

The Quality of Life for ELL Students

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Abstract

This action research was designed to investigate and determine the quality of life for certain English Language Learners (ELL) at the research site. Data on the affective filter, participation, transition and language growth of ELL students was collected and evaluated through the use of surveys and observations.

Data analysis suggests that ELL students are happy, they participate in classroom and school wide activities and they have made good transitions into the school. Results suggest possibilities for further research on improving language growth for ELL students and the different types of programs that help to do that as well as doing a case study on one or more ELL students to gather further and more in depth information.



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Action Research Proposal

Chapter One – Introduction

“Good morning students, welcome to room four. I am so glad to have you in my class this year. Please put your backpacks on your chair, your school supplies on the table by the sink and then sit on the rug because we are going to play the name game”

This is such a nice way for students who speak or understand English to start off the school year. They are welcomed and given instructions on what to do. This would, for English speaking students, create a safe, positive environment. Unfortunately, not all students speak or understand English. Think about what a non-English speaker might hear on that same first day.

“vbdd morning dfnaliedk, rihsscnp ui room four. T as fo leid cri safh nue os wk class iwbr wpxj. Please wbu suia krwniwpdn oj ushe lcjs, iknr school pqydklns tb keh quajf pe udn solk whn jdht oeh qh jns prv wispfjv wu tsg pohfj le ihfd wk name mtjs.”

For newcomers, that is, English Language Learners (ELL) new to this country, this would be scary and confusing and they would not know what to do. They would be relying on their observations of the other students modeling the expected behavior and the teacher specifically showing them what to do.

After thinking about this, the researcher asked the question, “What is the quality of life for newcomer students at the research site?”

The setting of the action research project is an elementary school in a medium-size city. According to bestplaces.net, the city has a population of 537,081. The median income for a household per year is \$46,848, and according to oregonlive.com, 12.9% of people in the city live in poverty. The city’s overall racial makeup is 75% Caucasian, 7%

African American, 7% Asian, 1% Native American, and 9% Hispanic. As a city, the Hispanic population is much lower than the research site.

The research site is one of 10 schools in the district. The district serves 6,783 students each year with a racial makeup of 67.7% Caucasian, 4.7% African American, 11.2% Asian, 1.6% Native American, and 14.9% Hispanic. Sixteen percent of students receive ELL services, with 20% of them being newcomers. The district defines a newcomer as a student who has been in the United States for less than a year. ELL services have become more of a focus for the district in the past four years and the district has hired an ELL coordinator to work with each school's English as a Second Language (ESL) program.

The research site is located in a lower income area of the city. Fully 73% of students are on free and reduced lunch making it a Title 1 school, which allows the school to offer extra services in reading and math. There is a 44% mobility rate at the research site, which affects all students' educational success. However, the students who leave the country for extended periods of time, and are no longer exposed to English come back to the research site and feeling lost.

The research site is a primary school with a population of 507 students between kindergarten and third grade. There are three kindergarten teachers, six first grade teachers, five second grade teachers and six third grade teachers. At the research site, .009% of students participate in the TAG program and 9% of students receive Special Ed. Services. Although the percentage of TAG students seems particularly low, these students need their needs met just as the special education students do. The racial makeup of the research site is: 48% Caucasian, .09% African American, 11% Asian,

.009% Native American, 30% Hispanic. Currently 40% of students receive ELL services, one percent of them being newcomers. There are currently 15 different languages spoken at the research site. This means that there is large communication barrier between teachers and students, especially for newcomers.

The research site is committed to providing a safe, positive learning environment, and offering challenging academics for all students. This includes ELL students. This is why the research site has 3.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) ELL teachers.

The researcher is a first-time ELL teacher at the research site and is finishing her Masters of Education at Concordia University. The researcher has previously worked as a first grade teacher at the research site and has worked with newcomer students in her classroom. The researcher finished her endorsement in ESL in the spring of 2008 and is looking forward to using the skills and knowledge learned through that program in the coming years as an ELL teacher.

