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Building Academic Confidence in English Language Learners in Elementary School

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Building Academic Confidence in English Language Learners in Elementary School

by

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Bachelor of Arts

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SIGNATURE PAGE

This Capstone Thesis has been presented to and approved by the coordinator of the Liberal Studies/Teacher Preparation Program and the LS 4001 Instructor in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts, Liberal Studies.

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ABSTRACT

Non-English speaking students lack the confidence and preparation to be verbally actively engaged in the classroom. Students may frequently display hesitation in learning to speak English, and may also lack a teacher's guidance in becoming proficient English speakers.

The purpose of this research is to examine how teachers build academic confidence in English language learners. This study also examines how teachers can develop active and confident English speaking students, and improve home-school communication.

Research questions include the following: What are factors that contribute to confidence among ELL students in gaining English fluency? How can classroom teachers help develop self-confidence in ELL students? How can classroom teachers enhance home-school communication with families whose primary language is not English?

The research approach includes gathering peer-reviewed information from articles, journals, and online databases. Additionally, a qualitative study is designed where several teachers were purposely selected to participate in a one-hour interview. Secondly, parents of children in a Spanish speaking community are being asked to participate in a focus group that addressed communication issues between home and school.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

During one of my fieldwork observations I noticed how many of the English language learners (ELL) students would limit their participation in the classroom and would allow the native speaking advanced students in the classroom participate in the classroom discussions. Many of the students seemed to lack confidence in themselves, a factor that would show in their difficulties in completing classwork and homework.

This fieldwork observation had me question how teachers could develop better approaches to building confident ELL students in the classroom. As an ELL student myself, I admired many of my native English-speaking friends, and looked to them for guidance. However, I also lacked the confidence to participate in the classroom because of my own fear and lack of knowledge of the English language. It was not until I was in high school that I gained confidence in myself. The purpose of this study is to examine ways to build confidence in students at a young age so they feel confident in themselves and interested in furthering their education beyond high school and into college.

Statement of the Problem

ELL students who exhibit hesitancy in speaking in the classroom is a special challenge for teachers who have many students ranging from new incoming ELL students to advance native speaking students. Hesitant students tend to be left behind and struggle following teacher directed lessons, classwork activities, and completing homework assignments.

One factor that contributes to this problem is that teachers focus on verbal, actively engaged students in an effort to support them to advance in their English proficiency. The less

proficient, timid students may not receive the same attention and effort from teachers, when compared to those students who exhibit confidence in language use.

As immigrants continue to come to the United States, and as children of these immigrants enter the school system, it seems that teachers are unprepared to deal with the wide range of English speaking students and the diversity in their behavior. Teachers are limited in helping students build confidence in the classroom because they must teach specific standards to meet testing goals. The Matthew's effect described by the UO dibles data based system compares the reading progress of children who struggle verses students who are successful in reading and how just between first grades to third grade how students who struggle reading continue to struggle and those who are successful continue to be successful. According to this projection by the third grade there is at least 70 words per minute difference in oral reading fluency between the struggling and successful students (University of Oregon, 2014). Unfortunately, lack of teacher preparation in ELL management and the demands of state standards seems to contribute to the problem where some children are moving at a slower pace at a young age in mastering English. This hesitancy in English language production seems to progress with students into high school.

The study focuses understanding factors and problems that student's face which contribute to resistance in developing English language proficiency. The results contribute to developing knowledgeable teachers who can apply this information and in encouraging development of self-confidence in students.

Significance of the Study

Teachers who work with struggling ELL students to improve their literacy, also help them gain improvements in other academic areas, in communities, and furthering their education. Minority ELL groups who identify as themselves as a stereotypes. They continue into this

pattern, setting low standards for themselves, compared to those who are native English speaking students.

This study addresses the following factors:

1. Limited parent involvement

2. ELL students' perceptions of themselves

3. ELL student perception of their own underdeveloped English speaking communities

4. Influence of peers

All effect how student set standards for themselves, thus also contributing to low academic confidence. Research shows how lack of parent involvement negatively affects child perceptions of academic confidence. Parent involvement was described in multiple ways. Parental involvement varies from in home involvement, for example, reading books, checking homework and in-classroom involvement, such as, volunteering in the classroom, an important form of parental involvement. (Vera, et al, 2012). ELL student self-perception, based on community outlook highly influences student confidence in the classroom. Motivation to succeed academically increases with student engagement in community programs for youth and also peer influence in these programs. ELL students who feel that they are supported in the classroom, at home, and in the community develop a well-rounded system that helps promote self-confidence.

Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on English proficiency, parent involvement, community support, and a combination of all three as a foundation that influences social learning and enhancement of English language learners' self-confidence. Through this understanding it informs and prepare educators of the continuous growing population of ELL. The purpose of this paper is to

recognize these factors as crucial areas that have an effect on ELL and also acknowledge how these factors contribute to academic achievement. It is anticipated that teachers, with a general understanding of these factors, could improve self-confident ELL in the classroom. Overall by improving students' confidence teachers may help students pursue and succeed in furthering their education.

Background Information

Early Formation of Public Schools

The early formation of public schools was a problem. Who would fund them, who would teach the children, and where will they learn? However, it was not until the large increase of immigrants was there an issue of how to teach English to a student that did not speak English from birth.

Patterns of Ethnic Immigration

Large group immigration occurred during the Industrial Revolution and continued due to the World Wars. European Jews who migrated in the 1880s. "Irish Catholics immigrants migrated between the mid 1800s and 1920s to the United States due to the potato famine in Ireland" (Arnold, 2011, p. 217). "In 1800s German immigrants migrated and were so of the first to be blamed for, "not assimilating…[and refusing] to learn English" (Arnold, 2011, p. 23). In 1850s Chinese, and everyone else worldwide continued to migrate to the United States. All of these immigrants were considered English language learners.

Learning a New Language

Everyone had to learn a new language in a new setting for the first time. Communities and families were all affected due to the increase in non-English speaking families and children.

