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Increasing Opportunities for Academic Talk for English Learners in the General Education Classroom Professional Development Series

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INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACADEMIC TALK FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS IN
THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

When I started in education six years ago, reading was receiving the greatest amount of attention. In many ways this, this is still the case. The district I teach in has recently invested in a new reading curriculum, a variety of reading intervention programs, and assessment tools for monitoring students' reading skills. When I began teaching in the district, teachers to English learners (ELs) and reading interventionists were receiving the same training in reading intervention strategies and programs. As I launched myself into the first few years of teaching, I observed that these interventions paid off for students. Their reading scores showed improvement, and students learned to enjoy reading as they struggled less. I also witnessed the impact on English language proficiency scores as measured by the ACCESS for ELs. While the improving receptive language skills of reading and listening was evidenced by an increase in student language proficiency scores in those areas, the productive language skills of speaking and writing demonstrated an opposite trajectory. I want to dive into what we can do to support students' language production skills in the same way that teachers have been able to strengthen students' receptive skills.

In this capstone project, I explore students' opportunities to engage in academic conversation in the general education classroom and how these can be increased by classroom teachers. My research question is how can teachers in a general education setting increase opportunities for quality academic talk for ELs? In the following chapter, I describe how I developed a passion for teaching English learners and my belief in the

importance of this role as it pertains to social justice. I explore how I concluded that academic language production deserves greater focus for the English learners in my school. This entails going over demographic and data trends for the student body and staff. To better understand the context in which opportunities for academic conversations may be created, I end the chapter by describing what a typical day looks like for students and teachers.

Becoming bilingual

As a student, I was fortunate to have parents who enrolled me in a Spanish Language Immersion elementary school. In my school, kindergarten through 5th grade, around 90% of the day was spent learning and communicating in Spanish. Students and teachers used Spanish for academics, as well as, all other types of interactions within the classroom. As a student body, we were mostly suburban middle class, white students, from English speaking homes, and we took our own sociolinguistic rule set and applied it to Spanish. To this day, I speak a very formal, academic version of Spanish with little awareness of slang or social rules. I am grateful to this experience for instilling in me a love of languages and creating in me a drive to offer my students the same opportunity to become bilingual.

Presently, the students at my school, who speak more than one language, are experiencing language learning in the classroom from a different perspective. These students have families who speak first languages other than English. For many of them, school is their first time in an English only environment. This is not an opportunity to participate in an immersion program where the goal is to become literate and fluent in

both languages, as was the case for my peers and myself. These students are entering into a school system in which English is the only language in which instruction is delivered. Therefore, they are required to learn English as they simultaneously develop academic and literacy skills.

As I became a teacher to English learners, I developed the belief that there exists a unique element of social justice in this area of teaching. When my parents enrolled me in a Spanish immersion program, they did so expecting that being fluent in two languages would be a benefit for me throughout life. My parents received praise for providing me with the opportunity to become bilingual. At the school I currently teach in, there have been instances in which I have been able to advocate for developing students' bilingual skills, even though it is not one of the goals of the school. This school and district are not explicitly responsible for creating bilingual learners. We are required to develop English proficient learners who are prepared to participate fully in an academic setting. The privileges associated with being bilingual are not recognized the same for my students as they were for me. Part of the purpose of this capstone project is to advocate for creating opportunities for English learners to become fully proficient in academic English in all modalities. Hopefully, this supports students becoming academically proficient in both languages by making sure they are fully proficient in English.

As I venture through the journey of creating a capstone project, and answering the question of how to impact the opportunities for academic conversation for ELs in the general education classroom, I keep social justice in the back of my mind. I also consider the social context in which students and families currently live. I cannot create for them a

bilingual immersion setting, but I can support students by creating improved opportunities to become fluent in both languages.

English Learners in this School

Over the past six years as an EL teacher, I have worked in a building where part of my role was to assist in facilitating a transition from an all pull out, small group teaching model for delivery English language development services to almost all co-taught service models. Initially, I was met with resistance from both EL and classroom teachers in relation to the concept of co-teaching. Historically, a divide existed between the six EL teachers and the general education classroom teachers. EL and classroom teachers saw themselves as teaching two different subjects and two different sets of students. EL teachers were solely responsible for developing language proficiency while classroom teachers taught the content areas with little to no collaboration between the two.

As I learned more about the EL team, I found that they had carefully and strategically advocated for their EL students by maintaining roles as EL teachers and not as reading interventionists. EL teachers in many buildings across the district were being used to support reading instruction. As a result of maintaining these differences a division had developed between classroom and EL teachers. I was attempting to bridge this gap so that teachers might view language proficiency of ELs as a shared responsibility and begin to collaborate around how to improve instruction.

The disconnect between classroom teachers and EL teachers has closed over the years. Now, almost all students see an EL teacher in the general education classroom

during a regular school day. At times, small groups are still used and may be appropriate, such as with newcomers or students with multiple needs, but the majority of students participate in some version of co-taught instruction. Commonly, classroom teachers and EL teachers co-teach during literacy or math instruction. The EL teacher has continued to be an expert in the area of language development while the classroom teacher contributes knowledge about specific grade level standards and content.

Changing demographic. Another factor that has affected student learning is how much the demographic has shifted at this outer ring, suburban elementary school. Ten years ago, 48% of the student body registered their ethnicity as white, while black students made up 24% and hispanic students 16% of the population. There were 19 different languages represented as students first languages (L1), but the majority of students, 65%, spoke English as their L1. During the 2019-2020 school year, the student body is 41% Hispanic/Latino, 33% Black or African American, and 15% white. There are fewer languages represented in the school at 16, but 73% of students speak a language other than English as their L1. The largest first language groups are Spanish at 40% and Somali at 23%. Currently, 58% of students qualify for services as English learners (Viewpoint, n.d.). In contrast, the school resides in a community that is, according to the US Census Bureau, 74% white and near 10% each Hispanic and Black (Data Access and Dissemination Systems, 2010).

Changes over the last ten years have created challenges and learning opportunities alike for staff and teachers in the building. As opposed to the demographics of the student body, the demographics of teachers has remained the same. According to the Minnesota

Report Card 2019 staffing profile, the race/ethnicity of licensed staff is 95% white and 92% qualify as “experienced educators”, which is an educator who has been teaching for three or more years (Minnesota Department of Education [MDE], 2018). For many of these teachers, the change in demographic has been a major shift in the culture of the students and families they serve. This has created a continuous need for developing culturally proficient practices and strategies for teaching English learners. Taking a look at how teachers and students both spend their time at school can give us an idea of the opportunities and challenges this new demographic has created.

A typical school day. Both teachers and students might consider a regular day at school to start with breakfast in the cafeteria. The school qualifies for free breakfast for all students. After breakfast, students head to their classes where, as a Responsive Classroom school, the day should start with a morning meeting (Responsive Classroom, 2019). The rest of the daily schedules are outlined by administration for each grade level and include all of the required minutes for content, prep times, lunches, etc. The district requires classroom schedules to provide 120+ minutes of literacy instruction and a minimum of 75 minutes for mathematics instruction. Students also spend about 50 minutes a day with a specialist teacher to receive instruction in art, music, gym, or digital learning. There is a 30 minute lunch and 30 minute recess built into each schedule. The secondary grades, 3rd through 5th, have 30 minutes for social studies and/or science daily. We also qualify to receive a fruits or vegetables snack Tuesday through Thursdays that must be fit into the schedule. All of this occurs in a 6 and a half hour window. Many students also receive a variety of other services such as Special Education, instruction for

English learners, services for students with Autism, speech, school based therapy, etc all woven into their day.

Missing academic language. The decision to address the academic language production of students comes from witnessing the change in demographics and the disconnect this created for many general education teachers. As the student population has changed, the skills, methods, and expectations of teachers have also had to adapt. This has shown up in many ways throughout the school but consistently in the need for specific teaching methods and differentiation for English learners. Staff has done a lot of work and training around culturally responsive teaching and responding to students with adverse childhood experiences. A new reading curriculum and intervention programs have been purchased and implemented. This coming school year our district launched a new writing curriculum alongside the reading program. These have been meaningful changes for students and has had a positive impact on achievement and culture in the building. However, when examining the language proficiency data of ELs, students are continuing to decrease or make no growth in the area of language production. The school does not currently have adequate programs or systems in place to develop these skills for teachers or students.

The English language proficiency of English learners is measured by the ACCESS for ELs which assigns students proficiency levels 1 through 6. Students with lower proficiency levels can be expected to make higher growth, while students with higher levels can be expected to make less growth (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment [WIDA], 2012). Proficiency is assessed in the four different modalities of

language, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In the 2018-2019 school year, the English learners made +0.024 levels of growth on average in the area of speaking. Generally across all grades and proficiency levels EL students are making what is essentially zero growth in speaking academic English Language proficiency.

Next Steps

This returns me to my research question. How can teachers in a general education setting increase opportunities for quality academic talk for ELs? In this chapter, I have discussed the benefits for me as a bilingual person and how ELs should be afforded the same advantages as bilingual learners. I have described how the changing demographics of students has created a gap in interventions and teaching methods. The data shows that EL students are not making the same gains in the productive language skills as they are in receptive language skills, such as reading. This shows the need for a change in practice and the development of different skills by teachers. Before the gap between receptive language skills and productive language widens any further, what interventions can be made?

There is a large body of research about the importance of academic talk and methods for increasing it in the classroom. There is research that addresses students increase in comprehension and deeper understanding of concepts as students are provided the opportunity to articulate and communicate their thinking (Baily & Bulter, 2003; Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2016; Resnick, Asterhan, & Clarke, 2018; Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard, 2014; Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). Research also demonstrates the importance of students mastering a variety of language registers so they have the capacity to navigate

diverse and demanding sociolinguistic situations, including those within academic settings. (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). Moreover, students' use of academic language has been shown to improve standardized test scores in populations of linguistically and socioeconomically diverse students (Resnick, et al., 2015).