Each classroom at the research site has approximately 50% ELL students so the researcher only has around 10 children at a time. The researcher teaches kindergarten and third grade ELL students in a pullout model. The researcher focuses on grammatical forms and functions during the pullout time and then goes into classrooms to help the newcomers when needed. The researcher is also part of the Positive Behavior Support team and is passionate about creating a safe, positive learning environment for all students.

The researcher's action research project will focus on the quality of life at school for ELL students. The researcher will observe students at the research site who receive ELL services. The researcher will observe the quality of school life for the students and then

use the information to perhaps improve the ESL program, the school and the quality of school life for the ELL students.



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Chapter Two -The Problem or The Issue

There are many legalities families face when they immigrate to a new country. These may include travel permits, visas, getting sponsors, classes and procedures to obtaining citizenship (INA, 2008). Sometimes, people may forget about the impact such a move has on the families and their children. There are a lot of outside sources pushing and pulling at them and it is important to the researcher, the staff and the administration at the research site that a positive learning environment is provided.

Teaching English Language Learners (ELL) is not new to the education system, but knowing what to teach is relatively new. The state created standards for ELL students only four years ago. This is the source of a lot of confusion for ELL teachers and classroom teachers because the standards are still so new. At the beginning of the school year concerns such as:

- “I have so many ELL students,”
- “My ELL students are so low,”
- “I don’t know what to do for my newcomer ELL students,” and
- “I don’t want to have the newcomer ELL students because then I would have to rewrite my curriculum,”

could be heard ringing through the hallways. What to do with ELL students, especially newcomers, in the classroom is a huge frustration for classroom teachers at the research site.

In the 2007-2008 school year, ELL students preformed the lowest in the state reading and writing tests in the school.

Native English Speakers Reading State Test Scores (% passed)	Native English Speakers Math State Test Scores (% passed)	English Language Learners Reading State Test Scores (% passed)	English Language Learners Math State Test Scores (% passed)
76%	71%	55%	53%

The research site also performed second to the lowest in the district on the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) in average points of growth per student.

School #1	School #2	School #3	School #4	School #5	Research Site	School #7
9.1	6.8	6.7	6.15	4.4	3.7	-1.0

The test scores show an achievement gap for the ELL population at the research site. The low-test scores for ELL students has become a focus point for the research site with many asking the question, “What do we need to do differently?”

The question to be researched at the elementary school is, “What is the quality of life for an ELL student at the research site?”

Literature Review

Everyday teachers in mainstream classrooms face the challenge of meeting the needs of diverse students. One group in particular is the ELL population, which is rapidly growing, not only around the United States, but at the research site in particular.

The changes made in 2001 with Title III and No Child Left Behind added responsibilities and accountability to schools and teachers regarding their ELL students. Two of these changes include that ELL students must be tested at least once a year using an English proficiency test, and ELL students must meet specific annual targets of Adequate Yearly Progress (Reed & Railsback, 2003).

Unfortunately, some children slip through the cracks and one has to wonder if all these laws are making teachers “teach to the test,” forgetting about what is best for students.

An example by Eleni Pappamihiel (2002):

It is now the end of April, and still Pablo is not participating in class. He often talks to his friends, and his teacher has even had to conference with him about his inattention during classroom discussions. His English skills had enabled him to pass his classes and meet minimum requirements on the standardized test used by the district, thus allowing him to be mainstreamed. Yet even with support from the English as a second language (ESL) teacher, he is not doing as well in the mainstream class...even when he placed in a group with other U.S.-born students who are fluent in English and Spanish, he withdraws from contact with them (p.1).

The legal, language and achievement obstacles faced by ELL students recently immigrated to the United States are formidable. However as Pappamihiel illustrates, an ELL child also faces challenges everyday. These quality of life challenges will be the focus of this action research project and will be defined by the following variables:

- Transition
- Affective Domain
- Participation and Engagement
- Language Growth.

The researcher will first write about how transitioning to the United States affects the learning of an ELL student. Next the researcher will explore how teaching in the affective domain can increase ELL student’s learning. Then the researcher will explore

different types of participation that occur in the classroom and what the best types are for ELL students. Finally the researcher will communicate how language growth occurs and how important learning English is to the success of an ELL student in school.

