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Asset-Based Teaching Strategies for Elementary English Learners

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Asset-Based Teaching Strategies for Elementary English Learners

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ED 590: Research and Complete Capstone (Cohort 033)

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ASSET-BASED TEACHING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Research studies were analyzed to find how English language learners (ELLs) brought unique skills, ideas, cultural experiences, and language into the classroom that could benefit all students. The assets ELL students brought into the classroom had a positive effect on the student's education when educators recognized the strengths of students. Research exposed the deficit mindset that had inhabited education where ELL students were behind in academics because of lagged language skills (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, Christian, 2005). The scope of the researched proved that a deficit mindset in regard to ELL students did not lead to academic success. Instead, the studies synthesized how asset-based strategies such as culturally responsive teaching and the use of home languages positively impacted student growth in academics and in whole-child development.

Keywords: English language learners (ELLs), asset-based pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching

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Chapter 1: Introduction

People from countries all over the world had immigrated to the United States in search of a better life. The United States, though, had a history of assimilating people into a dominant culture, suppressing those who seem different, and causing people to lose home identities. This had led to racism, loss of culture, and monolingual speakers. The 2020 United States Census Bureau recorded 18.7 percent of the population identified as Hispanic or Latino and 12.1 percent of people identified as Black or African American. In the 2017-2018 school year though, only seven percent of teachers were Black and nine percent were Hispanic (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021). The diverse population of the United States was not reflected in the leaders and educators in public schools.

If schools have historically been a place where minority populations, and people who speak languages other than English, do not feel welcome, the schools must change. Instead of having an English-only mentality where students in classrooms are forced to lose part of personal identity, classrooms and educators must see the strengths and benefits that so many multilingual people bring into the classroom.

Importance of Topic

The United States continues to become a more diverse country. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2021), English language learners (ELLs) in the public schools had risen to 5.0 million students, which was 10.2 percent of the population in 2018. ELLs in the public schools were part of every single state's population and were found not only in urban schools, but rural as well. Research has shown that as the population of students not speaking the English language has grown throughout the entire country, educators must be equipped to teach these students in the best way possible. Best-practice instruction regarding the education of ELLs

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stems from knowledgeable teachers who celebrate the strengths and cultural diversity ELL students bring to the classroom (Lopez, 2017). The research indicated that educators should put cultural and strength-based knowledge into practice within classrooms (Yoon, 2007).

The research showed that teachers had treated learning English as a disadvantage to the student's educational journey that put students behind in academic learning (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2019). This deficit-based mindset often included people both in and out of the school environments referring to ELLs as being behind academically, not having the skills to fit in culturally, not having the language to succeed, or a host of other challenges. Deficit-based mindsets in regard to ELLs were harmful to success in education (Lopez, 2017). Instead, educators implemented asset-based strategies and saw the strengths ELL students brought to the classroom and the use of these strategies impacted communities and personal lives for the better. The following research determined what strategies and practices were effectively put into place that celebrated the differences and saw the strengths of English learners within the elementary classroom.

Scope of Research

This research study investigated qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies in order to answer the question, "What asset-based strategies can educators implement to support whole-child development in elementary English language learners?" The research took place in a variety of classrooms all with students who learned a new language as part of the population. Most studies looked specifically at students who learned English in the United States. One study looked at students in the country of Haiti as the students learned in a second language (DeGraff, 2016). The research discussed applied specifically to elementary school students.

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The research included in this paper discussed three themes. The first theme discussed was the mindset that educators had towards ELL students, which, in turn, affected the mindset the students had about learning. This mindset was the practice of interacting with ELLs with an asset-based philosophy. The asset-based philosophy set the foundation for the perspective that influenced every interaction within the child's educational experience and also impacted how the child viewed the potential to succeed. The second theme discussed was cultural responsiveness within the elementary classroom. Culturally responsive teaching happened when educators intentionally taught using multicultural and multilingual literature, as well as placed importance on using student's home languages within the learning environment. The third theme discussed was the development of the whole-child. Children's learning did not only involve academic learning, but included a holistic framework found within the Circle of Courage perspective (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2005). Student's social, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs had impact on the educational experience (Lopez, 2017). Cultural influence for ELL students happened as communities, parents, and other relationships worked together to envelope a holistic well-developed child in the areas of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

Definition of Terms

Asset-based pedagogy included the mindset and practice of students' cultures, traditions, and languages being viewed as a strength. ELL students had valuable strengths and linguistics assets that should be capitalized on by educators (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2019).