In the following chapters, through research and a literary review, I examine the most effective methods for developing academic speaking skills in the classroom. I determine which methods may be used within the specific context of my elementary school with the changing demographics of students and experienced teachers. I include an overview of the social justice arguments that support creating positive learning environments for ELs. I then use this research to develop ways to share this information with teachers and staff. This includes research based methods for professional development for teachers in an elementary school setting. In the end, I use this information to provide general education teachers training on tools that develop English language proficiency for students, so students might leverage their language skills throughout their academic careers.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, is a review of the literature on important topics pertaining to the main question of this thesis project: How can teachers in a general education setting increase opportunities for quality academic talk for ELs? I first look into who and how many English learners currently are in the U.S. public school system to provide an idea of scale and urgency. Then, I offer an overview of the process used to identify ELs and language proficiency levels for ELs. I describe pertinent social justice and educational rights issues that affect English learners in U.S. public schools. The second section provides an overview of definitions of Academic Language and highlight common themes. I also include descriptions of several theories of academic language. This section covers why academic talk is beneficial for all learners, but especially important for ELs. The third section investigates the types of academic language ELs experience in the classroom, strategies for bolstering opportunities for oral academic language development, and a specific framework for implementing productive academic talk. In the final section, I explore how to develop a professional development opportunity for general education teachers working with ELs. I examine adult learning theories, best practices for professional development, and the role of the facilitator in professional development for teachers working with ELs.

Connecting all of this research allows me to fully answer the question of how teachers in general education settings can increase opportunities for quality academic talk

for ELs. The underlying questions to this research are how to make talk productive for content learning and English language development, as well as how to raise sociolinguistic awareness for teachers and students as a way to provide better access to educational opportunities. These are the guiding ideas for research to determine which information is most applicable and relevant. As I proceed through the discussion, I create an understanding of who ELs are, why academic talk is important for them, what teachers can do about it, and how professional development can disseminate knowledge.

It is important to note that I use the initials EL to refer to English learners. I use this for any student who qualifies for services in an English language development program in a public school. In some articles, the label English language learners or ELLs is used, so in quotes or titles ELL remains. At times, I discuss strategies or information that pertain to ELs, as well as learners who speak varieties of English that may be considered non-standard or informal. At those times, I refer to ELs and non-ELs as students. I choose to do this, because while discussing strategies and theories of Academic Language, the ideas that often benefit ELs also apply to other groups of students developing Academic Language.

English Learners in U.S. Public Schools

Understanding how English learners are defined and identified helps establish their needs as learners and clarify how educators can better prepare themselves for meeting those needs. In this section, I describe the trends in the current populations of ELs across the nation and locally in Minnesota. This includes how ELs are identified and labeled according to the English Learner Education Report by the Minnesota Department

of Education (2018). I also review how students are assessed to identify language proficiency levels. This creates a picture of the population of ELs currently attending local and U.S. public schools.

Defining English learner. Currently, there exist both broad definitions of English learners as well as technical, detailed descriptions. The federal government has provided a plethora of guidance around the education of ELs; however, their definition of ELs is the most broad. In the Office of Civil Rights ELL Guide (2000), ELs are defined as “a national-origin-minority student who is Limited-English-Proficiency” (p.35). In contrast, the state of Minnesota definition is over one hundred words long and is a 2017 Minnesota state statute (Minnesota Department of Education [MDE], 2018). To summarize MDE’s (2018) definition, ELs are pre-kindergarten through grade twelve pupils who use a language other than English and have demonstrated through a valid language assessment a lack of necessary English proficiency to “participate fully in academic classes taught in English” (p. 4). Such a range of definitions makes it challenging to create a common understanding between educators and policy makers of how to define and provide English language development services to students who qualify.

Each of the individual ELs in the public school system represent at least a dual objective for educators. One goal is to develop English language proficiency that provides the ability to fully participate in all curricular and extracurricular activities within the public school system. The other goal is to provide academic opportunities, so students receive equal access to education (Salomone, 2012; United States Department of Justice & United States Department of Education [DOJ & DOE], 2015). Before moving

toward either of these goals, students may also receive a third, or even a fourth, label that further defines their needs.

Labels for ELs. Students who use a language other than English are first identified by a Home Language Questionnaire filled out by parents and/or guardians. Students language levels are assessed by a language proficiency assessment to determine whether a student is Limited English Proficiency (LEP). If a student is found to have LEP, they officially qualify for EL services. After this occurs, further labels may still be considered.

Currently in Minnesota, there are a total of five additional labels used for the identification of ELs. One label is Recently Arrived English Learner (RAEL) which indicates that an EL student has attended a U.S. public schools for twelve months or less. Another label is for students who have participated in EL programming for over five years without demonstrating language proficiency on a valid assessment. These students qualify as Long-Term English Learners (LTEL). ELs who have experienced limited or interrupted formal education, which has resulted in students being two or more years academically behind their current grade level, qualify as Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) (MDE, 2018). The final two labels are immigrant or refugee youth, and migratory children (MDE, 2018). These labels provide insight into the complexity of developing language and academic skills for ELs. Not only do ELs receive different labels based on their identity as English learners, but they are also assigned particular language proficiency levels through language assessments.

English proficiency levels. In the past, districts have been allowed to create their own standards of English language proficiency development. Since the introduction of new acts and guidance provided by the federal government, states are currently required to establish common standards for all of their educational agencies (Salomone, 2012). As federal and state departments of education have raised the bar for the education of ELs, through efforts like the Every Students Succeed Act (ESSA) and the Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) act in MN, it has become increasingly important for educators to understand the basics of language proficiency and second language acquisition (MDE, 2018). This has begun the process of creating more common language between educators as English language proficiency have become more standardized.

Many states, including Minnesota, have adopted the English Language Development (ELD) standards for K-12 ELs created by the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium (2012). These standards outline levels of language proficiency and provide resources for understanding what to expect in terms of language ability from ELs at each proficiency level. Students' social and academic language abilities are assessed into one of six language proficiency levels. Level 1 is the beginning level and usually includes students who are RAEL (Recently Arrived English Learner). Students who score at a level 6 are considered to be proficient at a level comparable to that of their English only peers. Students who score around proficiency levels 2 or 3 can be expected to speak in phrases or short sentences, with the emergence of cohesion to ideas (WIDA, 2012). While students who are at levels 4 or 5 proficiency

can be expected to speak in expanded and complex sentences, organize ideas in a comprehensible manner, and use basic language specific to content areas (WIDA 2012). These proficiency levels help to organize instruction and guide expectations for learners in school.

It is important to note that proficiency levels determined by the ACCESS for ELLs are often the deciding factor for whether or not students qualify for English language development support in school in several states. MDE identifies students who attain English Language Proficiency (ELP) levels 4.5 or above, with levels in all modalities of 3.5 or above, on the ACCESS for ELLs test as having demonstrated English proficiency that afford equal educational access to that of their English only peers (Minnesota Department of Education [MDE], 2017). As such, these students no longer qualify for English language services in Minnesota schools.

The four language modalities in which EL students are assessed for language proficiency on the ACCESS for ELLs are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Of these four modalities, MDE reports students score the lowest in the area of speaking (2018). To illustrate, 33% of the more than 73,000 students tested are scoring as level 1 or 2 speakers, and another 40% as level 3 (2018). This demonstrates the complexities of teaching ELs and the importance of providing opportunities for developing academic language production. This data supports the focus of the research question of this capstone. After looking at criteria for identifying ELs in the U.S public school system, the next section includes statistics that bolster the need for urgency in improving educational access and instruction for ELs.

English learners by the numbers. The increasing numbers of ELs, and the persistent lack of systems and resources available to address their needs, underscores the growing demand for effective programming. Looking at state and federal department of education reports and related information, it is apparent that the number of ELs has been, and continue to, consistently increase. According to the English Learners in Minnesota Report (2018), the population of ELs in public schools is growing at a faster rate than total student enrollment.

The United States Department of Education (DOE) reports that in 2014-2015 EL students made up 10% of the overall student body in K-12 U.S. public schools (United States Department of Education [DOE], 2018). Of the 10% of students who qualify as ELs, 97% of them have participated, or are currently participating in, language instruction programs (DOE, 2018). In Minnesota, the percentage of enrolled EL students in public schools is just below the national percentage at 8.2%. (Minnesota Department of Education [MDE], 2018). Both nationally and in Minnesota, students who use Spanish as their first language (L1) comprise the largest group of ELs. Across the United States, Spanish speakers represent over 3.8 million students and 77% of all ELs (DOE, 2016). In Minnesota, Spanish speakers comprise 40% of the total population of ELs, while the next largest groups, Somali and Hmong, both make up 18% of ELs (DOE, 2018).

In the United States, the majority of ELs are highly concentrated in a small percentage of schools (DOE, 2018). High concentrations of ELs are further condensed within districts to one or just a few schools (DOE, 2018). According to the data story, *Our Nation's English Learners*, created by the United States Department of Education,

only 15% of public schools are responsible for 60% of the nation's EL students (2018). As state and federal governments raise the expectations for the education of ELs across the country, those schools are presented with unique challenges. Next, I consider some of the educational and social justice rights of ELs that may present challenges for those educational agencies.

Educational Rights of English Learners

Educating ELs has required a variety of responses from teachers, schools, and educational systems in the U.S. With the ever growing population of ELs, there are consistently questions at the state and national levels about the rights and opportunities granted to English learners. In this section, I provide an examination of the history of the educational rights of ELs and discuss why, through the perspective of social justice, educators should feel compelled to action. I start with a summary of the guidance provided by national and local government agencies, discuss some of the meaning behind these efforts, and finally build an understanding around sociolinguistic issues that ELs face. At the end, should be a picture of social justice issues specific to this group of learners and an illustration of how that picture impacts educators.

Civil rights and federal law. This is an overview of how the U.S. government and its various entities have attempted to address the civil rights of ELs in the public school system. It is not an extensive history, but a brief summary with greater focus on the present system.

The education of English learners was first addressed within the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Civil Rights Acts of 1964 stated that students have a right to an English

language instructional program no matter their primary language, and have a right to the same academic content as their English only peers (MDE, 2018). These rights were reaffirmed by the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (United States Department of Education [DOE], 2016). There continue to be state and federal laws that uphold these rights and provide guidance on how to best systemically serve EL students within the public school system.

