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Best Practice and Strategies to Effectively Support Dual Language Learners

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Abstract

According to Winsler et al. (2014), the fastest growing population of students entering preschool classrooms are considered Dual Language Learners (DLLs). Teachers are expected to teach these young learners, yet most of them feel unprepared to do so (Kibler, 2013). Many early childhood educators are unaware of the best practices and strategies to effectively support Dual Language Learners (DLLs) while preserving home language and culture (Hardin et al., 2010). In this review of literature, peer reviewed studies were examined for best practices teachers can utilize when working with children whose home language is not English. Results suggest that having children preserve and use their first language in the classroom is beneficial to their learning and development (Kibler, 2013). Challenges and gaps found in the literature will be presented and recommendations for future directions will be provided.

Keywords: bilingualism, dual language learners (DLL), early childhood education (ECE), scaffolding, home language (HL), culture

Chapter One: Introduction

Many early childhood educators are unaware of best practices and strategies to effectively support dual-language learners while preserving home language and culture (Kibler, 2013). This is a problem because Dual Language Learners (DLLs) represent a large and rapidly growing number of children in early childhood classrooms. Early childhood is a critical time in the development of children, but DLLs face an added challenge of developing language and literacy skills in an entirely new language (Buysse, Peisner-Feinberg, Páez, Hammer and Knowles, 2014). The number of children enrolled in early childhood programs are increasing every year (Méndez, Crais & Kainz, 2018) and this trend is expected to continue. Children under the age of five represent more than 50% of the children who are considered DLLs (Oliva-Olson, Estrada & Edyburn, 2017). Buysse et al. (2014) comprehensive review of literature from 2000-2011 says that Latino children is the largest group of DLLs for whom the research data is available. This reviews evaluated the effects of early care and education practices with Spanish speaking children three to five years old who are enrolled in center-based programs. Dual language learners are entering early childhood programs where educators are struggling to teach them. Teachers often do not receive the preparation necessary to support both monolingual English speakers and dual-language learners (Oliva-Olson et al., 2017).

Scope of Research

The scope of this capstone research study is centered upon bilingualism and the importance of preserving home language and culture in early childhood programs. The information focused on DLLs in early childhood classrooms and how their learning is affected. This research paper provided educators tools that can be used in the classrooms to support dual language learners and their families. Support can look very different dependent upon the child.

Educators need to be prepared to meet each child where they are and should strive to give each child the maximum amount of support.

Importance of Study

Dual language learning in early childhood education is an important topic to the field of education because almost every teacher will have at least one child in their classroom who would be considered a DLL at some point in their career (Lucas et al., 2018). The rapid growth of dual language learners in the United Stated over the past decade has raised questions about whether early childhood educators are prepared to effectively teach these children. With so many educators only speaking English, many are unaware of the best practices and strategies that work to support dual language learners. One growth area that teachers and even families are struggling with is preserving the children's home language and culture. This paper spoke to the importance of dual language learners using their home language in the classroom and at home.

Definition of Key Terms

Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP): Methods that promote each child's optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Dual Language Learner (DLL): A child who is learning more than one language during the early childhood period (birth through age 8) (Kelly, 2015; Partika et al., 2021).

Early childhood teacher*:* An educator who teaches children in an ECE program. Also referred to as teacher, educator, and early childhood educator. (Winsler et al., 2014)

Home Language*:* Any language spoken in child's home. Also referred to as first language and native language (Raikes et al., 2019)

Conclusion

This capstone research study addresses the problem of early childhood educators being unaware of best practices and strategies to effectively support dual language learners. This is important to the field of early childhood education because with the increasing number of DLLs in classrooms, there would likely be multiple students in the class whose home language is not English. The bodies of literature in Chapter Two include information surrounding the importance of both first and second language acquisition, best practices, and strategies that educators can use with the DLL children in their classroom and provide education for parents on the importance of continuing to use the home language while at home. Regarding our program question, "In light of early childhood theories, philosophies, and current research in the field regarding best practice, what is the future of programming and practice in early education?", educators will be prepared to successfully educate dual language learners in both English and their home language. Teachers will have the confidence needed to implement any given curriculum. This paper answers the research question: What best practices and strategies can early childhood educators utilize to effectively support dual language learners while preserving their home language and culture?

