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Best Practices Using Pair Work for English Language Learners

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by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background

When it comes to learning, there are many strategies to use. I have come to notice that the most successful are often those that are the most fun, and working with a partner can fall into that category. In my short time as an English Language (EL) teacher, I have developed a curiosity for finding the most effective and most motivating strategies for language learning, and want to learn more about how to use students' social tendencies to benefit them. In this chapter we will see the research journey for the question, *What are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in making English proficiency gains?*

Professional Experience

I have been fortunate to be able to work with students from a variety of different backgrounds and different age levels. Before I was certain I wanted to be an EL teacher, I volunteered with the Minnesota Reading Corps., implementing one-on-one reading strategies for students who were needing tier 2 interventions. The school I was at was an inner-ring suburb of Minneapolis, with many EL students from East and West Africa.

After this, I decided to become an EL teacher, and had my first experience working as a long-term substitute, teaching sheltered Language Arts for Newcomers to the U.S. Most of the students were from East Africa or Latin America. During this time, I remember a professional development that was focused on pairing English proficiency level 1 students with level 2 students. I didn't stay long enough to complete the full-year training, but I always wanted to learn more.

My next teaching experience was at the school I still am at today. The school I work at is a Hmong Language and Culture school, with the majority of EL students being Hmong-speakers, and a smaller number of students speaking Karen or Karenni from the country of Myanmar. I have learned so much at this school and have been given the chance to teach a variety of ages from Pre-k to Eighth grade. At my school the students are amazing and kind, and I can tell many of them enjoy working with their peers to complete tasks. It is clear how working with peers encourages many students, and they learn from each other.

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I will explain how I chose this topic and recount the development of my research journey including why I chose to research pair work and ELs, and how I chose the project over a thesis. I will examine why it is an important topic for EL students, teachers, and parents, as well as give context and rationale for choosing this capstone project. Finally, I will give an overview of the following chapters of the paper.

My Research Journey

A capstone is a long and often difficult task, but worthwhile in the end. When I started to get discouraged by the amount of work I knew would be ahead of me, I tried to reframe this experience as a way to learn more about something I am passionate about. For me, that passion is my students both as human beings and as language learners. It is important to me that I am as competent as possible at my job so that they get the quality education they need and deserve. I am also fascinated by how people learn anything, in particular language because it is such a complex process. I don't always have time or

energy to read up on all the latest studies about language learning, so it seems like a good fit to be able to do so with this project.

Pair work and ELs

This brings me to the topic I decided on. I had noticed in my teaching that pair work often gives students just the right amount of assistance with language tasks, keeping them in the Zone of Proximal Development so that they are challenged, but still have support (Vygotsgy, 1978). Pair work can be a great way to do the "We do" portion of instruction of gradual release (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) and scaffold them towards working independently. I like to use higher skilled partners with lower skilled partners at times to help students, but other groupings work too.

My third and fourth grade EL students also seem to love working in pairs to complete a task. This is backed up by research that found that when language learners enjoy a task, they are more motivated to work harder (Chen, 2021). It also seems to help them learn more from their peers and make them more comfortable practicing difficult language, lowering their Affective Filter, meaning they are more comfortable emotionally in order to learn (Krashen 1988).

One activity they often do is play a grammar board game. They have to use the target grammar in a sentence each time they move forward. Even though it is competitive, the language usage isn't. I encourage the other player to help their partner with the task at hand, and then they can both check the correct answer on the back of the task card. Part of the fun is that it's a game, but I think working together to play it is also rewarding for them. Though I had seen some success with student motivation, I knew

there were ways I could be doing this better. I also wasn't sure if the partner tasks were helping more than a different type of student grouping.

I also noticed that, when doing writing, students often worked harder if they had a peer to assist them and co-create with. When I would give one class a writing task, and then the next similar class the same task, but have them work with a partner instead of individually, it seemed like student confidence went up. While I would love for them to have confidence when working alone, I noticed that having a partner gave them not only more confidence that they could do a good job, but also gave them someone to lean on and learn from. They could then be scaffolded into writing individually using this partner support.

One issue I noticed when doing this was sometimes one student wanted to do all of the work, so finding the right partner and emphasizing how to divide the work seemed key. I experimented with timing them and having them switch who was the writer. We also set aside times to discuss specific aspects of the writing first. These experiences made me wonder about pair work in writing, grammar and also other areas besides simply speaking, which could seem like the obvious choice for EL pair work. All of these times and others helped my research question evolve into, *What are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in making English proficiency gains?*

Thesis vs. Project

I chose a project because with a project teachers are creating a product to be used in teaching. To me this seemed more practical, and a faster way to use all the research in the classroom. I am also a creative person who enjoys making things that are functional

and beautiful. The idea of creating something very visual and tangible appeals to me and my style of learning and teaching.

What Type of Project

Once I decided on the project, I chose professional development as the type, something my professor helped me decide. Professional development means that teachers can be more active in their learning than a resource like a website. If I made professional development that had concrete tasks for teachers to practice the strategies, it was more likely they would put their knowledge into practice. They wouldn't have to comb through the research themselves to obtain it. It seemed like professional development would make sure the information I found would be implemented.

I chose to divide the teacher development into domains of language for ease of organization and to help teachers with specific language goals. The four domains of language are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In doing the research I noticed most of the listening domains were embedded in the other domain tasks, and many tasks would have two domains in it as well. Because of this, and because listening is usually the highest score for most EL students in my experience, I decided to only teach strategies for the domains of speaking, reading, and writing, with listening being woven into those strategies.

Project Significance

This project is important because of all the people it will affect. The most obvious people it will matter to will be the students because it could facilitate learning and help them to learn more than they would without the strategies. It could help make classrooms more student-centered instead of teacher-centered.Teachers will also be clear

beneficiaries because they will gain easy strategies to help their EL students and all their students because all students are learning academic language. It could help families as well because if their students do well in school, everyone benefits and they may see more confidence in their children. Using professional development to teach teachers is a proven way to improve teacher instruction, if done correctly (Desimone 2011). Partner work with ELs also has many studies that support its benefits (Gersten et al. 2007). Creating this project was a way to ensure this valuable research would be used.

Teachers already use pair work in abundance in their instruction. It would be relatively simple to take a familiar form and adjust it to facilitate EL learning. I like this idea because it could potentially be more effective than engaging teachers in strategies that involve a lot of novelty. Most teachers are stressed and pressed for time, so implementing something that fits well into what they already have planned would help alleviate potential stress and work, making it more likely they would apply the methods they learned.

The fact that it is professional development means that if it works, teachers could learn from these strategies over and over again each time they need a refresher or there are new teachers to a school. The potential to reach more teachers and therefore students is there for all the stakeholders involved.