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) was defined as the approach to teaching that connected students' cultures, languages, and life experiences with what was learned in school. CRT honored culture as a conduit for more effective teaching (Newcomer et al., 2021).

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English language learner (ELL) was a term used to describe a student that learned the English language and had a home language that was not English. English learners had received additional support or services within the educational system. English language learners were also referred to as English learners (ELs), English as a second language (ESL), and emerging (bi)multilinguals (Escamila, Hopewell, & Slavick, 2021).

Conclusion

Concordia St. Paul's Masters in Education essential question stated that, "In light of what is known about how children learn, how shall professional educators best teach learners who speak a first language other than English?" The United States Census Bureau shared that 21% of the United States population had children under five speaking a language other than English in homes (Quick Facts, 2015-2019). This population of students then entered the public education system. If it is known that ELL students were prevalent in most classrooms, educators must work to find strategies that supported those students. At its foundation, educators must view ELL students as assets to the classrooms. Culture encompassed people's way of life, and included language, customs, beliefs, traditions, and perspectives of the world. Seeing students' culture as an asset to the classroom instead of something that needs to be assimilated into mainstream Western tradition was an important first step to integrating best practice strategies in instruction. The review of the research discussed practices such as the acknowledgment of the need for whole-child development, the use of an asset-based approach, culturally responsive teaching, and the use of home languages as important strategies when answering the question of how educators best teach learners whose first language was something other than English. Through the review of research, sixteen research studies were analyzed for the importance the studies brought to the development of ELL students.

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Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The research shared discussed three central themes which included, asset-based pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and whole-child development. These themes were unpacked through sixteen different qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies. The research discussed went in depth on the type of study, methodology, key findings, limitations, and the importance of the impact.

Asset-Based Pedagogy

Oftentimes, English language learners (ELLs) entered into a classroom and the conversation flowed around the student's deficits. Those deficits included that the students do not know English, were behind academically, students had parents that did not understand the school system, or a variety of other deficits that people placed on ELL students. Instead, the environment of the classroom should have focused on the assets that students brought into the classroom and communities as a more effective foundation and way to instruct elementary English language learners (ELLs). Through five different studies, the research was analyzed regarding the effectiveness and impact on students when teachers used an asset-based pedagogy instead of the creation of a negative self-fulfilling prophecy environment.

In the qualitative study by Yoon (2007), the researchers observed two different classrooms - one in which the teacher saw the students' culture as an asset to the classroom and the other where the educator viewed the ELL students as extra work or at the least with passivity. The study focused on four different ELL students who had lived in the United States for two years or less, in which the students spent time in mainstream classrooms, and also received small support from a pull-out setting during an ELL class (Yoon, 2007).

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The two classrooms provided different views on engagement with ELLs as the classroom either had an asset-based approach or there was a deficit centered environment (Yoon, 2007). In the first classroom, the educator had an asset-based approach to ELL students as the educator worked with all the students to understand and embrace the cultural differences of the ELL students (Yoon, 2007). This improved the ELL students' interactions with the other classmates without losing home language and identity (Yoon, 2007). The first educator had an asset-based mindset regarding the culture the ELL students brought into the room, which led to a positive experience for those students as well as increased participation and learning. In contrast, in the second classroom, the educator paid little attention to the students' culture and did not support the student's social needs, which led to the ELL students not participating in the classroom and not becoming active participants in the learning (Yoon, 2007). Educator's mindset and actions in regard to ELL students were essential to the success of the students in academic and social growth in the classroom (Yoon, 2007).

In the second qualitative research study, Yosso (2005), discussed critical race theory (CRT) and the needed shift from the deficit view of Communities of Color as places full of cultural disadvantages. The researcher argued instead to focus on and learn from the collection of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities of Communities of Color that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged (Yosso, 2005). The research does not involve a specific population group or timeframe, but was instead a general reflection and study of Communities of Color and the education approach to this population.

