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Effective Reading Strategies for Multilingual Learners in the Mainstream Classroom

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Effective Reading Strategies
for Multilingual Learners in the Mainstream Classroom

By
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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Literacy Education

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DEDICATION

To my family and friends, thank you for your support over the past two years. I had a goal to complete a Master's program at some point in my teaching career. It felt right to take on the challenge during the many months stuck inside during the pandemic. Thank you for the words of encouragement, the check-ins, and the many calls and texts. I could not have done this without all of you.

To my past, present, and future students, I hope I have made a positive impact on your educational experience. I find so much joy in teaching each of you and I hope that this time spent educating myself and others will continue to create a more inclusive environment in which you can all thrive, like you deserve to.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

As a monolingual teacher charged with the language development of multilingual learners, I am well aware of the consistent and continued need for professional growth. It is the duty of any teacher to be a lifelong learner for the benefit of their students. It is integral to my work to better understand how language is functioning in the classroom and provide scaffolds so that my students can access the learning at the same level as their native-English speaking peers. My primary goal is to create sustainable strategies and support for multilingual learners in their mainstream classrooms so that they are able to learn content and language simultaneously. This push-in style of support is underutilized and the significant academic growth it fosters is worth the time and energy to make it work. This goal will center on literacy development for multilingual learners, with a focus on fourth and fifth grade. This leads me to my research questions: *How can multilingual learners develop strong literacy skills within their mainstream classrooms? What strategies, resources, and instructional models best support them in this learning?* Chapter One will cover my journey towards merging the worlds of literacy and multilingual learner support, my rationale for choosing this topic, a summary of this chapter and a look at what is to come in the forthcoming chapters.

Journey to Literacy and Multilingual Support

As a student myself, I was enamored with reading. I found numerous book series that I was passionate about and characters that I could easily relate to. I immersed myself, became lost in fictional worlds, and found that I was imagining myself as the protagonist

of every story I read. I looked forward to my weekly trips to the local library and I simply couldn't understand those who didn't share my passion for a good book. Silent reading, for me, was my sanctuary at school and it felt like my moment to breathe.

When I began college at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I considered finding a career that would allow me to use my reading passion for a future job, but I quickly realized my passion only went so far. I struggled for multiple semesters to decide my college major, switching too many times to count. I knew in my heart that I wanted a career that served others. Through this journey I eventually stumbled blindly into English as a Second Language (ESL) education. I had finally decided education would be my path and I had hoped to become a classroom teacher. Through this process I earned a dual degree in ESL education and elementary education.

Throughout my coursework in my pre-service teaching program, a common theme was repeated each semester by our various professors and advisors. The consistent theme was that the best English language support happens when services are provided within mainstream classrooms. They stated that this was especially true for students who are no longer considered newcomers to the English language. This research-backed argument ingrained itself in my teaching philosophy and I made it my mission to provide the best support that I could within the confines of my colleagues' classrooms. The rationale was that students are very capable, and by utilizing a pull-out model of instruction, we limit their time and ability to access the content, social interactions, and discussions that occur in their mainstream classroom. This philosophy carried through as I progressed and completed my teaching program.

After completing my degree and gaining my Minnesota teaching licenses in elementary and ESL education, I was able to secure an ESL teaching position in Shoreview, Minnesota. When I began my work, I encountered an uphill battle. My first year was split between a kindergarten center, an elementary school, and a middle school. To say I was overwhelmed would be an understatement. I survived the first year, disappointed that I could not provide push-in and co-teaching support because I was merely trying to stay afloat and serve all of my students. Fast forward to my second year and I had been given the opportunity to work full-time at Turtle Lake Elementary School. This gave me the chance to implement types of instructional support that I knew were best practice and most supportive to the multilingual learners (MLs, as I will refer to them moving forward) in my school. Over the course of my years as an ESL teacher at Turtle Lake, I began to build a reputation and I used this reputation to bridge my two passions: literacy development and English language development.

Co-Teaching Experiences

To begin, I built strong relationships with my homeroom partners. Homeroom partners were chosen to have a small cluster of MLs in their class. Through these strategic placements and collaborative partnerships, I was able to establish an ideal avenue for supporting ML language acquisition. The ESL instructional model I have structured my support around is commonly known as content-based English language programming. The idea of this model is that the ESL teacher acts as the language expert and the homeroom teacher acts as the content expert. Through cohesive and strategic collaboration, the two experts provide instruction that targets both areas. In addition to

this strong support, teachers learn from each other, and in doing so they build their capacity to support students in other subject areas throughout their day.

During my first year of co-teaching I was fortunate enough to find three colleagues who were willing to plan, create, and collaborate as a team with me. After my previous year was spent traveling between buildings on my own and rarely collaborating, or even speaking to other teachers, this was an absolute dream come true. We spent hours creating engaging, creative, and supportive lessons with a plethora of scaffolds to support multilingual learners and striving readers. I can recall a time early in co-teaching when I walked into my partner's room on my birthday and I was greeted with a flash of color as students from every angle threw confetti at my face and screamed "Happy Birthday, Ms. Hebert". I was so emotional and I felt so close to the school community in a whole new way. I was invigorated and energetic to support all students and I was so appreciative of the opportunity to make English language support more visible in our school.

Literacy Focus

As I have worked more closely in the area of literacy through co-teaching support, I noticed that the literacy curriculum, Lucy Calkins' *Units of Study*, was not supportive to the needs of my students, or to any striving reader for that matter. I have spent the last four years of my career creating resources, such as slides, graphic organizers, vocabulary charts, and more to supplement the areas that this curriculum falls short. In first, second, and third grade, our school uses Jan Richardson's *Guided Reading Plus* as a resource for small guided reading groups, which has been very successful and impactful for MLs. However, in fourth and fifth grade we do not have an additional resource to supplement

the areas that need more support. This is where I see a glaring need for more scaffolding, accessible strategies, and research supported guidance for teachers.

To better explain the inaccessibility and rigor of this curriculum, I will provide this example. The Lucy Calkins curriculum in fifth grade asks students to identify the author's technique and goal, with the author's craft being the overall topic of discussion. The curriculum includes 15 different techniques, such as multiple plot lines, symbolism, tone, and metaphor, as well as 15 different goals such as showing character's motivations, building a mood, building suspense, and stirring empathy. In the overview of the lessons that cover this topic, there is no opportunity for building background knowledge, engaging in peer discussion, defining new terms, or any scaffolding that might be appropriate for the challenges this lesson presents. The authors assume that students come to the lesson with this knowledge.

Surprisingly, after implementing supplemental support, this particular lesson is now one of my favorites to teach. My co-teacher and I created flashcards of the goals and techniques so that students could easily manipulate them. We also created a paper mat that outlined an area that students could place their cards with a sentence frame above that reads "The author used ___ in order to ____". This allows students to manipulate the cards so that they would need to find a technique and goal that fit a particular passage in our mentor text or their own book. The level of engagement and understanding was outstanding and now the entire fifth grade team uses these strategies and resources to teach this lesson to their students. There is an obvious need for this type of support in more areas of literacy in fourth and fifth grade, which is why I see this as my opportunity to address these needs.