While the state and federal government have continued to affirm ELs rights to education, and established it is the responsibility of districts to provide access and instruction to ELs, most of the standards and methods for doing so have been left up to Local Education Agencies (LEA) (Salomone, 2010). Most recently, states and districts are following guidelines from the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to develop “college and career ready” learners, including ELs (United States Department of Education [DOE], Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2010). ESSA specifically asserts bilingualism as an asset while providing guidance for states and LEAs to support ELs in achieving college and career readiness (DOE, 2016). ESSA acknowledges the achievement gap that exists between ELs and English only peers (2010). It also stands in contradiction to the deficit perspective that has been the focus of past federal guidance (DOE, 2016).

Although the intent of ESSA is strong, and has raised the expectations for equitable education for ELs, the guidance is often unclear and vague. It often uses adjectives such as reasonable, meaningful, or appropriate as standards for instruction (DOJ & DOE, 2015). For example, students are expected to attain language proficiency

for participation in the general education classroom within a “reasonable period of time” (DOE, 2016). A reasonable period of time is left open to interpretation by LEAs, educators, and language proficiency programs. Ambiguous terms such as these do not support strong standards of implementation, but as a whole, ESSA does provide a basis for accountability.

The guidance in ESSA’s “Blueprint for Reform” from 2010 sets the stage for ELs to receive access to excellent educators and rigorous curriculum that affords students the opportunity to achieve academic success as well as develop language proficiency (DOE et al., 2010). For the first time, states were required to establish consistent entrance and exit criteria for ELs, standards of language development, and track progress of ELs’ growth toward language proficiency within schools and districts (DOE et al., 2010). These were standards that had not been systematically in place for EL programs before.

Although there is still much to be desired for guidance in educating ELs in an equitable and accessible way, the base level expectations and level of awareness are being raised. States and districts are now expected to at least note the effectiveness of their language proficiency programming. Policy makers continue to lay the groundwork for higher standards and more ambitious goals so, at some point in the future, accessible education may no longer be an issue of social justice for ELs. In the next section, I provide a depiction of how language affects not only the educational rights of students through access and policy, but also through social expectations and bias.

Sociolinguistics in school. As educators and decision makers at all levels work to put standards in place specific to ELs, there are still many sociolinguistic issues that

students confront within educational settings. As long as ELs are being taught academic English language as the only language in which education occurs, they may not be able to realize the asset that being fluent in two or more languages provides. The “Dear Colleague Letter” (DCL) written jointly by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) states that students should have meaningful access to core curriculum and in no way should LEAs, or those working within them, hinder the L1 development of ELs (2015). It does, however, fall short of advocating for developing bilingual learners or creating more bilingual programming (2015). The DCL acknowledges students may incur academic deficits while developing English language proficiency, and it is the responsibility of educators to address this within “a reasonable period of time” (2015). While supporting the right to equal access to rigorous education is important, this is where some issues of social justice arise. By receiving academic instruction in English only, a hierarchy of languages is created, which may imply to students that higher order thinking and cognitive development occur primarily in English (Rolstad, 2014).

Providing instruction in only English, and focusing heavily on academic English, may create for students the idea that English is the only language in which students can and should learn. Some authors argue for more bilingual and dual-language programming to support learning in native languages, as a means to address social justice issues (Salomone, 2012). The popularity of dual-language programs, which enroll students with backgrounds in different native languages with the intent of all students becoming fluent in those languages, demonstrates that bilingualism is a priority for native English

speakers (Salomone, 2012). These programs promote bilingual literacy and fluency in a language that is the L1 of some students and the L2 for others. The advantages of bilingualism are afforded to both groups, whereas ELs who join traditional, primarily English, public schools are less likely to fully develop bilingualism.

As ELs join majority English settings, educators should be mindful to celebrate and acknowledge the strengths and cognitive skills that come with being able to speak and switch between the two languages. They should be mindful not to treat high levels of English proficiency as gatekeeper for high level thinking and intellectual engagement (Rolstad, 2014). Too often, educators and administrators fail to recognize the capacity for sociolinguistic skills that students already possess. Students are often bicultural, biliterate, and/or bilingual without formal, direct instruction. Educators should honor, embrace, and strive to encourage the development of these skills (Salomone, 2012). Often, ELs are praised when they are articulate in English or demonstrate a strong grasp of academic language, which may imply to learners that English is a language of prestige and preferred over their native language for learning (Valdés, 2004).

To address the issues of social justice students face, it would be valuable for teachers and students to develop sociolinguistic awareness. Increased awareness and information, empowers students to make informed decisions about how to use or not use different registers of language to their advantage (DiCerbo, Anstrom, Baker, & Rivera, 2014; Godley, Sweetland, Wheeler, Minnici, & Carpenter, 2003). Rather than imposing on learners a 'standard' or 'correct' form of English, they can be taught to recognize the nuances of sociolinguistic situations (Valdés, 2004). Godley, Sweetland, Wheeler,

Minnici, & Carpenter (2006) argue that no variety of language is better or more complex than any other, and ‘standard’ English is elevated only because it is the language used by the majority of those in power in society (as cited by Bunch, 2013). The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) recognizes in the *English Learners in Minnesota Report* (2018) that “the ability to communicate in multiple languages and navigate distinct cultural settings are significant assets that need to be supported and understood in our schools.” If educators believe that bilingualism, and the navigation of multiple sociolinguistic settings, is an asset, then instructional choices should honor and reflect that. This leads us to discuss the type of language that is defined as academic English. It is the version of English often considered ‘standard’ or ‘correct’ and might be necessary for ELs to fully access educational opportunities. In the upcoming section, I review definitions of academic language and the theories of use for learners.

Academic Language

After reviewing who English learners are, how their language levels are defined, and what sociolinguistic issues they face, I dive into the type of language that is considered of utmost importance for English learners. Historically, language survival skills have been taught in public school settings as the primary form of language instruction. At present, the type of language students are expected to acquire is academic language. In this section, I refer to this particular variety of English as Academic English (AE) or Academic Language (AL). Starting with definitions and theories of Academic Language, I build an understanding of the nuances and complexities of the language students are expected to develop. After reviewing the definitions and theories, I look into

why academic talk is so important and beneficial for ELs. This brings us closer to discovering why developing strategies for academic talk in the mainstream classroom is important for the overall education of ELs.

Definitions of academic language. There are a range of definitions for academic language and little consensus in literature. The lack of consensus is an obstacle to furthering the investigation into how academic language affects learners in educational settings (Lachance, Honigsfeld, & Harrel, 2019). As I review definitions, I highlight some important themes. Understanding the range of definitions helps to illuminate the complexities and implications of academic language for ELs.

Both one of the broadest and most succinct definitions of Academic Language (AL) states that AL is the register of language used within a specific sociocultural academic setting (DiCerbo et al., 2014). It is also described as “the language of school,” which implies that it is required for full participation and educational access (DiCerbo et al., 2014). Zwiers argues that AL is a common variation of language that is necessary for all students to acquire in order to achieve success in school (as cited by Ernst-Slavin & Wenger, 2016). These are definitions that focus on mastering AL as a condition for education in US public schools. Using this definition, AL is often cited as one of the primary reasons for the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs (DiCerbo et al., 2014). These definitions acknowledge the educational benefits that proficiency in AL affords to learners, but they do not consider the complexity of language used by students in other contexts.

Another set of definitions view Academic English as the antithesis of social language (Bailey & Butler, 2003). The definition of Academic Language by Bailey and Butler (2003) sets social and academic language on opposite ends of a continuum, where AL is used for specific content areas in school, and social language is viewed as “informal” language. This distinction first appeared when Cummins described two types of language proficiency, Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (Colorín Colorado, 2018). There are many definitions that now rely on the dichotomy of language established by Cummins in the 1980s. Some scholars distinguish academic language as more abstract and complex, where social language is used in situations with embedded context clues to support meaning (Bailey & Butler, 2003; DiCerbo et al., 2014).

More narrow definitions focus on the discourse features particular to Academic English. Separate categories of language use are categorized to better understand how AE functions and develops. These definitions contend that the linguistic functions of language are complex and abstract in any setting, but comprehending how language is used in academic settings is especially important for language learners (DiCerbo et al., 2014; Scarcella, 2008). The English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards created by World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) provides a framework for the features of Academic Language (2012). The framework breaks language down to the discourse-, sentence-, and word-level demands of each domain within specific learning contexts (WIDA, 2012). It further categorizes language by its use in the four modalities of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (WIDA, 2012). WIDA, as a large educational

entity, aids in creating a common understanding of academic language for educators; however, the lack of consensus across the field of research demonstrates the lack of understanding there may be for educators.

Theories of academic language. Similar to definitions of Academic language, there are a variety of theories about academic language and its relationship to learning. More inclusive theories claim that all forms of language can serve academic purposes, and language users have the capacity to actively navigate different contexts by using a variety of registers (Bailey 2008). Other theories reinforce the deficit perspective of language by arguing that some language forms are not capable of supporting cognitive development and higher order thinking. Even more theories add categories to the dichotomies of language use, while others still attempt to create new perspectives on language altogether. In this section, I review a few of the most prevalent theories and how those theories affect perspectives on ELs in the school setting.

The most pervasive theory of language for ELs was developed by Jim Cummins in the 1980s consisting of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). This theory is traditionally taught in EL teaching programs and is generally accepted in most educational settings. BICS/CALP helped energize the conversation about how students access and produce language in school. It has helped advocate for an examination of how language is used within assessments, during explicit instruction in school, and for considering teachers' individual language use in the classroom (Bunch, 2014). Additionally, BICS/CALP has aided in creating a juxtaposition of language registers that vary in complexity.

Recognizing CALP as the language form that sustains learning and cognitive development has bolstered a deficit perspective of language which assumes students who have not developed CALP are not prepared for rigorous learning or do not possess understanding of complex linguistic rules. To counter, Bunch argues that the BICS/CALP distinction has allowed privilege and preference to persist for more academic or 'standard' language varieties and their users (2004).

