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Abstract

This paper is designed to address the issue of literacy acquisition among high school aged English language learners in US schools. High stakes testing measures literacy among all students, including those still learning English, yet we are still failing to provide the necessary supports and instruction to our English language learners in secondary schools. Current problems in working with English language learners are addressed including making a distinction between mainstream and English as a second language teachers, not addressing all components of literacy, teaching only basic English skills instead of course content, overrepresentation of English language learners in remedial coursework, and incorrect ideas regarding English language learners' abilities. Suggested best practices are also discussed including viewing English language learners as an important part of the school community, varying content taught, inclusion in high level courses, applying techniques shown to integrate literacy in subject-specific courses, using the students' native language to help them learn English and utilizing methods effectively through program fidelity. Future directions and the role that school psychologists, school counselors, and teachers should play in the education of English language learners are also addressed.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Literacy is one of the key focuses in education today. The 2001 reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) increased the pressure on schools to improve all students' literacy. The federal government passed No Child Left Behind to ensure that "all students [are] achieve[ing] academic proficiency" which will, in turn, "close the achievement gap" between typically successful and less successful populations, such as students with disabilities and English language learners (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). One of the ways the government ensures that the achievement gap is closing is through standardized testing for all students. These test results, in conjunction with other factors, result in a determination about whether or not a school is meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP); if a school does not meet the required growth in any one of the factors, it does not meet AYP (Braden & Tayrose, 2008). Colloquially, these tests are known as "high-stakes" tests "because they have serious consequences for school, states, and (in some states and schools) individual students and teachers" (Braden & Tayrose, 2008, p. 576). If a school fails to produce the necessary results two years in a row, corrective action must be implemented (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). This corrective action begins small, by starting a general "school plan" to improve scores, and increases in intensity based on how many consecutive years the necessary results have not been met (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). In the final stage, massive teacher turnover and "state takeover" of the school are just two of the potential actions that may result from inadequate progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, English language learners are enrolling in U.S. schools at the fastest rate of any group (Cited in Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Chinn, & Ratleff, 2011); in 2004, when new No Child Left Behind policies were released, there

were 5.5 million English language learners in U.S. schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Not only are we seeing more English language learners in our schools, but we are also seeing a widening of the same achievement gap that NCLB sought to close (Snow & Biancarosa, cited in Vanderwood & Nam, 2008). In 2003, one study found that three out of every four third grade English language learners were below average in their ability to read in English (Zehler et al., Cited in Vanderwood & Nam, 2008). Because of the increasing prevalence of English language learners in schools and the demonstrated need to increase their literacy, more focus must be brought to these students and how educators can most effectively teach them. This focus should be based in research-supported interventions that include skills that are generalizable across the nation to students of different ages, races, and linguistic backgrounds. Without a generalizable pool of interventions and skills, individual schools and districts will not be able to draw on this information to help their students who are English language learners perform at the level of proficiency.

Beyond statewide testing such as No Child Left Behind, it is important for English language learners to become literate so they can have a chance at a good future. However, "for too many English language learners, graduation from high school, let alone college, remains but a dream" (Koelsch, 2006, p. 2). In fact, one study found that about thirty percent of English language learners in U.S. schools do not graduate, compared to about ten percent of native English speaking students (Short & Fitzsimmons, cited in Giouroukakis & Honigsfeld, 2010). Most people would agree that school is an important stepping stone for future success. However, English language learners do disproportionately poor in school (McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, Cutting, Leos, & D'Emilio, cited in Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Chinn, & Ratleff, 2011), in particular on tests of literacy (NAEP; Short & Fitzsimmons, cited in Echevarria, Richards-Tutor,

Chinn, & Ratleff, 2011). Although school performance is not the only important area that literacy impacts, literacy can be the most important factor in school performance when a student struggles with English.

Lewis-Moreno noted that students not only need literacy skills to show that they understand concepts in subject-specific school courses, but they also need literacy for everyday social interactions (2007). Literacy is not only a key to school success, because most learning is generally done through the lens of language, but it is also a key to success at home and in community activities. Simple daily tasks such as making a grocery list or reading the instructions on a washing machine require basic literacy skills. One step school personnel and teachers can take to help these students achieve their tasks of daily life is to ensure a basic level of literacy. This way, once students grow up and leave school, they will be able to help themselves in novel situations, such as applying for a job online.

As anyone who has studied a foreign language can attest to, even simple tasks can be extremely difficult in a foreign language. Social language takes around two years and academic language takes five to seven years to develop to a comparable level as native English speaking peers (Cummins, 2008). Thomas and Coller found that it takes nearly a decade for English language learners to be able to perform at the same level as their peers in school (cited in Lewis-Moreno 2007). That means that, if a student entered the United States when he or she was in second grade, it could take him or her through senior year of high school to be as academically proficient as a native English speaker. This data shows that schools cannot expect an English language learner to be proficient in English after only three years, the time limit that No Child Left Behind regulations place on the option of English language learners to take the language arts tests in their native language (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007). It is

therefore important for schools to focus on research-based interventions that have been shown to be effective at teaching literacy skills to English language learners. Without such interventions, it is very possible that English language learners may not gain the necessary skills and either drop out of school, barely pass their classes, or receive passing grades from teachers due to their low expectations of the English language learners.