Rationale & Importance

These strong co-teaching partnerships and the content-based English language programming have been so impactful for our MLs and the ESL program at Turtle Lake Elementary. However, there is a great amount of work yet to be done. Supporting language growth and acquisition in each content area is a massive challenge and undertaking. Teachers need strategies and resources to support these needs and it is my goal to provide more guidance and research to support this work. In the past couple of years, we have seen MLs be disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. There is a remarkable amount of learning that needs to be made up for, and educators need a strong set of tools in their toolkits in order to meet the needs of their students. Homeroom teachers are not only addressing the academic needs of their students, but also the social and emotional needs. They have a lot on their plate, so as a language acquisition expert, I realize providing them with reliable and research-based strategies to support their mission is of the utmost importance.

Positionality

As I review the literature and describe my capstone project in the upcoming chapters, it is important to note my positionality on this topic. As a current ML teacher, I am actively involved in a ML program. As the sole ML teacher at my school, I have the responsibility of giving direct service to all students who qualify for ML services and I am also given the opportunity to shape the instructional model based on my schedule and what I believe is best for the students. This paper focuses on strategies, instructional models, and considerations that I believe are integral to the educational setting. I am undoubtedly biased towards the proposed implementations because I have personally

implemented them for my school and students. My decisions are backed by research and best practices for MLs, but it is still important to note that each aspect described is deeply embedded into my personal teaching philosophy.

Additionally, it is important to note that I am a White woman in a position of power, in charge of teaching the dominant culture's language to a group of multicultural students. This places me in a unique position and I must consider carefully how I perceive my students, their homes, their cultural values, and how their perspective and mine may differ. I grew up in a small town in northern Wisconsin that had very little diversity. I grew up going to church on Sundays but I am not religious and I consider myself to be a very liberal and open-minded person. I have had to do a lot of learning due to lack of exposure to anything other than the White dominant culture during my youth, but I have spent my time devoting myself to understanding my role in this society. My goal in everything is finding ways to empower and unite, rather than continuing the cycle of oppression and exclusivity. This is one of the many reasons why I chose to be a ML teacher.

Summary

In summation, the need for robust and effective instructional models for multilingual learners within the mainstream classroom is integral to the continued growth of both language and content acquisition. Through collaboration with homeroom teachers, ML teachers can make a massive impact on both the students they serve and the colleagues they support. There is a space for professional learning that many colleagues and myself want to engage in for the benefit of our students. Now is the time to hone our

skills to be better prepared for the needs that will inevitably arise in our classrooms this year and the years to come.

In the remaining chapters of this paper, I will continue to dig deeper into this topic as I begin to find answers to the questions: *How can multilingual learners develop strong literacy skills within their mainstream classrooms? What strategies, resources and instructional models best support them in this learning?* In Chapter Two, I will review and analyze related articles and academic journals that specifically address the questions I have raised in this first chapter. In Chapter Three, I will outline my capstone project, which is a website with resources that can be utilized for the benefit of students and teachers. In Chapter Four, I will reflect upon the completion of my project and my research.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Introduction

The goal of this second chapter is to analyze and synthesize relevant research that relates to multilingual learning and literacy development. There are many factors and considerations to take into account in multilingual learning and therefore there is a wide variety of academic research to explore. The guiding questions for this literature review are: *How can multilingual learners develop strong literacy skills within their mainstream classrooms? What strategies, resources, and instructional models best support them in this learning?*

This chapter consists of four subtopics that delve into different areas of the research question. First, there will be an overview of multilingual instructional models. Exploring the benefits and considerations of each, this chapter will emphasize the instructional models that encourage language and content learning within the mainstream classroom. Secondly, there will be an analysis of engagement strategies that educators can use in their classrooms to actively target successful multilingual student learning. The use of engagement strategies is integral to producing language that is comprehensible and makes simultaneous language and content learning possible. The third section will explore cultural considerations that are vital to examine as a socially and culturally responsive educator. These considerations will include diverse book selections, honoring cultures in the classroom, and creating a safe and accomodationg learning environment. Lastly, instructional strategies will be addressed that integrate student home languages so that language learners can utilize their first language strengths to bridge their second

language learning. These four subtopics will seek to answer the research question stated above and provide relevant and intentional strategies that educators can use to actively engage their multilingual learners.

Types of Instructional Models for Multilingual Programs

In this section, instructional models that schools could implement for their multilingual learning programs will be analyzed. It will specifically focus on the options that provide language learning in the mainstream classroom to support linguistic and literacy development, rather than pull-out instructional models. Pull-out instructional models are structures that have the ML teacher take, or “pull-out”, their multilingual students from the homeroom classrooms and instruct them in a separate space. These instructional models typically focus on language learning, placing content learning as secondary. For the purpose of this chapter, the focal point will be on models that provide language learning to benefit literacy development within the homeroom, or content, classroom. The instructional models that will be discussed in this section are co-teaching and small group instruction.

Considerations for Instructional Models and Programming

Districts and schools must make decisions about how they will meet the needs of their identified multilingual students. Under ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act), schools must provide meaningful support to all MLs that qualify for services (U.S. Department of Education English Learner Toolkit, 2016). Before instruction in the classroom even starts, decisions must be made about how districts should staff and support the multilingual programs they are charged with maintaining. According to the U.S. Department of Education English Learner Toolkit, Local Education Agencies

(LEAs) must hire qualified teachers, provide an adequate number of qualified ML staff, and adequate resources for language programming. Additionally, LEAs should consider whether or not their staff, including EL teachers, core-content teachers, and special education teachers, has the necessary training and strategies to support multilingual learners. Despite these understandable goals, many teachers are underprepared and lack the training to support multilingual learners in their classrooms, specifically in the area of literacy development, an area considered closely in this chapter (Barr, 2016). Program implementation that places qualified staff at the center has the potential to reverse this perpetuating problem for teachers operating in silos without the support of ML staff.

The role of ML teachers has shifted, adding new responsibilities beyond linguistic and literacy development, such as supporting acculturation into United States school systems, supporting the social emotional needs of students, and supporting families above and beyond (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018). However, the shift has allowed for clarity about how the expertise of ML teachers can be leveraged for the benefit of students, colleagues, and themselves through a more collaborative approach. According to Dove and Honigsfeld (2018), the most current understanding of the educational community is that language acquisition is not a process that should be done in isolation, but rather in collaboration. It is best supported in the classroom, where authentic language use is necessary and supports both content and language learning in conjunction.

Co-teaching Instructional Model

One of these collaborative models is co-teaching. Co-teaching is a flexible and supportive model that places both the ML teacher and content teacher in the room together. Collaborative teaching allows teachers to benefit from one another's strengths

and utilize a wide variety of instructional model types, broken down into whole group, two small groups, and multiple small group options as explained by Dove and Honigsfeld (2018).

Whole group options include:

- One Leads, One “Teaches on Purpose”;
- Two Teach the Same Content;
- One Teaches, One Assesses

While two small group options include:

- Two Teach Same Content;
- One Preteaches, One Teaches Alternative Information;
- One Reteaches, One Teaches Alternative Information;

Lastly, a multiple group option called:

- Two Monitor and Teach.

The success of co-teaching is in the flexibility it allows and the ability to meet the needs of students in the moment. With collaboration between teachers, there are two sets of eyes, working together to study and act on what is happening in the classroom.

The success in co-teaching can be traced back to the foundational idea that it is only successful when the participants are willing and committed. According to Vintan and Gallagher (2019), the mindset that happens when teachers collaborate is a shared goal that allows for a reduction in role differentiation. The shared expertise and ability to problem solve as a team, rather than as an individual, allows for a better understanding of the roles each individual plays in the learning process of the students they serve.