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I described the journey I took to find a research question and capstone project. I explained how I almost decided on different research questions that had to do with ELs and how I chose *What are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in making English proficiency gains?* because it seemed most practical to my

current teaching situation. I talked about how professional development was the best choice of project for my professional goals, and why this project could be important to stakeholders like students, colleagues, parents, and administrators. I told of the benefits to the teaching profession and why it could potentially be practical for teachers, and therefore more likely to be implemented.

Capstone Overview

The following is a preview of subsequent chapters. Chapter Two is a literature review that shows all the relevant research I used to create my project and shows how the project is evidence-based. The literature review also contextualizes the project within the world of teaching and learning, and shows how what I have made is building on others' hard work. In the literature review, EL identification and proficiency is defined. Language and general learning background is also be examined, as well as social and emotional aspects of learning, quality collaboration for ELs, and pair work by language domains. Chapter Three explains my project in detail. It answers questions about how it was done, and provides a rationale, as well as a description of the intended audience. In Chapter Four conclusions are described and explained. I discuss what I have learned and limitations of the project. I examine how I intend to use this capstone project in the future. The last portion of the capstone is the project itself. The project includes strategies based on principles of adult learning, assessments of learning, support materials like handouts and slide presentations, timeline, setting, and teaching plans.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Chapter Overview

Language learning is a complex process, especially when learning an additional language in school. The main objective of language is to communicate with others, so having a fellow learner to practice language with can be useful, and as the research shows, can be an effective way to grow in language proficiency (Gersten et al., 2007). Being intentional about using a partner to assist in language learning is a studied method steeped in sociocultural theory among others (Vygotsky, 1978).

This review of the literature summarizes research that is relevant to my question, *what are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in making English proficiency gains?* In order to gain more insight into this topic, there are a few different ideas to research. It is helpful to understand how EL students are identified and their proficiency is defined in the area I teach in. It also is useful to know the theories of learning in a social way as a starting point. In addition, reviewing how people learn additional languages gives necessary knowledge on the methods of how learners absorb and apply this complex content. The ways that social learning is applied in social and emotional parts of learning is helpful to know for the research question because peer collaboration is inherently social, and language and all learning involves perhaps more emotional pieces than one might think at first glance. For this capstone project about how to teach educators strategies of partner work in language learning, it is necessary to sift

out the aspects of successful collaboration. It is also useful to look at how this is done in various parts of language including speaking, reading, and writing.

Therefore, the first topic looks at how EL students are identified and proficiency is defined. Next, the background of learning and language overall is evaluated. Then, the chapter examines social and emotional aspects of language learning. After that, it synthesizes the best practices for quality collaboration in language learning, and finally, this chapter explores pair learning in the language domains.

EL Identification and Proficiency Defined

EL Identification

In Minnesota, every student is given a language survey when they enter school. The questions relate to language proficiency, comprehension, and exposure in the home. If they answer any question on the survey with a language other than English, they need to be screened using one of the designated tests as determined by that particular school in that state. Minnesota schools use the WIDA system to evaluate student language proficiency skills, so it will be a screener test from this system. If a student gets a certain score on this screener, they are considered EL, and parents are notified and given the choice to have them receive EL services. Regardless of services, they will be required to take an annual test ("English Learner Education", 2022).

EL Proficiency Assessment

This annual test is called the ACCESS test, and is used to assess their language gains for the year. The ACCESS test is made up of four smaller tests for the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (WIDA, 2022). Students get a score for each language domain as well as an overall score that can determine

proficiency. This overall score is a composite of the domains, with reading and writing weighted more, and grade level taken into account. In all the domains, language is evaluated for social language as well as academic, which can be harder to master.There are six numbered levels of proficiency for each domain and the overall ranging from 1-6. If a student receives 3.5 or above in 3 out of 4 domains and an overall score of 4.5 they are deemed proficient according to WIDA standards in Minnesota, and no longer qualify for English services provided by the school ("English Learner Education", 2022).

Learning and Language Background

Introduction

Learning language or learning anything is a social endeavor (Vygotsky,1978). People are affected by their cultural environment, and having a learner paired with a person with more knowledge in certain areas can facilitate learning for both as seen in sociocultural learning theory (Swain et al., 2015). Language learning in particular has its own process, and learning an additional language differs in specific ways from learning a first language (Vanpatten & Williams, 2015). This means reviewing the topic of second language acquisition is a relevant task as well. In this capstone project, a professional development course for adult teachers will be created in order to be able to facilitate partner work in language learning. Because adults learn differently than children, understanding how they learn specifically is also important to review (Mezirow, 1990). In this section, Sociocultural Theory will be examined first because it is part of the foundation for partner work in learning. Next, it will also look at Second Language Acquisition. Finally, this section will look into Adult Learning.

Sociocultural Theory

The basic premise for sociocultural theory could be considered the foundation for learning in groups and especially pairs. Vygotsky is considered the father of sociocultural theory, and his theory has been built on by many scientists since (Swain et al., 2015). A famous part of this theory is what is described as the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). This is considered to be a place where a learner is required to do something that is difficult for them because when they are challenged, they are able to add new information to their knowledge base. (Swain et al., 2015).

Another main facet of the theory is learning from a "more knowledgeable other". The thought is that learning happens best when a person with more expertise on a topic can assist a learner in a challenging task. This allows the learner to undertake something that is challenging enough for them to have to grow their knowledge, but makes it manageable enough to be feasibly done. It is considered a way to scaffold a learner into the aforementioned zone of proximal development, the place where learning is done (Vygotsky, 1978).

Second Language Acquisition

While sociocultural theory can be applied to all kinds of learning, language learning has its own type of process, and learning an additional language differs in specific ways from learning a first language (Vanpatten & Williams, 2015). The input approach (Gass & Mackey, 2012) is an approach built on by Krashen's input hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) which deals with the language that a learner is exposed to. This language is often modified to be more comprehensible to the learner. When the language is more

comprehensible it is theorized that they will find meaning in it and therefore be able to add it to their knowledge base (Jegerski, 2021).

Interaction is also an important part of learning a language. Interaction means conversation language learners partake in. This is a place where they could get feedback on the correctness of their language output (Vanpatten & Williams, 2015). In order to improve, a learner needs to notice negative evidence, or feedback that the language was incorrect (Gass & Mackey, 2012). This feedback can be explicit feedback or it can be implicit, involving negotiation in subtle ways for the learner to discover on their own that an error was made. If they can notice this, the learner can change their language output and knowledge base for the future (Vanpatten & Williams, 2015).

Explicit feedback involves metalanguage, or talking about language, and saying an error was made and, perhaps, what it was, outright to a learner. This can be effective in certain situations. Implicit feedback uses negotiation strategies like confirmation checks, clarification requests, comprehension checks, and recasting, meaning a more competent speaker restates what the learners said in a correct form (Ellis et al., 2006).