In fact, Lewis-Moreno (2007) argued that teachers' lowered standards for English language learners is one of the major reasons why we have so many English language learners who have been in U.S. schools for many years (It is important to note that the term 'English language learners' is only used to discuss those people who are not yet proficient in the English language; 2007). Schools must have higher expectations of what the students are capable of and must give the students time to develop skills as well as give continued support throughout their education, even when progress has been made. The combination of these factors should produce students who are literate and proficient in the English language. Lewis-Moreno stressed the element of time, noting that learning a language takes practice, "constructive feedback," and opportunities to change mistakes in the future (2007, p. 773). This process of action, feedback, and change will take considerable time, but if implemented correctly, will lead to improved results (i.e. improved literacy and English ability).

It is difficult to learn a foreign language. Although some people seem to learn faster than others, it still requires a considerable amount of time and effort. Even in young children, developing proficiency in a foreign language takes a considerable amount of direct instruction time (McLaughlin, 1992, cited in Vanderwood & Nam, 2008). Many studies have shown that the younger a child is when they begin learning a foreign language the better their spoken language, grammar skills, and pronunciation are in that language (Dixon et al., 2012). Flege and MacKay

determined that English language learners who did not use their native language frequently were more likely to have almost native pronunciation and sound discrimination abilities (cited in Dixon et al., 2012). Because this process takes time and because coursework becomes increasingly complicated as students get older, gaining literacy skills can be an especially significant problem for high school aged students. Presumably, these are the students for whom gaining literacy competence is the most challenging; therefore, this research will focus on gaining literacy at the high school level.

The roles of various school personnel and their collaboration will also be addressed, as well as the role specialized training for the educators and how these elements impact English language learners' literacy. Lately, there has been a strong push through the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) towards multicultural competence. One of the goals put forth in 2007 was to "enhance the association's responsiveness, through a focus on behavior, attitudes, and policy, to populations whose diversity may be expressed in terms of race, ethnicity, gender and gender expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, religion, and/or language" (National Association of School Psychologists, 2007). This essentially means that is a school psychologist's ethical duty to advocate for and be able to work with diverse populations, including English language learners. This, in turn, ensures NASP's vision to "ensure that all children and youth attain optimal learning and mental health" (National Association of School Psychologists, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

English language learners continue to struggle with literacy in US schools despite legislation designed to close the achievement gap. These students are tasked with learning core content at the same time as developing academic language such as reading and writing. Schools

need to implement research based practices to ensure that every student, including English language learners, is able to fully succeed in school. This research is necessary to identify common practices that are ineffectual or detrimental to English language learners' success and practices that are beneficial to these students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this literature review is to identify factors that influence English language learners' literacy in U.S. schools. More specifically, this study will address factors that impede English language learners' literacy, factors or strategies that help improve literacy, and what school psychologists, school counselors, and teachers can do to help improve the English literacy of these students. Qualitative and quantitative data will be collected from scholarly literature during the spring, summer, and fall semester of 2012.

Research Questions

There are five research questions that this literature review will address. They are:

1. What is the effect of No Child Left Behind testing on English language learners?

2. What are some of the main obstacles English language learners face in achieving English literacy?

3. What are the most effective methods used in English as a second language (ESL) curriculum?

4. How might school psychologists, school counselors and/or teacher implement evidence-based methods into their practice?

Definition of Terms

There are four terms that require further definition in order to understand this study. They are:

Academic Language. "The sort of language competence required for students to gain access to content taught in English and, more generally, for success in school and any career where mastering large and complex bodies of information and concepts is needed" (Fillmore and Snow, cited in Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010).

English Language Learner. "Those children of immigrants who speak a language other than English at home and who have limited ability to understand, speak, read, and write English" (Meyer, Madden, & McGrath, cited in Haneda, 2006, p. 4). The key to this definition is the fact that these children have limited ability to understand, speak, read, and write English. Therefore, this category does not include children who speak English as a second language proficiently. English language learner (Ell) students are also sometimes called English learner (EL) or English as a second language (ESL) students. This paper will use the term "English language learner."

Fidelity. "The degree to which an intervention or model of instruction is implemented as it was originally designed to be implemented" (Gresham, MacMillian, Beebe-Frankenberger, & Bocian, cited in Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Chinn, & Ratleff, 2011, p. 426).

Scaffolding. The strategy of providing, and gradually removing, external support during learning and producing activities. During scaffolding the task itself is not changed but what the learner initially does is made easier with support. As the learner takes more responsibility for performance of the task, less assistance is provided (McCloskey, 2010).

Assumptions and Limitations

It is assumed that there is current research pertaining to all of the aforementioned research questions. It is also assumed that there is a clear indication of what circumstances are obstacles, as well as what types of educational methods are best for English language learners. A limitation of this study is that certain research may not be conclusive and that further investigation into an

obstacle, asset, or method may be required. Another limitation may be that there is no updated or recent research on some of the topics or methods.

In summary, this study will review current research related to high school level English language learners and ways educators can help them increase their literacy skills. Specifically, practices that the literature has shown to increase literacy will be highlighted and ineffective practices will be identified. The summation of this research should give the reader a better understanding of English language learners and ways they can work with them in a general education classroom.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter will address the following topics related to English language learners and literacy: 1) the effect of statewide testing (NCLB) on English language learners; 2) some of the current barriers in teaching English language learners; and 3) strategies, techniques, and best practices in teaching English language learners.