Additionally, ML teachers are more visible to all students and staff, rather than isolating

themselves, and their work, to a separate room. This visibility makes it possible for collaboration to thrive and appropriately meet the needs of the shared learners.

Despite the benefits of a co-teaching and collaborative model, it does come with challenges and barriers. ML teachers and mainstream teachers are asked to collaborate and make shared decisions about students and instruction. For some, this may feel difficult. According to Arkoudis (2008), ML teachers and mainstream teachers operate under different views of language within their respective subject disciplines. In order to navigate the partnership, the two teachers must find a balance between the rules and structures they have constructed and find common ground by positioning themselves in one another's role. There is also a balance of power and level of trust that must be maintained and considered. Vintan and Gallagher (2019) stated that there are additional challenges that often hinder collaborative partnerships' ability to flourish, including schedule planning, misunderstandings of the role of an ML teacher, and minimal opportunities for professional development for ML teachers. By addressing these challenges, ML teachers could enter the classroom as a non-threatening and resourceful colleague, who provides the opportunity to build the capacity of their partner. This, in turn, ensures that the other times of the day that are spent without the ML co-teacher, MLs are still receiving quality and supportive instruction from their mainstream teachers (Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). With appropriate professional development and support of administrators, ML teachers can build their ability to support mainstream teachers through strong co-teaching partnerships. This instructional model does not work well for all ML or mainstream teachers, which is why flexibility and clear communication is key to maintaining a functional co-teaching model (Arkoudis, 2008).

Small Groups

An alternative version of co-teaching is the instructional model of small group support. ML teachers can instruct their students within the mainstream classroom by providing small group instruction through guided reading groups, strategy groups or language focus instruction. The flexibility of this model can position the ML teacher as an integral part of the mainstream classroom, while still maintaining their identified role as separate from the mainstream teacher in the classroom setting. This instructional model may work more effectively for schools with large populations of MLs or for those for whom co-teaching partnerships are difficult to cultivate.

Small group instruction allows the educator to cater to the individual needs of the students. In this model, teachers are working to teach skills or strategies that would eventually transfer to become independent skills. According to Serravallo (2010), teachers using small groups to support literacy instruction are working to find a balance between the amount of teacher support and student independent practice. Additionally, the instruction should be within a student's current capabilities as a learner but stretch them to push their skill level to the next step. Small group instruction relies heavily on explicit instruction. Serravallo (2010) explains that as students gain proficiency on the given strategy that is being explicitly taught, the need to consciously and thoughtfully consider the action being taken will fade and eventually become more automatic and unconsciously done. Serravallo stated, "The strategy gives way to a skill" (p. 12). For MLs, it is important to give them opportunities for this explicit instruction, especially in the area of literacy. ML teachers have the added responsibility of supporting students in their comprehension of text, along with the skills of phonological awareness, phonics,

fluency, spelling, and vocabulary (Barr et al., 2016). In response to a study about the lacking knowledge of literacy constructs of mainstream teachers, Barr et al. (2016) stated, “These studies revealed that students with more knowledgeable teachers who delivered explicit instruction made statistically significantly stronger word-reading gains than their counterpart students with less knowledgeable teachers who also delivered explicit instruction” (p. 63). Through a small group instructional model and the use of collaborative planning between ML teachers and mainstream teachers, MLs have a higher likelihood of making significant progress in the area of literacy.

Instructional Models Summary

Districts and schools have to determine what instructional models will be most effective and appropriate for the MLs that they serve, especially in the language-rich literacy setting. Co-teaching and small group instruction are both effective models to ensure that MLs are not missing core instruction in the mainstream classroom and that literacy and language learning can be acquired together. At the heart of these models is the foundational idea that students do not need to be removed from the classroom to learn language skills because language learning is part of the entire school experience. The flexibility and collaboration of these two instructional models are why they have been successful in many schools and districts.

Engagement Strategies

Teachers make a multitude of decisions about instruction on a daily basis. An integral aspect of instructional decision making is the use of strategies that will engage learners and encourage them to be active participants in their own learning. As discussed in the last section, there are instructional models that support the collaboration of ML

teachers and homeroom teachers, and a component of collaborative planning and co-teaching is creating a space to share these effective strategies within the partnership. A content area that is particularly impacted by this type of instruction is literacy. Literacy development requires a strong understanding of language and therefore offers a natural pairing between mainstream and ML teachers and an ideal setting for integrating effective strategies for engagement. Best practices for MLs often benefit all learners, regardless of language background. Some of the best strategies include conversation structures and scaffolds, visual supports, building background knowledge, and graphic organizers.

Conversation Structures and Scaffolds

Conversations, both academic and social, are an important part of the learning process. Teachers need to integrate opportunities for authentic talk in the classroom and this is especially important for multilingual learners. Through the use of intentional scaffolds for talking, teachers can create a rich language environment that propels MLs forward in their oral language development.

A scaffold is a support given by the teacher that is temporary to boost a student's ability to complete a given task in the classroom. Scaffolds are temporary because they are meant to build the student's capability of completing the task independently after practice so that the skill or strategy eventually becomes an independently accessible tool for the learner to utilize in the future (Fenner & Snyder, 2017, p. 60). Examples of scaffolding that might increase the amount and quality of spoken language in a classroom conversation include modeling, intentional grouping and seating, structured turn and talks, and starting activities with a "think-write". These strategies, as described by Ward

Singer (2018), are intended to engage students who are not actively engaging in conversations, those who may only say one idea and then stop, and those who may only speak with a linguistic frame. Modeling is a strategy that places the teacher in the role of the student, showcasing what will be expected of the students when it is their turn to speak. For intentional grouping and seating, teachers should encourage or specifically place reluctant speakers next to students who often engage in academic discourse, but won't dominate the conversation. Additionally, MLs should be placed in a group of three, if applicable, to lighten the linguistic load and create an environment where they can listen to the other students in their group. However, if an ML is with one other student, teachers can implement a structured turn and talk routine. In this strategy, teachers should assign roles and time allotted for each student to speak. This ensures that the more confident speakers go first and there is little interference with dominating personalities taking over the conversation (Singer, 2018).

Visual Supports

One of the fundamental strategies that can be used with language learners is the use of visuals, such as photos, videos, or other images, to support comprehension of oral language. This is an essential tool that all teachers can use to ease the linguistic load needed to understand written or spoken language. When a photo is presented, connections and recognition can be acquired faster, creating more accessible entry into a lesson. Educators who work with multilingual students should use photos in their classroom since it increases the odds that students will understand what is being taught, therefore spending less time trying to understand the language and more time spent understanding the content being presented.

Ferlazzo and Sypniewski (2018) outline a strategy originally from Calhoun (1999) called Picture Word Inductive Model (PWIM) that exclusively uses photos to drive a lesson. This strategy is a multi-step process that is typically utilized with English newcomers but could be modified for all levels. Teachers select an image that represents and connects to the topic being taught. For example, if the topic is swimming, the teacher might select a photograph of a swimming pool lined with swimmers preparing to dive in and judges standing by to time them. Students will label all the objects in the image that they already know, utilizing an activating prior knowledge strategy. Teachers can use the information gathered from this lesson to extend into further lessons, perhaps offering students more opportunities to write about the words they wrote. Additionally, teachers can incorporate this into a reading lesson by revisiting the PWIM and adding more labels after reading the text and gaining new vocabulary knowledge. A simple visual is the center of this activity and it has the added benefit of offering students the chance to show what they know about a topic prior to reading.