Output hypothesis is an important part of additional language learning (Swain et al., 2015). As indicated previously, output is a time to get feedback and push for more native-like utterances. It is also an opportunity to test out language for the learner and see if it is correct, as well as practice language to make it automatic, or more ingrained, without having to think through it explicitly (Shehadeh, 2003).

Adult Learning

Since this capstone project will produce a staff development course, it is important to understand the specific ways adults learn, and what are best practices for

adult training. The theory of transformative learning is a well-known theory of adult learning (Mezirow, 1990). This theory emphasizes how, to successfully learn, people need to become critically aware of subconscious assumptions to see if they are true, and evaluate how relevant information is in order to make a connection to their lives. These processes can potentially lead to a big change in world views (Mezirow, 1990).

The transformative learning theory is useful for thinking about how to teach adults effectively and with intention. However, some researchers believe that Mezirow leaves out critical components of learning and the brain. According to Malkki (2011), this theory lacks examination of the roles that emotion plays in the process of learning, and thought how reflection works in the process needed to be investigated.

Malkki (2011) describes how Damasio's neurobiological theory of emotions and consciousness is a complementary theory to the reflection process (Damasio, 1999). Basically feeling positive emotions towards something can cause humans to remember something better, while negative emotions towards a stimulus can do the same thing for an opposite reason. These processes stem from survival mechanisms that kept early humans safe and thriving (Damasio, 1999).

Andragogy is the process of teaching adults specifically, according to Malcom Knowles, and is a part of adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980). It includes four assumptions about adults who learn. These are self-concept, the adult learning experience, readiness to learn, and orientation to learning (Knowles, 1980). Motivation to learn was added later (Knowles, 1992).

The self-concept means adults can learn more independently than children because of development. The adult learning experience refers to how adults have more

background information than children because of their age. Readiness to learn explains how because of maturity and development into adult roles, adults are more available to learn. Orientation to learning looks at how adults apply learning more directly to their needs in their everyday life because of different responsibilities, and motivation to learn talks about adults are more likely to have internal motivation to learn because they have more independence in their lives to choose it than children do (Knowles, 1992).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) support the findings of Knowles (1992) as well. They found that there are seven aspects that effective professional developments in education have in common. Like Knowles (1992) found, effective training is infused with active learning and contains sufficient time for practice, implementation, and reflection. It is also content-focused, supports collaboration with teachers, uses examples to show effective practice, has coaching support available, and includes feedback and reflection (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

In addition to theories of learning for adults, there are some basic principles of adult learning as well. When teaching adults, the learners should be active rather than passive during the process, and the training should build on background knowledge of the learners as well as infuse their own interests and needs into the process, making it relevant to their lives (Aslanian, 1983).

There are some practical ways for professional development programs to apply the theories and principles of how adults learn. The first principle of active participation can be applied by making a presentation that has many visuals and maybe participant dialoguing in pairs (Darling-Hammond, et al. 2009). One way for the second principle to be met is to give the participants a way to decide which questions the presentation should

address before the presentation begins. This will make the process more important to them, helping to ensure that they will focus better, and hopefully gain something useful from the process (Aslanian, 1983).

Conclusion

Learning has many components, and when looking at the question of w*hat are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in making English proficiency gains,* it's important to understand the background of collaborative learning as well as language learning. We can see that humans are social creatures and having a partner helps the learner, as shown by sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Having a partner can also give feedback and be a person to interact with (Swain et al., 2015) .

Stage in life can also affect learning motivation and outcomes, and examining how adults differ from children and adolescents is useful to know when planning adult courses for professional development. While adults may have more motivation to learn, they need their learning to be functional in their lives according to Knowles (1992). They have a self- concept that makes them more independent in learning, and more background knowledge to draw on than a younger learner, (Knowles, 1980). Like younger learners, adults' affective reasons for learning should also not be neglected (Malkki, 2011).

Social and Emotional Aspects

Introduction

Learners of all ages are affected by social and emotional aspects, as previously seen in the adult learning section. Because learning doesn't happen in a vacuum, it is tied to factors such as emotion and perception (Phelps, 2004). Learning a new language, especially in the domain of speaking, can be considered risky, and some researchers have

set out to find how affective factors like motivation impact learning a language.

Motivation is an important factor in how much people learn (Kopinska & Azkarai, 2020).

Patterns of interaction, or participation in a task, is often used in the research to measure

engagement.

Motivation for Learning

Motivation for learning an additional language can be affected by many

components. Chen (2021) describes a few of these factors in a case study of

higher-proficiency level language learners in collaborative writing. He found that those

who had similar levels of language proficiency may still have different levels of

motivation. Some factors that may have influenced them were participants' overall

knowledge of collaborative writing, their previous experiences, thoughts about pair work,

and their perception of their own role in the pair work.

The affective filter is a hypothesis within the Monitor Model put forth by Stephen

Krashen (1982) originally. Its attempt was to determine why some who are exposed to

large amounts of language do not successfully acquire language. According to the model,

even when appropriate input is within reach, negative feelings such as anxiety or

boredom may filter out input that would otherwise allow for language acquisition. The

hypothesis looks at motivation and self-confidence.

One criticism of this hypothesis is that Krashen (1982) ignored the fact that

children can be affected by negative feelings. He used the fact that children obtain

proficiency in their first language to determine that they must not have negative affect

issues, though this is often untrue. Zafar (2009) also questioned how the affective filter

decides which features to filter out.

Though there are some valid counter positions on Krashen's hypothesis, the idea that negative affect influences language learning is hard to entirely dispute. Perhaps it is the way it works that should be in question. Gardner and Lambert (1972) studied learner motivation and determined that depending on the context, there are different types of motivation that can make for successful learning. They found it is a dynamic process that may change over time as well.

Dornyei (2001) also researched three phases of motivation that can affect learning in different ways depending upon how long a learner has been studying the language. By recognizing which phase a student is in, a language teacher can modify teaching to fit the phase in order to achieve optimal learning.

The way in which collaboration was correlated with motivation was examined by Julkunen (2001). Julkunen studied pre-teen English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Finland for motivation on language tasks, rather than motivation to learn overall. The EFL learners worked on vocabulary tasks collaboratively in small groups and pairs, as well as individually. Julkunen (2001) found that motivation was much higher when working collaboratively than when working alone.

This is similar to the results found by Kopinska and Azkarai (2020), who looked at motivation in language learning for young EFL learners in Spain. They measured the learner's fluctuation in motivation throughout a school year, and looked at task-specific motivation as well as overall motivation to learn the language. They also looked at motivation for individual versus pair work. Their results showed that they started with high motivation in the categories, and over time, motivation strengthened, especially for the tasks that were collaborative, similar to Julkunen (2020) and Dornyei (2001).