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Dual Language Learners (DLLs) are steady growing in early childhood classrooms and educators of these classrooms are not fully prepared to help these young learners be successful (Hardin et al., 2010). Considering this information, the essential question for this research paper is: What best practices and strategies can Early Childhood educators utilize to effectively support dual language learners while preserving their home language and culture? Research indicated that educators need a basic understanding of first and second language acquisitions and how they are developed. Once these are understood, educators could scaffold the learning for the children. However, this will look different for each child. When it comes to preserving the home language and culture, both educators and families need to be educated (Michael-Luna, 2013). DLLs home language and culture are a part of who they are, and it should not be taken away from them at school or at home. When educators are given the proper tools to be successful with students, children can reach their full potential. In this chapter, you will get a brief overview of bilingual education in the early childhood field, information regarding first and second acquisitions, the importance of preserving home language and culture along with its benefits, and best practices and strategies educators can utilize in the classrooms with DLLs.

Bilingual Education

The term bilingual education refers to education in an English-language school system where students with little English are taught in both their native language and English (Merriam-Webster, 1828). In Bligh and Drury (2015) ethnographic studies where behaviors were observed to make meaning of them within the silent period, *bilingualism* was referred to as children who live in two languages, who have access to or need to use two or more languages at home and at school. It does not mean that these young learners have fluency in both languages or that they are

literate in both their home and second languages. Bilingual education is continuing to bring forth debates from educators, policy makers and families (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015). In some schools, native language instruction is used strictly as a pedagogical strategy for teachers (Kibler 2013). Instructional practices related to using children's home language in the classrooms could be related to the teacher's beliefs. Spies (2017) sequential mixed-method design examined the beliefs of 53 early childhood educators and 45 instructional aides to determine if professional development was a factor as to why educators are struggling to include home languages in the classrooms. However, Sawyer et al., (2016), found inconsistent relations between early childhood teachers' instructional practices and their beliefs in his study which investigated the associations between practices and teacher level factors. There seems to be positive relations between bilingualism and their practices. According to Bligh and Drury (2015), in most schools, children learning in their home language is disregarded and even discouraged, this is mainly from policy makers and administrators (Spies, 2017). It has been shown in research that DLLs would benefit from an increased emphasis on developing oral language skills in both the home language and English by providing rich and engaging language environments (Buysse et al., 2014). At the same time, educators can focus on promoting the acquisition of early literacy skills. However, there are still scholars in the field that believe that learning two languages causes confusion or language delays in young children. Educators embraced bilingualism in the classrooms as home language literacy is positively connected to English literacy and acquisition (Lucas et al., 2018). Bilingualism has enhanced DLLs academic achievement when they continue to communicate with their parents in their home languages (Kim, 2011).

Understanding Dual Language Development

Understanding dual-language learning in early childhood education is a critical first step for educators, administrators, and family members to best support bilingual children. A national study of early childhood teacher preparation found that curricular focused on working with children whose home language is not English was the least likely subject to be covered in any degree offered (Zepeda et al, 2015), which points to teachers lacking the understanding of dual-language development. Consistent with this, a survey done in California found that only one third of early childhood centers reported that their teachers had any knowledge for working with DLLs (Oliva-Olson, Estrada & Edyburn, 2017). For teachers to implement language and literacy requirements, they must understand language development and language as a system of communication. In accordance with Villegas, SaizdeLaMora, Martin, and Mills (2018), teachers need an understanding of basic principles of second language acquisition, along with knowledge of child development and learning. To start the process of understanding the basic principles of second language acquisition, educators must first review how children learn a first language. This section will provide research and insight into first language acquisition, and second language acquisition to address the need for understanding dual language learning.