"[Students] or their parents understood that education was the likeliest route to improving their future lives in America. The schools in turn, had to address the problems of these children, many of whom spoke no English and lived [in low performing and rundown communities], where housing and sanitary conditions were terrible. Many big-city public schools implemented programs to teach children how to be Americans, have lessons in English, and American history…" (Mondale & Patton, 2001, p.65). Many of these issues and conditions still have an affect in communities and families of modern ELL students.

20th Century California Demographics

According to California Department of Education in, 1996 there was approximately 1.3 million English language leaners, between 2000-2009 there was 1.5million English learners, and most current data shows that "2010-2011 there were approximately 1.4 million English learners in public schools" (California Department of Education, 2013, para. 1). English language learners encompass 21.6% of enrolment in California public school, and 72% of them are enrolled in grades kindergarten to sixth grade. The increase in the amount of English language learners is only going to increase and unfortunately teachers are not going to be able to meet the demand needed to create over a thousand confident ELL students.

English Language Proficiency

English proficiency highly influences how academically successful students are. Beginning with large influence of changing traditional academic courses to fit the standard of how students learn English. "Experts believed that their methods of analysis were scientific and superior to academic traditionalism" (Mondale & Patton, 2001, p.66). Structuring classroom for specialized curriculum to specify strengths for students. Tests were given to specify jobs and careers that were best for students. "In public schools, IQ tests offered a seemingly scientific

basis for assigning students to varying curricular tracks, allegedly in keeping with their 'needs,'" (Mondale & Patton, 2001, p.67). Using testing to influence student expectation of how academically successful greatly affected perspectives of students. "In the 1960's and 1970's Julian Nava led a successful fight to ban I.Q. testing in the Los Angeles schools. Other minority leaders helped to end career tracking in the schools of Washington, D.C" (Mondale & Patton, 2001, p.113). The decrease of IQ tests influencing categorizing children allowed for the availability.

Economics and Language Proficiency

However, other factors influenced ELL students. In 1965, "Elementary and Secondary Education Act" gave some of the poor students some ELL students funding and equal opportunity. This federal community aid gave access to the ability to proceed in education. Bilingual education act gave direct funding in aiding students whose first language was not English (Mondale & Patton, 2001, p.158). Julian Nava an activist for equality stated, "Children who could not understand the language of instruction receive instruction in the language they understood in order that they not fall behind their peers while getting special instruction in English" (Mondale & Patton, 2001, p.158). According to the UO dibles data system they also agree that the students who struggle in school especially in English reading will continue to fall behind. If reading struggles continue they states, "These children's difficulties will only increase over time. In other words, they will not 'catch up' to their peers without explicit, intensive, systematic, and relentless instruction. This instruction must begin immediately and be sustained over time. Especially for theses students, teaching reading is not only essential for success, but also extremely urgent. Getting to 100% requires going through the bottom 20%, assuming students will 'catch up' with practice as usual is not wise. Catching up is a low probability

occurrence. The bottom 20% will require a very different kind of effort in both the short and long run" (University of Oregon, 2014, para. 14). Overall, all of these students who are poor and struggling in school will continue in this path if strategies do not change.

Stages of Child Development

Erikson describes the psychological stages of children and how it influences their development (Erickson, 1964, p.247-273). The eight stages all describe how all children form an understanding of society.

The fourth stage industry and inferiority describe how children in elementary school are able to understand their role in school. When children leave the stability of family, they experience a drastic change as they enter the school society, which in turn has an effect on child development. If, "family life has failed to prepare (the child) for school life, or when school life fails to sustain the promises of earlier stages," (Erickson, 1964, pg.260). Equally this stage of development is important for students to work together. If students do not learn to work together either in school or with others in their community they begin to restrict themselves from others. This behavior can make students timid, shy, and less confident in themselves.

Research Questions

1. What builds confidence in ELL students? (Proficiency in the English language, having a foundation of support to help build confidence (home, or community), or a combination of all)

2. How can teachers implement new techniques in classroom that actively engages ELL students to participate in the classroom?

Definition of Terms

English Language Learners:

"English language learners can be defined as individuals in an English speaking environment whose native language is not English…[In addition they are] linguistically minority students or linguistically diverse students" (Halle, Hair, Wander, McNamara, & Chien, 2011, p.1)

Academic Achievement:

In California academic achievement can be defined through the Academic Performance Index (API). API is measured through a test given to students in grades K-twelve that assess their comprehension in multiple content areas (California Department of Education, 2013). In this study academic achievement is at the state that students are able to comprehend and self assess their ability in specific content areas. This includes being English proficient in and outside of the classroom (Halle et al., 2011, p.3)

Confidence: " The quality or state of being certain," (Merriam-Webster, 2003, p.14c: 2)

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review shows that there are about three significant subtopics that help increase academic achievement in ELL through English proficiency, parent involvement, and community support. These key areas allow us to focus into multiple factors that encompass a well-rounded support group for all students. As teachers we tend to only dedicate ourselves into how we can teach students to become proficient English readers, writers, and speakers. However, we tend to forget that students' parents and community are important and significant factors in students' lives. The review of the literature allows us to better understand how we as educators in and out of schools can collaborate in creating confidence in students who tend not to receive sufficient support.

English Proficiency

Nguyen and Ho (2012) explain how English language teachers should approach teaching language learning strategies (LLS) to Asian students to make them proficient English language speakers. The four key ideas of the article are stereotyping students, analyzing students, parallelism in strategies and proficiency, and the role of gender in language learning strategies.

The authors use research from other studies on language learning strategies but they also implement some of their own research from Vietnam and Taiwan on learning strategies and its proficiency. The research shows that LLS is related to English proficiency and that teachers should get to know their own students and see what language learning strategies are effective and ineffective for their classroom.

One implication that arises from this article is that language learning strategies are important yet is still is in the process of research and debate. This article is helpful because it

looks into strategies that teachers can use to help students develop into more proficient English speaking students. However, it is not so helpful because it does not state the age of the students being studied, and it only looks into Asian countries teaching English and not the United States. This article was useful in my research but I need to continue researching to find a correlation between proficiency, active participation, and its effect on behavior of American students in the classroom.