Patterns of Interaction

While motivation is an internal factor for wanting to do a task, participation is the external output of that motivation. In the research this is called patterns of interaction, and is a common method used to measure engagement (Rosenthal et al., 1978). Wantanbe (2008) looked at this in a case-study of three EL learners. The learners did three tasks, one with a higher and one with a lower proficiency level than their own. After the patterns of interaction and attitudes were measured with interviews and surveys, Wantanbe (2008) found that both higher and lower collaborative pairs had positive patterns of interaction. Therefore, proficiency levels seemed to not matter, and what mattered more was working with those who had " shared many ideas" and were good at collaborating with others to co-construct language (Watanabe, 2008). Wantanbe and Swain (2014) also saw how language proficiency levels were irrelevant in regards to patterns of interaction.

In contrast, Kim (2020) found that a partner's *perceived* proficiency, in addition to perceived difficulty of the task, impacted learners' motivation and willingness to engage. It indicated that the pair work itself may not be what influences patterns of interaction, but rather what preconceived notions the learners bring to the pair work (Kim, 2020).

Conclusion

Motivation and patterns of interaction are factors that influence all learning, and especially language learning (Phelps, 2004). In order to answer, *what are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in making English proficiency gains?,* how motivation and patterns of interaction can be increased are important. Without any kind of motivation, very little or no patterns of interaction will happen, and therefore a

rudimentary amount of learning. Researchers have looked at factors that affect both overall language learning motivation and task-based motivation (Kopinska & Azkarai, 2020).

Context was an important factor for overall motivation, and that motivation could change over time (Dornyei, 2001; Gardner & Lambert, 1972). When it came to task-based motivation, collaboration seemed to be a factor that correlates with higher motivation (Julkunen, 2001). Language proficiency appeared to not be as important as perception of the task and others (Kim, 2020).

Quality Collaboration

Introduction

There are many aspects that go into having quality one-on-one collaboration in language learning. The research has identified aspects such as metacognition, a process that explicitly has learners talk about their thinking and learning (Chen & Hapgood, 2021), the quality of the language learning is often measured by how often Language-Related Episodes (LREs) occur in the interaction (Cumming, 1988), and the success of teacher-selected or intentional partners (Mozaffari, 2017). Mutuality, or having lots of interaction and feedback (Storch, 2002) is also an important piece. The first aspect reviewed in this section will be metacognition. Second, Language-Related Episodes will be examined. The third portion will look into partner selection, and fourth, mutuality.

Metacognition

In the previous section, Chen (2021) was reviewed for motivation, and found that knowledge of collaborative writing was a potential factor in motivation. Knowledge of collaborative writing is a form of metacognition, or being explicit about thinking

processes and learning. In a mixed-method approach, Chen and Hapgood (2001) examined knowledge of collaborative writing again as a factor that could affect learning. In this study, having more knowledge of the collaborative writing process, and therefore having metacognition involved in the process, helped to improve patterns of interaction and learning.

Fitzgerald (1995) has done a large amount of research on metacognitive strategies in English language learners. Fitzgerald found that ELs monitor their reading comprehension with a variety of metacognitive strategies such as Think-Alouds, or talking out loud about the reading with questions and verbalizing thought processes (Fitzgerald, 1995).

Language-Related Episodes

Language-Related Episodes (LREs) are a tool of measurement for determining if a learner is talking about language explicitly as well. This could include talking about the language they are currently producing, asking questions about their language, or giving feedback to another on their language (Swain & Lapkin, 1998).

There are many ways to look at LREs and study them. In one study by Zhang and Crawford (2019), LREs were examined in a collaborative writing task that sought to find out if having LREs in the first language (L1) was more effective than in the target language (L2). The results showed that the L1 condition facilitated discussion better, and students were able to talk about a wider range of lexical items (Zhang & Crawford, 2019).

In a related study, Canals (2021) looked at translanguaging, or going between two languages, and multimodal usage, which are nonverbal cues and physical props like

computers and notes, on how it affected LREs when talking about meaning. The study found that both the relying on two or more languages and multimodal tools helped to reinforce the LREs and support meaning making in the tasks (Canals, 2021). These findings show that LREs might be most successful in whichever language a learner is most comfortable in.

On the other hand, Pastushenkov et al., (2020) saw that pairs that had the same first language performed worse on tasks and had less LREs. They also found that high peer familiarity had a better correlation with high LRE amount and task success. This was one study however, and researchers suggest that perhaps it has to do with how short the task was and target language proficiency level. They suggested that limiting, but still allowing first language dialogue might be effective.

Looking at proficiency level in EL collaboration, Basterrechea and Leeser (2019) observed how the language proficiency level affected the type, amount, and outcome of LREs in a grammatical task with adolescents learning English. They found a positive relationship between having a higher proficiency level and having more LREs and correct outcomes of the LREs

Partner Selection

Who selects partners in pair work and how they do so may have an affect on the quality of the learning as well. Mozaffari (2016) set out to explore whether teacher-selected student pairings worked better than student-selected pairings in a study that was measured using quantitative and qualitative methods. The results showed that, while there was no significant effect for patterns of interaction between teacher-selected and student-selected, there was an increase in LREs for the teacher-selected pairings.

Pairs selected by the teacher also out-performed student-selected pairs in terms of fluency and accuracy in their writing, and had better text organization, grammar, and vocabulary. In addition, the student-selected pairs had many more off-task events. How teacher-selected pairings is a topic that may need more research.

Mutuality

Storch (2002) classified kinds of pairs or dyadic interactions in Language-Related Episodes. They dealt with the factors of *equality*, when both participants take equal control of the task, and *mutuality* is a concept that means linguistic interactions are rich in interaction and giving feedback. Storch (2002) found that how the equality played out didn't matter as much as the factor of mutuality. Having high mutuality was the best for learning, while having low mutuality was the worst.

This supports what was previously found by Damon and Phelps (1989), who saw that Language-Related Episodes that have high mutuality are considered useful for learning. Nelson and Murphy (1993) also found related results with their study on collaborative writing. Pairs that worked together in a cooperative way were more likely to use partner suggestions in their editing process, making their writing better, than those who worked in a more defensive manner (Nelson & Murphy, 1993).

Conclusion

What are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in making English proficiency gains? needs to address criteria that make pair work with ELs successful, and this is part of the content I will be teaching in the staff development. Having quality collaboration for pair work language tasks involves many aspects. While there is always more research to be done, there are a few overarching topics that were repeated in the

research. Having metacognition about language was an important aspect because it helped improve the interactions and make explicit what language processes were happening (Chen & Hapgood,2001) . For this project, teaching staff to teach students to have these processes will be necessary.

