

Literature Review and Application Paper: Power, Equity, and Inclusion in Learning

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For far too long, individuals who have been or are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs) have experienced issues with equity within the education system. People in power have created barriers for these students to thrive. English Language learners are the fastest- growing student population in the U.S (Calderón, Slavin, Sanchez, 2001). It is required for every school district with English Language Learners to take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order for these students to succeed. (Calderón, Slavin, Sanchez, 2001). However, the materials that are provided for ELLs to work on in school provide no clue as to how language works in academic discourse (Filmore, 2020). ELLs have been barred from learning the kind of English required for literacy beyond the most basic level, for academic development, and for reclassification from EELs to English speakers (Filmore, 2020). Due to the lack of resources, assumptions and misconceptions made about English Language Learners are likely to be ill equipped to handle assessments, grade level standards, and academic language.

Educators have the ability to define, name reality, and determine what is “normal” or “correct”. With this power, educators developed assumptions and misconceptions about how ELLs learn such as, teachers often determine that all EELs can be expected to follow the same route and rate for learning a second language (Harper, de Jong, 2020). The misperception of universal development affects the way teachers interpret English Language Learner’s errors as students develop and practice their new language. Educators must acquire an understanding of language differences, developmental stages of second languages, and cannot expect ELLs to follow the same learning paths (Harper, de Jong, 2020). Another common misconception many teachers have established is exposure to language and opportunity ties for interaction with English speakers (Harper, de Jong, 2020). When interactions occur, they are often limited to

brief exchanges that do not provide meaningful language development. Exposure and interactions are simply not enough, ELLs need explicit opportunities to practice. English Language Learners require their learning to be significant in order to learn language in a specific academic context and provide appropriate feedback that ELLs can use to further their academic development (Harper, de Jong, 2020). Educators must implement an approach to understanding the process of second language learning and the practices of teaching ELLs because ELLs requirements tend to be unnoticed. Without addressing professional development, can result in misconceptions that limit the extent to which ELLs receive appropriate instruction and feedback to develop academic language proficiency (Harper, de Jong, 2020).

English Language Learners have experienced barriers to equity, as research has shown that these students face many challenges including, issues related to academic, socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and socio- emotional strains (Perez, Morrison, 2016). In school, ELLs are not given the academic resources to prosper, educators are ill equipped to work with this classified group. As a result, ELLs are less likely to attend a higher education institution, are more restricted from rigorous curricula, and likely not to transfer to a four-year institution than their monolingual peers (Perez, Morrison 2016). Not only do ELLs have a challenging time in school, but 75% of ELLs come from low- income families (Perez, Morrison 2016). Parents of ELLs are hardworking individuals trying to make ends meet to support their families, making it impossible to assist their children in their academics. It is found that parents tend to not be involved because they are concerned with their own academic and language skills (Perez, Morrison 2016). However, this does not mean that parents of ELLs have lower expectations of their children or that they do not want to be involved in their education. It solely means they may not be knowledgeable on how to effectively participate in their students' education (Perez,

Morrison 2016). Also, ELLs, experience an excessive amount of stress such as factors related to racism, discrimination, many stand as interpreters for their parents, known to have responsibilities at home from childcare to having to provide economically. Having this responsibility and emotional feature causes children to be nervous, feel resentment towards parents, experience acculturation of stress, depression, and anxiety which negatively impacts academic achievement (Kam & Lazarevic, 2014). Despite barriers to equity, ELLs are known to value education and, despite their various disadvantages, become resilient individuals and prioritize their education (Perez, 2009).

Educators have the power to make a difference and shape the lives of students. However, working together is essential, everyone's effort and skills become enhanced when all stakeholders collaborate (Gonzalez, Faubert, 2017). In which, it is important for all stakeholders to maintain an understanding from a whole- child perspective because everyone acquires language at different rates (Helfrich, Bosh, 2011). English Language learners may also require a different approach of instruction and assessment (Helfrich, Bosh, 2011). For example, ELLs learn English primarily by listening to language being used around them and using context to determine the meaning of the spoken words (Helfrich, Bosh, 2011). However, ELLs must not only acquire a new language successfully; they must also be able to use it functionally to demonstrate understanding and to develop their own critical thinking skills (Helfrich, Bosh, 2011). Therefore, professional development should include, introduction to the theories of language development, professional reading, teachers can attend workshops on diverse cultures to help support the inclusion of all students (Gonzalez, Faubert, 2017). In an effort to increase buy in, stakeholders should participate in a activity, in a non- English language, which will allow colleague to walk in the shoes of the 'other' and thereby sensitize their perceptions/

attitudes as they reflect on the experience with the hope of developing a commitment to advocacy (Gonzalez, Faubert, 2017). When educators are on the same page, they will be able to provide equitable learning in the English language so that ELLs can achieve success in a manner that will afford them the same opportunities as those students for whom English is their primary language (Helfrich, Bosh, 2011).