Transitions

Every ELL student has to transition to a new country, a new school and a new set of cultural norms. Cummins, et al, 2005 writes in an article about how this transition is especially difficult for children in school because they want to build relationships with teachers and other students even though language is a barrier. One little girl in the article felt that her teacher was genuinely interested in her experiences and her insight and this helped her succeed in school and want to do a better job. Some ELL students do not connect with anyone so school does not become a priority. Another issue ELL students face is culture shock.

A student who is suffering from culture shock will go through four different stages according to Judy Haynes (2005). The first is the “Euphoric or Honeymoon stage.” During this stage the student is excited about their new life and enjoy learning about their new environment. The second stage is the “Culture Shock stage.” This is when students start to realize and become frustrated by the fact that everything is new and they have so much to learn about their new surroundings. This frustration can cause them to act out violently or get depressed. The third stage is the “Integration stage.” In this stage, the students start to figure out how they can integrate their old culture with their new culture, they may even replace old values with new ones. The fourth stage is the “Acceptance stage” when students final become successful in their new culture. They may follow their new culture at school and their old culture at home or outside of school.

It is possible for students with culture shock to adjust more quickly with the help of teachers who build relationships with them and give them a lot of opportunities to practice new things. It may also be helpful to pair them up with partners in an effort to make them feel more secure in what they are learning. There should also be staff development relate to culture shock so that teachers can identify it and work with the student individually (Lasso & Soto, 2005). Teachers can also help ELL students be more successful in school by teaching in the affective domain.

Affective Domain

“The affective domain describes learning objectives that emphasize a feeling tone, an emotion or a degree of acceptance or rejection” (Kirk, 2008, p. 1). When teachers teach with the affective domain in mind they are helping students respond, value and organize what they have learned. This is especially important for ELL students because they come to school with high levels of anxiety and a feeling of rejection. In an article by Jackie Xiu Yan and Elaine Horwitz (2008), they discovered that anxious learners had difficulty in not only speaking but also in discriminating between new sounds they were learning. The article also shares that anxiety is not only caused by the student’s internal feelings but by the belief systems of the teacher and how the teacher views the student’s learning abilities.

Teachers can be more aware of student’s emotional state by focusing their teaching in the affective domain. Krathwohl breaks the affective domain up into five categories:

- Receiving
- Responding
- Valuing

- Organization
- Characterization.

When teaching students, the goal is to get them into the highest level of the triangle, the characterization of value set, because “here is where the student will act consistently in accordance with the values they have internalized” (Krathwohl, 2008).

If teachers can help students get past their anxieties they will participate in class more and learn English at a faster rate, this will help them in all areas of their life.

Participation

There are five different types of class participation according to Raymond Jones (2008). The first is the initiate-respond-evaluate type, which is when the teacher initiates the learning, the students respond to the learning then the teacher evaluates if the students learned it. The second is the cold calling type where the teacher randomly calls on a student to answer a question. The third is the open and unstructured talking type where the teacher asks a deeper, more probing question and waits for a student to respond thoughtfully. The fourth is the simulated discussion type where the teacher gives the students a prompt or a task and asks the students to have it completed before the discussion takes place. The last type of participation is the structured discussion type where the teacher gives the students tools to use to help them engage in the conversation, such as the think-pair-share tool. Teachers need to use many of these participation techniques. In fact, they may even alternate between different ones in the same class period.

ELL students may participate differently in class than native English speakers so participation activities such as the structured discussion type gives ELL students a better

chance to succeed because they have had the opportunity to prepare for the discussion and think about what they are going to say.

A study done by Ana DiSilva Iddings (2005) in a second grade room showed that ELL students were asked to participate by focusing on the procedures and following them exactly. They were not being challenged to think because the teacher did not know what to do with them because of their limited English. During their reading block the ELL students were asked to repeat the teacher word for word in a pre-primer book and then complete a sight word activity sheet tracing words such as can, girl, boy, read and all (only the word *can* was found in the book they had just read). The other groups in the class, which contained no ELL students, were working on chapter books and basal readers and then participating in extensive comprehension conversation about what was just read. Because of the way the lesson was structured, the ELL students were not having opportunities to connect their language to their daily life experiences. Iddings writes, "They were [not] able to use language in ways that reflected, validated, and furthered their existences" (2005, p. 3).