Related to metacognition, Language-Related Episodes were important ways to measure and to promote more language learning (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). This can be done in a variety of ways and these episodes can be affected by other factors such as proficiency level and which language they are talking about the language in (Basterrechea & Leeser, 2019; Canals, 2021 ;Zhang & Crawford, 2019). In terms of the project's professional development, what will be in control of the teachers will be which language learners speak in. It will be important to convey to teachers in the professional development that students should know that they can use whichever language or dialect they feel most comfortable in, and this will actually help them learn.

Partner selection was a factor that Mozaffari (2016) looked at. Though more studies are needed in this area, Mozafari (2016) found that teacher-selected partners yielded the best outcomes for student learning. Though this may be true, it could still be helpful to allow students to select their own partners at times in order to give a sense of agency. Perhaps it will be up to the teacher which task is most necessary for teacher-selected pairs.

Finally, Storch (2002) and Damon and Phelps (1989) examined how linguistic interactions that were rich in interaction and feedback, or mutuality, was an important factor in determining how much language learning was done. This seemed to be more

important than how equal a pairing was. Creating a good pairing and environment for reaching high mutuality is a topic that will be investigated further in the next section.

Pair Learning in the Language Domains

Introduction

Partner collaboration strategies can be used for a variety of objectives within the area of English learning. Language learning is divided into four domains of listening, reading, speaking and writing (Vanpatten & Williams, 2015). Though the domains are often combined in learning tasks, it was helpful to organize the research by domain for the purpose of informing specific teaching objectives. The listening domain was not included in this section because there was not much research on it specifically, though listening tasks are embedded in many language tasks. It should also be noted that almost all language tasks engage more than one domain. Though that is the case, this section will be divided by which domain the study measured or assessed most. The first portion will look at the language domain of speaking and pair learning. The next part will examine the reading domain, and the last will look at the domain of writing.

Speaking

One strategy that has been studied is Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) (Delquadri et al., 1986). It is a peer-tutoring strategy that has found some success with language learners. Though this is a reading strategy, one of the main components of it uses speaking by having students read aloud and discuss the text, which offers ELs more opportunity to practice speaking (Coelho, 1994). In a study looking at ELs with learning disabilities, they found that students who used PALS had more success in oral and reading comprehension (Saenz et al., 2005).

Flipped classrooms, a strategy of having students learn key concepts outside of class in order to practice those concepts in the class, have also been examined to see whether students do better in writing and speaking proficiency. This model allows for lots of pair interaction because the input of learning is done before entering the classroom, meaning that interaction and practice is the focus of the classroom (Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021).

Research has indicated that flipped classrooms do improve speaking proficiency because overall students advanced in fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and accuracy (Köroğlu and Çakır, 2017). Studies also show that many adult students enjoyed this model (Li, 2016) ,which ties back to motivation factors being important in learning (Kopinska & Azkarai, 2020).Using a flipped classroom with Communicative Learning Teaching (CLT) activities also was successful in advancing student speaking outcomes and attitudes towards learning English, perhaps because CLT and Flipped Classrooms are based in pair or group work. (Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021).

Reading

In the area of reading, students of many age groups were successful with PALS and partner work. In Spanish-English bilingual first grade students, it was an effective strategy for three out of four components of reading (Calhoon et. al, 2007). Kindergarten students also did well using a version of PALS, and performed better with the PALS program than ELs who did not use it in the reading components of phonemic awareness and letter recognition. The students performed similarly to students who were non-EL not using PALS as well (McMaster et al., 2008). Reciprocal teaching with collaborative groups and with peer tutoring was also effective at raising EL reading comprehension,

though overall comprehension had no effect (Klingner & Vaughn, 1996).Contrary to these studies, Jackson (2016) found that PALS had a negative effect on reading skills. This study had a small sample size however, and when looking at it in comparison to the other studies that found promising results for PALS with ELs, it seems to be an anomaly.

Writing

Collaborative writing has produced better results than individual writing (Hillebrand, 1994). Pre-writing talk was a useful strategy found in a few studies. McDonough et al. (2020) saw that when learners discussed the writing topic before writing individually, everyone incorporated the ideas into their writing, making it richer. When learners used wh-questions, subordinate conjunctions, and first and second pronouns in pre-writing discussions, they had higher quality writing at the end compared to other grammatical features (Crawford et al., 2019).

Writing is a unique form of language because it allows the learner the chance to go back and review the language. Because of this trait, writing produces the highest number of LREs when working in pairs (Cummings, 1989; Storch 2013;Williams, 2001), and as mentioned earlier, LREs are useful for learning. Many of the studies on pair work with ELs have focused on collaborative writing, perhaps for this reason.

Storch (2013) found that partners took a longer time to complete writing tasks than individuals, and tended to be more motivated and focused on accuracy than when individuals wrote alone. Pairs tended to edit the writing more than when writing solo. Students in cooperative learning groups for reading and writing in second and third grade also saw higher scores in writing than in the control group (Calderon et al., 1998) because

they had a greater wealth of knowledge to build on with a partner than when working by themselves.

Conclusion

Partner work and language learning can be organized into categories of type of language output/input, or the domains of language. In this section, language learning and pair work was divided into speaking, reading, and writing. This is necessary in answering *what are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in making English proficiency gains?,* because language involves different domains, and teachers often need to focus on one of these domains in their teaching objectives. For speaking, learners used PALS which involved discussing texts and had shown success in oral comprehension (Saenz et al., 2005). Using flipped classrooms allowed learners to learn material at home and practice it in the classroom. This was a successful method to practice oral language. This method also helped many aspects of language (Köroğlu and Çakır, 2017), and students were motivated to learn (Li, 2016). This indicates that having more time to practice oral language with a partner could yield good results for increasing oral language proficiency.

In reading, Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies, PALS, was used in some studies. Lower elementary students were able to increase their reading comprehension and pre-reading skills (Calhoon et. al, 2007;McMaster et al., 2008). Reciprocal teaching and peer-tutoring also was able to raise reading comprehension scores (Klingner & Vaughn, 1996), though there was one study with a small sample size that showed PALS had a negative effect on reading skills (Jackson, 2016). Overall it seems that peer tutoring

works well to increase student reading comprehension and certain literacy skills, and this will be something included in the staff development.

For writing, collaboration proved successful perhaps because of a higher number of LREs and the ability to have a record to refer back to and edit (Cummings, 1989; Storch 2013;Williams, 2001). There was also a bigger focus on accuracy and editing when writing with a peer (Calderon et al., 1998; Storch, 2013). Using pre-writing discussions also was an effective way to create better writing results (Crawford et al., 2019; McDonough et al., 2020). It appears that peer collaboration in writing is effective when there are pre-writing discussions and there is time to have students edit their work.