Statewide Testing and English Language Learners

Statewide testing is standard practice in U.S. schools. No Child Left Behind was voted on and approved in 2001; however, it was not the first of its kind. No Child Left Behind was a reauthorization of a statute called the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was originally signed into law in 1965. The goal of No Child Left Behind is to help close the achievement gap that can be seen in U.S. schools, which is accomplished through a system of assessment and is encouraged through federal funding for schools (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007). As mentioned in Chapter One, this assessment involves statewide testing of all students, including those who speak English as a second language. However, despite these aspirations, there has been almost no change in English language learners' achievement (Collier & Thomas, cited in Giouroukakis & Honigsfeld, 2010).

Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Chinn, and Ratleff noted that these types of tests "may have considerable consequences" for the English language learner, "especially at the secondary level," where students are planning for their futures (2011, p. 435). High school is the time for students to gain independence, explore new areas of interest, and figure out what they want to do with their lives. However, this creative freedom can be stifled for some English language learners based on low scores on statewide testing. If an English language learner does not fully grasp the language used in a statewide test, he or she will do poorly on the test regardless of his or her true

ability in that content area. Valdés noted that these students will be placed on more remedial tracks and steered away from more challenging, higher-level content courses (cited in Koelsch, 2006). In fact, Valdés went as far as to call this type of tracking segregation of English language learners, as they are often separated from the general education curriculum (cited in Koelsch, 2006). In order for school personnel to help English language learners succeed in school, they have a duty to help the students learn the tools they need to be successful on the statewide tests. Of course, some of the tests assess the student's ability to use the English language correctly, but other tests measure content areas such as math and science. If a student does not have the fundamentals of being able to communicate well in the English language, he or she will automatically do poorly on these content tests. Because of this, Echevarria and colleagues stressed that teaching the "ability to read, write and discuss [subject-specific] concepts is more critical than ever" (2011, p. 427). In an ideal world, this would be enough reason for schools to take steps to increase English language learners' literacy.

Another reason for schools to work on English literacy among students who are not fluent in English is that the No Child Left Behind Act dictates that they must do so. If a school wants to meet their yearly progress goals, they must ensure that all of their students are making progress and performing well on the statewide tests. If they fail to make progress, there are consequences stipulated by the law. No Child Left Behind has underscored how important it is for schools to guarantee that English language learners are receiving an appropriate education relating to both their literacy needs, as well as their course content needs (Gebhard, 2010). This is especially true for schools that have a higher population of students from lower socioeconomic statuses and have a higher population of non-English dominant students (Gebhard, 2010).

If helping these students for the sake of helping them succeed is not enough, schools will

see that the possibility of failing on the No Child Left Behind measure as reason enough to work with these students. Nonetheless, recognizing the need and being able to implement a plan of action are two separate things. School districts must ensure that they are meeting all of the requirements set by No Child Left Behind while planning unbiased ways to test English language learners during statewide assessments (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). There have been many studies and many theories developed relating to English language learners and literacy or school success. Some concepts have proven themselves through research, while others have shown to be ineffective or, at worse, detrimental to the English language learner's success.

Current Problems in ESL Curriculum/ Teaching Ell Students

Research on English as a second language curriculum and on teaching English language learners has identified certain practices that impede language and knowledge acquisition. This section will address the following factors that have been shown to be current problems in the way schools address English language learners today: 1) making a distinction between general education teachers and English as a second language teachers; 2) disagreements about what literacy is, and therefore how to teach it; 3) teaching only basic English skills before teaching advanced course content with English language learners; 4) overrepresentation of English language learners in remedial coursework; and 5) over- and underestimation of English language learners' abilities.

Separation between general education teachers and ESL teachers.

Although many English language learners are placed in one or more English as a second language classes, they still spend considerable amounts of time in the general education classroom. Because of this, both general education and English as a second language (ESL) teachers are responsible for the students' achievement. However, in many schools there is a

detachment between English as a second language curriculum and teachers and the general education curriculum and teachers.

Lewis-Moreno noted that it can be a struggle for general education teachers to have English language learners in their classrooms if they do not have the proper background knowledge and practice (2007). Without this knowledge, both the student and the teacher will leave the classroom feeling frustrated and unfulfilled; the teacher will be frustrated that he or she could not help the student, and the student will be frustrated because he or she did not understand the language or the content. Many general education teachers who have not had specific training regarding English language learners will have many questions such as how to teach the students in a language they are not fluent in and what they can do when the language is a barrier to the content (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). Of course, English as a second language teachers have had training and experience working with English language learners; they know how to approach instruction in a way that is both effective and efficient.

One way to help English language learners succeed in general education classes would be to increase collaboration between general education and English as a second language teachers. This communication can be accomplished in many ways, for example, joint workshops or conferences. If the teachers collaborate to develop an effective plan for the student, everyone benefits. When this collaboration is encouraged and teachers are actively working together to help the English language learners, the issues and concerns are significantly less intimidating (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). This is a situation when the cliché "two heads are better than one" is decidedly true. The collaboration gives the general education teacher more knowledge and resources he or she can use with all of his or her students, not just English language learners. The collaboration also takes some of the pressure off of the English as a second language teacher

in that he or she does not feel solely responsible for the success or failure of the student.

Disagreements about the definition of literacy.