Teachers play a vital role in the lives of students in their classroom. Teachers also set the tone of their classroom. When working with English Language Learners, teachers should work to engage ELLs in classroom instructional activities without isolating them. Language learners benefit when teachers use strategies to enhance clarity and reduce the complexity of the language. For example, teachers should utilize explicit instruction, adapted patterns of speech, modeling, and reading to convey meaning and increase ELLs comprehension (Helfrich, Bosh, 2011). Learning English can be a challenging experience for English Language learners. However, when teachers take every opportunity to build connections, and promote a low-anxiety environment by emphasizing making mistakes are common and mistakes present opportunities to learn language, students will be more comfortable learning (Gonzalez, Faubert, 2017). For example, in the classroom teachers should have predictable routine students who know the sequence of events where to find items in the classroom are able to focus more energy on instruction. Predictable routines and signals are among the easiest strategies for teaching (Gonzalez, Faubert, 2017). To ensure students have the language needed to understand instruction using sentence frames can be powerful tools for students learning the English language. Sentence starters such as frames are flexible enough to be used in the variety contexts such as allowing students to use vocabulary terms to put together complete thought that can be connected, confirmed, rejected, revised, and understood (Bresser, Melanese, Sphar, 2009). Also,

modifying lessons to make them comprehensible and to provide language support to help English learners think about new concepts, experiment with what knowledge, and solidify their understanding which will promote equity and helps all students to fully participate in their learning community and fully benefit from teaching (Bresser, Melanese, Sphar ,2009). Partner work is a particularly effective strategy also because it provides opportunities for verbal interaction and support, working together in small groups encourages discussion at all levels of language usage (Gonzalez, Faubert, 2017). When ELLs are provided access to acquire language their language acquisition increases, and they have a higher chance to pursue higher education (Johnson, Ziomek- Daigle, Haskins, Paisley, 2020).

Parent involvement in education is the best guarantee for student success. Parent support for children's success in school is always important, but it is especially so for the children of immigrants. English learners are likely to have to balance cultural, linguistic, and social differences between home and school, so open communication and positive relationships across the home-school divide are crucial (Calderon, Slavin, Sanchez, 2011). When parents are engaged in their children's lives, students have the home support and the knowledge they need to finish assignments. Therefore, Parents need to feel that they play a meaningful role in school decisions that affect them and their children. Schools may, for example, establish a Building Advisory Team to review schoolwide discipline policies, suggest opportunities for parent and community involvement, review homework guidelines, and suggest ways to improve school climate. (Calderon, Slavin, Sanchez, 2011). Also, facilitating workshops about career and educational opportunities for ELL parents is linked to an increased college attendance rate (Johnson, Ziomek- Daigle, Haskins, Paisley, 2020). However, when working with parents, it is best to meet them where they are at. Many will not be able to attend these events, so it is important to

maintain communication using all platforms such as, evening call ins, in person meetings, emails, and school website. Many schools offer parents a “Second Cup of Coffee” to give them a chance to sit with a parent aide or other staff member to discuss ways to help their children at home, as well as parenting issues such as behavior management and finances (Calderon, Slavin, Sanchez, 2011). These programs should be offered in the parents’ home language if at all possible. When all stakeholders work together to establish a thriving school and classroom, the effect on their students is profound.

School counselors are vital members of the school community, since it is their duty to believe that all students have the ability to learn. They advocate for an education system that provides optimal learning environments for all students (The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, 2016). School counselors have been described as essential assets in the success of their students, so as schools become increasingly diverse, they play an essential role in assuring that educators equitably serve all students, including ELLs (Johnson, Ziomek- Daigle, Haskins, Paisley, 2020). It is their job to provide direct and indirect services for ELLs and actively advocate on their behalf. (Johnson, Ziomek- Daigle, Haskins, Paisley, 2020). School counselors should also provide ELLs with individual counseling, group counseling, collaboration, consultation (Johnson, Ziomek- Daigle, Haskins, Paisley, 2020). When all stakeholders work together, counseling programs can also include training at school which may explore the experiences of ELLs, their background, and its impact on society. These steps will equip schools with the tools they need to understand the experiences of ELLs and their families, policies that influence their schooling, and the strategies that are most effective for this student population (Johnson, Ziomek- Daigle, Haskins, Paisley, 2020). School counselors are advocates, leaders,

collaborators and consultants who create systemic change by providing equitable educational access for students to succeed and become productive members of society.

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