Summary of Chapter Two

Discussion

In this review of the literature, there were many topics to cover to give a general background of research related to the capstone project question of *what are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in making English proficiency gains?* In the first topic, how EL students are identified and proficiency was defined. Next, background information on learning such as sociocultural theory was discussed because it gives reasons for how to scaffold learners using a peer who has more knowledge in a certain area (Vygotsky,1978).

Learning about a few theories of Second Language Acquisition was useful as well because when addressing the needs of ELs, knowing the processes of learning a language is necessary. The last portion of that topic looked at theories of adult learning for the purpose of informing how best to create a staff development that is engaging and effective. The next topic covered the social and emotional aspects of learning because

that is important for the teaching of adults in the professional development of the

capstone and for informing how school-age students learn. This topic was divided into

motivation for learning, meaning the reasons that learners will try to learn, and patterns of

interaction. This is the output of their motivation, in other words, their participation.

After that, the topic of quality collaboration for ELs was analyzed for features that stood

out in the research as criteria for success in EL partner work. These included

metacognition, Language-Related Episodes, partner selection, and mutuality, which is

having a large amount of interaction and feedback. Lastly, peer collaboration in three

domains of language development were reviewed. How pair work is effective in

speaking, reading, and writing was discussed in order to organize the staff development

by what is needed by the teacher.

This literature review has been a compilation of the large amount of research that

relates to language learners and partner work. There are many studies with English

learners in the U.S. and English as a Foreign Language from around the world that help

us get a picture of best practices for partner work in language tasks, and give background

information on how people learn languages. Much of the research was found in the

language domains of reading, writing, and speaking, and many of the tasks in the

research involved more than one of these. Specific research on ELs using partner work

for the domain of listening alone wasn't found, but almost every study used listening as

part of the language task.

Chapter Three Preview

In the next chapter I will give an overview of my capstone project. In order to best

answer the question, *what are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in*

making English proficiency gains?, it made sense to create a staff development that teaches educators how to apply methods of pair work to best assist their EL students. Chapter Three will explain the rationale behind the project and give the setting and learner makeup of those attending. It will give details on expectations for the timeline of the staff development, as well as the content divided by language domains that teachers need to teach.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Overview

Introduction

My research question is, *what are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in making English proficiency gains?* As we saw in the previous chapter, there is an abundance of research to support using pair work with language learners. This topic also expands to reach a variety of learning targets and types of learners from all different backgrounds and ages. This project will take that information and tailor it to a specific type of learner: English Language (EL) students in elementary and middle school in the U.S., and in addition to them, use the research to teach their adult educators how to implement the findings. The organization of the project will follow the domains of language, or the kinds of language output and input. The three I will focus on for the purpose of allowing teachers to create specific learning goals are the domains of speaking, reading, and writing.

In this chapter I will first discuss my positionality. This is a way to provide context for potential biases I might bring to this project and recognize them in order to ensure I am as ethical as possible. Next, I will provide a description of the project that details the components of the staff development I will create. After that, I will explain the rationale for the project and some general theories that support the staff development such as sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1990). Following this, I will review the setting for the professional development,

the participants that will be involved, and the timeline for implementation in order to have a fuller picture as to what the project will look like in practice. I will also touch on the assessments used for the participants. Finally, I will summarize the chapter and project overview.

Positionality

Positionality is a way to orient ourselves in the paper and acknowledge the biases we may come with when writing about our topics. My topic is about the best ways to use partner work to help English Learners. I am not an English learner, so I think that is one of the most important aspects to point out. I want to be careful to not have a deficit mindset in thinking about ELs because although they may have room to grow in English, it doesn't mean they are not proficient in other languages and skill sets.

I am a white woman who is a speaker of Standard American English, and a teacher of it, and I realize this is the language of power now and historically in the US and the world. Even though it is helpful for my students to know and be able to easily use this language of power, I want to acknowledge that it is not in any way "better" than other dialects of English or other languages in general. I want to empower people without making them feel like their culture is less important.

Project Description

In order to answer my research question, I have decided to do a staff development course that teaches educators how to implement some researched strategies of partner work. The goal is to help teachers assist their EL learners in achieving success in their English proficiency and in their other content areas. I want to make this a practical staff development for teachers, and show how the strategies can fit into what subjects

classroom teachers and content teachers will already be teaching. The idea is to make it tailored to their needs as well, and there will be some choice involved as to which strategies specifically they will be learning, which ties into best practice for adult learning. It helps to make the learning functional and honor adult learners' previous knowledge.

Another aspect that will make the course organized and practical will be making each session dedicated to a different learning goal. There are four language domains: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Though language learners often use more than one domain in a task, there may be a domain that a teacher wants to be the focus of the lesson. Because of this, each session is dedicated to one of the domains, excluding listening. The first session will be an introduction of pair work and language learners and how to use strategies to teach speaking. The next session will be about EL pair work and reading, and the third, pair work and writing. There will also be time to assess the progress of the teachers in using the strategies.

In the first session, a survey will be given to see what teachers already do and know about this subject. Then I will show slides to give an overview of the course and answer questions about what the course will be about and how it will be implemented. In the first session we will also address the domain of speaking, and, because my audience is made up of EL teachers and non EL teachers alike, I will emphasize the importance of speaking. This will be for those that might not realize how EL students need to verbalize their thoughts in order to become more proficient in academic speaking and whatever subject they may be learning. Then we will learn some speaking strategies as a group, with time to turn and talk to small groups to process the learning. I will

provide a visual handout that makes learners fill out what they learn as they go to promote their own learning, as well as be a product to take back to their classrooms for reference. We will use the back of the handout to discuss and write about how to use one or more strategies in their own teaching practices. My goal is to have information that is succinct enough to fit on a front and back page in order to ensure the learners will be able to process and implement the information they learn that day. We will do a short quiz at the end to see what new things they learned and assess if they find the information relevant.

In the second session we will talk about partner work and reading. I will again do a pre-survey/assessment, but this time use them to put teachers into groups according to which strategies they want to learn for the remainder of the time. This will be a type of jigsaw puzzle activity, or an activity where learners learn different subtopics in different groups and then come together to teach the class. Learners will have a handout similar to the first session's handout in order to process new information and take a reminder of the learning home. After this there will be another short survey to assess how relevant the information was to their teaching lives, and see if they learned anything new.

The third session about writing will follow the same format. I chose this format because EL teachers and classroom teachers may already have a variety of strategies they use for reading and writing, so I don't want them to waste time learning strategies they may already know. There is also lots of research for these two domains so it will be easier to break it up this way.