Some have tried to build on the dichotomy of language functions by adding to, or modifying, the categories. Bailey and Heritage (2008) developed School Navigational Language (SNL), Curriculum Content Language (CCL), and Social Language (SL). They differentiate language use in the classroom in two categories. First, SNL is used to accomplish specific tasks, such as requesting materials, asking clarifying questions, following directions, etc. CCL is the language required for learning in different content areas, as in literacy, math, or science. SL is the only language type that is not limited to classroom use. SL is drawn from Cummins original distinction of social language. The various categories of language forms highlight the challenge of navigating language use in a mainstream classroom (as cited in DiCerbo et al., 2014).

Moving away from dichotomies and language sub-groups are theories that do not divide language into social and academic categories. Second Language Instructional Competence (SLIC) was proposed by Rolstad as language defined by its use in different contexts (2017). All language users can become proficient within particular contexts that require specialized language (Rolstad, 2017). Rolstad (2017) defines SLIC as "the language of a particular set of overlapping linguistic communities- collectives of

language users pursuing common interests and engaged in common practices” (p. 498). In Rolstad’s view, different registers of language develop within communities and are afforded varying levels of respect and prestige within society as a whole. However, language varieties do not reflect cognitive or intellectual development (Rolstad, 2017). Students using the language forms used by their families or social groups are navigating language that is similarly complex and nuanced as that used in the classroom during instruction and learning.

A final theory proposes a new perspective on dichotomies of language. Bunch (2014) proposes the language of ideas, and the language of display, as the types of language students use in academic settings. These language forms relate to the process of learning and the demonstration of knowledge. Bunch’s theory explains that students use the language of ideas to work out concepts and meaning together (2014). During this phase of learning, Bunch states that students should not be focusing on correctness of language use but on the meaning and clarification of ideas (2014). Students hear, build, and produce more complete ideas when they use language collaboratively. Language of ideas is consistently on a trajectory toward the language of display (Bunch, 2014). The language of display is used when students are prepared for the presentation of learning and is modified for the particular audience (Bunch, 2014). This view of language is comparable to students using a rough draft and final draft in written language. When students are given the opportunity to process writing, they are able to fine tune for a particular assignment and audience. Thinking of oral academic communication in a way

comparable to writing grants students more time and space to produce what they think is the most appropriate language form for the task.

The importance of academic talk. With all of the focus on academic language, it is essential to understand why oral language production is of particular importance for educators and learners alike. It is a meaningful experience for students to be able to think aloud about their learning and to effectively explain their understanding to others (Resnick, Asterhan, & Clark, 2015; Bailey & Butler, 2003). Teachers should help students understand the power of language and the benefits of being able to use specific registers for different purposes (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011) In this section, I describe some of the reasons opportunities for academic talk are crucial to the learning and academic success of English learners. I also discuss the importance of explicit instruction about what is considered academic language so that students are better prepared to navigate the academic world.

The benefits of academic talk in the classroom. It has been reported by multiple sources that the ability to articulate and explain academic concepts has the capacity to deepen students' comprehension and the ability to effectively integrate knowledge (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2016; Resnick, Asterhan, & Clarke, 2018; Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard, 2014; Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). When given the opportunity to explain and discuss academic topics for authentic purposes, students are able to clarify and refine their own ideas through the process of putting their ideas into words (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). The process of putting ideas into words requires higher order thinking, while self-monitoring explanations for clarity and meaning strengthens and deepens concept

understanding. For example, participating in pair communication requires students to manage the negotiation of meaning, which results in the accumulation of knowledge as students engage in a give and take of ideas (Resnick et al., 2018). Students should also find it beneficial to participate in sharing during group conversations for the purpose of building communal learning and shared background knowledge (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). Including students in dialogic teaching, which is defined as instruction that uses talk effectively, has even been shown to improve standardized test scores (Resnick et al., 2015). These are some of the reasons that students' academic achievement can benefit from academic talk. I also consider how students benefit from building metalinguistic awareness and an understanding of sociolinguistic ideas.

Language of privilege. In addition to bolstering students' comprehension in the content areas, participation in academic conversation can positively impact students' identities as learners and their ownership of ideas (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). This is a relevant idea for schools with students of diverse linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Many students who are not immersed in English at home are not being afforded the same advantages as students whose homes are supporting the development of academic or 'standard' English (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011; Godley, Sweetland, Wheeler, Minnici, & Carpenter, 2006). In this case, it is the responsibility of schools and teachers to instruct 'standard' or 'academic' English so that ELs, and those that speak non-standard varieties of English, have access to the same educational privileges and advantages (Rolstad, 2014; Valdés, 2004; Zwiers & Crawford, 2011).

Some argue that society is responsible for assessing and mitigating the privileges that are awarded to those that are already proficient in certain types of language (Godley et al., 2006). For now, educators are able to help students by promoting linguistic awareness, so students do not miss out on rigorous learning and educational opportunities (Godley et al., 2006; Lachance, Honigsfeld, & Harrel, 2019; Rolstad, 2014; Valdés, 2004; Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). According to some authors, building sociolinguistic awareness to empower students is a critical role of educators today (Godley et al., 2006; Lachance et al., 2109). Recognizing the differences between language used in school and other registers may also begin to provide access to equal educational opportunities for ELs (Lachance et al., 2019).

As students face complex language demands at all levels of language proficiency, they may accrue academic deficits while focusing on language development (DOJ & DOE, 2015). This is especially true for RAELs or younger English learners who entered public school with the lowest levels of proficiency. During time spent developing English proficiency, students may not be able to demonstrate their knowledge on standardized tests (Bailey & Butler, 2003). This exacerbates the achievement gap between ELs and English only peers. As a result, it is important for educators to encourage and support intellectual engagement, as well as language development.

In this section, I went over the variety of definitions of Academic Language by looking at broad definitions of AL that focus on the context of use, such as school, and more narrow definitions that examine the differences between discourse, sentence, and word-level. When going over the many theories of AL, it is evident that it is an ongoing

debate, and like the definitions, there are a variety of views. Some theories create dichotomies or categories of language, such as BICS/CALP, and others describe language by its function, like the language of display and ideas. Finally, I reviewed the importance of Academic Talk. AT provides students with the opportunity to refine and deepen their comprehension of academic concepts. Developing sociolinguistic awareness for students allows them to take advantage of their ability to manage and choose language types for varied educational and social situations. Moving on, I look at the way language is currently used in the classroom and some ways that teachers can support students in language development while focusing on content learning.

Academic Talk in the General Education Classroom

To start investigating academic talk in the general education setting, I first discuss some of the ways that language is currently used by teachers and students. This demonstrates the opportunity for improvement that exists and leads into ways to achieve it. Having reviewed how language is used, I look at strategies that classroom teachers can utilize during instruction. These strategies are mostly stand alone procedures and simple resources that create opportunities for student talk in the classroom. Finally, I provide a specific, research based method for creating a dialogic classroom. Accountable Talk with Talk Moves as tools is a framework for embedding expectations for clear communication and shared knowledge within a group (Resnick et al., 2018). I review some of the basic concepts and methods for making Accountable Talk happen in a general education classroom.

Language in the classroom. There is a plethora of research to demonstrate that teachers do the majority of talking in the classroom. A study by Hollo & Wehby found that 80% of utterances in a thirty minute time frame were made by the teacher, and the utterances that students made were often comprised of simple sentences or one-word responses (2017). Utterances is defined here by Miller & Iglesias (2010) as “a unit of speech that represents a complete thought” (as cited by Hollo & Wehby, 2017).

When students participate in concise communication directed by the teacher, it is often in the form of Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (IRE) (McGlynn & Kelly, 2018). IRE is a process of evaluative, repetitive communication that does not normally generate higher order thinking skills and allows for non-participation on the part of many learners (McGlynn & Kelly, 2018; Michaels & O’Connor, 2015). Nystrand (1997) estimated that IRE represents two thirds of talk in most classrooms (as cited by Michaels & O’Connor, 2015). Due to large amounts of IRE and teacher talk, August (2002) reported that less than 2% of an EL’s school day is spent deliberately developing oral language skills (as cited by Soto-Hinman, 2011).

Creating more dialogue in the mainstream classroom starts with teachers upholding high expectations for students to communicate clearly and with whole messages (Zwiers, O’Hara, & Pritchard, 2014). Too often, teachers focus on errors in syntax and grammar, while many authors state it is more important to listen for meaning (Walqui & Heritage, 2018; Zwiers et al., 2014). Expecting students to communicate whole messages and ideas through oral language provides invaluable space for practice, making mistakes, and clarifying communication (Resnick, Asterhan, & Clarke, 2108;

Zwiers et al., 2014). As teachers listen for meaning over grammar, and provide students with multiple opportunities to communicate ideas, teachers should begin to hear an increase in depth and clarity in academic talk.

Strategies that make academic talk routine. There are many simple strategies that can be easily incorporated into teacher directed instruction. Some are stand alone strategies that create authentic opportunities for extended language production. Others increase the linguistic expectations of commonly used strategies like Think-Pair-Share and sentence starters. I look at some of the most accessible strategies and how they can be integrated into classroom routines to increase the amount of time students spend developing proficiency in academic talk.

One of the basic strategies to encourage students to talk during lessons is Think-Pair-Share. With open ended questions, this practice gives students explicit time to think and an opportunity to turn to a partner to share their thinking. A greater number of students can participate during a Think-Pair-Share as opposed to a few in an IRE routine. Think-Pair-Share also allows students to model language for each other and to gather ideas from one another. Another version of this is Turn and Talk which does not provide the same think time that is embedded in a Think-Pair-Share, but has the same premise.

To build on Think-Pair-Share, Zwiers et al. (2014) and Zwiers & Crawford (2011) suggest turning to a 3rd or 4th partner to share. This allows students to continue negotiating and gathering new ideas from peers (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). Students could also record and play back their Think-Pair-Share discussions. Listening to themselves helps build metalinguistic awareness and identify ways to improve their own

language production (Zwiers et al., 2014). Another variation is Jot-Pair-Share which has the advantage of getting students moving as they find new partners. With each new partner, students share and jot down ideas they like or new information they learned (Resnick et al., 2018). This supports accumulating ideas and provides language models for all proficiency levels. These strategies support students as they articulate their ideas and results in deeper comprehension (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2016; Resnick et al., 2018; Zwiers et al., 2014; Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). They are simple and effective strategies that many educators already include during classroom instruction and can be further developed to encourage additional language production.