Another visual strategy from Gibbons (2015) offers a simple way to quickly engage students in a predicting conversation based on a visual in a text. Using a photo or illustration from a text to spark conversation is a quick way to offer students the opportunity to talk with peers and their teacher, as well as get students to actively think about story plots and patterns. Gibbons (2015) suggests this as a gateway conversation for the teacher to informally teach technical vocabulary knowledge needed for understanding the book. This prepares students for the task of comprehension through context and conversation in a low-risk environment. Incorporating a visual in a lesson is

effective, accessible to all, and a method for helping students engage in meaningful conversations on topic.

Building Background Knowledge

A key strategy to increasing the likelihood of learning and success of a lesson is to build background knowledge for MLs. This strategy works well because it allows students to preview and grasp some of the key learning points so that they can have some familiarity with the content as it is presented. This is especially important for MLs because there could be vocabulary, experiences or cultural differences that students may not have exposure to.

Through the act of building background knowledge, the teacher ensures that all students then have that exposure to actively engage in the lesson or task (Honigsfeld, 2019). If this strategy is implemented by teachers as a pre-reading strategy, it will help students build confidence going into the academic task. Human brains can only attend to a limited amount of information at a time, so if teachers focus on building comprehension prior to reading, students will focus their attention more on the mental load of decoding and fluently reading the words in the book. This will improve their overall ability to enjoy reading and make deeper connections because they are breaking down the tasks of reading into more manageable chunks, thus building their confidence and ability to read well.

According to Honigsfeld (2019), a few strategies that teachers can use to build background knowledge include, but are not limited to: previewing the text and pictures; using realia, visual concept maps, pictures, videos, or photographs; and previewing predictable texts to familiarize students with the pattern. Previewing the text allows time

for students to make connections, ask questions and familiarize themselves with the sequence of the book, which in turn allows the students to focus more exclusively on the action of reading during the next phase of the lesson. The use of realia, visual concept maps, pictures, videos, or photographs gives the reader the chance to make even more tangible connections and understandings of the concepts, experiences or vocabulary outside of the context of the book. For younger readers or MLs who are just learning to read in English for the first time, it is helpful to preview the predictable reading pattern to support the overall comprehension of the text and lighten the cognitive task.

Ferlazzo and Sypniewski (2018) suggest a few more background building strategies, including KWL (Know, Wonder, Learn) charts that allow students to write about what they know and wonder prior to reading, previewing text structures in order to help students notice differences and make predictions, and setting a purpose for reading to help students understand why they are reading. These strategies are not only helpful to students, but they also support teachers by gauging what their students already know and what might require additional pre-teaching or comprehension checks throughout reading.

According to Fenner and Snyder (2017), our prior knowledge greatly influences the new learning and comprehension of what we read. Since multilingual learners come from diverse backgrounds, there is a wealth of information that students can share with their teachers and fellow classmates. With this in mind, carefully choosing the text is vital. Selecting books that give a chance for students to share knowledge they already possess from their culture is incredibly powerful, as it provides students the opportunity to feel successful and confident.

Teachers who choose a book that covers a topic or experience they know will be new for their students can implement as many building background knowledge strategies as necessary to help their students feel successful and prepared to tackle the new material. Fenner and Snyder (2017) describe a framework for teachers that can help determine the amount of background knowledge needed for students. The framework is described in four parts. Part one asks teachers to determine the amount of background knowledge that the MLs already have on the topic. Part two challenges teachers to decide what information is truly essential for students to know prior to reading. It is important not to spend too long pre-teaching, but spending only a few minutes targeting the crucial material. Part three is the process of accessing the prior knowledge of the students in order to inform the next phase of the lesson, which leads to part four, which is the process of quickly and concisely teaching the background knowledge needed. This systematic framework is helpful for teachers in determining the needs of their students and making informed decisions about their instruction.

Graphic Organizers

Language learners are by nature visual learners, due to the fact that visuals lighten the amount of language processing needed. Through the use of a graphic organizer, students can organize their thoughts and ideas into a format that is easy to understand and review. A graphic organizer is simply a formatted document of shapes meant to help students organize their thinking into more manageable and comprehensible parts, making it easier to review information later on in the lesson or unit (Ferlazzo & Sypniewski, 2018). There are a wide variety of graphic organizers to choose from to fit the needs of the given lesson, such as a venn diagram for comparing and contrasting, sequence charts for step by

step processes, story maps for plot and literary elements, vocabulary graphic organizers for understanding new words, and many more. Each graphic organizer serves a valuable purpose and goal that makes learning more accessible to MLs. Graphic organizers can be used in different capacities during the reading process depending on the goal. They are easy to make, a simple way to engage learners, and an informative tool for teachers to see how students are processing the new content .

Engagement Strategies Summary

There are many ways for teachers to assess their own instructional success in the classroom but one of the easiest ways is to stop and notice the number of students actively engaging in the lesson content. By implementing a wide variety of strong engagement strategies in the classroom, teachers can pull in their striving and reluctant learners. The strategies outlined in this section are meant to particularly benefit multilingual learners, however the blessing is that they support all other types of learners too. A good strategy for a multilingual learner is a good strategy for any learner.

Home Language Scaffolds

In this section, home language, or first language (L1), scaffolds will be considered as an extension method of support. For multilingual students who are further along in their school experience, they may come to school with language strengths in their L1 that can be applied to their acquisition of academic and social English. It is important to note that teachers should not make assumptions on the academic level of their student's first language. Seeking clarification from families is an important step in determining whether or not using L1 strategies would be effective. If these scaffolds are applicable, then educators will find that MLs can transfer those literacy skills and oral skills at a faster

rate to their second language (L2), English. Such scaffolds could include opportunities to speak their home language in the classroom, complete work in either their first language or English, and be provided opportunities to make transfers and connections through the use of cognates. Not only are these strategies effective but they also provide a safe learning environment that values and honors students' assets in their native language.

Benefits of Using First Languages in the Classroom

There are many immediate benefits from allowing students to use their native language in the classroom setting. First and foremost, allowing a student to utilize their language assets to benefit their academic success will certainly have a positive impact on their impression of the safety of the learning environment. Through the use of a student's L1, teachers can help make faster connections to content learning, especially for vocabulary learning. According to Méndez et al. (2015):

vocabulary instruction that uses a child's stronger language to capitalize on the child's conceptual L1 knowledge prior to introducing the concept in L2 may be beneficial for beginning DLLs [MLs], especially if the strategic use of L1 is delivered in the context of evidence-informed shared reading approaches combining culturally relevant content, explicit vocabulary instruction, repeated exposures, and multimodal strategies. (p. 102)

The knowledge gained by using home languages for vocabulary instruction is obvious. It allows multilingual learners to take charge of their learning and to regain some power over their language learning by communicating and interacting with either language to accomplish the learning goal.

An additional asset of accepting native languages in the classroom is the ability to see students code-switch. Code-switching is defined by Unamuno (2008) as “the use of more than one language in conversation” (p. 1). Code-switching is possible if there are multiple students in the classroom that speak the same home language. Code-switching is a wonderful way to allow students to engage in social or academic conversations in both their home language and English, allowing them to clarify and engage in conversations on a deeper level. Language learners who take advantage of their ability to code-switch in the classroom are able to make meaning quickly and efficiently, which in turn allows them to participate more effectively and increase their language repertoire at a faster rate. (Unamuno, 2008).