Despite the fact that most researchers acknowledge that there is more than one type of English (e.g. spoken, written, academic, or social), most studies have focused solely on English language ability in an academic context. Of course, this is a logical direction because school success is what most teachers, school psychologists, and school counselors can impact; however, it is important for schools to realize that students may be struggling with academic English while still being competent in other modalities (e.g. social or spoken English). Research had found that there are two types of skills that we learn as we acquire a second language: basic interpersonal conversation skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). BICS are commonly known as social language, or the type of language we use in our everyday life. Studies have shown that BICS can be learned through experience and do not need to be formally taught (Cummins, cited in Vanderwood & Nam, 2008). CALP, on the other had, can only be achieved through instruction and typically requires half a decade or more to become proficient (Cummins, cited in Vanderwood & Nam, 2008). Studies have shown that it takes people more time to learn to read and write in a foreign language than it does for them to learn to communicate orally (Dixon et al., 2012). Because BICS are more quickly learned than CALP, students may be able to adequately communicate in informal or social settings yet not have the necessary skills to succeed in school. It is important that schools address the fact that students may be proficient in some forms of English despite their problems with another. Coleman and Goldberg point out that BICS and CALP are not strictly a black and white issue, but rather some language uses may use a combination of the two (2010).

Academic English tends to be the most taxing for English language learners in the school

settings (Echevarria et al., 2011). Echevarria and colleagues noted that this may be particularly difficult because academic English requires the students to both learn English skills and demonstrate an advanced knowledge of English at the same time (2011). English language learners have trouble translating their knowledge into academic English and they may also find it difficult to comprehend knowledge when it is presented to them in a higher-level of English than that in which they are proficient. These barriers are only one of the reasons why English language learners tend to do worse in school than native English speakers (Echevarria et al., 2011). However, being that there is overlap between academic and social language, teachers should be able to draw on English language learners' life experiences and social knowledge to bring concepts and language from outside the school setting back into the academic realm (Coleman & Goldberg, 2010).

Different forms of English follow into the realm of literacy. Haneda stressed the importance of school personnel reassessing their ideas of literacy and expanding the concept to include a wider definition (2006). In the future, students will use literacy in many different ways and in many different contexts, so it is important for schools to look at a variety of modes of communication. For example, maybe a class assignment that is an in-class debate is more appropriate for English language learners than is one that requires the student to write a persuasive paper. Both would require the student to take a position and argue for it, but one assignment allows the student to showcase his or her abilities in a more accurate light. This is not to say that educators should ignore or otherwise de-emphasize academic English, papers, or testing. It merely means that educators should take a look at what they believe literacy is and to reconsider broadening the term in their minds and in the definition for the curriculum and in turn allow students to express themselves in a variety of manners.

Basic skills first approach.

Another common mistake that educators make when teaching English language learners is that they avoid "more difficult" content before the student has mastered the basics of the English language. For example, a teacher may assume that the student cannot understand a math lesson unless he or she can pass a certain English language test. This teacher will then completely avoid more advanced critical and inferential thinking skills until basic English competencies have been met. Haneda called this type of idea a "linear view of literacy development" (2006, p. 340). This leads to the students being under-stimulated in many aspects of school. This under-stimulation and underutilization of the students' abilities follows them throughout their schooling. Many schools track students, and if an English language learner is deemed not competent early on, he or she will be continued on an easier track throughout school, which can negatively affect the student's performance (Almon, cited in Haneda, 2006).

Placing Ell Students with lower functioning students.

As mentioned in the previous section, it is not uncommon for schools to track English language learners into more remedial coursework until their language abilities improve significantly. However, research has shown that this tracking is not as short-term as educators plan for it to be. In fact, Koelsch cited many different studies that have shown that this tracking continues through high school and that it is one of the contributing factors to the achievement gap (2006). One may think that this tracking is just a result of schools having too much to do and not enough time; the student might just be pushed through on the same track without a reassessment of his or her abilities. However, Ruiz-de-Velasco and Fix argued that, in general, educators "hold lower expectations for all the academic achievement of all English language learners across all subjects" (cited in Koelsch, 2006, p. 1). This is an issue, because if no one

believes in these students, they will not learn to believe in themselves. This expectation may also lead the teachers to act differently around English language learners or to treat them as if they are not as smart as the other students.

Often, when an English language learner first enters U.S. Schools, the student has already had some schooling in his or her native country, so he or she has a base of knowledge in various academic subjects (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). This means that the habit of placing English language learners in remedial content classes is not a useful utilization of time and resources. As Lewis-Moreno explained, English language learners' "time is poorly spent remediating skills they already have in a language they have yet to acquire" (2007, p. 773). These courses are often combined with native English speakers who simply struggle at reading and writing, despite the fact that the issues these students have are completely different than the problems English language learners face in the school setting (Lewis-Moreno, 2007).

Koelsch cited several studies that show that this lower-level tracking is still common in many schools, despite the considerable amount of research showing its inadequacy (2006). Not only does this adversely affect the student because he is not allowed the richest curriculum possible, but Callahan has also shown that this low-level tracking system forecasts the student's future success in school better than the student's English ability (cited in Koelsch, 2006). In summary, we can see how damaging this type of tracking can be for English language learners. Koelsch strongly advocated for school districts nationwide to change the way they decide when and if English language learners get placed in remedial coursework (2006). Instead, he argued that English language learners should be placed in more advanced courses (2006). This concept will be discussed further later in this chapter.