Other strategies are based on information gaps in which students have pieces of information and must communicate with partners or small groups to facilitate the accomplishment of a task (Zwiers et al., 2014). A/B partnerships or small group roles are ways to structure this strategy. Providing examples of language can support this strategy when students are unsure of how to start. For example, creating sentence frames or word banks provides more structure in the interaction for students (Zwiers et al., 2014).

Teachers can also use thinking strategies that make an explicit connection between writing and speaking. Zwiers et al. suggests relating written paragraphs to speaking with depth and length (2014). Students can think about using topic sentences, details, and a closing sentence in speaking as they would in writing. Vice versa, orally practicing and speaking out loud can prepare students before writing (Zwiers et al., 2014). Thinking aloud helps students to self-monitor for clarity and meaning and to identify existing misunderstandings (Resnick et al., 2018). These are accessible strategies

that can be embedded into the daily practice of any teacher. The next section reviews a framework that goes beyond singular strategies for increasing academic language production for all students.

Framework for Accountable Talk. There are many resources available to provide an in depth description of what Accountable Talk is and how it can be implemented by teachers to diverse student groups. Accountable Talk is a classroom framework that uses academic dialogue and tasks to develop student metacognition, communicative skills, and ability to think aloud about more complex ideas in collaboration with others (Michaels & O'Connor, 2015; Resnick et al., 2018). The type of dialogue that is created through Accountable Talk strategies is a specific type of talk that has been shown to engage students in further learning (Resnick et al., 2018). It has been shown to improve general learning abilities of students and results in academic achievement by diverse groups of students (Michaels, O'Connor, & Resnick, 2008; Resnick et al., 2018).

Before starting with Accountable Talk, teachers must create a classroom environment in which students feel respected, valued, and safe to take risks (Michaels & O'Connor, 2015). Students should feel that they have the right to speak and what they have to say adds value to the classroom (Michaels et al., 2008). Once a culture of respect and risk taking is established, the three dimensions of Accountable Talk can be introduced. The three dimensions of Accountable Talk are accountability to the learning community, to knowledge, and to accepted standards of reasoning (Resnick et al., 2018; Michaels et al., 2008). Accountability to the learning community is concerned with

students' ability to listen and build on one another's ideas. Accountability to knowledge means that dialogue is based on explicit facts, written texts, or generally accessible information to the best of student ability. Accountability to reason relies on students explaining and drawing reasonable conclusions. These levels of accountability are interdependent so that academic conversations can produce new learning and complex thinking for students (Resnick et al., 2018; Michaels et al., 2008).

One of the challenges for Accountable Talk is establishing the Accountability to Knowledge. Teachers must navigate Accountability to Knowledge by determining how long to entertain student mistakes and incomplete or erroneous ideas (Michaels et al., 2008). Allowing students to process ideas, and self-correct through collaboration with peers, results in deeper, more personal comprehension. Deciding when and how to include direct instruction or redirection is up to teacher discretion, but Michaels et al. argues for sustaining a "productive middle ground" (2008). Michaels et al. describe productive middle ground as recognizing when knowledge requires direct instruction and giving students space to work out learning productively. Some facts must be learned without challenge and other ideas can be discussed (2008). Accountable Talk is not meant to replace or supplant direct instruction from teachers on new content concepts.

Accountable Talk is a framework for learning and a method for developing students ability to generate productive talk that has depth, is sustained, and student controlled (Walqui & Heritage, 2018). Using the framework supports and bolsters student dialogue in the classroom which can result in productive learning. Next are some tools that can support teachers generating more productive dialogue.

Talk Moves as tools. As students are developing the ability to participate in Accountable Talk, there is research that shows teachers can use Talk Moves as tools to continue and encourage conversation. A Talk Move is defined by Resnick et al. (2015) as “families of conversational moves that are intended to accomplish local goals” (p. 348). Many of these strategies are conversational moves that teachers naturally employ with students and the goal is to use them more purposefully and consistently (Michaels & O’Connor, 2015).

All conversational prompts that successfully generate productive talk between students can be considered talk moves. Here are six of the most common Talk Moves, their purposes, and examples of how they may sound (Keeley, 2016; Michaels & O’Connor, 2015; Michaels et al., 2008):

- Revoicing- Clarifies student statements. “What I hear you saying is...”
- Restating the ideas of others- Re-words the words of others, provides think time, and promotes listening. “Can someone tell me what they said in their own words?”
- Applying your own reasoning- Accumulates evidence and compares thinking. “What else can you add?”
- Say more- Agree, disagree, or add on. “Tell me more” “What do others think?”
- Press for Reasoning- Goes deeper and more explicit. “What evidence did you use?”

- Wait time- Two options; five or more seconds before a question, or five or more seconds between responses, encourages think time and participation

Talk Moves were developed within the context of math and science to strengthen students' understanding and reasoning skills (Michaels et al., 2008). However, teachers may use them to expand students thinking and discussion skills in any content area. They provide equity and accessibility to learning in the classroom by promoting participation and supporting students as they process complex ideas and academic dialogue.

One final note on Talk Moves is that they are tools that prioritize communicative meaning over form (Resnick et al., 2018). Teachers should allow for errors, incomplete statements, and informal language as students develop more sophisticated forms of communication. Focusing on ideas rather than form allows students of all levels of academic language proficiency to participate (Resnick et al., 2018). Teachers' maintain the responsibility to provide facts, expect explanations, and to anticipate misconceptions, but moving away from IRE and a corrective feedback loop allows students space to make mistakes and self-correct when possible (Michaels et al., 2008; Resnick et al., 2018). To encourage teachers to take up strategies such as these, strategies and information must be disseminated to them. In the next section, I move into a discussion about the most effective methods to introduce teachers to the concepts covered thus far.

Professional Development for Teachers of ELs

In the previous section of this paper, I explored some strategies and methods that can be used in mainstream classrooms to support academic language development of ELs and others. In this section, I delve into ideas around professional development (PD) for

teachers. I look into three distinct issues that I foresee needing to address in planning. First, there is a need to develop an understanding of how adults learn differently from children by examining adult learning theory. Second, I examine some of the best practices and goal writing for professional development for teachers. Third, I investigate the responsibilities in the role of facilitator for professional development. At the end of this section, I hope to have assembled an understanding of how to construct an effective and quality professional development course focused on creating opportunities for academic talk in the mainstream classroom.

Adult learning theory. When coordinating professional development, it is essential for teachers to have a basic understanding of how adult and child learning differs. There are several adult learning theories that focus on acknowledging the experience and autonomy of an adult learner. Teaching adults requires a different level of direction than teaching younger students. I discuss two adult learning theories that support the creation of a professional development course for teachers.

The first is the theory of Andragogy which outlines a model for how to create effective lessons for adults. There are six major concepts that are outlined in the andragogical model (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005):

1. The need to know
2. The learners self-concept
3. The role of the learners' experiences
4. Readiness to learn
5. Orientation to learning

6. Motivation

These ideas all relate to treating adult learners as experienced, autonomous, self-motivated individuals. Gessner (1956) stated that “None but the humble become good teachers of adults” (as cited by Knowles et al., 2005). Gessner is referring to the fact that adult learners’ experiences, prior knowledge, and independence must be honored to facilitate learning. It is not effective when a facilitator imparts knowledge to adult learners without making learning relevant or including adults in the learning process (Knowles et al., 2005).

The second adult learning theory important in planning professional development is Mezirow’s Transformative Learning theory (1997). This theory is based on adult learners’ frame of reference and ability to be self-critical (Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow also highlights that adult learners are autonomous thinkers who are able to integrate new knowledge through dialogue (1997). Transformative learning focuses on learners using learning experiences to facilitate critical self-reflection and dialogue that leads to changing unexamined assumptions and biases in frames of reference (Mezirow, 1997).

Both adult learning theories rely heavily on learners’ autonomous thinking and experiences. Mezirow and Knowles et al. both acknowledge that adult learning is most effective when learning is facilitated instead of highly structured and led by an instructor (1997; 2005). To be impactful for adults, learning must be centered on and relevant to current life perspectives and situations (Mezirow, 1997; Knowles et al., 2005). It is important to develop strong, meaningful goals for the professional development of teachers, and when possible, to include goals and input from learners themselves.

Best practices. There are two frameworks for creating high quality professional development that align with training classroom teachers of ELs. The first is based on research done by Desimone & Garet and describes five features of high quality professional development (2015). The other is designed specifically for implementing professional development for teachers of students who speak languages other than English or non-standard varieties of English (Godley et al., 2006). These two frameworks, along with other research, provide the basis for designing this professional development.

Desimone & Garet describe five basic features for effective professional development (2015). They report that these five features are necessary for improving teacher practice and student outcomes through PD (Desimone & Garet, 2015). They are as follows:

- 1) Content focus
- 2) Active learning
- 3) Coherence
- 4) Sustained duration
- 5) Collective participation

Specifically, content focus has to do with presenting teachers with relevant and applicable information. Coherence is adjusting information to ensure it aligns with school, district, and state requirements. Sustained duration could provide the most challenge since the authors suggest that twenty or more hours of training over consecutive months is required. Collective participation implies that teachers benefit

most from participating with like communities, such as grade level teams or school staff (Desimone & Garet, 2015). These five features assist in developing the structure and design of the professional development sessions. The next framework assists in planning for deep learning and facilitating shifts in teachers perspectives.

Godley et al. (2015) presents three themes for professional development to teachers of “dialectically diverse classrooms” (p.30). In the article Godley et al. (2015) define dialect as “a variety of a language that is associated with a particular regional or social group” (p.30). Godley et al. primarily discuss students who speak dialects of English, but I extend the framework to teachers of ELs since neither student group is usually considered proficient in academic English (2015). The three themes presented are these:

- 1) Anticipate resistance to diverse dialects and negative attitudes from teachers
- 2) Raise metalinguistic awareness for teachers and students
- 3) Emphasize practical, pedagogical applications of research on language variation

If the features by Desimone and Garet outlined the structure of effective PD, these three themes address the perspectives and theory behind it. According to Wilson (2001), implementation of these methods requires asking teachers to reflect on their own variations and habits in language (as cited by Godley et al., 2015). Teachers and students alike participate in situations that require a linguistic choice between formal or informal language (Godley et at., 2015). These three themes assist in designing my approach to creating professional development that has depth and impact for teachers to ELs.