Integrating L1 in the classroom for academic conversations is hugely beneficial for students, as well as the use of biliteracy skills. Biliteracy is defined by de la Luz Reyes (2012) as “the ability to decode and encode meaning from written texts in two languages” (p. 249). This is particularly valuable while students are learning to read in English for the first time. Research has shown that biliterate students have higher capabilities of “crossing linguistic borders” and can transition between the rules and codes of the two languages to benefit the acquisition of further language skills (de la Luz Reyes, 2012, p. 249). A culturally inclusive classroom environment will allow students to navigate new learning by drawing on previous language knowledge, therefore contributing to the literacy development in academic English.

Home Language Scaffolds Summary

Educators should validate their students’ strengths in their first language and encourage students to capitalize on these strengths to participate more effectively in the

classroom. By leveraging this language asset, teachers can not only offer their students a safe learning environment, but they can also show all of their students the value of being multilingual. There is a persistent stereotype in the United States that language learners are unintelligent, however this is absolutely false. As described in this section, there is a significant linguistic challenge that language learners face. They are constantly trying to make meaning and understand context through two or more means of communication. The cognitive load required shows how dynamic being multilingual is. Teachers who allow students to leverage their first language provide a culturally responsive space for their MLs to grow academically. In the next section, I will explore further considerations teachers can make to be culturally inclusive to all students.

Cultural Considerations for the Classroom

Classrooms across the country are becoming more and more diverse, creating an increased need for educators to make mindful cultural considerations in their classrooms. Students who feel included and considered by their teachers are more comfortable and willing to engage in the learning that is happening in their classrooms. Educators know how integral a safe learning environment is for their students to thrive. As the diversity of the classroom continues to change, educators must carefully consider the books and characters they decide to showcase, making space for students to share and talk about the cultural knowledge they already have, and finding ways to honor and celebrate the diversity that their students bring to the classroom. Multilingual students will find their voice in the classroom when they are actively included and considered by their teachers.

Selecting Diverse Stories

The joy of sharing and discussing stories in the classroom is one of the most cherished parts of the school experience. The act of sharing stories offers different perspectives and cultures. Stories create the perfect opportunity for students to converse and it is important that teachers think critically about the stories they choose to share. If teachers share stories that fit only within the dominant White culture, they do a disservice to their students. By cultivating a learning environment that honors diversity and offers many chances to see how students can learn from different cultures, there is a better chance that students will be more prepared to be culturally inclusive adults in our global community. Diverse characters offer students the chance to see themselves reflected in the stories they read. By simply reading a story, teachers can begin building bridges for their students to view the world in a more accepting light, which will only help them become more inclusive and understanding adults.

The selection of stories is a task that should not be done without consideration of the other books already present in the classroom. It is important to note that diverse stories are necessary and important. There is a danger to selecting only one type of diverse story. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) warns of the danger of the single story in her TedTalk. She explains that often we perceive a group of people through the lens of the stories we hear about them in books, in the media, or one experience. Adichie uses an example of her American college roommate feeling shocked about her ability to speak English so well, despite being from Nigeria. Her roommate had one single understanding of life in Africa and applied it to her perception and understanding of all things African.

Adichie explained, “Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person” (2009).

Taking this warning from Adichie and applying it to the classroom, teachers must be especially mindful of the stories they choose, as well as selecting a wide range of stories to represent different cultures and especially the groups that the students in the classroom belong to. The concept of mirrors versus windows in the context of diverse book selection is often used to explain the difference between reading a book as an outsider (through a window) as opposed to reading a book with characters that are reflective (within a mirror) of the reader (Tschida et al., 2014). In order to have more mirrors than windows, books need to have BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) at the forefront and showcase a multitude of plots and experiences. More often than not, BIPOC books feature characters experiencing struggles or living through historical events that deeply affected a particular group of people. These books are necessary; however, they perpetuate the single story Adichie (2009) warned against. Furthermore, Balkaran and Killingsworth Roberts (2019) stated, “Minority students who do not see any reflections of themselves, or who see stereotypical, distorted, inaccurate, or comical depictions of themselves, may grow to view themselves of little value, stunting personal growth” (p. 66). In classrooms with an ever-changing and increasingly more diverse demographic makeup, teachers must consider the lasting negative effects they could have on students if they do not take stock of their classroom libraries, intentionally choose mentor texts and mindfully select read-aloud texts.

Thankfully there are websites and universities that are working hard to advocate for an increase in diverse books. According to Elrod and Kester (2020), in 2002, books

that were mainly published in the United States that featured a Black main character only made up 5% of children's books and when analyzed again in 2018 this statistic increased to 11%. This is hardly equitable, but increasing the number of BIPOC authors is an integral part of this process. The University of Florida took a hard look at their Education Library within the College of Education (COE) after their students pointed out the lack of diversity in the library (Elrod & Kester, 2020). This led to the creation of the Diverse Book Finder (DBF). The DBF is a research tool that students can use to find books that specifically represent different groups of people. Tools like these are needed as the wave of publications with diverse characters continues to expand.

Another organization that is seeking to increase the tools and resources for diverse books is We Need Diverse Books (WNDB, n.d.), a nonprofit that has made it their mission to increase the number of BIPOC authors and stories that are published. Their website is also a hub of resources and suggestions for teachers seeking to diversify their classroom libraries and integrate more culturally relevant and responsive texts. Educators should seek out resources to support their learning of recommended books for their students. It is important for all students to be exposed to a wide variety of stories, not just the BIPOC students. It is especially important for White students to read stories that do not have a White main character. Tschida et al. (2014) explained when White students only read stories where the character looks like them, this creates a precedent and thought process that perpetuates a dangerous idea that the dominant White culture is inherently more important. All students must recognize their own self-worth and worth of their peers in this multicultural world. Stories are the stepping stone to having these honest conversations about inclusivity and representation. Selecting books for a classroom is not

as easy as clicking the purchase button. It is imperative that teachers consider all the factors involved in order to best choose books that establish classroom environments that are culturally-accepting and inclusive of all backgrounds.

Honoring Culture Differences

Book inclusivity is just one important factor in creating a culturally inclusive classroom. To be culturally inclusive, teachers must find ways to honor and validate the home cultures that students bring with them into the classroom. Strong educators who can find ways to bridge home and school culture will find high engagement, students more willing to voice their opinions and thoughts and a learning environment that allows for differences to be celebrated and honored. Au (2013) stated that being a culturally inclusive and responsive teacher is not simply being a “good teacher” and applying the tried and true principles of strong instructional support. A culturally responsive teacher considers how the instructional choices they make might give preference or an upper hand to the students who have always experienced Westernized school systems. Au uses the example of competition-based learning and how that conflicts with the learning style of some students of varying cultural backgrounds. A key aspect to remember is that the dominant culture determines who will be most successful in school with the fewest amount of barriers. The students who have been explicitly taught how to function within this system will always have an edge, which more often than not, are the students who are not from diverse backgrounds.

Cultural Considerations Summary

This section extends the opportunity to educators to reflect upon past decisions in the classroom and modify and adjust to consciously integrate more culturally responsive

practices. The United States is, and continues to be, a diverse country made up of many different cultures and backgrounds. Our educational system must honor and protect that diversity through valuing and incorporating those cultures into the classroom setting. There is not one “right” culture and by continuing to value dominant White cultural norms, we do a disservice to ourselves as teachers, our students and our society as a whole.