Protacio (2012) describes what motivates students and how teachers can help motivate English learners (ELs) in their classrooms. Protacio (2012) looks into qualitative data that they have collected from other articles and journals to better explain what factor motivate students to read. She organized her research by detailing the importance of English proficiency and the motivation English learners gain in their comprehensive skills. Protacio (2012) research was mainly on all students' motivation factors to read. The main factors that influenced children's' reading was, "self efficiency beliefs about reading, access to interesting texts, social interactions around books, autonomy support, or opportunity for self-selection," (Protacio, 2012, p. 70). In her study she wanted to see if these same factors influenced English language learning students motivation to read.

Protacio (2012) referred to some articles and journals that have studied ELs reading motivation in the classroom. In these studies she saw that there was a correlation in reading with being proficient in English, academic achievement, peers, family influences, and books that captures their attention. In her research Protacio conducted her own study where she interviewed six ELs four boys and two girls who were in upper division elementary school and of different ethnic backgrounds (Protacio, 2012, p.70). In her study she found that there were five main

motivation factors: sociocultural environment, integrative orientation, instrumental motivation, perceived competence, and reading materials influenced ELs to read.

Sociocultural environment was described as the surrounding environment that influenced children. These influences could be family or peer motivation. The reason this was a factor in motivation was due to one key statement that one of the interviewees both stated that because they were able to discuss the books with other peers to better understand or just to receive their feedback on the book (Protacio, 2012, p. 72). Integrative orientation was, "ELs use [of] reading as a way to form bonds with their American peers and learn more about their new culture" (Protacio, 2012 p. 72). Jonathan a Chinese boy stated how he feels more comfortable speaking to his American friends about American books rather than his Chines friends who do not understand the books or cannot help him understand which made him, "frustrated" (Protacio, 2012, p. 72). While this one child was only one example of ELs using reading as a way to make connections with other students. Jonathan's example shows how the gap in reading advancement and motivation allowed him to advance to a higher level of understanding of books compared to his ELs counter parts. Jonathan was able to create a better bond between his American friends because of reading compared to his Chinese friends.

Instrumental motivation was ELs realization that by reading it would help them develop a better English proficiency. For example, some students in the study stated that they noticed that through reading they were able to develop a greater vocabulary, improve in their writing (Protacio, 2012, p. 74). Perceived competence was the, "ELs perceptions of their English abilities are related to their motivation to read in English, (Protacio,2012, p. 74). In the study if the students realized that they could read in English then they were motivated to read more challenging books. However, if the students realized that they were not as competent in their

reading abilities then they tended not to read as much. Reading materials was very significant in ELs. The students that could find an interest or relativeness in a book they tended to be motivated to read more. The key to interesting or could relate to a text was the help of teachers guiding these children to books that interested them (Protacio, 2012, p. 75). Overall, the main connection to reading motivation in all of these factors was that these children found a social or educational motivation to want to read.

I found this article very insightful. Reading motivation, and comprehension skills all correlated to children's English proficiency. As these children were motivated to read because of social reasons or educational reasons they were all motivated to assimilate into their American culture through reading. This article had very important information about the reading want to advance in their English proficiency.

Parent Involvement

Vera, et al. (2012) focuses on following the Epstein study and its correlation and barriers of parent involvement in English Learners. The article began by explaining factors that influenced English Learners. For example, the low socioeconomic factors that greatly influences academic achievement and motivation in English learning children, and explaining the relationship of English Learners being at the developmental state in which they can have full understanding of instruction in English. It followed by explaining the Epstein study which created a format that the researchers were able to follow. The Epstein study broke down multiple ways in which parents are involved in their child's academic life. These factors were, "parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community," (Vera, et al., 2012, p. 185). Through this understanding the researchers were able to formulate a study in which they interviewed parent volunteers. They tested which one of these

factors was more common and reported the importance for parents to become more involved in their child's life.

They began their study by communicating with four school administrators from different school districts. They then gathered 239 English learning parents in the Midwestern metropolitan area to participate. They varied in twenty-eight cultural backgrounds with 74% being mothers and 26% fathers. The parents were generally consistent with 10-20 years living in the United States. With in these schools parents were concluded eligible as parents of English Learning students. A letter was sent out to these parents explaining the study and a survey. The survey was established on their five guided questions based on the Epstein study. The researchers were then able to collect the surveys that were returned and created graphs of the results (Vera et al.,2012).

The results were quantitative showing that the return rate was about 10-20% return of the surveys. The majorities of the families were Latino or had an Asian descent in all of the four schools. The study was able to concluded from the surveys that there was a strong correlation between parent involvement based on perception of the school depending on, "the parents usage of community resources (r=-.169 p<. 05), communication with teachers, (r=. 267, p<. 01), communication with their children about school (r=. 209, p<. 01), and negative experiences with the school '(r=. -196, p<. 05)'" (Vera, et al., 2012, p. 190). Showing the importance of school and teacher involvement and communication with parents. Another important factor and barrier that influenced parent involvement was English language comprehension. It indicated that parents who were non-proficient in English language tended to use less community resources. This effected the parents involvement in the child's life because it decreased there involvement in reading to their child, talking to their child about school, and usually these parents lacked a

home routine for the children (Vera, et al., 2012, p.190-191). Generally the study showed that home involvement for example, monitoring homework and talking to children was the most common type of parent involvement and community resources was less common.

Overall, this article was very helpful in my study of English language learners' academic confidence through parent involvement. Although the majority of the research focused on the parents barriers and the type of involvement that parents commonly or not as commonly would use in a child's life. The research was still able to give me a perspective of the large influence that parents have on child's life in the types of involvement that parents use in their child's life at home and school. In a small part of the research it described the correlation of parent involvement and educational aspirations for English learning students. While the correlation was not as significant as other factors it did indicate that parents reading to their children and parents communication with teachers had a " .09 and .08" correlation which was the greatest influence in comparisons to other involvements and educational aspiration (Vera, et al., 2012, p.191). I found this very interesting because it showed the average interest that parents of English language learners had for their child's educational aspiration. This article was very helpful because it gave me some background knowledge that is useful in understanding parents' influence and overall involvement in their children lives. This shows how influential parents, schools, and overall communities are and how they are all correlate and overall effect the child's academic achievement.