Role of the facilitator. Being a facilitator in professional development for teachers is the last area of focus. Limited research exists about the role of the facilitator specific to teachers of ELs, however, Molle (2013) conducted case studies and research on this exact topic. I describe the key responsibilities described by Molle, combined with some ideas from Transformative Learning theory to create goals specific to the role of facilitator (2013).

While keeping in mind the three themes established by Godley et al. (2015), Molle lays out some practical responsibilities for facilitators (2013). It is the responsibility of the facilitator to maintain the flow of a training, the direction of interaction, create an environment of inquiry, and address any tension (Molle, 2013). These all require intentional planning and deliberate focus on norms of communication.

Facilitating effective discourse is key to encourage learners to arrive at new judgements and to critically examine their own learning (Mezirow, 1997). One important aspect of this, as Molle discusses, is addressing tension or negativity that is brought into the discussion (2013). Disrupting negative discourse, and addressing negative assumptions about ELs, can be done by emphasizing the resources and potential of ELs (English, 2009; Molle, 2013). Highlighting common ground between participants or ideas is another method for diffusing or redirecting conversation (Molle, 2013). It is important to acknowledge the challenges that teachers face, and the added responsibility that ELs bring to a classroom, while still affirming that schools and teachers have an important role in building the capacity of all learners (Molle, 2013).

Another strategy Molle suggests for managing the flow of discussion and promoting inquiry is to allow political conversations to occur. Allowing these conversations to take place has the potential to increase capacity for advocates of ELs as well as reaffirm that educators of ELs are working toward the same goal (Molle, 2013). Mezirow points out that through dialogue adults affirm and validate their own perspectives (1997). Allowing discourse to continue may create the opportunity for critical reflection of one's own assumptions or perspective. Whatever the direction of the conversation, it is important to establish norms of communication that, according to Molle (2013), “allow for the respectful acceptance of divergent views” (p. 201).

In the end, the responsibility of the facilitator is to orchestrate and implement high quality professional development which sustains an environment of self-reflection and respect for adult learners. Especially as facilitator to educators of ELs, it is important to emphasize positive perspectives, like what students are capable of and bilingualism as a resource (Molle, 2013). It is important for facilitators to keep in mind that change is gradual and behaviors are easier to modify than the transformation of frames of reference (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Hismanoglu, 2010; Molle, 2013; Mezirow, 1997).

Bringing it all Together

I now come back to the research question and how all of these ideas connect. The question is, how can teachers in a general education setting increase opportunities for quality academic talk for ELs? This question was directly answered in the third section on language in the general education classroom. I reviewed research based strategies that may added to the procedures and routines of any classroom. The frameworks for

Accountable Talk and Talk Moves are in depth changes that establish academic discourse for learning in the classroom (Michaels & O'Connor, 2015; Resnick et al., 2018). I expect that many teachers will readily recognize the benefits of these strategies and work to embed them into daily practice.

The final section about professional development provided the most new learning out of the four concepts. Through the use of the five features for design and the three themes for facilitation, I found that research provided me with tools for creating and implementing effective PD (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Godley et al., 2015). I also found the Pedagogical Language Knowledge helpful for prioritizing information to be included in the PD (Bunch, 2013).

The first two sections created a crucial understanding of English learners as whole students within society. This includes their diverse socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds. Its essential for educators to recognize this growing population and that it represents a need for change. There are many political and sociolinguistic issues that affect ELs in public schools. In presenting this information, my hope is that it raises the urgency of educators to address their needs and highlights the assets that ELs bring to society.

The section on definitions and theories of Academic Language was the most complex to synthesize and summarize. I found that theories and definitions of Academic Language that emphasize linguistic abilities of ELs are the most helpful in supporting my research question. The theory of the language of ideas and language of display, proposed by Bunch (2014), reframes how language is used for academic purposes. It encourages

teachers to provide space for both language forms. Language of ideas supports the processing and communication of ideas, while the language of display is modified for the audience and communicates knowledge (Bunch, 2014). It is a concept of language that I believe classroom teachers will be receptive to and supports the practice of Accountable Talk with Talk Moves.

Summary

To answer the research question, I developed a complete understanding of ELs in the U.S. public school system, including how they are identified, assessed, and assigned different proficiency labels. I reviewed the sociolinguistic issues and educational rights of English learners. I went over ideas of sociolinguistics and how students can develop metalinguistic awareness to navigate a variety of situations. Next, I discussed definitions and theories of Academic Language. This provided the basis for understanding how and why academic talk and discourse in the general education classroom is so important and beneficial for ELs and their non-EL peers. Furthermore, I described how academic language is often used and produced by ELs and teachers in the classroom, strategies for embedding more opportunities for student talk, and the framework of Accountable Talk with Talk Moves for establishing a class norm of academic discourse. Finally, I provided an overview in three areas of professional development. I reviewed adult learning theories, two frameworks for designing high quality and ideologically challenging PD, and the role of the facilitator in PD for teachers of ELs.

All of this was done in preparation for providing an in depth outline of the capstone project that is the culmination of the research question. In the next chapter, I

describe how I intend to deliver the answer to my research question to my colleagues and various teachers of ELs. I describe the intended audience and the school context. A description of the student body and the reasons for choosing this research question is described. The design and framework for this professional development utilizes the five features of high quality PD and the three themes for preparing teachers of ELs (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Godley et al., 2015). I rely on the theory of andragogy and transformative learning to guide the development of objectives and learning tasks.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

I now provide an overview of the project and how it connects to the information from the literature review. This is done to answer the research question, how can teachers in a general education setting increase opportunities for quality academic talk for ELs? To begin, I will describe the intended audience and how this information is relevant to them. I then provide a description of the project itself, which is a professional development course delivered through Google Slides with handouts. I outline each of the three sessions with an agenda and goals. I explain how theories of adult learning and best practices for professional development are interwoven into the design of the project. A description of the expected timeline of the project is included throughout. At the end, a brief summary of the main ideas covered in this chapter is provided before moving on to a preview of the following chapter.

Audience and Needs

The purpose of this professional development series is to provide general education teachers with effective resources and a stronger understanding of how to increase quality academic talk for ELs in a general education setting. The intended audience for this professional development is the teaching staff at an outer ring suburban elementary school. At the time of this capstone, 100% of the teaching staff was white and had an average of seventeen and a half years of teaching experience. Over the course of ten years, the school's population of students that qualify for EL services has increased

from 32% to 55%. This has been a distinct change in demographics and has resulted in a need to adapt methods by which students are engaged in learning.

One need that has been apparent is to modify instruction that supports, and is inclusive to, English Learners. Specifically, there is a demonstrated need for all teachers to strengthen support in the area of Academic Talk. According to the WIDA Consortium's ACCESS for ELLs 2.0, in the 2018-2019 school year, students made an average of +.02 levels growth in the area of speaking, while in reading the average growth was +.75 levels. Students have consistently shown close to zero growth in the modality of speaking on the ACCESS for ELLs. ELs in all grade levels at this school are scoring as Level 1 or 2 speakers at a higher rate than students across the state. According to the English Learners in Minnesota Report (2018) 33% of all ELs in Minnesota were assessed as Level 1 or 2 speakers. At this school, 56% scored in the lowest two levels in the same year. Another 28% of ELs in the school qualify as level 3 speakers making it difficult, if not impossible, for students to meet the minimum exiting criteria of level 3.5 as defined by MDE (2017). The data bolsters the need to strengthen the instruction provided for students in the area of Academic Talk.

Anecdotally, teachers often share their own low expectations for students in the area of oral communication. Teachers have observed and shared that students are unable to communicate thoughts or ideas in complete sentences, nor participate in quality academic discourse. Teachers have received instruction, either formally or informally, on using sentence frames as a method for supporting students ability to speak in full sentences. The need for further support is evident and some have even requested it. In the

following section, I include the manner in which this project intends to meet the stated needs of teachers and students.

Goals and Outline

This professional development series takes place over three separate half hour sessions and utilizes a pre- and post-survey to assess teachers' needs and responses. To make this professional development relevant for teachers, and aligned with data, the goals are as follows:

- 1) Teachers build awareness of how sociolinguistic issues affect students.
- 2) Teachers are prepared to integrate tools for increasing opportunities for academic talk in the classroom and build connections to current curriculum.
- 3) Teachers recognize the ways in which academic talk supports students in productive learning.
- 4) Teachers understand the main differences between the language of ideas and the language of display and how it applies to students (Bunch, 2014).

These goals align with Godley et al. stating that teachers should be exposed to basic sociolinguistics (2006), and it is important for adult learners to make connections with learning to real life situations (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Knowles et al., 2005). In each of the three PD sessions, the goals are addressed to some capacity. They are not discrete goals to be met during separate sessions.

Following the components of the Andragogical Model and Transformative Learning theory, this professional development centers on teachers' experiences with students and is based on relevant data (Knowles et al., 2005; Mezirow, 1997).

Survey. The purpose of the survey is to gather information about teachers' habits and attitudes towards the language production of ELs in the classroom. It asks teachers about their concerns and interests in potential topics for the PD. According to Desimone & Garet (2015), including teachers' ideas increases engagement and buy in for professional development. The same survey is to be administered prior to the first PD session and after the last. Teachers responses are used to assess any areas of change that can potentially be addressed to the routines or attitudes about the language use of ELs. The surveys are collected electronically through a google form and are anonymous.

Kember et al. completed a study that measured participants' levels of reflection through a survey (2000). The results outline a scale assessing the particular areas of habitual action, understanding, reflection, and critical reflection (Kember et al., 2000). Teachers taking the survey self-assess in each of the four areas to statements about students' language use in the classroom, with agreement or disagreement. Affirmative responses to the statements are assigned higher point values, which allows for averages to be calculated across the school and in smaller sub-groups. The goal is to observe an increase in scores from the survey taken prior to PD participation when compared to one completed after.