Rationale for Research

The literature examined in this chapter covered necessary components and considerations for a successful ML framework. In order to successfully support MLs in literacy development, there needs to be research-proven strategies and scaffolding that allows MLs to be successful in the classroom, as well as culturally responsive approaches that create safe environments for learning. It is important that educators are intentionally thoughtful about their instructional practices as it pertains to their MLs. The research analyzed in this chapter indicates that students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds have assets that should be considered and leveraged in the classroom. These considerations, paired with strong teacher planning and collaboration, will create an environment that will help MLs thrive.

Summary

In this chapter, research was analyzed and synthesized on four subtopics: instructional models, engagement strategies, home language scaffolds, and cultural considerations, in order to address the research questions: *How can multilingual learners develop strong literacy skills within their mainstream classrooms? What strategies, resources, and instructional models best support them in this learning?* The information

covered helped deepen understanding of how multilingual learners can thrive and succeed in the mainstream classroom, specifically in the area of literacy development.

There were some overarching ideas that can be taken away. First, supporting multilingual learners in the classroom takes careful considerations, including appropriate support and models that will adequately provide opportunities for language and content learning to happen together. Secondly, educators have a responsibility to find ways to make learning accessible and engaging in order to pull all of their learners in as active participants. Implementation of appropriate strategies, such as graphic organizers, conversation structures, visual supports, and many more are integral to making learning something that all students want to participate in. Third, in continuation of appropriate scaffolding in the classroom, teachers should examine the possibility of using home languages as a means to boost literacy development, participation and language transfer to English. Last, all educators should consider how culturally responsive their classroom environment is and make intentional changes to provide the most inclusive learning space possible for all learners. By examining these aspects of teaching and learning, educators can have more confidence in their ability to meet the needs of their MLs and their students from diverse backgrounds.

In the forthcoming chapter, I will take the next step in supporting literacy development of MLs in the mainstream classroom by explaining my capstone project. I will use the research from this chapter to guide my creation of a supportive website. The intended use of this website is to help teachers understand how to go about strengthening their capacity to work with their MLs. Additionally, I will give an overview of the

project, discuss my intended audience and provide rationale for the creation of this website.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

In this chapter I describe the capstone project that I created to support the work of mainstream teachers and ML program leaders. This project aims to provide applicable strategies and instructional examples for teachers to use with their multilingual students and relevant guidance and considerations for program design for administrators and teacher leaders. The project will delve deeper into my research questions: *How can multilingual learners develop strong literacy skills within their mainstream classrooms? What strategies, resources, and instructional models best support them in this learning?*

My chosen project is a website, designed to be used by teachers and multilingual learner (ML) program leaders to support planning and decision-making around best instructional models for ML program support. Through this chapter, I go into further detail about the project. First, I provide an overview of the website project and the rationale behind its creation. Then, I clarify the intended audience and how the viewer should navigate the project based on their position in the school setting. After that, I outline the timeline for the creation of the project, from start to finish. Next, I provide a description of how the effectiveness of the project will be assessed and the intended impact it will have on education professionals. Finally, I give a summary of the chapter and briefly outline the fourth, and final, chapter. The sections described will be integral to understanding the purpose and proposed implementation of the project in the educational setting.

Project Overview and Rationale

The purpose of this project is to create a hub of information and examples for teachers to draw from when trying to best support the instructional needs of their multilingual students. It is imperative that educators are given strong examples and resources to utilize. It is a well known fact that teachers are prone to burnout because of the expectations of the profession. Time is precious and the implementation of this website would support giving teachers time back by providing a quick and easy way to access research-proven strategies and scaffolding for lessons that are developmentally and instructionally appropriate for the language acquisition of multilingual learners. Additionally, the website supports teachers and administrators in selecting the best instructional models for their ML population, language level needs, and staffing. The website is a source of information, strategies, examples, and flowcharts to guide educators towards a stronger and more effective multilingual learner program.

This website is intended for teachers who may not have worked with MLs before or any educators who would benefit from some relearning and exploring of new strategies and scaffolding they might not have previously tried. The rationale for the project is to build the capacity of all staff to support the multilingual students in a school, rather than isolating that responsibility to the ML teachers. In a society that continues to grow more diverse, we must recognize and purposefully plan for students who do not identify themselves within the dominant White culture. Educators need to acknowledge that all students come to the classroom with their own set of strengths and assets that must be accepted and advocated for. We can no longer live in this reality where the dominant culture sets the rules and dictates which students will succeed and which

students will struggle. We must be willing to differentiate our practice and meaningfully plan for the wide range of learners who will walk through our classrooms. That is the incredibly rewarding, yet demanding, challenge of this profession. The next section will provide greater context for the reader so that they can more effectively utilize the website to support their work towards meeting this challenge.

Project Description

In order to provide the most user-friendly experience, I divided my website into the four areas that I researched in my second chapter. The website provides ideas and guidance that could be accessed in a few minutes or could be poured over for a few hours. Each section provides resources, strategies, guides, videos, or examples based on the subtopic. The website sections will be divided into: Instructional Models, Engagement Strategies, Home Language Scaffolds, and Cultural Considerations, as well as a homepage and about me page. The goal of this website is to provide an introduction to each subtopic, offer suggestions, resources, website links, and examples to spark ideas, and incorporate videos that showcase experts in the field as they discuss topics or model teaching.

One of the most impactful ways to support a teacher is to provide meaningful and applicable strategies that could be integrated into the classroom the next day. It is not my intention to teach my colleagues strategies that would potentially take hours of time to learn and understand, but instead I have provided powerful examples and suggestions that will help reshape teachers' thought processes during crucial instructional decision-making moments. In this way, the practices are woven into daily practice and they help redefine how teachers go about making choices in regards to their MLs. As

teachers stop to consider language and how it plays out in a lesson or unit, they will become more comfortable recognizing where certain linguistic scaffolds would be most appropriate. By using this website, teachers can begin to recognize how certain scaffolds may benefit MLs more than others, and they will begin to embed those scaffolds more naturally on a daily basis. According to the U.S. Department of Education English Learner Toolkit (2016), Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must adequately train teachers to support MLs, especially if the LEA is unable to provide the appropriate number of certified ML teachers. It is encouraged that certified teachers are hired to teach MLs, but if that is not possible, training is required for all teachers. This website will be a perfect starting point for those who are interested in beginning the process of becoming more qualified to adequately meet ML needs.

The day-to-day stress of the education profession is overwhelming and taxing on teachers. Split-second decisions are made throughout the day and recreating the wheel takes time that many of us do not have. The website supports teachers in modifying their strategies and reshaping their approaches and thinking as they pertain to ML support. By doing this, decisions in the classroom will be more proactive rather than reactive. Providing examples and models to guide the instructional practice decisions, teachers feel more capable in their abilities to intentionally and effectively meet the needs of their MLs.

For this website, I considered the needs of administrators, ML teacher leaders, ML program leaders, or any other education professional who might be tasked with the decision making of a ML program. Each school and district has varied needs in regards to the instructional program that they will need to implement for their multilingual students.

