

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Engaging Best Practices for Newcomer English
Language Learners in the Mainstream Elementary
Classroom**

RESEARCH QUESTION

How can Elementary teachers engage newcomer English language learners in their classrooms, while incorporating EL best practices and fostering English language development?

LEARNER OBJECTIVES:

- I can identify newcomers in my classroom and better understand factors that may affect their English language development.
- I can use EL best practices and strategies to increase engagement and English proficiency of newcomers in my classroom.

WHO ARE OUR NEWCOMER ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

- New to country (less than 1 year)
- Typically little to no English proficiency
- Level 1, emergent/beginner
- Come from many cultural and educational backgrounds

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT, TRAUMA & THE EFFECTS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

From a neurological point of view, early trauma and adversity can cause hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis dysfunction. This stems from stress and may impair the limbic region, prefrontal and parietal lobes, corpus callosum and the brain stem, all leading to impaired language acquisition. This dysfunction can also affect emotional regulation, attention, concentration and memory, all of which contribute to difficulties in learning a language.

“Post-traumatic stress disorder frequently occurs within traumatized and refugee students, as well as depression and anxiety disorders. Correlation between these disorders and brain functioning, including language learning has been found to have an effect on one another. Loss of family members, trauma, family functioning and learning a new language can all affect cognitive functioning and performance.”

Kaplan, Stolk, Valibhoy, Tucker, & Baker (2015)

BRAIN CONTINUED...

As English language learners are adjusting to schools in the United States they may be experiencing a multitude of stressors; acculturative stress, migration stress and the stress of learning a new language. These factors can account for students having a more difficult time learning a language, due to the effects trauma has on the learner's brain (Hos, 2014).

Lombardi (2008) describes the brain as being flexible, modifiable and repairable, and disagrees with research in the 1960's who saw the brain as being fixed, arguing that humans can grow their brains and are constantly learning new things.

PREVIOUS EDUCATION, FIRST LANGUAGE (L1) & L1 PROFICIENCY

- Previous Education
- Language commonalities and characteristics
- L1 proficiency and literacy

SLIFE STUDENTS

DEFINITION: STUDENTS WITH LIMITED INTERRUPTED FORMAL EDUCATION

The Minnesota Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) Act defines SLIFE as an English learner with an interrupted formal education who *meets three of the following five requirements:*

1. Comes from a home where the language usually spoken is not English
2. Enters school in the United States after grade 6
3. Has at least two years less schooling than their grade level peers
4. Functions at least two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics
5. May be preliterate in their native language

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Engagement

- Family & Home Culture
- School/Classroom Community
- Asset versus Deficit Approach (bilingualism)
- Newcomer Tool-Kit

TOOL-KIT AND MALP PROJECT

Cain (2018) explains that having a newcomer booklet or tool-kit allows newcomers to “make connections between English and their first language, develop confidence, and build on background knowledge and prior experiences.”

Resources to include:

- Introduction letter to parents
- All About Me book
- Visuals of daily schedule/routines
- Staff names & pictures
- Vocabulary picture cards
- Sentence frames
- Alphabet cards
- Numbers
- Sight words
- Cognates
- If-then scenarios
- Commands
- Greetings, basic phrases

STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Language Development

- Use of L1
- Total Physical Response
- Conversational versus Academic English Language
- Cognates

CONVERSATIONAL VERSUS ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

Conversational

- Informal
- Social language
- Spoken on playground, at lunch, with peers

Academic

- Formal
- Content language
- Spoken in classroom, textbooks, presentations

In building academic language, think of the following progression, in regards to content areas:

Science: knee, kneecap, patilla

Language Arts: person, character, protagonist

Mathematics: all, total, sum

Social Studies: people, population, demographics

SPANISH-ENGLISH COGNATES

Definition: Words that share the same Latin and/or Greek root, are very similar in spelling, and have the same or similar meaning

Examples:

elephant, elefante

mathematics, matemáticas

telephone, teléfono

art, arte

fruit, fruta

multiplication, multiplicación

SHARE OUT

With the people at your table, turn and talk about the following ideas/questions:

- How can you best support English language learners living with trauma?
- Do you know of any SLIFE students in your school or classrooms right now?
- What strategy (either to increase engagement or English language development) stood out to you today?

Questions?

REFLECTION

Please fill out the survey addressing today's PD session, including your major takeaways, possible wonderings and general feedback.

Thank you!

SURVEY

1. What is your biggest take-away from this PD session?
2. What is a question you still have or something you are still wondering?
3. What resources or items would you find useful in a newcomer tool-kit for your classroom?
4. Additional comments or feedback for the presenter

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