Student class participation and motivation go together because if students are motivated they will want to participate. There are two different types of motivation, extrinsic and intrinsic. An extrinsically motivated student will participate to get something or avoid a punishment of some kind. An intrinsically motivated student will participate for the enjoyment of participating (Lumsden, 1994). ELL students start out extrinsically motivated because they have to learn English in order to get what they want or need. The goal is to get ELL students to become intrinsically motivated by not allowing their limited English skills to get in the way. It is up to teachers to push ELL

students to think about their learning and make connections between English and their daily lives.

Language Growth

Learning English is the top priority of ELL students and their teachers and it is important to know that students who are classified as proficient English speakers are more likely to pass high school standardized tests than those students who are not proficient in English (Jacobs, 2008). Mary Ann Zehr also states, “English proficiency is the biggest predictor of academic achievement...not [the] programs within a school but whether or not [the student] acquires English” (2007, p. 1).

Language acquisition is a process that goes through stages. The first stage is the silent/receptive or preproduction stage. In this stage students have about 10 words they understand but may not be comfortable using. This stage can last from ten hours to six months and it is common for them to only answer yes/no questions and point a lot or gesture for things they want or need. The second stage is the early production stage. This stage can take another six months and by now students have acquired around 1,000 words that they can understand and use and able to speak in one to two word phrases. The third stage is the speech emergence stage. This stage can last up to a year and students have developed approximately 3,000 words and can communicate in short sentences and with simple questions. The fourth stage is the intermediate language proficiency stage. This stage can also last up to a year and now students have developed 6,000 words and are beginning to make complex statements, state opinions, ask for clarification and share their thoughts. The final stage is the advanced language proficiency stage. To fully become proficient in a second language it can take five to

seven years and by this time students can fully participate in grade-level classroom activities (Reed & Railsback, 2003). Knowing that every ELL student goes through these stages, it could take four to ten years for a student to be comfortable participating fully in class activities. This puts a lot of pressure on the classroom teachers to help push these students toward proficiency as soon as possible, hopefully by year four.

There are some things that teachers can do to help ELL students in the classroom. The first is to make information comprehensible using graphic organizers, pictures and hands on activities. The second is to increase interaction for ELL students with native English speaking students through group work, partner work and projects. The third is to increase the student's knowledge of thinking and study skills through think alouds and modeling. The fourth and last is to use the student's native language to offer support for content and to deepen understanding (Reed & Railsback, 2003; Holmquist, Lindgren, Mattisson & Svarvell, 2008).

Because ELL students are learning English all day long and not just during their pullout time with their ELL teacher or direct instruction time with their classroom teacher the researcher will look at the quality of life for an ELL student at the research site.

Summary

Students who learn English quickly will do better in school. The research will explore how well all of these variables: transition, affective domain, participation and engagement and language growth, are implemented in classrooms at the research site to ensure that learning English happens quickly and efficiently for ELL students and no one slips through the cracks.

Action Research Proposal

Chapter Three- Outcomes and Evaluation

The goal of the action research project is to investigate the quality of life for ELL students at the research site. Ultimately, the researcher wants to improve the ESL program at the research site and increase the achievement of the ELL population by improving their quality of life. The literature review showed four areas that affect the quality of life for an ELL student. The researcher's goal is to examine these four variables; transition, affective domain, participation, and language growth more closely in order to answer the question, "What is the quality of life for an ELL student at the research site?"

During the action research project, the researcher will be observing students from different classroom and at different language levels. The researcher will be looking for how well the student has transitioned to their new school, whether or not the student is happy, whether or not the student is participating in the lesson and with other students, and if the student is comfortable using English in the classroom setting.