Throughout this research, Yosso (2005) shared that the goal of people, specifically those in education, should be to see the cultural and social assets of Communities of Color. Yosso (2005) wrote that community cultural wealth was a commitment to develop schools and teach

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people to serve a larger purpose of social and racial justice, even if the change was slow and difficult. Educators, especially those that had worked with ELL students, used best-practice strategies when the instructor used an asset-based philosophy that acknowledged and supported students' cultural capital in whatever community the students came from (Yosso, 2005).

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Lopez (2017) took the practice of an asset-based pedagogy and applied it specifically to the relationship between reading scores and the needed change of the impact of a negative self-fulfilling prophecy. The self-fulfilling prophecy was a false definition of a situation that made a new behavior or concept come true (Merton, 1948 as cited in Lopez, 2017). This study looked specifically at the reading growth in ELL students through a mixed-method study in six different schools in urban Arizona where 66 percent of students identified as Latino (Lopez, 2017). The study compared the success and implementation of the school's asset-based pedagogy and also made the correlation to student's reading scores (Lopez, 2017).

The research studied the relationship between teachers' behavior regarding cultural knowledge and cultural integration and the foundation and success that the students had in reading development (Lopez, 2017). Classrooms where educators included students' cultural practices into the lesson, and environments where teachers believed students could succeed, led to higher reading scores (Lopez, 2017). Lopez (2017) wrote that the perspective educators had about how ELL students could succeed impacted student learning. Limitations of the study included the single school and specific regard to Spanish speakers instead of a variety of English learners with varying home languages.

Guyll, Madon, Prieto, and Scherr (2010) reviewed a variety of literature to complete the study regarding the sociological and economic barriers faced by Latino/as in America. The

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research article showed students that had low rates of acculturation or environments where students felt the threat of negative stereotypes tended to achieve less academically (Guyll et al., 2010). Where bilingual education was in practice, the students, families, school personnel, and larger community saw the Latino/a culture and language as a source of value (Guyll et al., 2010). The researchers explored how educator's negative view of Latino/a students led to a negative self-fulfilling prophecy as the students' academic work was not as successful as English-speaking peers (Guyll et al., 2010). Limitations to the study included the lack of extension of the research to other language groups.

DeMatthews and Izquierdo (2020) also looked at the impact of the belief in and instruction of, students in a way that showed culture was valuable to educational success which then led to a high-performing school. The qualitative case study looked at one high-performing elementary school over two decades which also introduced one of the first dual-language programs (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2020).

The study recognized that leadership was a critical component in the success of school and the education of ELL students (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2020). The principal saw the student's home languages and cultures were an asset to communities, an asset to education, and valued cultural responsiveness as an advocate for bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2020). DeMatthews and Izquierdo (2020) showed teachers believed the student's culture was an avenue for success. Asset-based pedagogy created a positive spin on the self-fulfilling prophecy when ELL students' culture and language were valued within the classroom.

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Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching was another way that educators used asset-based strategies to support whole-child development in elementary English language learners. Culturally responsive teaching was the awareness and understanding that students might come from a variety of different cultures (Piper, 2019). Educators then incorporated practices in the classroom that supported all cultures, not just mainstream dominant white philosophies. This section of the literature review looked at numerous studies to show how culturally responsive practices such as using home languages, multilingual literature, and multicultural literature, supported ELL student development (Piper, 2019; DeGraff, 2017; Escamilla, Hopewell, & Slavick, 2021; Osorio, 2020; Bosh & Helfrich, 2011; Nash et al., 2017).

In the qualitative research study by Piper (2019), the researcher looked at the racial development in young children and the children's development from interactions with teachers and the curriculum. The study's participants were part of a larger multiple case study, but this particular research focused on three child participants racial identity development (Piper, 2019). The study looked at an 11-year-old boy, and an 8-year-old girl, and the girl's twin brother. Limitations included the small sample size of the research.