Community Support

Crosnoe and Lopez-Turley (2011) focus on understanding the expectations that come from immigrant youth in the United States. The authors look into qualitative and quantitative data from multiple research articles and journals to better explain where these expectations come

from and to separate the stereotypes from the truth. The authors compare and organize their research first by explaining the historical contexts that have led to the lack of understanding of immigrant youth. They then look into the factors of immigrant paradox, differences in gender, ethnicity (mainly Asian American, African Americans, and Latin Americans), the generation of immigrant the child is, socioeconomic status, family/ home socioeconomics, English language proficiency, and finally it explains about some policy and programs that are trying to help immigrant youth.

Through its multiple references, and extensive research by both authors one can truly see how these factors give society an impression on the capabilities of immigrant youth. In the article they discuss a term that is used throughout the entire article, immigrant paradox. The immigrant paradox as defined by the article as; " immigrant youth often [being] academically successful compared with children with U.S born parents" (Crosone & Lopez-Turley, 2011, p. 133). The paradox is then described as this idea that, "immigrant youth enjoy academic advantages in the relative absence of the socioeconomic advantages, such as high parental education and income, that are usually associated with school success" (Crosone & Lopez-Tureley, 2011, p. 133).

Through these ideas the authors explain how there is a lot of research that can support the immigrant paradox however, it is not true for all immigrants. They explain how the paradox is different depending on race, generation of immigration, gender, school, and many more factors. They show how while some immigrants mainly African American and Asian youths do tend to succeed academically than those of Latin American families and those of U.S. born children. This success tends to lack the, "gains in the early years of elementary school" (Crosone & Lopez-Tureley, 2011, p. 143). The motivation to succeed academically does however tend to

increase with youths from Latin American youth do to the hope of policies and help from community programs.

One aspect of the research that really caught my attention was the authors' explanation of the lack of research and use of English language learners in studies. As I am researching English Language Learners I assumed that the research being presented in the article would include English Language Learners since a majority of them are immigrants. While in previous research it stressed the importance of English proficiency and its importance to help develop better more successful students. This article looked at other factors that contributed to students' struggle and success in schools. The article also highlighted the lack of research being done on elementary school immigrant students. It explained how most of the research being done on immigrant children was done in secondary schools where the success was continuing school and the failure was not continuing school. I found this article very insightful. Although it had a lot of information and not a lot on English language learners it shows me how importance my research is especially since I am mainly focusing on English language learners in elementary school. This research is very helpful because it lists multiple resources that I can look into for further my understanding of timidness in English language learners.

Téllez and Waxman (2010) focus on what factors parents, communities, and peers involvement are beneficial or unhelpful for English language learners to achieve academic success through community programs. The authors look into qualitative data in multiple research articles and journals to better understand the problems with the minimal success in English language learners in grades K-12. The authors study the issues of English Language learners from the perspective of Jane Addams, "whose efforts helped an earlier generation of immigrants adjust to life in the United States" (Téllez & Waxman, 2010, p.103).

Through multiple study references the authors showed that there is a direct correlation with the effectiveness of being proficient in English for parents, communities, and peers and the success of English language learners academically. For example, in the article they reference a study where parents who were taught to speak English in a program were more involved in children's education, which resulted in progress in child's academic goals (Téllez & Waxman, 2010, p.109). The implications of the article is that although there is minimal study on English language learners development there seems to be a direct correlation with community programs focusing on English proficiency to better improve the skills necessary for parents, communities, and peers to help the English language learner achieve academic success.

I feel that this article made me think of many important factors that could contribute to timidness in English language learners that limit confidence in the classroom. One critique that I have about the article is that it does not really define what academic achievement means. I was confused if they meant proficiency in English, achieving good grades in school, or just being more involved with the classroom environment. All in all, I feel that this article has provided me with multiple references I can look into for my capstone project that can help further help my research process.

Rossa et al. (2012) focused on the family structure and other factors that contributed to academic success in Mexican American students beginning in fifth grade and seventh grade. The article explains the importance to promote academic success especially through the critical transition stage from elementary school to high school. The study was based on the integrative model. The study was examined through a theoretical model of relationships of several family and individual strengths to study multiple variables that contribute to academic achievement in Mexican Americans. The multiple variables that the researcher's looked into were: human

capital, residential stability, family role models, family structure, externalizing, bilingualism, gender, and immigration status (Rossa, et al., 2012,p. 308).

The researchers developed their study by interviewing 749 Mexican American students who were in the fifth grade and seventh grade whose families fit in their categorical eligibility. For example one important control factor that the researchers emphasized was the child's parents had to be their biological parents who originated from Mexico. The families all ranged in in socio economic status, immigration generation, and language. The students' education ranged from public, religious, and charter schools all in the southwestern United States metropolitan area. Through their interviews the researchers were able to collect the data and find a correlations in all of the variables and conclude which of the variables influenced academic performance in both fifth grade and seventh grade.

The results of the variables concluded the most correlated factors through out the variables and in academic performance. The research showed that human capital, family role models, residential stability, and externalizing were on average the most influential and correlated in comparison to the other variables. Human capital was calculated by the parents response to the highest level of education they had completed, "[a] '0' [was given] for parental education less than high school completion (53.7%) and '1' for having at least one parent with high school completion or above (46.1%)," (Rossa, et al., 2012, p. 312). Family role models were categorized based on mothers, "rating adults in the immediate or extended family experiences [for example] graduating high school or full time employment. The rating was on the five point Likert scale, one for (none of them) to five for (all of them)," (Rossa, et al., 2012, p.312). Residential stability was calculated by given a zero for living in their home for less than a year, one or two years was scored a one, three years or more was given a three (Rossa, et al.,

2012, p.312). Children's externalizing was calculated through a computer Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children that recorded mental health problems in these children. For example, it concluded if a child had conduct disorder or opposition defiant disorder which are very common in children of in that age group (Rossa, et al., 2012, p.312). These results were generally similar in comparison to academic performance. The largest correlation in fifth graders was human capital, residential stability, externalizing, gender, and immigration. In seventh graders human capital, family role models, externalizing, and gender were most significant. In further detail both of these showed that externalizing behavior and gender had a negative correlation with academic achievement and human capital was a positive correlation. This explains how metal health problems and gender identity development negatively influenced Mexican American students academic achievement. It also showed that having one family member be educated in the family had a large influence in how academically accomplished the child was.

