyed are Oral Language Proficiency, Academic Language Proficiency, Promoting Literacy Development, and Personal Practice. Coleman & Goldenberg (2010) suggest that oral and academic language, paired with the promotion of literacy development via pedagogical strategies are the foundation of success for English language learners. The survey on 'Personal Practice' would provide insight as to what teachers are already doing in their classrooms to support students who have limited language proficiency.

The following questions have been adapted from Coleman & Goldenberg's (2010) work on research based practices to support English language learners, and are the proposed questions for the FCPS teacher survey. The teacher name, grade, school, and years of teaching experience would be at the beginning of the survey, followed by extended response answers.

1. Describe how interactive techniques for English language learners look in your classroom.
2. What are some strategies are you currently using for promoting oral language development with students who have limited English proficiency?
3. What is the difference between oral language and academic language?
4. Describe the various levels of oral language development for an English Learner.

5. Think about an English language learner in your classroom and describe the student's level of proficiency. What techniques are you using to promote that student's oral language proficiency?
6. What types of language prerequisites are necessary to enable an English language learners to access the curriculum?
7. What roles do vocabulary and background knowledge play in studying a content area? How can a teacher ensure anti-bias educational content, or work to eliminate bias?
8. To better prepare English language learners for academic content, what cues and other study aids might you use in your classroom?
9. Describe literacy development techniques that can be effective with both English Learners and English speakers.
10. Do you believe students need to develop literacy skills in their first language before they can develop them in English? Why or why not? If you believe this is true, how are you supporting students in their first language.

### **Anticipated Results and Findings**

By asking early childhood and elementary aged educators to focus specifically on the methodology and pedagogy used to support English language learners, this researcher anticipates teachers will be able to articulate numerous scaffolds. With Batt (2010) indicating that it takes 5-7 years for English language learners to fully acclimate to the educational and academic language used in classrooms, it is vital that teachers are intentional about which techniques they are using to support instruction. By spending time reflecting on strengths and limitations in current instructional practices, teachers can begin to pinpoint where their hesitation or lack of understanding lies. This provides a clear path to communicate with the English Language Learning/English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher about how to support students in their oral or academic vocabulary, or request support and feedback on implementing scaffolded practices in the classroom.

Compiling the data from teachers across grade levels and schools will provide school wide, grade wide, and district wide trends in teacher technique and understanding of English language learners. Using grounded theory to organize the data into trends would provide individualized plans for professional development in CLTs. This targeted instruction and professional development for educators would align to the *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) ruling to provide appropriate education for students learning English, as well as maintain compliance with the No Child Left Behind goals of closing the achievement gap in students who speak a language other than English.

### **Potential Limitations**

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The first limitation to this study is asking teachers to spend a thoughtful amount of time to complete this electronic survey. Teachers have a significant amount of work to do on a daily basis, and adding an extended response survey to their list could result in limited completions. Framing the survey as a method for teachers to plan their own professional development course of action could promote investment in the project. Additionally, the use of a monetary incentive could be used to promote engagement and completion.

A secondary limitation to this survey is the technology factor. Whenever providing a survey online, it is possible for participants to encounter technical issues. Using the internet for surveys also opens the possibility of using search engines and outside resources to answer questions in an attempt to answer 'correctly.' The inconsistency of technology, or outside support for answering could potentially skew the data collected and create an inauthentic narrative.

## References

*References with an asterisk refer to research that was cited within the review of literature.*

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