Piper (2019) wrote that the system of education had historically structured schools and the curriculum of those same schools to put attention on and affirm white ideals and provide educational success for that group of students. Teachers though, must be prepared to provide instruction to students from diverse cultures. Whether the students in a classroom were these three children, ELLs born in the United States, or ELLs entering the country, educators should be prepared to use culturally responsive practices when teaching. Culturally responsive teaching

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involved the examination of the material delivered, the acknowledgment of personal biases, and the recognition of power structures in society and the classroom (Piper, 2019).

Use of Home Languages

Research had shown that students should have access to home languages in the classroom (Osorio, 2020). The prevalence and use of students' home language within the English-speaking classroom was an important asset-based strategy implemented to support whole-child development of ELLs (Bosh & Helfrich, 2011). Educators provided and allowed supportive strategies to ELL students when students shared vocabulary words in home languages and when educators provided translations. Research findings indicated cross lingual transfer developed when students were asked to share an answer in home languages or when the educator provided access to complete learning in home languages (DeGraff, 2017). Educators who saw students' home languages as well as the learning of English as vitally important to the learning environment created an asset-based classroom (Escamilla, Hopewell, & Slavick, 2021).

In the quantitative study by DeGraff (2017), the author compared reading scores and the growth that students made when educated in early reading skills in home languages before learning to read in another language. The study looked at first and second graders in a Haitian school where students were taught in the home language of Kreyòl and then compared learning to children at five schools where the students learned in a traditional, teacher-centered, French classroom (DeGraff, 2017). The research found that when students first learned to read in the student's home language of Kreyòl, later second language French reading skills also were stronger than the students that only learned in the second language of French (DeGraff, 2017). Limitations of the study included the location of the research. A similar study replicated with

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English learning students who were in the United States would be more significantly applicable to the research question.

Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, and Christian (2005) completed a qualitative research study that reviewed research findings of ELL students in education. The research looked specifically at oral language, literacy, and academic achievement (Genesee et al., 2005). The authors looked at empirical research conducted in the United States and published in English peer-reviewed journals or technical reports during the preceding 20 years, in which there was a focus on oral language, literacy, and academic development of ELLs (Genesee et al., 2005). Researchers found that students who had been read to in the student's first language (L1) had knowledge of cognate vocabulary and L1 phonological awareness, and acquired the skills to read in English more readily than ELLs who lacked the same skills in L1 (Genesee et al., 2005).

Genesee et al. (2005) studied the vast research on the development of literacy skills in English by ELL students and found that there were similarities between English-L1 and English-L2 development and that ELLs drew on a variety of linguistic, meta-cognitive, and experiential resources. The findings indicated that students who were exposed and instructed in literacy development in home languages either at home or in the classroom, had stronger skills in literacy development that transferred to the learning of English (Genesee et al., 2005). The studies reviewed indicated that bilingual proficiency and biliteracy were positively related to academic achievement in both languages (Genesee et al., 2005).

The researchers also looked specifically at academic achievement and the array of programs regarding ELL instruction (Genesee et al., 2005). ELL instruction in the United States of America was provided through a variety of systems. Instructional settings included bilingual education where students learned content in two languages, sheltered-instruction in which

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students that learned English were in separate classroom settings for varying amounts of time, and English-only environments where there was little access to home languages. The fluctuation of language groups in the United States had led to schools that employed different methodology regarding instruction of ELLs.

Genesee et al. (2005) compiled research data where early evaluations of academic achievement in grades kindergarten through third grade typically revealed that students in bilingual education scored below grade average. In contrast, almost all evaluations conducted at the end of elementary and in middle and high school showed that the educational outcomes of bilingually educated students were comparable to and usually higher than peers (Genesee et al., 2005). Home language use was an effective strategy to English language development whether educators used supportive strategies to aid instruction or education was delivered in a bilingual setting (DeGraff, 2017; Genesee et al., 2005).

Multilingual Literature

There existed a considerable body of research on culturally responsive practices that included positive growth when students saw themselves represented in the literature of the classroom (Escamilla, Hopewell, & Slavick, 2021; Osorio, 2020; Piper, 2019). Books, stories, and pictures where the people in the text looked and spoke like the students in the classroom was a powerful way to value culture. Students needed to see themselves as the heroes of the story, not just the historical problem. The involvement of culture in instruction included a connection for students between the type of home the characters lived in, a family that reflected the students' own life, or characters in the story who had similar features to that of the students (Escamilla et al., 2021). The research suggested the recognition and inclusion of students' personal

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experiences and culture in the classroom as an imperative part of the learning environment (Escamilla, Hopewell, & Slavick, 2021; Osorio, 2020; Piper, 2019).