Overall, this study concluded the important factors that influence fifth and seventh grade Mexican Americans. Through this study one is able to understand significant factors that influence academic achievement in these students. By being able to distinguish some of these factors the researchers were able to pin point specific areas that have a positive and negative influence in these children's lives. The article was able to give background information on factors that influence academic achievement in students. Even though the study does not specify on English language learners it still has important content that I can use in my study. Through previous research one can see that the majority of English language learners are Hispanic. Through academic achievement confidence is built in these students. This study has provided more supporting evidence about the importance of parent and community involvement in creating a foundation for these students to further succeed in their education.

Summary

Overall, all of these articles support the importance of English proficiency, parent involvement, and community support as key factors that influence confidence in ELL students. The majority of the articles focus on Mexican American, and Asian ELL students. However, all of these factors are still influential in creating confidence in ELL students. English proficiency is acquired through students learning language strategies, and creating a language motivational environment in and outside of the classroom. Parent Involvement can increase by creating a good parent, teacher, and student school communication. Influencing parents to be involved through reading books at home and encourage English language comprehension. Finally, community support has a large correlation with academic achievement and motivation. All of these articles show how strong all of these factors have a large correlation with academic achievement.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

Overview

The research follows a qualitative design using interviews, and focus groups from purposive sample and open-ended questions to teachers and parents of ELL. This research study addresses the following questions: What builds confidence in ELL students? Proficiency in the English language, having a foundation of support to help build confidence at home, community, or a combination of all? How can teachers implement new techniques in classroom that actively engages ELL students to participate in the classroom?

The review of the literature indicated that English proficiency, parental involvement, and community support are outside factors that influence confidence in ELL students. In addition, the limited research on ELL students also demonstrated how important the need to focus on ELL students. Through this study it was apparent how difficult it was finding a school with limited ELL showing how the population of these students are increasing in all schools in Northern California. Everyone included in this research was chosen because they have a regular interaction with ELL students. Additionally they all volunteered and studied outside of Dominican University of California.

Ethical Standards

This study adheres to the ethical standards established by the American Psychological association (2010) that safeguards participation of human subjects and research. Additionally, this study was reviewed by the Dominican University of California, Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects (IRBPHS), approved, and assigned number #10211.

Research Questions

The following questions from two schoolteachers who are teaching predominately ELL classrooms compared to one schoolteacher who has a minority of ELL in Northern California. Additionally, asking them their opinion of how participating in the classroom effects self motivation in these students to participate in the classroom (parents, teachers, and or peers).

In addition I collected qualitative information from a focus group parents. Parents were asked open-ended questions on self-perceptions regarding their child's level of confidence in the classroom and at home. They were asked to report on their own observations and opinions as parents of ELL and non-English speaking parents.

Participants

I interviewed three teachers in Northern California School District in the greater San Francisco area. Teachers X male and Y female were from a majority of English Language Learners, and female teacher Z and had a minority of English Language Learners. The teachers ranged in years of teaching but all had a minimum of five years or more teaching in public Elementary schools. I began by first contacted the schools principals through email and requesting permission to interview the teachers at each designated school. Once each principal had agreed I emailed and phone called each teacher and designated a day in which I was able to meet with them and conduct the interviews. In addition a focus group in the same area was conducted with parents of students who are and were ELL. These parents all have lived in California for over ten years and have or have had children in classroom where their children were English language learners.

I purposely selected these teachers and parents because their experience with ELL was a valuable insight into their perspective of ELL in elementary schools. The teachers and parents

were chosen, because I have personal relationship with all of them. In addition, all of the teachers and parents live in the same area I live and it made it very convenient.

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at Dominican University of California approved the study (#10211). All participants were given a Bill of Rights documentation and Consent form in which they indicated that they had the right to deny my request to participate in this research.

Procedures

I began my research by collecting data about ELL and factors that influenced confidence. I then completed an IRB applications and received approval before I began interviewing and conducting the focus group. I then decided whom I would interview and ask to be in the focus group. I have a personal relationship with all the teachers who teach in classrooms with the large population of students who are and are not ELL. In addition I have a personal relationship with all of the parents in the focus group.

I emailed, phone called, and personally talked to the elementary school teachers and parents who agreed to participate to confirm availability. I interviewed three elementary school teachers for an hour at their present school and took notes in order to learn more about building academic confidence in English language learners. In addition I conducted a focus group with parents whose children attend schools where a majority of the students are English Language learners. My questions were open-ended and benign in nature, and there was minimal risk involved in this interview. The only risk with both interviews and focus group was running over time. I tried to make sure to stay within the hour time frame we set for the interview and made accommodations based on my subject's schedule. In order to alleviate fatigue, we took brief

breaks as needed. I used a pseudonym when referring to my subject's responses in the final

paper. This is to make sure that confidentiality is maintained.

Data Analysis

I interviewed all of the teachers and conducted the focus group with all of the parents.