Considerations around staffing of the ML program, the language level needs, the total number of students, and the capacity to support high quality instruction. This website focuses primarily on the benefits of a content-driven language program, which includes models such as co-teaching and small group support. Through instructional models that create space for collaboration between teachers, the program will only continue to flourish when added expertise is utilized appropriately. Fenner and Snyder (2017) outlined a similar goal in their guiding principles in their book *Unlocking English Learners' Potential*. They explained that MLs benefit when teachers collaborate to share the expertise that they bring to the table. By sharing expertise, the ML teachers are able to share specific knowledge of language acquisition and strategies to support, while content mainstream teachers can share skills and strategies that support the learning of a particular content. Through this collaborative partnership, both parties benefit from the strengths the other provides, and in doing so create wonderfully supportive learning opportunities for MLs. My website outlines instructional models that help the decision making process, while it simultaneously provides research-based recommendations for a program that supports a collaborative approach to instruction. In this way, ML programs are not only supporting the MLs, but also providing professional development support for mainstream colleagues and their ability to meet the needs of MLs in their homeroom classrooms.

As I considered how to engage my website viewers, I tried to analyze the ways in which I could make the platform easy to navigate. Most teachers, in my opinion, benefit from having examples and visuals to show how an instructional idea might take shape in the classroom. My website framework was built around an interactive homepage with

visuals that lead to the four different subtopics, so viewers can find what they need quickly and efficiently. At the top center, the subtopics are hyperlinks that direct the viewer to those specific areas of research. Leavitt and Shneiderman (2006) explain that viewers tend to look at the top center area of a website first in order to navigate through to find their specific needs. They advise that all important navigation tools are posted at the top because a viewer's eyes are drawn to the top of the screen. Additionally, Leavitt and Shneiderman clarified the importance of descriptive headings and subheadings so the viewer understands the purpose of the integrated materials on the website. I considered the question, "*Is this easy to find and understand*" during the entire creation process. This question helped me reshape and alter my layout and the way I offered the information so that it was accessible to all. It was integral to my framework that viewers only need to focus on the content and not be burdened with a challenging website to navigate.

In summation, the four sections of my website were designed to cater to the viewers' needs and their role in a ML program. Effective instructional shifts and programs are developed when educators and administration have a shared vision and understanding of what must be done to support student learning. In this case, my website should provide a common shared knowledge of recommendations and strategies so that the collaborative work between informed and capable professionals is more aligned.

Audience

The intended audience of this website is broken into two groups. First and foremost, it was developed for instructional planning and collaboration purposes for mainstream teachers. The second intended audience group includes any staff members

who make ML programming decisions, such as administration, ML team leaders, ML teachers, or coaches. I chose to break the website into four sections in order to cater to both audiences more appropriately. Both groups serve MLs in different and meaningful ways, but the information that will support their work will differ.

Any education professional will benefit greatly from this website. So often I hear colleagues say that they are not confident in meeting the needs of MLs, typically because they have not had the opportunity to work with MLs, or it has been many years since they previously did. My school is slowly becoming more diverse each year, but it still has a significant majority of White students. My ML roster has nearly doubled in the five years since I started, so the likelihood of teachers working with MLs continues to rise. Therefore, this website will ease minds and build competence and confidence around effective strategies and scaffolds for MLs.

Timeline

The creation of this website took place over the course of the 2022 spring semester. Over the course of the semester, I designed my website thoughtfully and carefully for ease of navigation and use. There are quite a few instructional models, teacher videos, lesson and resource examples incorporated throughout the website. The bulk of my time was spent on pulling and creating resources, in addition to the construction of the layout. It was my mission to make the website visually appealing and engaging, so regardless if teachers are spending hours exploring or just a few minutes, they will still take away some new learning to enhance their instructional practice in the classroom.

At the completion of the semester, the website was shared with my fellow multilingual teachers in my Professional Learning Community (PLC), homeroom teachers, my administration, and any other staff members that I believe would benefit from this resource. My PLC has integrated time into our meetings that is spent sharing helpful information and resources. This provided me the opportunity to share with my colleagues how they might implement or utilize the website to better their practice and build the capacity of other teachers in our district. Through this implementation plan, a wider audience will be reached and impacted to become better educators and to better serve their MLs.

Assessment

The creation of this project was intended to be used by teachers as a self-study to improve and guide their instructional practice and decision-making as it pertains to MLs. The success of this project will be measured by the increase in engagement and linguistic strategies, targeted and meaningful planning to support MLs, and feedback provided by those educators who access the website to support their work. It is my intention to continually engage colleagues in conversations to see what support they need and guide them to a supportive section of the website. Additionally, this will continue to be used as a support of my PLC team members who are also supporting mainstream teachers and helping to make ML program decisions. Ideally this website will continue to evolve and support as many education professionals as possible.

Summary

In this chapter I discussed the creation and implementation of my capstone project, which is a website filled with resources to support the instruction of MLs in the

mainstream classroom. For many years, educators have operated under the expectations of the dominant culture. It has been this way in the education system for far too long. It is time for educators to step up to the plate and expand their ability to meet the needs of diverse learners through a culturally inclusive approach. Valuing the strengths of MLs and leveraging those assets in the classroom is the first step towards a more powerful and inclusive educational environment that should, and hopefully will, be the norm moving forward. In the upcoming final chapter, I reflect upon the completion of my project. This will conclude my study and provide closure for myself and the reader.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Introduction

My entry into this masters program was initially intended as an opportunity to advance myself in the field and gain a better understanding of literacy development.

While this was my original goal, I have also found a passion for supporting my colleagues on their journey towards best support of multilingual learners in the area of literacy. This journey has also led me to my guiding questions: *How can multilingual learners develop strong literacy skills within their mainstream classrooms? What strategies, resources, and instructional models best support them in this learning?* These questions led me to create my capstone project.

The resource website I created as my capstone project is meant as a first step for educators looking to grow their knowledge around literacy support for multilingual learners in the mainstream classroom. As a ML teacher, I know the importance of having a steady stream of instructional resources to pull from to support learners, especially in the area of literacy. It was my purpose to provide teachers with meaningful ideas that would support a wide range of learners with a variety of preferred learning styles. In this chapter I will offer a reflection of my major learnings, revisit the literature that made the largest impact on my project, explore some possible policy implications, explain the limitations I faced, any future research in area of ML literacy support that I may delve into, how I will communicate the results, how the capstone project will benefit the profession, and a chapter summary.

Major Learnings

The process of creating this capstone project has been a labor of love. I was able to explore areas of my field that I have always been passionate about and in doing so I have expanded my knowledge and capabilities to better support my students and my colleagues. This project was made to create a stepping stone for my colleagues to find their own passion and understanding towards best instructional and inclusive support for multilingual learners, specifically in the area of literacy. It is my hope that educators, program leaders, and administrators use the website I created to think critically about how they are currently serving their MLs and how they might adjust their decisions to make the most equitable learning experiences for their students.

As I consider the major learnings I am taking away from this experience, I keep coming back to the same three. First, collaborative teaching models, such as co-teaching and small groups, are flexible and supportive. These instructional models are designed to meet the needs of learners by adjusting to the current needs of students. In my current role as an ML teacher in an elementary school, I am utilizing some of the models I researched, but I discovered a plethora of new models I had not considered implementing before.

Second, literacy learning for multilingual learners is best when it includes a multitude of engagement strategies and scaffolds. At the core of my project, I wanted to create a toolkit of accessible strategies for teachers to access. In doing so, I was able to explore new strategies and ideas from professional development books and articles that have been on my shelves or in my digital library for years. I am looking forward to including these strategies in my classrooms.