In the qualitative study by Escamilla, Hopewell, and Slavick (2021), the researchers looked at the importance of and instructional practices that included home languages in authentic instruction. The researchers analyzed previous studies and took interviews from the literature review in which bilingual students and two elementary school teachers together showed effective bilingual instruction options (Escamilla et al., 2021). The researchers argued that all programs which involved ELL students needed to encourage and recognize the effective use of student's home language in language and literacy acquisition (Escamilla et al., 2021).

The research looked at specific children's literature where the written story had both English and other languages within the story (Escamilla et al., 2021). The authors also discussed effective multilingual strategies like orally retelling the story in different languages before the students were asked to write about the literature (Escamilla et al., 2021). Limitations to this study included the specific focus on Spanish speakers. Conducting similar research with more language populations would increase the accuracy and usefulness of the study.

In a similar study by Osorio (2020), the researcher conducted a qualitative study about the importance of using multiple languages during read-alouds in a dual-language elementary school classroom in Illinois. The research was conducted using interviews and observations. Key findings of the study indicated that the most important aspect of success was demonstrating to students that home languages were seen as a resource and benefit to learning (Osorio, 2020). Through multilingual literature and discussions, the author emphasized that the use of home languages in literature instruction was an asset-based teaching strategy (Osorio, 2020).

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Multicultural Literature

Research had displayed that ELL students should have access to home languages in literature, and also that students should have cultural values reflected in the literature in the classroom (Bosh & Helfrich, 2011). Bosh and Helfrich (2011) reviewed research articles and composited the findings to conclude that children, especially ELL learners, benefited when cultures were acknowledged in the classroom. The literature reviewed showed that multicultural literature, or stories about specific cultural values like family, oral storytelling, or specific holidays, brought engagement and inclusion in the classroom learning environment (Bosh & Helfrich, 2011).

Nash, Panther & Arce-Boardman (2017) also shared research from a second-grade classroom where a bi/multilingual teacher worked to uphold cultures and histories embedded in students' names. The qualitative study looked at culturally authentic children's literature that engaged students and reflected on cultural diversity through names (Nash et al., 2017). The researchers used interviews and observations to collect data for the study. The study suggested that when student's names were valued in classroom instruction and through intentional multicultural literature, educators employed asset-based strategies that were effective in ELL's learning (Nash et al., 2017).

Whole Child Development

Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (2005) described a framework called the Circle of Courage which identified the four universal needs of all children: Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. This framework put together the areas that all children need in order to grow and thrive (Brendtro et al., 2005). Children, specifically ELL children, needed holistic development involving all four of areas of the framework in order to succeed. Classroom

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and home relationships that worked together to support culture led to success as students were fulfilled in the need of belonging (Newcomer, Ardasheva, Morrison, Ernst-Slavit, Morrison, Carbonneau, & Lightner, 2020). Self-efficacy in the classroom learning environment led to students who's need of mastery was fulfilled (Soland & Sandilos, 2021). Research concluded that student's showed independence in the ability to control personal future and exert influence on educators as student's taught personal culture to the classroom community (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Finally, the research argued that cultural purpose in respect and concern for others led to generosity of shared influence (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). Belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity were analyzed in the research as a strategic method to ELL's holistic development.

Belonging

The Circle of Courage framework validated research in which belonging was a vital part of what children needed in order to grow and thrive (Brendtro et al., 2005). The educational experience of children was not limited to the academic learning that took place in the classroom. Although students spent time within the educational classroom, students also brought a history of experiences outside of the academic setting. Partnership between the classroom and the child's life were essential to helping develop the whole-child (Newcomer, Ardasheva, Morrison, Ernst-Slavit, Morrison, Carbonneau, & Lightner, 2020). Students who felt a sense of belonging to the classroom community were more likely to have shown success academically (Newcomer et al., 2020).