Once I had written down all of the responses to both the interviews and focus group I put all of

the answers to each question on a one-page document to be able to compare and contrast all the

answers. I asked the teachers a series of questions and here are some of their responses to the

questions.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Demographics

I interviewed three teachers two from a school of majority of ELL and one teacher from a minority of ELL. Two of the teachers were females and taught Kindergarten and then the male teacher was a fifth grade teacher. The two Kindergarten teachers have taught at their current location for three years, and the fifth grade teacher has taught for eighteen years. All of the teachers have a teaching credential. The two teachers from the majority ELL school received their credential ten years or more ago. The teacher from the minority of ELL has had her credential for four years. However, the teacher from the minority of ELL has had experience in multiple social sciences as an undergraduate and has a degree in law. All of the teachers I interviewed have experience working or teaching in their communities before they began teaching officially. However, the teacher teaching at the minority ELL has had the most instruction and preparation from her credentialing program in instructing and creating lessons for ELL in the classroom. All of the teachers have had instruction in the Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) program and integrate the program into their classrooms. The program is dedicated to " Tied to the Common Core State Standards and State Standards, the model trains teachers to provide access to core curriculum using local district guidelines and curriculum. [It] develops metacognitive use of high level, academic language and literacy. Project GLAD training results in teachers' renewed commitment to high expectations and high standards for all students. The results for students have been continued gains in standardized test scores, as well as renewed involvement in a classroom that is, not only student-centered, but fosters a sense of identity and voice" (Project GLAD, 2013, para. 1-3).

The focus group was created from parents of ELL students. All of the parents have children in a Spanish speaking community. These parents were asked to participate because their children are the ELL students in local schools. The parents varied in ages 26-41. The parents either had one or three children. Out of the parents that had three children their youngest child was an ELL. The parents speak very minimal English. All of the parents have lived in the United States in a range of 7-22 years. They all have full time jobs seven days a week.

Data from Interviews

Question 2: How were you prepared to teach ELLs?

Teacher X (male, teaching 18 year), "One or two classes in general. I don't use any [of the tools they taught us]. I was not prepared very well. It [teaching ELL's] was just starting. It was very general and now there are specific strategies for everyone."

Teacher Y (female, credentialed for 12 years, teaching for three years), "My background being Latina English is my second language. [There was one] class that I took most of the information, strategies, and techniques that I use in my own classroom. For example, listening before you want to put anything in their heads. Using common sense is to what feels right and how to balance the standards in it as well."

Teacher Z, (female, teaching 3 years), "I took and ELL development course as part of receiving my teaching credential as it is part of the requirements now. Curriculum courses focused on building background, connecting content, and scaffolding, revisiting using assessment data. I always in the credentialing program had reflections and had to include ELL in my lessons and developed a practice. Learning to be empathetic to what other people are experiencing, and all Types of backgrounds. Preparing to just teach being nice and be able to use

strategies gave me the confidence and understanding of family dynamics and cognitive, and neuro-science to learning language."

Question 7: What factors influence ELL confidence?

Teacher X: "Having a lot of posters in your room as scaffolding samples. Compare and contrast and having a brainstorm and share out and talking!... Confidence is being able to speak write and read are all confident builders. Since they do not get it at home."

Teacher Y: "Depends on child's personally and their families. Secure push they are willing to take risks. If other families are making fun of them their confidence level is low. Nature and feel safe to take risks. The home! It is what is influential."

Teacher Z: "I think that personalities are biological. For me I feel that to be able to have different experiences for children are [builds confidence] taking risks and rewarded for taking the risk… Changing the resiliency into confidence. Foster natural curiosity and willingness to try reinforcing that they are trying. It's hard when parents get flustered and are parents of language learners because I know that they struggle. I encourage them to also further being an example…I try to build this with students so they are not outcaste or ostracized. So many schools are diverse in so many ways not an issue any more and so many languages. There is more help now. It is even in the standards."

Question 9: What do you look for in determining ELL confidence in English language?

Teacher X: If they are a shy kid if they can participate. If they are not move from proficient to advance… confidence through growth, being able to have them feel confidence in the skill. Going into an assessment and be confidence. They will feel confident to do it on their own, and express themselves clearly. Willing to share. Expressing himself or herself with the

teacher or a parent. When you cannot communicate with a parents its difficult. Teachers need to be able to give them a program to help their child's, and resources."

Teacher Y: " If students are tell me 'hi, how are you?' and be happy not so shy. I try to praise when he or she is telling me. [Conversation starters] she student is able to write full sentences. I had students who were quite for months and all of a sudden they were writing and playing. When you see a big change and personality. Problem at home is very difficult. I try to have quick check in's. Being more personal, 'Is something happening?'"

Teacher Z: "Willingness to speak out. Willingness to initiate play, devote friendships wiliness to try tasks. If a student is shy in his or her abilities a chance to try. They are afraid to try and ask for help and the esteem had not been built yet. Nurture to be at home to be good or be bad. What choice and responsibilities builds confidence… How much involvement parent has in development and coincides to make bad decisions and reward bad decisions. Family and home connection is being developed, how much the type of interaction with parent and guardian. However, even though parents are with [their child they have them] only watch T.V. compared to engaging them with play for example building Legos."

Focus Group Responses

Participants

LR -20 (age 41) 3 children

AD -22 (age 39) 3 children

YG-10 (age28) 1 child and one expecting

JG-7 (age 26) 1 child

Questions and Responses

2) Describe your largest obstacle with teachers as non-proficient English-speaking parents?

LR: Not being able to help or correct in English. If my child was saying or writing something in English it was hard to help. I never had a struggle because all of the teachers had a translator and the majority of the teachers knew Spanish in the schools. There was always something that would help explain and I never felt out of the loop.

AD: It was not a struggle I can communicate with them even though my English is poor.

YG: I do struggle. The teachers are not able to communicate with us (parents) because they don't know Spanish. And we don't know English. I mean there is a struggle but I feel like the school always tries to include us.

JG: It is difficult because sometimes we have meetings. I feel like I can understand but I get frustrated because I do not know how to ask questions correctly and I do not feel that they translator is translating correctly.

5) Describe how actively engaged you are in your child's homework?

LR: When I could I tried if I could understand yes. Like when they learned colors I tried. I tried to read the book in English. I feel like I learned English with them. That is how I tried to learn English by trying to help on homework. When they got older (middle school) it started to become more difficult and I couldn't help anymore.

AD: Yes with math we are able to help. Fortunately our older son is also able to help and it makes it a lot easier on us.