First Language Acquisition

Acquiring a first language can be considered a monumental task for children. Tabors (2008) suggests that one must think of the language system as a puzzle with a variety of interlocking pieces. All the pieces must fit perfectly for the puzzle to be complete. It cannot be complete if one piece is missing. These pieces include phonology, vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and pragmatics (Tabor, 2008). In the first five years of a child's life, they should be able to control all the aspects mentioned above. The first stage of language development starts as

infants' babbling. It may be sporadic at first but as the child continues to grow, the babbling will begin happening in response to those around them. From there, children begin to form syllables such as ma and ba. The term baby talk is used when these syllables are multiplied for mama or baba. After acquiring several words, children begin demonstrating an understanding of grammatical requirement of language by combining words. They begin combining words, starting with just two and then moving on to combine more. It is known that DLLs develop oral language skills and early literacy abilities at different rates depending on their learning environments and the quality and amount of exposure to each language (Buysse et al., 2014), resulting in varying degrees of language competence or proficiency.

Second Language Acquisition

According to Bruer, a child's first language serves as a foundation on which the second language is acquired (as cited in Otto, 2018). That means that without a strong foundation of a child's first language, the road to second language acquisition could be difficult. Most second language learners typically have a silent period in which they are acquiring receptive language knowledge. This is the time when children are comprehending oral language through listening and observing others. Children will typically be more cautious, less sociable, and less willing to try, and they may be fearful of making a mistake causing this period to be prolonged (Bligh & Drury, 2015). During the silent period, children may sometimes isolate themselves and to many, this may seem like a sign that the child might have a problem. According to Bligh and Drury (2015), there is an increasing number of bilingual learners being referred to speech and language therapists and subsequently being diagnosed with speech and language disorders. Teachers and families should understand that this is a part of the process of learning how to communicate in a new language.

So many in this field have refuted that learning two languages causes confusion or language delays in young children (Buysse et al., 2014). It has been proven that learning two language does not hinder the language development in either first or second languages. Children in the early stages of second language acquisition often experience much pressure to speak that language, stigma and discrimination from teachers, peers and sometimes even families (Winsler et al., 2014). This can cause potentially damaging stress that can lead to delays or difference in various aspects of child development.

Importance of Preserving Home Language and Culture

A critical component of teacher preparation for working with DLLs is understanding that there is a link between language and culture (Lucas et al., 2018). Language is a tool that both informs and is informed by the community that uses it (Michael-Luna, 2013). Communities use language to acculturate their newest members into a dominant language practice (Michael-Luna, 2013). This is important for educators to know because language and culture are a part of every young learner and should not be taken away. Language develops within the context of the child's home culture (Zepeda et al. 2015). Their values and beliefs indicate when and how a child uses the home language. Each child brings a different culture into the classroom, and it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that each culture is welcomed and respected.

> For optimal development and learning of all children, educators must accept the legitimacy of the children's home language, respect (hold in high regard) and value (esteem, appreciate) the home culture, and promote and encourage the active involvement and support if all families, including extended and nontraditional family units. (Castro, Espinosa and Páez, 2011, p. 265)

The culture DLLs are being taught at school may be completely different than the one taught at home. Vygotsky says as social constructors of knowledge, children rely on language to serve as the key to their cognitive development and successful participation in social settings (as cited in Hardin et al., 2010). Teachers, administrators, and family members must understand the importance of preserving home language and culture. Educators need to understand, value, and support a wide array of students' home language practices to support DLLs home language and their native cultures and communities (Kim, 2011). If schools promote English only for DLLs and marginalizes DLLs home culture, the loss can have long term effects on their socialization at home and at school. If this happens, children will lose their identification with their home culture that may cause rifts among family members and confusion about where they fit in with the community (Hardin et al., 2010). Unfortunately, preserving family language and culture is often not addressed as part of a holistic dual language learning program.