In the qualitative case study by Newcomer, Ardasheva, Morrison, Ernst-Slavit, Morrison, Carbonneau, and Lightner (2020) two upper elementary school teachers shared about experiences and perspectives working with mostly refugee English language learning students.

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The elementary school studied had just over 500 students with 75% of whom were refugee background students, almost half of all the students were ELLs, and 12 percent were migrant students (Newcomer et al., 2020). The study was a larger multiyear project but this particular study pulled two teachers with five or more years of experience teaching ELLs for specific focus. Limitations included the need for a larger study done with more educators to find more consistent patterns across a larger variety of professional educators.

One key finding from the study was educators who opened up in-class space for students to discuss personal experiences helped bridge the connection between students personal lives and academic work in the classroom (Newcomer et al., 2020). The discussion or sharing of personal experiences helped support student's socioemotional well-being and lived experiences (Newcomer et al., 2020). Newcomer et al. (2020), discussed the teachers in the study who focused on relationships. In one classroom, the teacher worked to build strong student to student relationships by pairing students who spoke similar languages together for linguistic, social, and emotional support while the other teacher focused more on building strong teacher to student relationships by sharing about family and learning about the students personal lives (Newcomer et al., 2020).

Students who felt connected and had a sense of belonging to the classroom community saw the importance of contributing to the whole group by sharing about personal culture (Newcomer et al., 2020). When students were a valuable part of the classroom community, academic learning also had room to grow (Newcomer et al., 2020). Teachers must work to develop the whole-child, caring not only about students' academic learning, but also social well-being, past experiences, and future dreams. Students who had a strong sense of belonging in the

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classroom environment felt the value and place of personal culture in that environment (Newcomer et al., 2020).

Mastery

The previous study showed the importance of culture in belonging as children grew successfully (Newcomer et al., 2020). This research looked specifically at how self-efficacy led to the second quadrant of mastery being fulfilled within the Circle of Courage framework (Brendtro et al., 2005; Soland & Sandilos, 2021). In the quantitative study by Soland & Sandilos (2021), the researchers studied self-efficacy and the correlation with achievement in ELL students from fifth grade until eighth grade. Self-efficacy was defined as student's ability to attain a certain education goal or outcome (Soland & Sandilos, 2021). The researchers used math and reading achievement tests and a self-efficacy survey to gather data (Soland & Sandilos, 2021). The research findings indicated that there were large gaps between ELLs and non-ELLs, especially in mathematics and reading, but when instruction attended to ELL students' perceptions of competence, academic performance was enhanced (Soland & Sandilos, 2021). The authors of the study mentioned limitations such as generalization outside of that specific school district and the need for replication in other settings (Soland & Sandilos, 2021).

Independence

In the third quadrant of the Circle of Courage framework, independence was discussed as an important aspect of whole-child development (Brendtro et al., 2005). Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) discussed instructional strategies that combined households and classrooms and viewed students as funds of knowledge. In the qualitative study, the researchers visited homes in Mexican communities in Tucson, Arizona and encouraged educators to learn from the culture of the students in the home environment (Moll et al., 1992). Ten educators participated in the

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observations and field study and visited 25 households (Mexican and Yaqui families) and conducted approximately 100 observations and interviews (Moll et al., 1992). The authors developed a research approach that utilized a combination of ethnographic observations, open-ended interviewing strategies, life histories, and case studies to better understand how households functioned within socio-historical contexts (Moll et al., 1992).

The educators in the study saw the value in the connection between student's home cultures and the importance it had on classroom experiences (Moll et al., 1992). Students were the funds on knowledge in the classroom environment, and had the influence and independence to impact the learning environment (Moll et al., 1992). Students in these classroom environments believed that personal culture aided to control future direction and also impacted classroom success (Moll et al., 1992).

Generosity

In the final area of the Circle of Courage framework, Brendtro et al. (2005), defined generosity as the contribution to others, in that students' lives had purpose in the respect shown by a concern for others. Research showed that whole-child development of ELL students was effective when students contributed to the needs of others by sharing about personal experience and providing cultural strategies that led to success (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017).