YG: I participate in helping my son with his homework. If I do not know a word or understand

something I ask for help. I have a lot of family here so I ask them or I look it up on the computer.

JG: I help my son with his homework with what I understand. The things I cannot that is hard. I look for help in translating or just someone to explain to me.

7) How do you define confidence?

LR: Being honest. Being able to decide for one able to say things. Not being confident to speak out. Not being shy or hesitating to act. Knowing that what you say and do it correct.

AD: having a good relationship with parent and child that transfers into teacher and student relationship

YG: Paying attention to our children, listening and learning to understand. Helping them talking to them with our eyes. Opening our hears and asking them how they are and you can see it in there studies and with there friends being able to communicate and resolve problems.

JG: Confidence is one who can ask questions, in school and out of school. Being able to talk to your child ask him how his day went, what did he learn in school, how are his friends. Just building a good communication system with your child. This allows his to be able to play and open his heart to communicate. Being trusting especially when times of trouble with someone. This allows them to be confident in themselves to ask for help and not be shy or afraid to ever ask.

8) Describe your experience at home with your child or other students' perceptions of confidence in learning English?

LR: I feel like students confuse themselves when there are two languages to learn. I mean my sons could never learn and were confused with both English and Spanish. I had to make sure that they only learned one language. I feel like they are confused, because I got confused. At home it was difficult because they would hear English in school or from media (TV, music, movies, etc.) then they would hear me speak in Spanish and that would confuse them especially our different levels of speaking. I get confused speaking Spanish myself because I did get the most advanced Spanish language teaching. However, in schools you are learning so much advanced vocabulary in English and it does not coincide. I think that is what confused students and makes them lose confidence in themselves because they do not know how or where to speak what and in what language.

AD: The experiences of our children with each other at home, allows them to advance in learning English at school and other students in there grade level it creates a mode of competitiveness that I feel is good for them.

YG: My experience is really beautiful because there are times where I try to read to my son as the teacher recommended. I sometimes mess up and it is great having my son correct me and explain to me how to read the word and why it is said a certain way. We help each other learn English. I feel like that is what it is like for many parents and I hope they see the beauty of the experience with their children.

JG: This is a hard question. One learns this with them and sometimes not. It is beautiful being able to help them with homework and sometimes the beauty comes with what is difficult. One does not know English and doesn't know how to talk to other parents and his classmates, but when I see him try. That is when I see that he is building confidence because he is trying to communicate, because he used to not do that.

Teacher Interview Findings

Through my research interviews I found many differences and one similarity. The teachers I interviewed have taught for many years and all highlighted factors that I found in my review of the literature. Teachers discussed how English proficiency, parent involvement, and community support as factors that influence confidence in ELL students. However, even if the teacher was able to have support with any of these factors. One common similarity was the importance in classroom discussion. The chance for students to communicate with each other in the classroom was a large factor to building confidence. The teachers I interviewed all discussed some way that they enforce ELL students are integrated in the classroom and learn to be confident engaging in in classroom discussions. One teacher described how he engages his entire class when he sees timidness and hesitance to discuss in the classroom. "If at one point I ask a question and then ask who has an answer and everyone else is silent, no raise your hands. I have learned a new technique where I ask first, 'Turn your partner and discuss.' Slowly I see quite hands rise up with multiple students wanting to engage in the lesson. The chance to allow students to talk and turn to a classmate allows for a great opportunity to re-engage in the classroom."

Focus Group Findings

In the focus group similar results were shown. Parents all agreed that they had the most influence in their child's confidence and English proficiency. They also mentioned how parent and teacher communication was a factor that made school interaction either very influential not very influential. One parent was able to explain to me how the teachers' communication with her was the most important in building confidence not only in her son

but also in her. "My experience is really beautiful because there are times where I try to read to my son as the teacher recommended. I sometimes mess up and it is great having my son correct me and explain to me how to read the word and why it is said a certain way. We help each other learn English. I hope that is what it is like for many parents and I hope they see the beauty of the experience with their children."

Summary of Findings

Overall, through the interviews and focus group one key factor as I anticipated was that parent and teacher communication influenced confidence in English Language learners. However, not each individual factor but a combination of all of the factors all contributes to building academic confidence not only in ELL students but also to all students in the classroom. Through this research I recommend that all teachers can use more classroom engagement through communication activities where the ELL students can discuss with the native English-speaking students. Teachers can also access community resources and become familiar with to them to be able to reference sources to ELL parents. Which in turn will build on good parent and teacher communication. Encouraging parents to read to their child, asking parents to come in and volunteer in the classroom and not just on fieldtrip days, and additionally creating a foundation of consistent communication.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

The purpose of my study was to understand what builds confidence in ELL students, proficiency in the English language, having a foundation of support to help build confidence in home or community, or in combination. How can teachers implement new techniques in classroom that actively engages ELL students to participate in the classroom?

Through the review of the literature and my own research I have been able to find out how to importance of building confidence early in elementary school age is extremely important. The key factors that most teachers and parents were able to agree on was that English proficiency and parent involvement were the key factors in increasing confidence in ELL students. However, while the review of the literature indicated how community was an important factor especially in Latino ELL students' parents and teachers did not mention the importance of this factor (Crosone & Lopez-Tureley, 2011 p. 143). However, while comparing both the review of the literature and through the teacher interviews and parent focus group I was able to conclude that all a combination of all of the factors all build confidence in ELL students. Teachers and parents alike should not feel that they are the only key factors that build confidence in ELL students and feel that it is their own responsibility but look for community support and build on it to create a well-rounded consistent support system for ELL students.

Some techniques that I learned through the review of the literature, teacher interviews, and parents focus group all focus on the three key factors. One technique that was consistent in all of the factors was really getting to know your ELL students. Figuring out what strategies and tools are helpful for each student (Nguyen & Ho, 2012). Using many visuals where students can

refer to, building communication between ELL students and native English speaking students, encouraging parents to read to their child in any language, and allocating resources for example using the specific guidelines from the common core state standards for ELL students, sharing community resources with parents, and finally building consistent communication with ELL students and their parents.