A second technique the researcher will use is surveying the teachers at the research site. The surveys will generate information about the following:

- Feelings toward ELL students transition into the research site.
- Feelings about whether or not ELL students are happy at the school.
- Whether or not ELL students are participating in classroom activities.
- Are ELL students showing language growth in the classroom?

A third technique the researcher will use is interviewing the principal and district ELL coordinator. The interview will provide the following information:

- From an administrative point of view, how well do ELL students transition into the research site/district?
- From an administrative point of view, are students happy at the school?
- From an administrative point of view, are ELL students participating in school wide activities?
- From an administrative point of view are ELL students showing language growth school wide?

The final technique the researcher will use is a focus group for parents of ELL students. This focus group will provide information on the following:

- From a parental point of view, how well do ELL students transition into the school?
- From a parental point of view, are students happy at the school?
- From a parental point of view, are ELL students participating in classroom/school activities?
- From a parental point of view are ELL students showing language growth?

The teacher will compare information from each of these surveys to see if there is consensus about the quality of life for ELL students at the research site. The information will be analyzed to see what needs to improve to increase the quality of life for ELL students at the research site.

Action Research Proposal

Chapter Four - Action Plan

The goal of the action research project is to investigate the quality of life for ELL students at the research site, asking the question, “What is the quality of life for an ELL student at the research site?”

This issue is significant because many teachers are challenged by language diversity in the classroom and ELL students performed lower last year on the state test than in the previous year and the researcher hopes that by increasing the quality of life for ELL students test scores will also increase. In this chapter, the researcher will examine possible solutions to this issue as well as explain the action steps for this plan.

Possible Solutions

A study done by four university professors, Beverly J. Irby, Fuhui Tong, Rafael Lara-Alecio, Doris J. Meyer, and Linda Rodriguez (2007) showed that bilingual education was the best way for ELL students to learn. The study was conducted in an urban school district in Southwest Texas that serves over 51,000 students. The study focused on third grade Spanish/English bilingual classrooms which resulted in 17 classrooms and 345 students (all of the students were ELL students with Spanish as their native language). The study followed teachers through instruction and then looked at the results of the state test scores in which 34% of the students took the English test and 66% took the Spanish test. Seventy-seven percent of the students passed the English test and 85% passed the Spanish test. This indicated to the researchers that the results on the test were closely linked to the language of the test taken as well as their success on the test and the language in which students received instruction. It also concluded that students who

receive instruction in their native language did better in transferring the new information to their second language. The researcher thinks this is a great model for ELL students but has decided to reject this solution because there is not enough money or staff for the district to move to this type of model.

Another possible solution is to teach ELL students only in English and not incorporate any of their first language. There are many reasons Jill Kerper Mora (2006) gives for implementing an English-only program. The first is that ELL students can learn enough English in a one-year intensive English program to function in a mainstream classroom. A second reason is that only proficiency in English is important for students to be successful in school and in American society. A third is early and rapid learning of English in school will reduce dropout rates, especially among Latinos students. All of these reasons are valid but the district the researcher works for supports some form of native language instruction and would not accept the philosophy of an English-only program model. Therefore, the researcher has decided to reject the idea of an English-only program as a solution.

The third and final solution the researcher looked at is a push-in model of instruction for ELL students. In this model, the classroom has both an ELL specialist and classroom teacher teaching a content area together. This model requires that the classroom teacher and the ELL specialist work very closely together by coordinating a common planning and teaching time so that both teachers are always teaching the subject together. This is beneficial because the classroom teacher has the knowledge and materials for the content and the ELL specialist has cultural and second language learning knowledge (Model One, 2008). The researcher has decided to reject this model however because it is best for

intermediate and advanced students who have developed secure English language skills. The research site is a kindergarten through third grade school so most of the students are at a beginning and early intermediate level, therefore this model would not be effective for the students at the research site.