In the qualitative study by Shapiro and MacDonald (2017), the researchers examined how a refugee-background student of Somali Bantu heritage employed linguistic resources to explain forced migration, resettlement, and formal education. The researchers collected data from the students' personal memoir, radio interviews, interviews of the students' educators, interviews with the student, and newspaper articles about the student. The student recounted an awareness of systemic problems but also suggested ways that such problems were counteracted by focusing

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on the contributions Somali Bantu students could and have made to schools and societies (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017).

The research study focused on the student's life experiences as a refugee and how that impacted and contributed to life in America (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). The researchers also highlighted the linguistic resources that the students employed to benefit others and how the student's generosity in sharing the assets of the Somali Bantu culture led to a contribution to society (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). Limitations of the study were acknowledged as the study was the perspective of one individual (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). The Circle of Courage framework correlated with this research as both studies examined the connection between students who showed concern for others and operated out of generosity were able to develop more holistically (Brendtro et al., 2005; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017).

Conclusion

Researchers from sixteen peer-reviewed research studies found that asset-based strategies support whole-child development in elementary English language learners (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2020). Throughout the literature review the type of study, participants, methodology, key findings, and limitations, the research question was analyzed. Educators implemented asset-based strategies when there was a focus on students' strengths and contributions brought to the classroom (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2020; Gyll et al., 2010; Lopez, 2017; Yoon, 2007; Yosso, 2007). Educators used asset-based strategies for instruction when culturally responsive teaching was practiced through the use of home languages, multilingual literature, and multicultural literature (Bosh & Heifrich, 2011; DeGraff, 2017; Escamilla et al., 2021; Genesee et al., 2005, Osorio, 2020; Piper, 2019). Researchers found that whole-child development happened more successfully when belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity were displayed in ELL

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children (Brendtro et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992; Newcomer et al., 2020; Soland & Sundilos, 2021; Shaprio & MacDonald, 2017). In the next chapter, the previous research discussed will be used to determine insights gained, how the research impacts instruction, and possible future studies.

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Chapter 3: Discussion, Applications, and Future Study

English language learners (ELLs) populate most classrooms in the United States. How educators instruct these students is of great importance. This chapter will include a summary of insights gained from research, application of how the research will inform instruction or educational practices, and suggestions for possible future studies.

Summary of Insights Gained

Research supports asset-based pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching practices, and whole-child development as important aspects of meeting the needs of English language learners (Newcomer et al., 2020). Best-practice instruction regarding the education of ELLs stems from knowledgeable teachers who celebrate the strengths and cultural diversity ELL students bring to the classroom (Lopez, 2017). The previous research determined what strategies and practices were effectively put into place that celebrated the differences and saw the strengths of English learners within elementary classrooms.

Educators who employed an asset-based pedagogy regarding the ELL students in the classrooms focused on student's strengths. In the first theme of the research paper, the use of an asset-based pedagogy regarding ELL students was discussed. Educators can employ asset-based instructional practices by seeing student's culture and languages as assets to education, assets to schools, and assets to communities. Research has shown that when educators believe in strengths of students and celebrate that in the classroom, there is success (Lopez, 2017). Educators who believed that ELL students brought strengths to the classroom helped the ELL students succeed.

Asset-based strategies also include using culturally responsive practices such as the use of home languages in instruction, using multilingual literature, and using multicultural literature (Escamilla et al., 2021). Educators translated instruction to students' home language or used

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bilingual instruction to incorporate home languages in the classroom. Educators sometimes translated specific vocabulary and allowed students to participate in discussions or writing by responding using home languages. The previous research studies proved that students learning academic skills while using the students' home languages led to academic success in the learning of a second language later (DeGraff, 2016; Osorio, 2020). Instructional practices can be improved when educators make a conscious effort to involve students home languages within the learning environment. Classrooms that encourage an English-only environment where students are not allowed to speak anything other than English do not necessarily lead to growth. Students should be encouraged to involve home languages in the learning process.

Studies on multilingual literature summarized that this type of literature was a culturally responsive practice in the instruction of ELL students (Bosh & Helfrich, 2011). Literature that showed an assortment of languages within the text showed that the language used had value within the educational learning environment. Dual language texts and literature that had specific words in other languages esteemed students and brought connection to student's cultures having a place in the classroom. Educators can improve instructional practice when multilingual texts are selected for use in the classroom.