The pre-survey assists in choosing which topics to focus on during the professional development sessions. Teachers may express a high level of interest in a specific topic or responses may demonstrate benefits of increasing time spent in other areas. The outline I provided next can be modified according to the information gathered through the surveys.

Session One. This session lays the groundwork for thinking critically about sociolinguistics, considering how it affects students, and reviewing data that highlights how critical support in academic language production is for students.

First, I ask teachers to create their own sociolinguistic timelines. Sociolinguistics is defined as the ability to navigate and respond to society through the use of language and varieties of language. Teachers have the opportunity to share individual timelines with small groups and volunteer to share with the whole group. This is an activity that highlights the diverse language varieties teachers have employed throughout their lives. The goal in this activity is for teachers to build awareness of the diversity in language use according to changing environments. According to Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning, the opportunity to dialogue with peers encourages teachers to arrive at new judgments and to critically examine their own perspectives (1997).

Next, small groups participate in dialogue about the types of language students might use and the different settings in which learners face any type of sociolinguistic expectations. After teachers respond to open ended discussion questions, there is an opportunity to discuss as a large group. This provides an opportunity to model Talk Moves, allowing teachers to observe the strategy before it is introduced in a future session (Hismanoglu, 2010). During the discussion, teachers should begin to recognize how students use language and their personal biases in regard to students' language use (Godley et al., 2006; Mezirow, 1997).

Lastly, I review student data belonging to this particular elementary school. I specifically show school and state wide ACCESS test results to demonstrate the need for

intervention in the area of academic talk. The goal of sharing data is to validate and acknowledge teachers' experiences with language in the classroom. The data is important for confirming what teachers experience in the classroom instead of being told by the facilitator what students need. This honors the role of the learners' experiences and explicitly links future sessions to existing needs (Desimone & Garet, 2015; English, 2009; Knowles et al., 2005).

Before ending the session, I review new information and preview learning for future sessions. I hope to make myself available for feedback and requests for the following session.

Session Two. This session focuses on specific methods and tools for creating academic talk in the classroom. It highlights the importance of focusing on language meaning instead of language form (Resnick et al., 2018; Walqui & Heritage, 2018; Zweirs et al., 2014). Academic Language is defined and how its development can be supported by Accountable Talk with Talk Moves (Resnick et al., 2018). The timing of this session is about one month into the school year and hopefully occurs at an opportune time for teachers to add strategies to their classroom routines. It begins with an overview of the previous session and an open discussion to any thoughts or questions people have had since then.

To begin the session, teachers work in small groups to brainstorm methods they already use to encourage student talk in the classroom. This includes not only activities, but also prompts and strategies for urging students to elaborate or clarify responses. These are shared out to the whole group to see which are the most common and effective

methods. After sharing strategies, a broad definition of Academic Language in the classroom, is provided, as a basis for further discussion.

From there, I outline features of Accountable Talk with Talk Moves as tools for supporting academic discourse. We discuss how Accountable Talk is a classroom framework and that Talk Moves are strategies under the umbrella of Accountable Talk. I share about the effectiveness of Talk Moves and how studies show it results in higher achievement for students overall (Resnick et al., 2018). I distribute handouts on Accountable Talk and Talk Moves, with descriptions and examples of each (Appendix B & C) (JDTeach, 2016; Winter, 2018).

Session three. The last of the three sessions focuses on teacher experiences and a reflection on student language. This session is used to introduce the theory of language of ideas and the language of display as a lens for discussing student language (Bunch, 2014). Most of the time is spent facilitating small group dialogues and connecting information back to research and theory.

To start the session, teachers participate in partner discussions about how they have implemented new strategies or observations they have made on student language production in the classroom. There is time to share noticings or wonderings with the whole group. Group sharing is an important piece of the professional development as it honors learners' experiences, as well as, offers the opportunity to validate and/or challenge the assumptions of others through dialogue, which are both key components of adult learning theories (Knowles et al., 2005; Mezirow, 1997).

Next, I share several modifications to Think-Pair-Share strategies that aim to increase student talk and engagement. These strategies are simple to implement in the classroom and less intimidating than adopting an entirely new framework, such as Accountable Talk. Sharing these strategies aligns with researchers findings that it is easier to change discrete behaviors than perspectives and attitudes (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Kember et al., 2000; Mezirow, 1997). Sharing accessible strategies that can be immediately implemented in the classroom addresses the short term objectives of this PD.

Before ending the session we review the essential questions that have introduced each session. The purpose of this is to review and reflect on ideas and learning that took place in previous sessions such as sociolinguistics, school data, Accountable Talk and Talk Moves. It is important to circle back to topics covered in previous sessions so that learners finish with a reminder of previous learning (Fracissa, 2019).

At the end of the third session, each teacher individually comes up with their two biggest take-aways from the professional development series. One take-away is focused on transformational learning or changes in perspective. The other is a tangible, actionable tool that teachers have found useful in the classroom. Both of these take-aways are written on post-its and presented in a way for others to be able to read. This facilitates a final self-reflection on practices and perspectives on students' language use. The intention of this is to create responsible and self-reflective thinkers as outlined by Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory (1997).

After teachers participate in the full professional development session, they are asked to fill out the post-survey described earlier. The survey helps to assess teacher engagement, self awareness, and changes in practice that are being implemented in the classroom. Sending out the survey also serves as a reminder of the strategies and learning experienced during the PD. Next, I describe how this PD is grounded in adult learning theory and best practices.

Rationale and Adult Learning Theory

This professional development project relies heavily on Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning (1997). It implements methods from the theory of Andragogy by Knowles et al. (2005) and incorporates the themes by Godley et al. (2006) about teaching dialectically diverse learners. It is based on building awareness and developing new perspectives on students' language proficiency. Mezirow argues there should be long-term and short-term goals for transformative learning (1997). In the following section, I examine how the long-term and short-term goals of this professional development series are informed by research and theory.

Need to know. In andragogical learning theory, Knowles et al. states that adults need an understanding of why they are learning something before they are motivated to do so (2005). In comparison, Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory claims that learning must be specific to learners current needs and understandings (1997). Desimone & Garet found professional development is more successful when the topic is explicitly linked to classroom lessons (2015). These and other writers have made similar arguments

about how adult learners have increased motivation and engagement when they experience a vested interest in the topic.

Through data and dialogue, teachers participating in the PD sessions recognize the relevance and urgency of increasing academic talk in the classroom for ELs. Session one aims to meet this goal by sharing data and reflecting on the experiences of ELs in the classroom. This data is meant to bolster and validate what teachers already observe in general education classrooms as students may struggle to communicate higher level thinking through oral language. The purpose of activities based in sociolinguistics is to build awareness about the complexity of linguistic issues students confront on a daily basis. Together, these activities are intended to prepare teachers for critical reflection and new perspective on students' language use in the classroom.

Long and short term goals. There are long and short-term goals embedded into the overarching learning targets. Mezirow states the importance of long and short-term goals in *Transformative Learning for adults* (1997). If the long-term goal of this PD is to transform teachers' perspective on sociolinguistics for ELs, then the short-term goal is to increase the use of strategies that create opportunity for academic talk (Mezirow, 1997). Adult learners more naturally focus on attainable, short-term goals, such as the instructional strategies and tools presented in session two, while transformative learning that shifts perspectives or attitudes requires long-term learning and self-reflection (Mezirow, 1997).

The long-term learning target for teachers during this professional development is to build awareness around issues of sociolinguistics and how it affects learners. These

ideas are brought up during each session and presented as opportunities for dialogue instead of facilitator-led direct instruction. According to Mezirow, facilitating discourse between adult learners encourages validating and arriving at new judgments, while new information should only be provided as a resource for dialogue (1997). Dialogue with open-ended questions addresses long-term goals, whereas short-term goals are met through more explicit instruction.

Session two is when the majority of tools and strategies are introduced to teachers. These tools are directly applicable to classroom instruction and address the short-term goals of the PD. With the timing of session two about a month into the school year, teachers may be more receptive to learning that is not emotionally demanding as opposed to higher stress at the beginning of the school year.

The long and short-term goals described here align with research which states that teacher behavior and practices are easier to change than deeper held beliefs and perspectives (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Mezirow, 2000). The professional development outlined here uses research-based methods and adult learning theory to facilitate learning for professional adults as they consider their role in supporting ELs' opportunities for academic talk.

Summary

This chapter has covered the main body of the project and how it connects to research in prior chapters. This professional development is presented in three 30 minute sessions. Ideally, one session each month starting at the beginning of the school year. It includes pre- and post-surveys for teachers who participate. The surveys are used to

gauge teacher interest and engagement with the topic. The three sessions and learning objectives are all grounded in Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning (1997) and rely on Knowles et al.'s theory of Andragogy (2005). The purpose is to challenge teachers perspective on the complexity of student language use and provide tools to increase quality opportunities for academic talk. The main research question to be answered is, how can teachers in a general education setting increase opportunities for quality academic talk for ELLs?

In the next chapter, I reflect on the process of researching, writing, and creating this capstone project. I review which research and learning proved to be the most critical and impactful to the project and to my development as an educator. I consider the implications and limitations of the research and the professional development series as a final product. The last chapter of this capstone, also focuses on further learning that could be done in this area. Understanding the impact and continuing focus of this work is valuable to bringing this project to its conclusion.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Overview

After completing the process of creating a capstone project, there are some key areas of learning that I discuss in this chapter as a conclusion. I review ideas as they pertain to being a writer and a learner, as well as how ideas I researched impacted the development of this work. Through revisiting the literature found in chapter two, I highlight the information that turned out to be the most valuable during the research and development phase of this capstone. I discuss the implications and limitations of the project and the possibilities I foresee for continuing this work in the future. Lastly, I answer how this project adds to the conversation between those in the field of education and the development of educators within a professional learning community. This is the final focus on the research question posed at the beginning of this paper; how can teachers in a general education setting increase opportunities for quality academic talk for ELs?