Action Plan

This action research project will begin in December before winter break and will continue until March before spring break. The following explains the timeline in detail:

- December- The researcher will gain consent from the principal and district office to follow through with the action research proposal. The researcher will also create the surveys and interviews for the students, teachers, parents and administrators.
- December- The researcher will send out a survey to the staff members and administration of the research site as well as the ELL coordinator for the district then collect and analyze the results from the survey.
- January – March- The researcher will be observing ELL students weekly in the areas of language growth, affective domain, transition, and participation.
- February- The researcher will attend a parent meeting and have the parents fill out the survey then collect and analyze the results.
- March- The researcher will analyze and interpret the data from all the surveys and the observations from the action research project. The final project will be completed and turned into the researcher's faculty advisor by March 31st.

The researcher is looking forward to starting this action research plan. The researcher knows that her efforts will enable her to discover what will increase the quality of life for ELL students at the research site.



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Action Research Proposal

Chapter Five -

The goal of the action research project is to investigate the quality of life for ELL students at the research site, asking the question, “What is the quality of life for an ELL student at the research site?”

The researcher used the data-collection methods of survey and observation to determine the quality of life for ELL students at the research site. The researcher surveyed the staff, the parents of ELL students and ten students at the research site. The ten students were also observed. In an effort to get the surveys filled out and returned in a timely manner, the researcher gave the survey at a staff meeting, a parent meeting and then individually surveyed the 10 students.

The second method the researcher used was observations. The researcher randomly chose 10 second grade students whose ELL levels varied from beginning to advanced. The researcher observed these students five times over the course of ten weeks, once every other week, but not necessarily on the same day or at the same time each week. The researcher chose to do this in order to get a broader picture of what the students’ lives were like throughout the day.

The researcher completed the action research with fidelity, following the plan outlined in chapter four. The researcher chose two different methods to determine the quality of life for ELL students at the research site. The two methods were surveys and observations.

The first method the researcher will describe is surveys. The researcher gave a survey to staff members, students and parents of students at the research site.

The survey included five questions based on each of the four domains the researcher believed would reveal the quality of life for an ELL student.

- The first question asked if the ELL student was happy at the research site.
- The second and third questions asked if the student participates in classroom as well as school wide activities.
- The fourth question asked if the student had made language growth compared to the previous year.
- The fifth question asked if the student felt valued at the research site.

The person taking the survey was instructed to circle a one, two, three, four, or five (one being low and five being high) based on how well they agreed with the statement, for example:

- ELL students are happy at the research site 1 2 3 4 5.

The researcher then collapsed the data to make it easier to understand. The researcher counted a one or two as being “no”, a four or five as being “yes” and a three as being “maybe”. The results of the survey are as follows:

ELL students are happy at the research site?	Student	Parents	Staff
RESULTS	8/10 YES	7/8 YES	28/29 YES

All three sources indicate that ELL students are happy at the research site. One parent commented, “My student is very happy at this school”. One student commented, “I love school.”

ELL students participate in classroom and school wide activities?	Student	Parents	Staff
RESULTS	8/10 YES	8/8 YES	20/29 YES

All three sources indicate that ELL students participate in classroom and school-wide activities. One staff member commented, “ELL students love going to ELD and ELL night”. Another staff member commented, “We’ve seen an increased level of participation from our Spanish ELL students and their families.”

ELL students have made language growth this year?	Student	Parents	Staff
RESULTS	10/10 YES	6/8 YES	18/29 YES

All three sources indicate that ELL students have made language growth in the past year. The researcher notes that many staff members as well as parents commented that even though they thought ELL students made yearly language progress, they were not sure of the definition of appropriate yearly growth.

The ELL student feels valued at the research site.	Student	Parents	Staff
RESULTS	7/10 YES	8/9 YES	26/29 YES

All three sources indicate that ELL students feel valued at the research site. One student commented, “Oh, yes I feel very safe...we have great teachers here.”

Based on the survey the researcher determines that staff, parents and staff all believe that ELL students are happy, they participate in classroom and school-wide activities, they make adequate yearly language growth and ELL students are valued at the research site.