Benefits of Developing Two Languages

Dual language learners would benefit from an increased emphasis on developing oral language skills in both the home language and English by providing rich and engaging language environments, while at the same time focusing on promoting the acquisition of early literacy skills such as phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge (Castro et al., 2011). According to Spies (2017), early childhood educators should create environments and learning opportunities that respect diversity, support connections between children, families, and communities, and promote second language acquisition. Research indicates that the use of first language instruction can lead to higher levels of social, cognitive, and academic achievement for DLLs (Buysse et al., 2014). These carefully constructed environments will honor the children's home language and culture, which will develop positive educator-child relationships through sensitive and

responsive practices. In Durham, Harrison, and Barry's (2019), qualitative study that

investigated teacher's experiences working with dual language learners, researchers said when

teachers plan intentional peer interactions that strategically use children's home language, they

are providing opportunities for children to engage in language rich activities. According to

Méndez et al. (2018), bilingual vocabulary approaches combining the use of English and home

language as early as preschool may be more effective than English only instruction. Shared home

language and English linguistic resources support language skills in both languages.

Connection between Home and School

Home language and culture is best supported when teachers build a relationship with

families from the start. Establishing this relationship allow teachers to collaborate with families

on the learning happening at home. Educators need to be aware of DLLs' strengths, their

developments, and their experience while at home (Zepeda et al., 2015). Having this information

allows educators to build a bridge between the home and school cultures. This will foster the

children's socioemotional development and promote school readiness.

Communication with families is crucial to preserving home language and culture,

however, in many cases, it can be difficult to communicate with families who themselves are not

fluent in English (Kim, 2011). In Kim's (2011) study, it examines three aspects of the DLLs

learning in relation to home literacy. The qualitative study interviewed 6 primary participants

about their opinions and beliefs of their child's education. Research indicates the importance of

providing multiple methods of communication with family members of DLLs. Some researchers

have found the use of questionnaires in the family's home language as an effective method of

communication. Using translators and interpreters to communicate with families of DLLs and to

translate documents when possible is a great strategy to communicating with families. Educators

should seek help from ESL teachers or other bilingual staff from their schools, friends, family

members of the parents and bilingual parents from their classrooms (Hardin et al., 2010).

In comparison to written communication in the family's home language, Oliva-Olson et

al. (2018), found the importance of educators meeting face to face with families and conducting

an interview to collect important information instead of relying on questionnaires. However,

researchers have also found that information that is collected from families, either at the first

meeting or at parent-teacher conferences will give teachers the opportunity to form a full

understanding of each child's language production (Michael-Luna, 2013). Ensuring that the

families' home language is included in the classrooms informs them that they are respected by

the teachers. This will also assist in making the children to feel comfortable with their transition.

Once the relationship begins to form, parents should be invited to volunteer in the classroom, in a

variety of ways.

Opportunities for Families' Involvement

All opportunities for participation and involvement contribute toward strong school-home

connections (Otto, 2018). The more opportunities provided; the more likely parents will be able

to fit volunteering into their busy schedule. These opportunities include assisting educators

during classroom activities, attending special events, and volunteering to read a book in one's

home language. Parents can visit their children's classroom and lend a hand. This can be seen by

parents as the least difficult role in the classrooms. During the classroom visit, families can get a

better understanding of what their children's day looks like (Tabors, 2008). Aside from

observing, parents can help serve meals and help when it is time to clean up areas of the

classroom. If parents are still present during recess/outside time, especially during the colder

months, parents can assist with helping children get their gear on (Otto, 2018). Parents are then

able to extend the learning by talking to their children about the activities they did in the classroom or even what they did while outside. Educators should ensure that books in the classroom represent multiple cultures. If parents are available, they can come into their children's classroom and read a book in their home language to the children. They could bring their child's favorite book, or they can use books that are present in the classroom.

Parents are valuable resources for enriching a classroom environment. Just like educators should surround activities around the interest of the children, they should surround special demonstrations of a talent or skill around the interest of parents (Tabors, 2008). Teachers can send a questionnaire home for parents, translated in home language asking parents what they enjoy doing and would feel comfortable sharing with the children in the classroom. Just like parents can volunteer to read a book in their home language, they can also go to their child's classroom to teach songs in their native language, demonstrate national dress or develop an ethnic cooking project.