Reflection on Learning and New Connections

In this section, I discuss what I have learned in the role of writer and learner during the development of this capstone project. First, I look into new learning that guided the research phase of this project. Specifically, the study of data pertaining to ELs and the role of a general education teacher to ELs. Next, I present the areas of learning that impacted the formation of the professional development sessions that I created as part of this project. This includes how ideas of adult learning theory and sociolinguistic

concepts influenced the facilitation of learning within the professional development sessions.

Completing the research. During the research phase of this capstone project, there were two areas that I found the most important to my own development as a learner and writer. Before I could move on to developing the project that would communicate the findings of my research, I had to build my own understanding in both the areas of EL student data and what is necessary information for general education teachers. I briefly discuss these pieces and describe how they affected my research process.

First, there is an incredible amount of student data available to the public. To make this information usable, I had to find a way to present the data as accessible and relevant to educators. I sifted through the information provided in the English Learner Education Report by the Minnesota Department of Education to identify any data that might be comparable to that of my own elementary school (2018). The ability to determine and communicate common trends that occurred within the local and state populations of ELs was significant to creating educator buy-in during the professional development phase of this project. Finding correlations between the different groups of students required me to first develop a strong understanding of the data. Understanding data and building relationships among the information is a skill that will continue to be critical as an educator.

Another idea that became important as I conducted research was considering the responsibilities and roles of the EL teacher and the general education classroom teacher in regard to the education of ELs (Hamann & Reeves, 2013). The research done by

Hamann and Reeves (2013) centered understanding the differing responsibilities of general education and EL teachers. I found that as I made decisions about where to focus research, I modified my criteria for relevant information for general education teachers based on this research. It is based on the idea that the most essential information to provide general education teachers is not a primer on language development or second-language acquisition (Hamann & Reeves, 2013). Another goal, based on this research, was building shared responsibility for supporting EL students between the EL and mainstream teachers, so students may benefit from the collaboration between both sets of educators (Hamann & Reeves, 2013).

Therefore, I sought to focus my research on how language can be increased and developed for ELs specifically by general education teachers in the classroom. The methods and theories of language acquisition remain the area of expertise for the EL teacher (English, 2009). General education teachers have a unique opportunity to provide authentic opportunities for language use that support students' language development within content area instruction. In this way, the role of general education teacher remains distinct from EL teachers in regards to second language acquisition. This separation allowed me to better define my research question and focus in a way that produced information that was of greater benefit and relevance to the intended audience of my capstone project.

Developing the project. The project developed into three professional development sessions intended for elementary educators in mainstream classrooms with EL students. Again, there are two areas of learning that most influenced the creation of

this project. Embedded throughout the development phase of this project are key ideas from both adult learning theories and sociolinguistics.

During the formation of the professional development sessions, I relied heavily on theories of adult learning, especially the theory of Andragogy and the theory of transformative learning (Knowles et al., 2005; Mezirow, 1997). Incorporating teachers' prior experience, expertise, and relevant learning were crucial aspects to planning effective and engaging learning experiences for adults (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). After doing research in this area, I realized it does not suffice to develop sessions that utilize best practices for teaching elementary students. There were elements of adult learning that I was not aware of and greatly impacted the planning phase of the professional development sessions.

In addition, I was mindful of incorporating activities and discussion prompts that would continuously build sociolinguistic awareness throughout the sessions. It was important to embed the idea that English proficiency should not be treated as a gateway to higher level thinking and academic engagement (Resnick et al., 2018). Students have the capacity for content learning and academic achievement at any level of language proficiency. As an advocate for ELs, all teachers should be aware of the many abilities belonging to students who are bilingual and bicultural. Creating awareness of sociolinguistic issues is important for creating authentic learning opportunities for students that permits non-standard varieties of language as demonstrations of knowledge (Bunch, 2014).

Implications, Limitations, and Future Focus

Implications and limitations. Here, I discuss what I see as the implications and limitations of this project as it currently stands. There are many thoughts that could be discussed in each of these areas. I focus on the ideas that at present are the most apparent and relevant to learners and communication to educators. This includes how the information is being communicated to stakeholders and the specific data trends that were discovered during this process.

What I perceive as the primary implication is also the greatest limitation. This project was developed with a particular student population and teaching community in mind, meaning that the information is most relevant to schools with similar populations and needs. This is also the greatest limitation. The scope of research and development was limited to information that was pertinent to this particular audience. While, the project is limited by this, if needed, it could be modified or adapted to apply to a greater community of educators.

The data trends that surfaced during the research phase of this project have implications for the learners within my own school and beyond. The data demonstrated a trend toward lower English language proficiency levels in the area of speaking, as measured by the ACCESS for ELLS. This trend has been evident within the local district, as well as, more broadly across the state. In my own building, highlighting this data could strengthen the resolve of teachers and administrators to focus professional development on academic talk to increase teacher capacity for supporting ELs. This is an implication that, if the trend remains consistent, and the data becomes more prevalent, has the

potential to affect a greater population of learners as educators respond to the needs of learners.

Future focus. While the data shows that the English language proficiency levels of ELs is plateauing in the area of speaking within my school and across the state, the educational focus will most likely remain the same until the effects on overall academic success are documented. Within the literature, there are many examples of how academic talk is beneficial for students' thinking and cognitive development. Moreover, it is well documented that providing students regular opportunities to explain their thinking and discuss their ideas increases engagement, deepens comprehension, and creates authentic learning (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2016; Resnick, Asterhan, & Clarke, 2018; Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard, 2014; Zwiers & Crawford, 2011), but there is little research or data on how this affects overall student success or achievement on standardized tests. Within today's culture, in which decision makers rely heavily on assessment data for guiding instruction and policy, more research is needed to illustrate how overall learning and achievement benefits from increasing students' academic talk.

Professional Benefits

The benefit to the professional community of educators as a result of this project is mostly due to increased awareness and capacity as an outcome of participating in the professional development sessions. Teachers who are interested, and have the opportunity to take part in this training, should have better knowledge and strategies to address the challenges EL students are facing in regard to language development. Beyond the professional development sessions, the research I have conducted has provided an entry

point for conversations with colleagues and stakeholders that may not otherwise have occurred. Increasing awareness with one individual has the potential to share ideas beyond.

The reach of this project mostly remains within my own sphere of influence. Currently, there is the opportunity to share this professional development with staff in my own building. If the opportunity presented itself to provide this training elsewhere I would be interested in making it accessible to a wider audience of learners. It is possible to modify and edit the sessions to be applicable to teachers with similar student populations. This process has provided a plethora of learning for myself as an educator and writer, but is intended to have greater impact on students as more teachers are able to participate in the professional development.

Summary

In closing, while creating this capstone project, I have experienced multiple levels of learning, as well as deepened my understanding around ELs use of academic talk. I have learned strategies and theories that clarify my knowledge about how students use language for learning in the classroom. I have developed communication tools for presenting this information to a professional learning community of adults. In the future, I hope to continue to gather data about how increasing opportunities for academic talk impacts student achievement. As I continue my journey as an EL educator, I hope to carry forward the ideas I have gathered and the persistence to continue advocating for what is best for all learners, especially English language learners, in the general education classroom.

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APPENDIX A

Academic Talk Professional Development Survey

Choose your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

- A) Definitely Disagree
- B) Somewhat Disagree
- C) N/A (This does not apply to me)
- D) Somewhat Agree
- E) Definitely Agree

Habits:

1. On a daily basis I add opportunities for academic talk
2. I provide ten seconds or more of wait time before asking students to share
3. I expect students to answer in full sentences with clear ideas
4. I use questions and prompts to clarify student communication

Understanding (book learning, fact level):

1. Students benefit from peer-to-peer communication
2. Listening for meaning is more important than fixing grammar
3. Students who participate in academic conversations improve standardized test scores
4. When students explain their thinking they deepen their understanding

Reflection (Examination and awareness of one's beliefs):

1. One goal of educating English learners is to produce bilingual students
2. Students who have limited English proficiency can achieve high academic success

3. Academic vocabulary is critical to academic success
4. Any type of language can be used for content instruction and higher order thinking

Critical Reflection (Transformation of perspective):

1. Students who are bilingual are an asset to the learning community
2. Students who are bilingual have the ability to navigate complex language demands
3. Students should be explicitly taught about types of language, such as social and academic language
4. I can actively support students ability to become bilingual in a general education setting

What would you like to know about ELs and academic talk in the classroom?

What have you noticed about ELs ability to talk in your classroom?

What strategies have you tried for getting ELs to talk in the classroom? (multiple choice)

- Turn & Talk
- Think-Pair-Share
- Sentence frames/stems/starters
- Accountable Talk
- Talk Moves
- Other: _____

Appendix B



Accountable Talk

classroom norms

We are Accountable to our Learning Community

- Listen carefully to each other
- Use & build on others' ideas
- Paraphrase and seek clarification
- Respectfully disagree.
- Use our sentence stems!

We are Accountable to Accurate Knowledge

- Be as specific and accurate as possible.
- Resist the urge to say just "anything that comes to mind"
- Get your facts straight!
- Challenge questions that demand evidence!

We are Accountable to Rigorous Thinking

- Build arguments based on evidence
- Link claims & evidence in a logical way.
- Form clear, strong claims, arguments & opinions!

Appendix C

TALK MOVES

Move	Teacher	Student
Revoicing	<p>Teacher repeats what students say in another way to help clarify student thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So you're saying... 	<p>I can repeat what someone said and ask them to verify if my statement is correct.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So you're saying...
Rephrasing/ Restating	<p>Asking students to restate someone else's ideas in their own words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you repeat what _____ said in your own words? 	<p>I can restate someone else's ideas in my own words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I heard you say _____.
Reasoning	<p>Asking a student if they agree/disagree with an idea proposed by another student.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you agree or disagree and why? 	<p>I can apply my own reasoning to someone else's idea.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I agree/disagree with your idea because _____.
Elaborating	<p>Prompting other students to challenge, add on, or elaborate to increase participation and deepen understanding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would someone like to add on? • Can you give me an example...? 	<p>I can participate in the discussion by adding comments or sharing my reasoning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd like to add _____.
Waiting	<p>Use wait time, help students to learn that quiet time is not awkward silence but thinking time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This question is important, let's take some time to think about it. 	<p>I can take time to organize my thoughts and be ready to contribute to the discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your time...