The final session will be a review session and a way for learners to process what they learned and may have applied to their teaching practices. Teachers will have the

opportunity to choose their own groups to discuss each of the domains taught, and use

helpful tips from other teachers to take into their own practice. In the previous sessions it

will be emphasized that they will have an opportunity to do this, in order for teachers to

be prepared to discuss their trials and successes. There will be an opportunity for teachers

to tell me what they liked about the course, and what they think could be improved as

well.

Rationale

The sociocultural theory of learning by Vygotsky (1978) is an extensive theory

that supports language learning and pair learning especially. The social part of this theory

is that learning happens with others. In Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, a

learner is trying to obtain knowledge that is challenging and difficult to grasp alone. A

"more knowledgeable other", whether it is a teacher, parent, or peer, can help scaffold a

learner to reach this difficult knowledge. In this project, I am teaching teachers how to

have ELs use pair work to help them reach their language goals. In this case, the "more

knowledgeable other" can be a peer, as well as the teacher, who helps fill in the gaps the

other doesn't know, and guide them towards more language success.

The other theory that supports this project is Mezirow's theory of transformative

learning (1990). It is an adult learning theory about how adults need to be critical of

subconscious beliefs to see if they are true, and look at new information intentionally to

see how it will be relevant to their lives. Mezirow's transformative learning theory

applies to this project because I will be directly teaching adult staff. Because there are

different goals for adults and different experiences and levels of brain development they

bring to the learning, it is important to understand how their learning differs from children and adolescents, and use this knowledge to effectively teach them.

Setting

The setting of the project is a Hmong Language and Culture preK-8 charter school located in a large urban setting. The school serves 1,333 students, 98% of which are of Southeast Asian, with the majority being Hmong. 2% of students are Black or more than one race. Most students are bilingual to varying degrees, and 60% are EL learners. The majority of the students were born in the U.S. The student to teacher ratio is 21:1.

Participants

The participants will be most of the teaching staff for grades 1-8 at the school, in total 50 teachers. This includes EL teachers, elementary classroom teachers, Hmong and Chinese language teachers, and subject-specific middle school teachers. It is meant to be a course that can apply to EL teachers and classroom teachers because, especially at the lower grades, the majority of the students are EL learners and can benefit from the partner work strategies. At the school, 85% of the teachers have three or more years of teaching experience, so the intention will be to assist both new teachers and those who have been teaching a while.

Timeline

This project has developed over many months. It started with my interest in using pair work with my EL students because I saw how engaged my students were when they

worked with a partner, and I also saw how well paired students produced better results in language. With this thought in mind, I began some initial research for a couple of weeks. Eventually I decided on the research question, *what are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in making English proficiency gains?,* and realized there was plenty of information and studies done on this, which encouraged me to pursue it. In the third and fourth weeks I wrote Chapter One which helped me to reflect on why I wanted to do this project and the background information on my journey as a teacher of EL learners. After a month, I created a visual map of the research that supported my question, and began the month-long process of writing a literature review, Chapter Two, that examined a large portion of the relevant research. After gaining this background knowledge, I began to write the project overview, seen here in Chapter Three. This details the way the staff development will look and examines the *hows* and *whys* of my project in more detail. These chapters were edited and reviewed for these months to make sure the project was what I hoped for. The three months will be making all the documents, slides, and physical materials for the project, as well as ensuring the best and most applicable strategies from the research are included.

The course will be segmented into topics for easier learning digestibility and to allow participants to practice techniques and come back with questions. There will be three one-hour sessions that teach about pair work strategies for speaking, reading, and writing respectively, with the speaking session also including an introduction.

The first introductory and speaking session will be during the staff development week before the school year. The second session, focused on reading, will be during the hour-long Professional Learning Community (PLC) time two weeks later. The third

session on writing will happen in another two weeks during the PLC time. After these initial sessions, there will be another session a month later during the hour-long PLC time to check in about how the strategies have been implemented and their successes and adjustment needs. The reason for the usage of PLC time is because this is the best fit for the designated staff development time of the school, and a way to ensure that our staff learners don't get overwhelmed by the amount of information to interact with and digest.

Assessments

The staff development will begin with a survey to see what the educators already know about pair work and ELs. This will be made up of multiple choice questions, self-assessment as to their comfort levels with aspects of pair work and ELs, and some open ended questions to help identify what they already know and implement in their classrooms. This survey will be used as a baseline, and as a way to divide participants into groups that will learn about different aspects of the content. Throughout the first and last sessions there will be short formative assessments that use smartphones or computers to check in as to what they just learned. At the end of each day there will be another short survey to see if they've learned anything new and to see how useful they thought the session was to their own teaching practice.

Summary

In order to address my research question of *what are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in making English proficiency gains?,* I decided to create professional development for teachers at my school. The course is to be divided into an introduction to pair work and ELs, pair work speaking strategies, pair work reading

strategies, and pair work writing strategies. It will also have another session to discuss its implementation for teachers.

This staff development uses research-based strategies that are based in many theories, but especially sociocultural learning theory by Vygotsky (1978) and transformative learning theory for adult learning by Mezirow (1990). The setting is a preK-8 urban Hmong charter school with a large population of EL learners. The audience is all teaching staff in grades 1-8, including classroom teachers, all language teachers, and middle school content teachers. The timeline will be one-hour sessions divided by type of language, or language domain, every two weeks for the first three sessions and the last session being a month after the previous. There will be pre-assessment surveys, formative assessments using technology to make it anonymous, and post-assessment surveys to gather summative information as to the effectiveness of the training sessions. The staff development hopes to make learning about how to assist ELs accessible for all teachers, not just EL teachers.

In the next chapter, I will discuss what I have learned from this project. I will look at which parts of the literature review were most useful for the project and identify conclusions and next steps in my learning process.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Overview

Creating this capstone project has been a journey that allowed me to learn things I

didn't expect. Because I saw some success with pair work in my EL classroom, I started

with wondering about pair collaboration for ELs. This wondering led to the creation of

the research question, *What are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in*

making English proficiency gains?, and grew into the research and creation of a

professional development course for educators. This course allows teachers to learn about

strategies to accomplish language goals for speaking, reading, and writing using partner

work. In this chapter, I will reflect on my learnings and thoughts for the future of this

project.

This chapter will first explain the most surprising things I have learned from my

capstone project including how the literature review showed important EL pair work

ingredients necessary for doing the process in any language domain. Following this, I

will discuss possible limitations of the project and how to navigate those. Finally, I will

consider what the future looks like for similar projects to EL pair work, and include my

recommendations for the project's use and its benefits to the profession.