Family Education

Some families, in addition to educators carry the myth that raising a child bilingually will lead to a language deficit (Michael-Luna, 2013). Providing parents with resources to better support their children while at home is a great help, especially for those who believe they should be speaking English to their children (Michael-Luna, 2013). Parents who are not fluent in English, believe that they are not fully supporting their children's English language development due to the language barrier (Tabors, 2008). There is also a myth that the more input a child receives in one language is related to higher proficiency in that language (Raikes et al., 2019). Families need to understand the importance of continuing to speak in their home language while children are learning English at school. Unfortunately, some DLLs will not have a chance to

develop their home language in a classroom setting therefore it is necessary for parents to communicate with their children in home languages while at home. DLLs develop a distinct language system for each language, they interact, and that development and proficiency in the first language affect the second language development. It has been noted that early language development for both the home language and second language depends on the quality and quantity of the language input they receive from parents at home (Winsler et al., 2014).

Best Practices and Strategies for Early Childhood Educators

Scaffolding learning for bilingual children should support students as they attempt to produce more complete and complex sentences than they might be able to do on their own (Lucero, 2014). Vygotsky defined scaffolding as the support that an adult or a more advanced peer provides to help a child reach his potential level of performance while gradually letting him accomplish it independently (as cited in Chen et al., 2011). Teachers should be intentional with how they implement high-quality instruction. Dual language learners may need extra support in different areas of learning. Teachers should be able to scaffold the learning base on where each child is. Educators should adapt their teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of the children in their classrooms. According to the Department of Education, teachers need to have a clear understanding of the needs of the children. They should be able to evaluate teaching approaches that will help children to be engaged in activities (as cited in Bligh & Drury, 2014). Well known theorist, Lev Vygotsky talked about what he referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is the distance between what a learner is not currently capable of doing unsupported, and what they can do unsupported (Otto, 2018). It is the range where they are capable only with support from someone more knowledgeable in the task set forth. In Lucero (2014) study, where he conducted a qualitative case study as an observer to explore how teachers

use information from a professional development (PD) training to scaffold academic language with DLLs, he found out that educators do not necessarily use the information learner unless they are provided with coaching/mentoring from management. Over the course of a year, the researcher spent 27 hours observing three monolingual teachers in their classrooms. Instruction within the ZPD has the potential to be highly effective for dual language learners. Educators should have a clear understanding of the needs of the children in their classrooms, including those with English as a second language. Zone of proximal development is considered to offer critical support for development of academic language (Lucero, 2014). This is one of the most effective moves that a teacher can do to support dual language learners. Educators should be able to use and evaluate teaching strategies to engage and support all children (Bligh & Drury, 2015). According to Kelly (2018), there's a type of scaffolding that educators can use called language-support practices (LSPs). Kelly (2018) study examined language environments of dual language learners in four preschool classrooms. Based on responsive teacher-child relationships and the support of DLLs second language acquisition, the LSPs that are developmentally appropriate are child-oriented, interaction-promoting and language modeling. When these strategies are used, it increases their responsiveness to children's language development and limit their directiveness. These LSPs will be discussed below.

The first LSP is caller child-oriented practice. This support is used to have a conversation with a child. It is based on the child's interest and assists on sustaining communication. Some examples of this includes listening to the child until he finishes his thoughts or following his lead to complete an activity or play a game. The role of the educator is to be non-dominant (Kelly, 2018). To follow a child's lead in conversation, the educator must be able to understand where the conversation is going, which can be difficult due to the language barrier.

The next is known as interaction-promoting. This strategy is used to facilitate interactions between children in the classroom. This consists of partnering children for projects or providing activities that allow for interactions to take place. The educator should place themselves in a position to ask open ended questions to begin a conversation (Kelly, 2018). Teachers can also use this time as an opportunity to observe the children and be close enough to answer questions that might arise. For educators to provide the best outcomes for DLLs, they should focus on child-centered free play opportunities that offer higher levels of engagement between them and the child and the child and his/her peers (Durham et al., 2019). Both the teacher and peers act as linguistic resources for DLL in classrooms (Lucero, 2014). Existing research says that peer scaffolding that occurs when students collaborate and support one another's skill play an important role in supporting DLLs language growth (Partika et al., 2021).