Third, I learned that cultural inclusivity in the classroom cannot be surface level. Teachers must intentionally find books and resources that integrate a wide range of stories and backgrounds. This is something that I knew was important, but as I continued to read about the importance and the benefits of having a culturally inclusive classroom, I feel like my knowledge and passion to support this work grew even more. This leads me to consider some of the important literature that led me to these three major learning outcomes.

Revisiting the Literature

There were many different articles and professional texts that I explored during the course of this program and capstone process. However, there were three that particularly stood out to me and made an impact on my project and my learning. First, the U.S. Department of Education English Learner Toolkit (2016) was so informative and offered guidelines for a ML program based on laws and policies to make sure districts and schools are serving their students. As I was researching instructional models, program requirements, and federal government guidelines, it was helpful to cross-reference with best practices for ML placement in the school setting. For example, the toolkit offered pointed considerations regarding staff development, stating that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must hire qualified teachers, provide an adequate number of qualified ML staff, and adequate resources for language programming. This led me to feel more confident in my goal of creating a website to ensure that staff are qualified to meet the needs of MLs.

The second piece of literature that I found particularly helpful was *Co-Teaching for English Learners* by Maria Dove and Andrea Honigsfeld (2018). The book delved

deeper into a multitude of collaborative teaching models for co-teachers. This information offered very valuable information to my instructional models tab on my website. It showcased the wide range of flexibility a co-teaching model can offer a mainstream and ML teacher who are committed to a co-teaching partnership. I particularly appreciated the opportunity it gave me to rethink my current models with my co-partner and how I might explore different configurations to serve our students. This book also gave me the opportunity to model how each type of co-teaching structure might be utilized. On my website I took the opportunity to create a lesson topic in literacy that teaches students how to identify the main idea and supporting details of a nonfiction text. Using Dove and Honigsfeld models I created a short explanation of how each co-teaching model could execute that learning target and why it might be supportive to MLs in the classroom. For me, this was so valuable to explore the value in each structure and I hope that viewers of the website will also find the value in the examples I provided.

Lastly, I have learned something new every time I rewatch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TedTalk titled *The Danger of the Single Story*. No matter how many times I view it, I still find a new piece of information that sticks with me and allows me to reconsider choices I have made in the classroom. Adichie warns us that if we assume the truth in only one single story that represents a group of people, we are often creating assumptions that are quite dangerous regarding that group of people. This same idea can easily transfer into the classroom as teachers select books, mentor texts, classroom library additions, etc. Throughout the creation of my project, I continued coming back to Adichie's warning because literacy development cannot be done without quality books in the hands of students. I think it is important to consider what books we actually select,

and that those choices are made with careful consideration. I was conscientious of the fact that my students are diverse and should have books that represent their lives and have characters that look like them. This prevailing theme was something that had a lasting impact on the completed website. I hope that message was explicit for the viewers and if they take anything away, it is the importance of diverse stories.

Implications

The field ML education has changed in recent years, moving from a pull-out model to a more collaborative push-in model, which is a large section of my website. As it is outlined in the U.S. Department of Education English Learner Toolkit (2016), LEAs should consider whether or not their staff, including ML teachers, core-content teachers, and special education teachers, have the necessary training and strategies to support multilingual learners. This will cause a shift in how districts hire teachers and the professional development they plan. Additionally, teachers will be pushed towards a more collaborative style of teaching, and less of a “closed door” style of teaching. This means administrators will look to hire staff that are willing to be a team player and they will place a higher value on teachers who have co-taught previously.

Limitations

There are always challenges and roadblocks during a large undertaking and this project was no exception. I think one of the most difficult challenges for me was trying to think through a mainstream teacher lens. I thought it would be fairly easy since I work in mainstream classrooms every day and many of my colleagues are close friends. I hear about their struggles on a daily basis and I feel like I understand what it is that they need from an ML support standpoint. I do think I was able to capture the essence of what is

needed for my colleagues to grow in the area of ML support; however, I think there will always be additions to be made to the resource website as I receive feedback from mainstream teachers. I have no intention of being a mainstream teacher and I have never been a mainstream teacher. As much as I believe that I have created a resource that would be easy to access and navigate, I will not know how effective it truly is until I have had my peers use it for its intended purpose.

Future Research

The nature of professional development, especially in the area of education, is that the learning is never done. We simply cannot learn it all, as much as we might try. Our field and the students in front of us will continue to change and therefore the research, scaffolds, strategies, and more will have to evolve along with them. I think at this particular moment, my website is relevant and current, but I imagine I will need to make adjustments as our field advances, especially as we learn more about the ramifications of learning during a pandemic. I particularly think I would like to continue developing strong home language scaffolds, especially as my newcomer population grows and the need for those resources becomes more necessary. I believe the technology will also continue to advance, which will make translating classroom resources more accessible and more reliable. I look forward to advancements in this particular area of ML learning.

Another advancement I look forward to is the push for more publications of diverse stories. I believe that we are making great strides towards the inclusion of more characters, cultures, and backgrounds so it is an exciting time to be an educator. There are more stories to choose from and there are more being written each year. I look forward to continuing exploring a multitude of stories and finding a more equitable balance of story

types. I look forward to staying up to date on current publications and I will continue to update my own classroom library with these new stories and communicate the continued need for these stories on my website.

Communication of Results

The plan to share this website has evolved for me over the past few weeks. I intend to share this at my school, specifically with my administrators, co-teaching partners, and instructional leadership team with the purpose of benefiting their work. Additionally, I plan to take some time at my next ML team meeting to showcase the benefits of my website to my job-alike colleagues. I will offer them the opportunity to share the website at their school, if they feel it will be useful for the same peers I mentioned. Lastly, I will share my project on the Hamline University Digital Commons for students and staff to view and benefit from. During this process I used exemplars from the Digital Commons to guide me, especially during particularly challenging moments. As a visual learner, I especially appreciated the opportunity to view other capstone websites. It allowed me to wrap my mind around the project and gave me a vision for how I wanted my website to look when it was completed. I can only hope that my website will provide the same guidance for future Hamline graduate students.

I do not view this website as complete, and as I receive feedback, I will continue to add and modify. I think the best resources continue to adjust based on the most current research, needs, and changes in the field. I think that is the best way to ensure a resource continues to benefit those in the profession.

Benefit to the Profession

Our society is facing a turning point. The dominant White culture does not hold the same standing as it once did and as we continue to include and value diversity, we must recognize the need for change. Mainstream teachers need to have as many resources at their disposal. This website will benefit the profession because it will offer mainstream teachers new strategies and scaffolds that are linked to research and embedded in a collaborative model, which in and of itself is supportive. I strongly believe that educators benefit from examples so they can see how it might be utilized in the classroom. I find it helpful when I can take an idea, consider how it might work for my particular students, modify it for my needs, and then implement it in the classroom. I believe my website will create this support for other teachers as well and hopefully they will continue building their own capacity in other areas of ML support.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I reflected on the creation of my capstone project, a resource website that includes relevant information about the best literacy support of multilingual learners in the mainstream classroom. This project has helped me to develop into a stronger ML teacher and I have found new and creative ways to support my mainstream colleagues through the research I have explored. I look forward to the collaborative discussions that this website will prompt and the increased capacity for educators to meet the needs of their MLs.

The prevailing message I hope to pass on through the use of this website is that we, the teachers, share the responsibility of ML learning. It is not the sole responsibility of the ML teacher to meet their needs and incorporate useful strategies and scaffolds. The

collaborative work between mainstream teachers and ML teachers will benefit everyone involved and create a more inclusive learning environment and experience for all involved.

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