Over- and underestimations of Ell's abilities.

Another barrier to the education of English language learners is that many teachers do not understand English language learners and their needs. Teachers may be confused because they see the student between classes when he or she is using English well to interact with friends and peers (Echevarria et al., 2011). This observation may lead the teacher to incorrectly assume that the student does not need any additional help with his or her academic English skills, despite the fact that the student is not yet proficient in academic English (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). The reality is that these students still need help and support from the teachers and other school staff. In fact, as mentioned earlier, the English language learners may have very adequate skills in conversational English with peers, yet still struggle with more formal, academic English.

This disconnect between what the student can do and what teachers think he or she can do can cause the student to do poorly in classes. This poor performance then strengthens the mentality that English language learners need less advanced classes and that they are not as smart as their native English speaking peers (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). This idea of inferiority lowers teachers' expectations of English language learners' school performance. Teachers who have lowered expectations may adopt the idea that "the students don't know English and can't be expected to do the same as everyone else" and therefore accept or pass work that would otherwise be below the expectations of native English speaking students (Lewis-Moreno, 2007, p. 775). This can be particularly detrimental to students who are continuously passed through courses until they graduate from high school. Often, graduates attempt to attend post-secondary schools, only to fail due to a lack of English skills or to be forced into courses that teach basic reading and writing skills (Harklau et al., cited in Koelsch, 2006).

Many teachers assume that English language learners' English abilities are directly

correlated with their academic abilities (Mantero & McVicker, 2006). In fact, even teachers with good intentions may "provide inadequate…or inappropriate [instruction]" to English language learners because they simply do not know how to work with these diverse students (Mantero & McVicker, 2006). One key to English language learners' success is to find a middle ground that incorporates the same academic standards that are required of native English speaking students, while still providing support and guidance to the English language learners as they learn the language.

Best Practices in ESL Curriculum

Despite the current problems in teaching English language learners, research has identified several factors that enhance English language learners' ability to do well in school. This section will address the following factors that enhance English language learners' ability to thrive in academics: 1) accepting English language learners as an important part of the school community; 2) varying school work and avoiding "basic skills" approaches; 3) allowing English language learners to participate in high level courses; 4) applying general techniques shown to integrate literacy in subject-specific courses; 5) using the students' native language to help them learn English; 6) utilizing methods effectively through fidelity.

      Embracing Ell students as an integral part of the school or district.

One way to improve English language learners' success in school is neither through drastic curriculum change nor through drastic policy change. Rather, simply changing the attitudes of the school staff and community towards English language learners can have a significant positive impact on their education. Lewis-Moreno (2007) state that the first thing schools should look at when planning how to improve educational outcomes for English language learners is the thoughts and beliefs toward English language learners in the schools.

Before any other changes can be made, the school must make an effort to consider "students who arrive from other cultures with other languages …assets rather than liabilities" (Lewis-Moreno, 2007, p. 772). Youngs and Youngs (2001) found that individual teachers were more likely to view English language learners positively if they were female, had college training in another language or in multiculturalism, if they had lived outside of the US, and/or if they have had professional development in their schools regarding English language learner students (cited in Mantero & McVicker, 2006). In addition, Mantero and McVicker found that English as a second language teachers, in general, had a more positive attitude toward English language learners than mainstream teachers (2006). However, this effect may be offset through education; the same study found that mainstream teachers' attitudes toward English language learners grew more positive as the number of graduate courses addressing working with these students increased (Mantero & McVicker, 2006). The results of these studies indicate that the more education and experiences teachers have regarding English language learners or languages in general, the more likely they are to believe in English language learners and their success in school.

In addition to an overall favorable outlook toward English language learners, schools must be careful to not view English language learners as a population of students who need special help. The success of English language learners is a responsibility that every teacher in a school must claim, not just ESL or special education teachers (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). However, it is not uncommon for many general education teachers to be unaware of teaching practices that are effective with students who do not speak English as a native language. Because of this, every teacher should be trained in practices that apply to learning English as a second language and literacy development (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). Haneda stresses the importance for all teachers to understand what "becom[ing] literate" looks like in the classroom and to provide a safe space for

students to develop and grow through "critical discussion of substantive issues by using reading and writing as tools for thinking" (2006, p. 343). If general education teachers understand what developing literacy may look like and follow strategies to foster and build on this growing skill, they will be able to effectively teach English language learners in the general education classroom. This, in turn, will reduce the disproportionate amount of English language learners receiving special education services (Koelsch, 2006).

Of course, teacher training programs can teach education majors how to work with English language learners, but there are many skilled teachers in our schools today without this training. One way to foster this knowledge and skill base among current teachers is to provide opportunities for school-wide professional development (Echevarria et al., 2011). These types of opportunities should be regular and intensive for the best effects. Echevarria and colleagues list seven outcomes of these types of training, which explain why the knowledge that teachers gain can benefit their classrooms in general, not just English language learners. Professional literacy instruction:

> (1) deepens teachers' knowledge of content and how to teach it to students, (2) helps teachers understand how students learn specific content, (3) provides opportunities for active, hands-on learning, (4) enables teachers to acquire new knowledge, apply it, and reflect on the results with colleagues, (5) links curriculum, assessment and standards to professional learning, (6) is collaborative and collegial, and (7) is intensive and sustained over time. (Echevarria et al., 2011, p. 427).