Learning in pairs is a way to create low-pressure opportunities for children to engage in conversations with each other. Teachers have English-speaking students work with a dual-language learner with activities in the classroom. This can be beneficial to both parties. DLLs can pick up on some English words as well as the other way around. Doing this can help with social, emotional, cognitive and language development (Hansel, 2019). If English speaking children are not able to understand their partner, the teachers are always there to assist. The purpose of this strategy is to encourage social interactions between students in groups in or to encourage speaking. The teacher being in proximity is to simply help the children learn to speak to one another.

The final practice is called language-modeling. Modeling the correct way to speak is essential (Kelly, 2018). It is not about correcting the child but about modeling correct language use. Educators should give children correct linguistic content. They can expand on the

vocabulary that the children already know but also introduce new words to sentences (Kelly, 2018). Children who are having a hard time understanding what a teacher says can rely on their peers that share a home language to use concepts such as repeating, translating or paraphrasing what the teacher said (Partika et al., 2021).

Best Practices to support DLLs

Pairing DLLs with monolingual English-speaking children has proven to be an effective cooperative learning strategy (Alanís, 2013). The goal when doing this is to pair DLLs with children with higher skill levels. This ensures that the children can collaborate with each other and give DLLs a chance to use language skills with just one child versus in a large group. Working in pairs build linguistic confidence in a fun and relaxing environment. The strategies below should be easy for educators to implement in any classroom, especially classrooms with DLLs.

Turn and Talk

This concepts provides a space for children to physically turn and talk to their partner. This strategy is perfect for large group meetings. According to Bredekamp, whole group settings can be an effective learning context where children express themselves, hear the opinions of their peers, and feel part of a learning community (as cited in Alanís, 2013). During turn and talk, children can talk about a topic that is meaningful to them.

Think-Pair-Share

This strategy engages children in a short amount of time by first proving a few minutes for children to think about what they want to say and then encouraging them to share their thoughts with a partner. Again, it is best if the partners for DLLs have a higher skill level. It is believed that this strategy encourages children who are less likely to participate during large

group to be more active since it is in a smaller setting. This reduces children's anxiety about

speaking in front of large groups (Alanís, 2013). Educators should remember to ask open ended

questions instead of questions that evoke a one-word answer. This will encourage children to

think before responding.

Hands-on Activities

The nature of the classroom activities affects the quantity and quality of children's talk

(Alanis, 2013). Teachers should strive to create/have activities that interest the children. This will

ensure that children will be engaged. During this concept, teachers should have one activity for a

pair or small group to complete together. Before allowing the children to complete the activity,

educators should have concise instructions for the children. If DLLs are unable to understand,

they can ask their peers for assistance.

Strategies when interacting with DLLs

There are many strategies teachers can use when interacting with children learning

English as a second language and strategies used for interacting with the families of DLLs.

Strategies used with the children are verbal and non-verbal. Non-verbal methods are used when

children are having trouble understanding the verbal communication of teachers or their peers

(Worthington et al., 2011). Gestures is one non-verbal strategy that teachers can use. These are

facial expressions, reaching for or giving an object or even pointing. Sign language is a great

way to communicate with children who is not fully ready to use his/her words. It has been

acknowledged that nonverbal communication via gestures and expressions adds an extra

dimension to cultural understandings normally carries though the home language (Bligh &

Drury, 2015). Nonverbal communication provides means through which young bilingual learners

convey meaning, avoid misunderstandings and "fit in" to the target culture.

Teachers can also print off pictures that they can use to communicate with children and even their families. Most classrooms have a word wall, and this can be used for students as a reference when vocabulary words are being used. It is recommended that all labels, this includes the word wall be in all languages represented in the classroom. It should also be noted that the labels should be in different colors so children can differentiate them.

Teachers should try to communicate with DLLs in their home language as much as possible throughout the day. However, most teachers are not bilingual, this is not always possible. Bilingual teachers should try integrating both English and the home language into learning activities. During large group, numbers, colors, and days of the week should be presented in both languages. In the case of multiple home languages that is not English, teachers should try their best to circulate the languages throughout the day or week.