The second method the researcher will describe is observations. For the observation piece of the action research the researcher randomly chose 10 second grade students whose ELL levels varied from beginning to advanced. The ethnicity of the 10 students

included one Egyptian, one Russian, and eight Hispanic students. All students have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

- The first of these ten students is Emma. Emma loves school and is at school everyday eager to learn. She has a lot of friends and is very social. She is very talkative and loves to be in conversation with her peers and teachers. Her language level is high early intermediate and in first grade Emma barely spoke Spanish and shared with her ELD teacher that she was embarrassed because she spoke Spanish. This year, in second grade, she is speaking both Spanish and English and has decided that Spanish is part of her identity that she is smart because she speaks two languages. She is smart and well adjusted to school and her teacher has only positive things to say about her.
- Vlad is shy with his teachers but outgoing with the other boys in his class. He is sneaky and does not always do his work if the teacher is not watching him. His English level is early intermediate but is not as interactive with teachers and peers as Emma is. His teacher is not worried about his academics and believes that as his English improves so will his reading and writing. He is very smart but would rather play than work.
- Jennifer is very social. Her English language level is low early intermediate and only wants to be around girls in her class that speak Spanish. She does however like boys and often gets in trouble for “flirting”. She is very distracted in class and it often takes her a long time to get started on her work. Her teacher is worried about her academic growth because of her lack of attentiveness.

- Juan's language level is beginning and he is extremely shy and hard to talk to. He will turn his head in embarrassment if he is asked a question and will sometimes use other kids in class to ask the teacher a question for him. His friends included mostly other boys who speak Spanish. He is also a very sensitive child and a little bit of a perfectionist. If the teacher corrects him or if something is too hard he may cry and is hard to reconcile.
- Jorge has made a lot of progress in second grade and was a big academic concern for his first grade teacher. He is starting to do more writing and his reading is also improving. His second grade teacher is also concerned about Jorge academically because even though he is making progress he is not at grade level. Jorge is also distracted in class by little things and has a hard time moving on to something if he hasn't finished the first thing he was working on. One can often see Jorge wondering around the classroom looking for something because he is also very disorganized and scattered. He has a sweet, likeable personality and gets along with the other kids. The teacher enjoys having Jorge in class but is worried if he feels confident with his abilities.
- David is a very smart boy and likes to remind the teacher of that by telling her that activities are boring or he has already learned something. He is at an intermediate level with his English and very talkative in both Spanish and English. He has some friends in class but kids do not always want to be around him because of his negative attitude. He shared with his teacher that he does not like school and would rather draw all day instead of doing class work.

- Ricardo is very shy but is a hard worker. His best friend is another shy Spanish speaking boy in class. He always chooses to be partners with him and they keep to themselves when they work. He has made a lot of progress academically in second grade but is still not at grade level. His English language level is low early intermediate and only responds to the teacher when asked a question directly; he will rarely offer to answer a question on his own accord. He seems happy at school and is well adjusted to classroom routines.
- Jesus is very busy and is always moving around the rug if the class is on the rug or around the room if the class is at their desks. The teacher is often redirecting him or placing him at the front of the rug. He does not speak very much in English, his language level is early intermediate and will not volunteer to answer questions during discussions. His teacher recommended him be tested for Special Education because he has not made much academic progress this year. His mother is very involved with his education and even volunteers to work in the after school program. Behavior problems are usually dealt with quickly because mom is so involved.
- Abrahm was new to the United States in first grade and has made incredible language and academic growth. He only speaks in English to his peers and teachers and has started to write books about animals with non-fiction text features. He is friendly and energetic and always tries his best. He is constantly watching others around him and listens to the teacher while she talks, he even volunteers to answer questions and participate in games. His language level is beginning but his reading and writing levels are more advanced than beginning.

The teacher really enjoys his love for learning and says that he inspires other kids with his deep sense of morale and need to work hard.

- Raul's language level is low early intermediate and is very shy. He seems to be paying attention when listening to the teacher but has a glazed over, checked-out look on his face. He is usually one of the last children off the rug as if he is trying to figure out and process what just happened and what he has to do next. He is low academically and he needs a lot of practice and repetition before he understands something. He gets along with his classmates and has a lot of friends. He is also loves school and feels happy when he is at school. His teacher is worried about is academic growth and wonders if a learning disability is a possibility.