When teachers are actively seeking to improve their practice, everyone in the school community benefits, especially those who need the extra support.

Varying literacy work—not just basic skills.

Many researchers today have noted that schools are responsible for teaching English language learners course content as well as literacy skills (e.g. Haneda, 2006; Lewis-Moreno, 2007). Therefore, teachers must take into account the English language learners' growth in both subject knowledge as well as linguistic knowledge (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). Of course, teachers should strive to improve English language learners' literacy, but that should not be the single focus of their education. In fact, Haneda stresses the fact that students do not need to have complete literacy skills to be "considered capable of engaging in critical thinking" (2006, p. 342). Students should be encouraged to actively participate in class and group work even when they lack vocabulary and grammar; the focus should instead be on the ideas and content supplied by the student rather than his or her linguistic abilities. One example of an activity that can improve literacy skills as well as challenge the student academically is to examine texts to gather meaning and develop skills instead of focusing merely on reading and building vocabulary (Haneda, 2006). In this case, students are using literacy skills they do have to improve knowledge while working on improving literacy. In fact, this type of activity fits into the model described by Haneda (2006). This model states that all students, including English language learners, must "be able to act as code breaker, text participant, text user, and text analyst and critic" in order to be considered literate (p. 341). Haneda stresses that the last component, text analyst and critic, is of critical importance for all language users and should be integrated from the beginning of literacy instruction for *all* students (2006).

Teachers can also help students improve literacy by instructing them in specific literacy-building activities while allowing students to try new things and make mistakes (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). Teachers can do this by creating an environment in which the student feels comfortable

exploring language and by providing immediate, encouraging feedback that helps the student understand what did or did not work and encourages him or her to experiment again in the future. However, Lewis-Moreno (2007) also cautions teachers to not provide too much feedback: correcting every mistake simultaneously can have the opposite effect on students and discourage future participation. Therefore, teachers must find a balance that is informative while not being too overwhelming. Teachers can also encourage exploration through teaching students how to be aware of and use their own abilities, prior knowledge, strengths, and weaknesses (Koelsch, 2006).

The main idea is to encourage students to be active participants in their own journey to literacy. Lewis-Moreno (2007) goes as far as saying that the only way to become fluent in a language is through producing that language and testing novel ways of using it. She emphasizes the need for English language learners to have opportunities to "make meaning of the content and the academic language they are learning to use their knowledge in other contexts" (Lewis-Moreno, 2007, p. 774). This means that all of a student's teachers must work in collaboration with each other to grant that student chances to use language to explore new concepts and express him- or herself in various situations. This varied approach will therefore positively impact the basic skills of literacy to improve the students' vocabulary and grammar.

High-level courses rather than remedial coursework.

One factor that improves English language learners' literacy that may seem counterintuitive is placing the students in higher level courses. However, this approach focuses on what the students can do, rather than what they cannot (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). Koelsch (2006) cited a study that demonstrated the positive effects challenging coursework has on students. This study showed that students' achievement increased when they were placed in

more advanced classes even if they had lower achievement when they entered. In fact, another study established that the level of coursework, not baseline achievement, had the highest correlation with success in post-secondary education (Cited in Koelsch, 2006).

Koelsch goes so far as to label lower-level coursework an "academic barrier" to English language learners (2006, p. 1). Lewis-Moreno proposes that English language learners be enrolled, at the very least, in advanced classes in their native language (2007). This way, the students would increase their literacy and critical thinking abilities in their native languages. When the English language learners are communicating in English, they can then draw on this foundation of knowledge. This approach is not merely theoretical; schools have reported improved outcomes for English language learners not only in academics but also in negative behaviors (Lewis-Moreno, 2007).

techniques to improve content-related literacy in general coursework.

As students enrolled in regular content courses, English language learners are expected to be able to keep up with the concepts and facts presented to them. It would seem logical to assume that an English language learner should have minimal difficulties doing hands-on work such as a science lab. However, even seemingly nonverbal tasks require some English knowledge. Key terms or technical names are examples of barriers to content knowledge. If a student is not sure what a graduated cylinder is, he will have a hard time completing the tasks required in a lab that uses this tool. Therefore, teachers should take care to model the use of key vocabulary in addition to academic language structure when working with English language learners (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). One simple way to do this is to simply use the language around the student. If a teacher notices that a student describes the function of an item rather than calling it by its name, she can incorporate the name into her response.

Although simply exposing students to the academic terms is important, it is often not enough when students are being bombarded by new vocabulary and concepts in each course. Often, it is hard for the English language learners student to separate out the important terms from the unimportant ones (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). Scaffolding instruction is a useful technique to help students sort through the information effectively. Whereas building scaffolding is a structure that is built around the construction area to help support the creation of the building, lesson scaffolding is a structure that is built around the lesson to help support the understanding of the materials. Scaffolding instruction involves providing the students with a frame of reference with which to work through the lesson or unit.

McKenzie outlines eight components of scaffolding: "scaffolding provides clear directions..., clarifies purpose..., keeps students on track..., offers assessment to clarify expectations..., points students to worthy sources..., reduces uncertainty, surprise, and disappointment..., delivers efficiency..., [and] creates momentum" (McKenzie, 1999). The key to scaffolding is to help the students deduce which information is important and what information is supporting. It is therefore important to use scaffolding with care and to always examine the match between the student's abilities and the demands of the task (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). Care should also be taken in deciding the amount of scaffolding to use with a particular student as well as how and when to reduce and possibly eliminate the scaffolding altogether (Carnine, Miller, Bean, & Zigmond, 1994).