When children step out and begin using their home language in the classroom, teachers should not discourage this. In fact, teachers should offer praises to the child for using his/her native language (Kibler, 2013). This shows the child that their language is accepted, and he/she is accepted in the environment. Teachers should create opportunities for children to offer answers in either their home language or English, whichever the child is comfortable using at that moment (Michael-Luna, 2013).

Strategies when interacting with families of DLLs

There are three strategies that teachers should use when interacting with families whose children are considered dual language learners. These include translating forms and materials, creating an open-door policy, and modifying communications with families in and out of the classroom (Worthington et al., 2011). When teachers have forms and materials translated in families' home language, they feel valued. Thy can know what is happening in their child's

classroom. Ensuring that all program forms are in second languages, makes parents more comfortable and they know what is going in the entire school. They will always be kept in the loop. Families should always feel welcomed in any center and classroom that they child is in. Teachers should encourage families to come and share their culture with the children in the classroom. Teachers should place an 'open door policy' sign by the classroom door and ensure it is translated into home languages (Worthington et al., 2011). However, not all parents understand what this means, and it should be explained to parents that they are able and more than welcomed to visit the class.

Monolingual teachers are struggling to communicate with families in their home language. If a bilingual teacher is present in the building, Worthington et al., (2011) suggests that teachers utilize them when interacting with families. Another strategy that can be used are the ones mentioned before regarding communicating with children in the classrooms. If an interpreter is not available during the time you are meeting with families, educators can use pictures and gestures.

Research Limitations

McWayne (2013) and Méndez et al. (2018) both addressed the limitation that research focused mainly focused on the preservice teachers who believed that they were unprepared to educate DLLs. It is believed that educators are not receiving the knowledge they need to be successful in these classrooms. Preservice teachers have no knowledge of what it is like working in a classroom, let alone a classroom where children are learning to speak multiple languages.

Another limitation is that some of the educators in dual language classrooms are monolingual English speakers (Kibler, 2013; Raikes et al., 2019). Therefore, there is a language barrier present. In addition to not being able to communicate with the children, teachers are not

able to effectively communicate with families because of this language deficit. According to

Kelly (2015), the educators who have been in the ECE field for a while are set in their ways and

are not willing to communicate with DLLs. Some believe that it is the responsibility of their

bilingual colleagues to teach these children.

Kibler (2013) study examines factors that impact teacher learning during and after aa

professional development (PD) day. However, this study only compared interview notes of 8

monolingual teachers. There are two limitations that arise from this, the sample is too small to

gain a deep understanding of what teachers are learning during professional development

training. But the other brings up the lack of professional development that teachers are receiving

during the year, more specifically, PD on supporting dual language learners.

Conclusion

Many early childhood educators are unaware of the best practices to effectively support

dual language learners while preserving home language and culture (Kibler, 2013). This is a

problem since research point to the need for teacher preparation in this area along with the

important impact home language and culture had on development and learning (Oliva-Olson et

al., 2017). This capstone research study sought to answer the research questions: What best

practices and strategies can ECE's use to effectively support dual language learners while

preserving home language and culture? This question was answered through a critical

examination of previous research surrounding bilingual education, the importance of preserving

home language and culture, and best practices and strategies early childhood educators can use to

effectively support dual language learners while preserving the home language and culture. Key

findings in the research indicated the need for educators to understand the importance of first

language acquisition before understanding how important second language acquisition is.

Educators need to strive to build relationships with families of DLLs as they are the ones to provide information to the teachers about the children's home life. Teachers need to know background information about the children in their classrooms. With the language barrier that most will face, the use of interpreters and translators would be needed. In Chapter Three of this paper, limitations, insights gained, examples of how the research will inform educational practices and suggestions for future studies will be discussed.