Limitations

Some limitations throughout this study were small sample size, limited time period, and not including other ELL confidence factors. When doing my research I wanted to interview a teacher from each grade level in both an ELL majority and ELL minority populated school to see how each factor is referred to at each grade level.

However, because of teachers busy schedules and the limited time I had to complete my research I was only able to interview three teachers two Kindergarten teachers and one-fifth-grade teacher. All of the teachers were also from the same greater San Francisco Bay Area and if I had more time I would interview more teachers from all over California. I would also interview teachers that I do not have a personal relationship with to get a different perspective.

Additionally, the focus group was only with parents of Hispanic ELL students due to the large Hispanic community in my area. However, ELL students are not only Hispanic and I would have liked to interview a wide variety of ELL students parents ranging from emergent to advanced ELL students parents. If I had more time I would get a larger group of ELL students parents and have more diversity in the focus group. Also have the focus group of parents where I do not have a personal relationship to get a more wide rage perspective.

Finally, I would like to research and identify the other factors that influence confidence in ELL students. Due to the minimal amount of time I was only able to focus on three of the key

factors that influence confidence in ELL students. If I were able to continue with this research I would continue into seeing how these factors change confidence over time in each grade level. Additionally, I would interview students to see what they identify is most influential in their perspective in their confidence.

Implications

Practical Implications

Further research should focus on other factors that influence academic confidence in ELL students. While the research conducted in this study addressed the views of both teachers and parents many limitations created a small sample size. Further research should be done on both parents and teachers from different ELL populations other than Hispanic ELL populated communities. Additionally, a large sample size of students from K-6th grade should be surveyed to see the similarities and differences in how the view their confidence and what they feel is most influential in building up their self-efficacy in the classroom.

Research Implications

From this research it appears that the research implications are that further research should be focused on ELL students. In addition, more research should focus on how we can build academic confidence through an analysis of all of the factors in these students especially since these are the students who struggle assimilating into and outside of the classroom.

Conclusions

In conclusion reviewing the literature and conducting my own research I have concluded that not one factor but a combination of many factors is what builds confidence in English language learners. In addition, one factor in turn can lead to another in guiding the students in

building their academic confidence. Experienced teachers often had less training in learning to teach English language learners when compared to recently credentialed teachers who had extensive preparation in working with this population. However, many of these more experienced teachers are being prepared through new programs being established in their schools, working with there colleges who might have more experience in ELL students, and additionally using the new Common Core State standards that outline specific standards to help teachers create appropriate lessons for ELL students in each grade level and subject. Most of the strategies that teachers are now using for example guided scaffolding, using multiple hand gestures, and creating a good and home communication are helping build confidence in ELL students. However, through a study of the research, interviews, and focus group I feel that there still needs to be further research on how community support can improve and become more accessible and known to both elementary schools and families. Additionally, I feel that there should be more research on how building confidence over time can create successful ELL students who are guided to further their education. Through this process I have learned that confidence is not the only factor in how engaged ELL students are in the classroom. English proficiency, Parent involvement, and community support are all important factors that influence confidence in ELL students. I feel that confidence especially in ELL students is important, because it impacts all communities all over the United States, especially in California where the ELL population in elementary schools constitute more than 50% of the enrollment (California Department of Education, 2013). Through an understanding of these factors I hope that future educators and researchers accept the importance of how confidence has an effect on ELL students. If we as educators, parents, and active members in the community see how important it is to build engaged and productive ELL students, then these students will help guide the path for

future generations of students and improve our understanding of ELL and how we can build proficient, engaged, and confident English speaking students.

About the Author

Alejandra Vazquez is a junior Liberal Studies/ Teacher Education major at Dominican University of California. Alejandra was born in Yucatan, Mexico on April 24, 1993. When she was one and half years old, her family moved to the United States and resided in California for the next twenty years.

Living as a low-income first generation immigrant family in the United States created many struggles for Alejandra growing up in one of the wealthiest counties in Northern California. Entering her schooling Alejandra was a very timid and shy student. Alejandra and her family had minimum of English vocabulary and that affected her schooling.

One teacher in second grade influenced Alejandra's love for education and learned to speak, read, and write in English. In high school Alejandra began a tutoring group through her Latinos Unidos club where native English speaking students would help tutor ELL high school students in math. Through these experiences and the support of community resources Alejandra was supported to further her education. Alejandra was accepted into Dominican University of California were she is currently studying to become a multiple subjects credential elementary school teacher.

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APPENDICES

Interview Questions

I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. Your involvement is important to me in completing my undergraduate research of English language learners. Again, thank you for your time.

Interviewee: Teachers of English Language Learners

1) Please tell me how your interest in teaching ELL began.

2) How were you prepared to teach ELL?

3) Describe your largest obstacle in teaching ELL.

4) What/ who helps you guarantee that ELL is advancing academically in the classroom or outside of school? Is there a test or an ELL aide?

5) Describe how actively engaged ELL are in your classroom.

6) Describe the struggles you face as a teacher having to meet standardized testing requirements and academic standards for ELL?

7) What factors influence ELL confidence?

8) Describe what teachers look for in ELL academic achievement in becoming proficient English students.

9) What do look for in determining ELL confidence in English?

Thank you

Focus Group Questions/English

I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. Your involvement is important to me in completing my undergraduate research of English language learners. Again, thank you for your time.

Focus Group: Parents of students in schools where the majority of the students are English Language Learners

1) Please tell me how you see ELL students are being taught in your children's schools?

2) Describe your largest obstacle with teachers as non-proficient English-speaking parents?

3) What/ who helps you guarantee that ELL is advancing academically in the classroom, outside of school, or in the community? Describe how they help and how many hours or days in the week do your students go to these aids?

4) Describe how actively engaged you are in your child's classroom?

5) Describe how actively engaged you are in your child's homework?

6) Describe the struggles you face as a parent helping your child learn English (this can include homework or out of school resources)?

7) How do you define confidence?

8) Describe your experience at home with your child or other students' perceptions of confidence in learning English?