One example of scaffolding for English language learners would be to give them a chapter outline with some key terms highlighted before asking them to read (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). Another example of larger group scaffolding might involve having a large group discussion on the upcoming unit before asking the students to complete independent work. This

discussion should address what the students already know "both linguistically and academically" about the topic as well as introduce key terms that will appear in the reading (Lewis-Moreno, 2007, p. 774). Both of these techniques help students pick out the important information and draw connections to their prior knowledge (Lewis-Moreno, 2007).

Carnine, Miller, Bean, and Zigmond note that there are two particularly effective methods of scaffolding that educators can use with diverse students: interspersed questions and oral reading (1994). Interspersed questions involves the teacher creating questions to give to the students while reading; ideally, these questions are posed immediately before the section of related information. Carnine and colleagues note that this technique can help increase student understanding of the material and help them sort the important from unimportant information (1994). Oral reading involves choosing a skilled reader to read the passage to the entire class while other students follow along in their own books. Oral reading seems to be most effective with English language learners when it is presented after a brief introduction to the topic at hand, thus giving them the needed cultural and background knowledge to understand the text (Carnine et al., 1994).

Lastly, general education teachers should collaborate with English as a second language teachers to develop a plan that works for both the student and the teacher. English as a second language teachers can be an invaluable resource for information on scaffolding and strategies that may be useful for English language learners (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). English as a second language teachers have specific training on instructing both written and oral language in a school setting and they know the English language learners students well and can comment on strategies that have proven effective with the individual students. Through a cross-content discussion, teachers can determine together what standards and expectations are important and reasonable

for the English language learners students (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). These goals and responsibilities should then be used when planning the lesson and type of instruction.

Using the native language to improve English literacy.

Although it may seem counterproductive to have English language learners rely on their native language when they are having difficulty expressing an idea in English, utilizing their knowledge of their first language can actually enhance English literacy. Students who struggle to communicate in English or are having difficulty with a specific aspect of literacy have the ability to use techniques they learned in their home language (Haneda, 2006). Koelsch stresses that English language learners have skills and abilities when speaking or writing in their native language and that educators can therefore identify these strengths and then bring them into the English literacy curriculum (2006). These aptitudes are easier to identify in adolescents, since they have had more schooling in their native language, but they can be found in any English language learner at any age. For example, one study found that decoding skills in elementary school in one's native language predicted decoding abilities in tenth grade in English, regardless of English competency (Sparks et al., cited in Dixon et al., 2012). Another study found that a combination of native language literacy and oral English ability when the student entered schools predicted better English literacy 6-8 years later (Reese et al., cited in Dixon et al., 2012).

When we teach English language learners to use their native language and skills learned to use with their native language while speaking, reading, and writing in English it is called using cross-language reading strategies. Koelsch showed that students who utilized these cross-language strategies performed better than students who did not utilize these strategies when given reading tasks in English (2006). The students were able to compensate for lack of vocabulary by drawing from their prior knowledge of their own language. Therefore, it is

recommended that teachers should work with English language learners to identify personal strengths and to teach them how to use them when communicating in English.

Program fidelity.

Beyond the scope of this research are specific programs and curricula that are designed to address the needs of English language learners. However, the National Reading Panel, the National Literacy Panel on English Language Learners, and other organizations have accumulated many evidence-based programs that have been shown to be effective (Echevarria et al. 2011). Both the practices discussed in this chapter and the packaged curricula have been shown, through research, to help increase the success of English language learners in schools and to increase their literacy. However, without program fidelity, these approaches and programs will not be effective for English language learners (Echevarria et al., 2011). A main obstacle facing schools as they try to implement research-proven efforts is that they are often done in "less than optimal conditions than are recommended in the research literature" (Echevarria et al., 2011, p. 432). Without program fidelity, we cannot ensure that English language learners are actually receiving the interventions as they are intended. Echevarria and colleagues highlight the fact that there is plenty of research on procedures that enhance literacy, but barely any conversation about how reliably the procedures were implemented (2011). Unless we can be sure that these practices are being executed consistently in the schools, we cannot be sure that there will be any positive effects that will come for our students.

Because fidelity is so important to increasing student success, educators need to turn their focus to reliably executing procedures. Saunders, Goldenberg, and Gallimore compiled a list of fidelity-enhancing elements (Echevarria et al., 2011). These elements include:

1. Many professional development opportunities where educators learn and see the practice

2. Peer reviews of implementation

3. A place for discussions, collaboration, and support regarding the new practice

4. Administrator support and focus on the new practice

5. "A supportive culture in which teachers and school leadership value continuous professional learning and shared leadership" (p. 427).

Having a supportive community that is willing to collaborate with each other will enhance the fidelity of a program because those staff members who may need more help will have a group of people to go to that can help them work through the issues they may be having (Echevarria et al., 2011, p. 432). It is important to keep in mind that some teachers will need more support and/or more time to learn about and to implement the new strategies and curricula and that the school administration should be prepared to invest "significant time and ongoing support" to the new program (Saunders et al., Cited in Echevarria et al., 2011, p. 433).