Chapter Three: Discussion/Application/Future Studies

The changing demographics of young children in the United States is causing a

transformation on how Dual Language Learners (DLLs) should be educated in early childhood

programs (McWayne et al. 2013). In almost all educational settings, children whose home

language is not English is steady increasing (Kelly, 2015). Children under the age of 5 years old

make up nearly 50% of the children who live in homes where English is not the first language

(Oliva-Olson, Estrada & Edyburn, 2017). This chapter of the paper will give insights gained

from the research that will lead to improved instructional practice, specific application examples

of how the research will inform instructional or educational practices and three suggestions for

possible future studies.

Discussion

The research demonstrated that educators themselves do not believe they are prepared to

work with DLLs. Teacher educators have the responsibility to prepare preservice teachers to

meet children where they are in the classrooms, which include linguistically (Kelly, 2015;

Kibler, 2013). At some point in an early childhood educator's career in the ECE field, there will

be a child or children in their classrooms whose first language is not English. Because of this,

teachers need a basic understanding of language development in first and second languages.

According to Inozu (2011) and Kibler (2013), teachers' beliefs inform future teaching and

therefore students' language learning. What teachers do reflect what they know and believe. If

teachers believe it is the responsibility of their bilingual colleagues to teach DLLs, then they will

not put in the effort to gain knowledge or implement strategies gained from schooling or

professional development.

Teachers should be intentional when implementing Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) for DLLs (Kelly, 2015). Educators need to understand where each child is and have a plan for them. During the silent period, teachers may question how appropriate their teaching strategies are when working with DLLs (Bligh and Drury, 2015). Some educators will mistake the silent period for DLLs as a sign that there is a problem with the child.

Application

Research suggests that many believe that dual language instruction interferes with language development (Oliva-Olson et al., 2017). However, Lucas et al. (2018), believes that instruction in the child's home language encourages learning and development. Giving children instruction in the language that they speak at home encourages them to become comfortable and speak out more. Hearing his/her language a quarter of the time constitutes a very different experiences from rarely hearing home language in the classroom (Raikes et al., 2019).

Ongoing professional development for early childhood educators can be applied to inform educational practices in ECE. But administrators cannot rely only on what was taught during this training. Coaching after training workshops increases the likelihood of successful implementation of learning and strategies (Spies, 2017). Teachers need continued coaching/training to increase their competence in educating DLLs and their families (Hardin et al., 2010). According to Knowles, adults are more likely to learn from professional development opportunities of they are engaged in the planning process and the PD has immediate relevance to their current situation (as cited in Spies, 2017).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2009) emphasized that early childhood programs are responsible for creating a welcoming environment that respects diversity, supports the ties to families and communities, and preserves a child's

home languages and cultural identities. Educators should make it a point to solicit more information from families to determine how well they feel their cultures are being represented in the classroom. This will make families

Future Studies

Finding multiple ways to determine DLLs language exposure and experiences. At this point, the only way educators are receiving this information is from parents. As mentioned above, they themselves are either learning to speak English or may not speak English at all (Buysse et al., 2014). Multiple methods would ensure consistency across DLL samples and valid comparisons of effects on different groups.

Assessments are given/conducted in English even with DLLs. For future research on data assessments, they should be given in both English and the children's home language (Partika et al., 2021; Michael- Luna 2013).

Educators need techniques and training for home language use in the classrooms. Teachers should continue to encourage children to express themselves in their home language (Raikes et al., 2019). Teachers not only need to learn how to speak the home languages of children in their classrooms but should be able to promote child conversation and creative and conceptual expressions

Conclusion

According to Hernandez et al., one in five children residing in the US is either born to immigrant parents or were born in a foreign country and many of those children will be entering early childhood settings speaking a language other than English (as cited in Zepeda et al., 2011). Thus, the role of the educators is critical for the learning and development of these children. Having DLLs in early childhood programs adds new depth to classrooms. The goal of this

research paper was to provide educators with best practices and strategies to use when working

with dual language learners while still preserving their home language and culture. Once early

childhood educators acquire best practices and strategies, they can give their best to these young

learners. Early childhood educators can make a difference in the lives of the children in their

classrooms. Even if a teacher is a monolingual English speaker, he/she can still educate these

young minds. There were verbal and non-verbal strategies mentioned above and they can provide

a sense of belonging to children who are unable to speak English fluently.

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