What I Have Learned

Throughout this process, I have learned many pieces of information that can help

me in my personal professional development. As a researcher, my suspicion that partner

work is a powerful motivator for students was confirmed. It was surprising to me to find

out that, in some studies, the proficiency levels of one's partner didn't matter, but the

perception of one's partner proficiency levels did (Kim, 2020; Watanabe, 2008). I also found it so useful to learn about tasks that were rich in interaction and feedback, because I knew these were best for learning, but did not always have the ideas for activities to accomplish it.

As a writer, I was forced to organize my learnings for the literature review into categories that made sense to the reader and myself. I started out with categories that gave background information for adult learning, language learning and social learning before diving into the literature for best practices for pair work with ELs. This allowed me to see the elements that go into successful EL learner pair work so that if a strategy does not fit well for what I need, I am able to create the elements of the pair work to keep the success of it. Doing this allowed me to widen the scope of using pair work.

Literature Review Highlights

There were many ideas from the literature review that I found important, and I will discuss the ones that are the overarching ideas for pair work and ELs. One of the main reasons for using partners with EL learning is that motivation is higher with partner work, as found by Julkunen (2001). Wantanbe (2008) also found that people learning both higher and lower levels of English language could also benefit from pair work.

The main ideas of how to do pair work are also important to note. For instance, one study found that teacher-selected partnerships worked best (Mozaffari, 2016). This is not the most surprising fact, but often it is tempting to let students choose their own partners for motivation purposes. I think this can still be done occasionally, but ideally the teacher should choose in order to have the best dynamics for learning. Another helpful technique for pair work is using metalanguage. Chen and Hapgood (2016) found

that having metalanguage, or specific words to talk about the features of language, facilitates the learning process in pairs. It also was found to help improve participation in students, which is important because without this, students get less out of the tasks and are less likely to give feedback and interact, which are integral parts of language pair learning (Storch, 2002).

Summary

I have learned so much about language learning and pair work throughout this project. I've learned surprising things like how perception of language levels can be more important than actual language levels when students are paired together. I have learned the main ingredients for successful pair collaboration so that, even if a specific strategy doesn't work for me, I can use the main ideas to create something that does. From the literature review I found many of these main ideas for pair work and ELs like why to do pair work for student motivation, how teacher selection of partners is important, how metalanguage is useful to learners, and how interaction and feedback is necessary to create language learning tasks with a partner.

Limitations

The main limitation for this project was that the strategies I found in the research were often very extensive. My objective for the professional development was to provide educators with a toolbox of strategies for each domain, but this was often hard to accomplish because many of the techniques and strategies I found required many days of training just to learn how to do it. In these cases, I tried to find the most relevant piece to use that would give teachers the most impact for their students without much preparation or background learning. I also realize that sometimes the reason for extensive teacher

training in the research is to ensure a study is reliable and accurate, but in real life settings we often have to make do with what there is actually time for.

A second possible limitation was that there was not a section on the language domain of listening. I didn't include this domain directly because it was difficult to find research that only looked at listening and EL pair work. For practical purposes, I don't feel that this is such a problem because most language tasks involve the task of listening to some extent, and in my experience listening is often the easiest domain to master, meaning less focus needs to be done on practicing it.

Summary

Overall, this project provides useful information for EL teachers and general educators alike, but it is not without some limitations and imperfections. Finding informative strategies that could be taught in bite-size pieces proved challenging and I wonder if I chose the best ones. The other potential limit is that I couldn't find research for pair work and listening with ELs specifically. I don't feel this is a problem as much because listening is embedded in most language tasks and it is not the language domain I am most concerned about. It is, however, important to practice, and some might find it unbalanced not to have a section dedicated to only that. The future of EL pair work will have to decide whether this is something that needs to be fixed or not when doing similar projects or expanding upon this one.

Future for EL Pair Work

In the future, this project could be expanded to be a longer professional development due to all the research there is to choose from. Related projects could focus on EL students and small group work, as I found lots of research on this when looking for

ELs and pair work due to the collaborative nature of each. There were also some studies I found that focused on EL pair work for students with learning disabilities that I think could be a useful and meaningful topic to teach others about. I am not sure how much research is out about this specifically, but maybe in the near future there will be more to draw from.

Course Application and Recommendations

In terms of how I can use this project specifically, I can use it at my school which is a Hmong language and culture school with a large percentage of EL students. I planned the project with this setting in mind, having it begin during the teacher workshop time before school starts, and have the rest of the sessions during PLC time in order to make it more manageable to learn and give time to practice the strategies with students. It could be a recurring professional development with adjustments made to teach new strategies each year if I wanted, or teach the same strategies for new teachers or those who want a referesher.

I would recommend that any school that has a medium to large EL population use this teacher development for all their staff, especially classroom/content teachers and EL teachers. It could be a great way to start off the year, or be used during Professional Learning Community (PLC) time that many schools carve into their months. It could be used at any grade level of a student from about first grade on up.

Benefit to Profession

This professional development project benefits the profession of teaching because it offers simple techniques and strategies for teachers who are not licensed in EL

teaching. This can help them reach more EL students, and even help facilitate learning for students who are not identified as EL, as much of the course is focused on literacy strategies. I also think this could be of use to EL teachers because these specific strategies were not all taught during my EL coursework, and I think it can always be useful to have more strategies in one's toolbox of teaching.

Summary

This project could be a stepping stone for future projects that inform educators about collaborative groups and EL students or pair work with EL students and learning disabilities. I want to use this project at my school because there is a large EL population, and similar schools with large EL populations would also benefit from this. My project is useful to the teaching profession because it gives general education teachers and EL teachers alike tools and strategies to expand how they teach any subject because they are methods that expand the language used to learn.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I recounted surprising information I learned from answering the question: *What are the best ways to use pair work to assist EL students in making English proficiency gains?* This included how perception of language levels can be more important than actual language levels when students are paired together. I showed how the literature review gave me important EL pair work ingredients necessary for doing the process in any language domain as well. Following this, I discussed limitations of the project like how it was hard to choose the strategies to include because there were so

many detailed strategies, and how listening was a domain I didn't explicitly find many techniques for. Finally, I pondered the future for similar projects to EL pair work, such as projects that do the same thing, but are longer, EL small group work, and pair work strategies for EL students with learning disabilities. After this I included my recommendations for the project's use in schools with medium to large EL populations and its benefits to the profession for EL teachers and general educators alike.

     Learners of any language are doing difficult work and deserve strategies that help them accomplish their language goals. Using pair work is one of many techniques for ELs, but it is one that is proven successful in multiple contexts. As we have seen, it is useful not only for learning, but as a motivational and engaging method for students of all ages and abilities, which is something our students need and have a right to. The power of partner work is perhaps successful because it uses what humans are programmed to do with language, interact, and as we can see from the research, this is a necessary component for language learning. It is my hope that, through this resource, educators can become more knowledgeable in the ways that create successful moments for their students, and are able to empower both their students and themselves.

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