Equally important as multilingual literature was the use of multicultural literature in the classroom. Multicultural literature showed specific cultures represented in the story of the book. Students found learning experiences meaningfully relevant to families, homes, and cultural situations. Educators used multicultural literature to teach specific lessons about different people groups or to simply show situations of joy represented in people. Best practice instruction regarding ELL students involved the use of multilingual literature.

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Whole-child development was the third theme presented throughout the research paper. Students who experienced belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity developed more holistically and were able to grow (Brendtro et al., 2005). Academic learning is not the only part of the education process. Instead, the research showed instruction that led to holistic development of all children, and specifically ELL children, was also an important educational practice (Soland & Sandilos, 2021).

Research that Informs Instruction

The previous research must also inform instruction and educational practices. Educators should welcome opportunities to explain the importance that ELL students have to classrooms and communities. Cultural diversity, different values that have a greater importance in certain families, bi/multilingualism, and varying perspectives all strengthen classrooms and communities. In a world that can blame and degrade those learning English, educators should be equipped to explain the strengths of ELL students. In conversations around the lunch table, or within the community broach an English-only mentality, educators should welcome the opportunity to explain why the use of home languages actually strengthens ELL students' academic learning more effectively.

Educators should advocate for multicultural books and multilingual books within the curriculum used in schools. Guest speakers of different cultures and language groups should be invited in to schools to share about cultural strengths or to give students opportunities to see themselves represented in different future professions. Different cultures and languages should be celebrated with joy in the classroom. Application of the research in the educational practice of educators involves instruction using multicultural and multilingual literature.

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When educators believe that English language learners are an asset to the classroom and communities, educators should also work to lead professional development classes in districts or out in the community. Best practice instruction regarding ELL students can also be best practice instruction for all students. The United States of America is a wonderful nation because of the different language groups and cultures that make up its people. Educators should feel equipped to explain the strengths of ELL students to others and inform other educators about ways to involve ELL strengths within the learning environment.

Possible Future Studies

Future studies are needed in the research involving English language learners. Many research studies looked specifically at Spanish speakers learning English. Future research is needed regarding other language groups within the United States. Spanish might be the most prevalent home language in the USA after English, but large groups of Chinese, French, Tagalog and Vietnamese speakers also exist (United States Census Bureau, 2013). Research regarding non-Spanish speakers who are also learning English would be a beneficial possible future study.

Secondly, specific research regarding specialty population of ELL students and best practice instruction is needed. Students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) that enter school districts in the USA are a needed population to research. These students often begin learning English in later grades and have not received formal education or the education has been interrupted and inconsistent. Another specialty population of ELLs where further research is needed are newcomers. Newcomers are ELL students who have been in the United States for less than a year. Asset-based strategies educators can implement to support SLIFE and newcomer students in whole-child development is a needed area of continued research.

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Third, conducting longer studies over a period of years is a needed area of continued study. Much of the research concerning ELL students focuses on a specific year of instruction and the discussion centers around that year. Students entering ELL programs and exiting those same programs requires studies that follow students for a period of years. Possible future research that compares years of data regarding ELL student's growth in a variety of instructional classrooms would be beneficial to the field.

Conclusion

Educators can implement asset-based strategies that support whole-child development in elementary English language learners. These asset-based strategies include seeing the strengths that ELLs bring to the classroom and letting that perspective effect every area of instruction of students (Lopez, 2017). Asset-based strategies also include using culturally responsive teaching practices like using home languages, multilingual, and multicultural literature and by developing the whole-child through using the Circle of Courage framework. The research shared regarding these strategies can lead to improved instruction and inform educational practices when put into practice in the elementary classroom (Newcomer et al., 2020). Future studies are needed in regard to students who speak languages other than Spanish, specialty ELL populations such as newcomers and SLIFE students, and longitudinal studies over a period of years. English language learners bring value and strengths to classrooms. Asset-based strategies that support whole-child development in elementary English language learners are essential in every classroom.

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