Chapter III: Summary, Critical Analysis, and Recommendations

This chapter will include a summary of the topics presented in Chapter Two, including a review of the effect of statewide testing (NCLB) on English language learners; some of the current barriers in teaching English language learners; and strategies, techniques, and best practices in teaching English language learners. Chapter Three will then move on to a critical analysis of the current literature pertaining to English language learners and literacy. To conclude the chapter, recommendations for teachers, school psychologists, and school counselors who work with English language learners will be provided. This section will also address areas in which more research must be done.

Summary

There has been considerable research on the topic of English language learners and literacy. However, it seems that the problems English language learners encounter on a daily basis in schools are still very real; there has been a lack of implementation of research based methods in U.S. schools. No Child Left Behind has created an environment where schools have a vested interest in helping English language learners succeed, yet there is still an achievement gap.

Multiple factors have been identified that adversely affect English language learners' ability to thrive in schools. These factors are: 1) lack of training for general education teachers on how to best work with English language learners; 2) lack of communication between general education teachers and English as a second language teachers; 3) confusion over what literacy is and how teachers can best utilize different aspects of students' English abilities; 4) avoiding more advanced, subject-specific content until mastery of the English language has been reached; 5) the overuse of remedial subject coursework with English language learners; and 6) confusion over at

which level English language learners are able to perform.

Research has also identified many factors that improve outcomes for English language learners. The first factor that has been identified is that of inclusion. It seems that English language learners do better when they are accepted into the school with enthusiasm and positive attitudes toward the student. It seems that the attitude a school takes on having English language learners in general education classrooms can help specific students do better.

The second concept that improves literacy is varied work modalities and avoiding the "basic skills" approaches. By varying the types of assignments (e.g. some papers, some discussions, some group work) and allowing students to work at higher-level subject courses while still mastering the English language increases the chances that English language learners will do well in school.

The third approach is to allow English language learners to participate in advanced classes, especially any offered in their native language. For example, a native Spanish speaker should be allowed to take an AP Spanish course. This allows the students to develop their critical thinking and analyzing skills while not having to worry about language barriers. In other high-level courses taught in English, students' minds are still being stimulated better than in the regular classes even if the student cannot draft a perfect essay.

The fourth technique that improves success among English language learners is when general education teachers incorporate literacy in subject-specific courses (e.g. science or math classes). This allows English language learners to advance their academic vocabulary while still learning the subject-specific concepts. This can also be a benefit to native English speaking students as well.

The fifth concept relates to the third; it is helpful to use a student's native language while

teaching them English. Many times it can be advantageous for the student to be able to relate to grammar in his or her own language and then to apply it to English. It can also help for students to be taught equivalent words or to have grammar explained in his or her native language. All of these factors have been shown through research to improve literacy among English language learners.

Critical Analysis and Recommendations

We have an abundance of research regarding how to most effectively teach English language learners. Many of the concepts that are empirically based are also effective for native English speaking students. At the same time, these techniques and approaches are still not seen in many US schools. It is unclear what is creating this disparity; however, it is clear that it is affecting our students. Therefore, it is recommended that researchers look into factors that may be creating a barrier between teachers' knowledge and practice. It is important to understand why teachers are not utilizing the current research in their practice so that we can address these factors and begin to implement the concepts presented in this paper. At the same time, school psychologists and school counselors should become familiar with these concepts and take the responsibility of education their schools and districts. It is possible that teachers are not changing their practice because they do not realize that there are more effective methods out there. If school psychologists and counselors lead professional development workshops or even meet one-on-one with teachers who serve English language learners, they can help increase awareness and knowledge and therefore help all students achieve to their fullest potential.

In correlation with increasing knowledge of English language learners in the schools, we should evaluate teacher education programs at local colleges and universities to see what types of training they are receiving regarding working with English language learners. If we were to only

address this issue with current teachers, each year we would only be adding to the problem as new teachers graduate and enter the field without the necessary knowledge about working with English language learners. Griego (2002) claims that the majority of education majors do not take classes that look at "language acquisition and methodology" and how it is related to teaching English language learners (cited in Mantero & McVicker, 2006). In fact, in Griego's study, it was discovered that many of the pre-service teachers did not know how long it generally takes to become competent in a foreign language or how competent one must be in that foreign language to succeed in school (cited in Mantero & McVicker, 2006). Future research should take an in-depth look at what types of information and experiences education majors are getting in their training programs and to determine where instructors can add the missing content. Because you can only fit so much information into a four-year degree, it may take some creative thinking and problem solving to find a good place to insert this curriculum. Therefore, future research that addresses teacher training in relation to working with English language learners should be careful to look into professors and students perspectives on the issues for a qualitative approach in addition to gathering more data for a quantitative approach.

Lastly, this paper has addressed the topic of program fidelity. It is well documented that the effectiveness of any program is dependent on the fidelity with which it is utilized. Conversely, there is a lack of research addressing how fidelity of these programs will affect school based practice. Teachers are extremely busy throughout the day, and despite the best intentions may not execute a strategy in the exact way it was developed in a research study. Therefore, it is important to find out what practices will be effective despite imperfect practice as well as what factors will increase the chances that the program will be carried out correctly. In addition, when teachers are learning these programs they should be ready to put their best efforts

into the implementation and to follow through with the steps required of them. School

psychologists and school counselors should provide support and guidance to teachers who may

have questions or need assistance when attempting these new programs in their classrooms.

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