The researcher observed these ten students five times, once every other week, but not necessarily on the same day or at the same time each week. The researcher chose to do this in order to get a broader picture of what the students' lives were like throughout the day. The researcher not only observed but also asked students if they knew what they were supposed to be doing and why they were supposed to be doing it in order to help understand their transition and language growth.

The researcher looked for four things while observing the students.

- First, whether or not the student had transitioned well into American school culture, that is, do they understand routines and know what is expected of them.
- Second, whether or not the student was happy at school, in other words, are they smiling and laughing or sad and disconnected.
- Third, whether or not the student was participating in school/classroom activities?

- Fourth, whether or not the student’s English improving or were they using grammatically correct English all of the time, some of the time, with the teacher and with their peers.

When asking these questions, the researcher scored the students on a 1-5 scale: 1 = none of the time, 2 = some of the time, 3 = most of the time, 4 = often, and 5 = all of the time. The researcher then collapsed the data to make it easier to understand. The researcher counted a one or two as being “no”, a four or five as being “yes” and a three as being “sometimes”. The results of the survey are as follows:

Week One:

Affective Filter	Participation	Language Growth	Transition
9/10 YES	7/10 YES	5/10 YES	9/10 YES

The researcher’s observations show that although affective filter, participation and transition are high, language growth is low. The researcher noted during the observations that many students were talking to their peers in their native language and then to the teacher shyly in grammatically incorrect English.

Week Two:

Affective Filter	Participation	Language Growth	Transition
6/10 YES	7/10 YES	3/10 YES	7/10 YES

The researcher notes that this observation was at the end of the day and students had switched to new desks and were very excited about who they were now sitting by. The researcher believes this caused some distractions for many of the students.

Week Three:

Affective Filter	Participation	Language Growth	Transition
7/10 YES	6/10 YES	5/10 YES	8/10 YES

Affective filter, participation and transition remain high but language growth continues to remain low. The researcher noted that this week one student used a peer to ask a question to the teacher instead of asking himself.

Week Four:

Affective Filter	Participation	Language Growth	Transition
10/10 YES	8/10 YES	5/10 YES	9/10 YES

The researcher observed a “centers” time activity and all students were very engaged and actively participating however the activity did not lend itself to much talking for the students.

Week Five:

Affective Filter	Participation	Language Growth	Transition
10/10 YES	8/10 YES	4/10 YES	7/10 YES

The researcher watched the class during PE and many of the students needed extra help from the PE teacher as to what to do and where to go (transition). They also were congregating in common language groups so the students that spoke Spanish chose to be in a group together and so were only speaking in Spanish.

Based on the teacher’s observations and notes taken the researcher determined that overall the affective filter, participation and transition of ELL students at the research site was high but the language growth was not. Through the observations the researcher also determined that the more engaging and self-modifying the activity was the more ELL students were able to participate. The researcher liked that ELL students were very

happy at the research site and credits that to the teachers for having set up consistent systems within the classroom allowing students who do not speak fluent English a chance to be successful.

With the results from both the surveys and the observations the researcher can determine that ELL students are happy at the research site, they participate in classroom and school wide activities and they have transitioned well into the school system. The researcher finds a discrepancy with the results of language growth. The surveys revealed that ELL students made adequate yearly language growth but the researcher observed that students were not making adequate yearly language growth. The researcher wonders if this is because staff, students and parents are not well informed as to what adequate yearly language growth is.

Overall, if ELL students are happy and feel safe in the environment they are working in they are more likely to participate in classroom activities. This will then increase their level of social and academic English as well as make their transition into the school system smoother. The classroom teacher and staff at the school also play a huge role in making sure ELL students not only get the ELL services required but taking an extra step to modify and adjust curriculum so they can be successful in their learning as well.

In conclusion the researcher has learned that the most important piece in an English language learner's education is feeling happy and safe so that they are willing to take risks in their language, reading and writing. The other thing the researcher realized is that the lowest academic students in classes at the research site are English language learners and this concerns the classroom teachers and staff. It is important that classroom

teachers and staff feel supported in working with ELL students and are given more staff development around working with ELL students.

If the researcher were to have changed anything about the research project she would have added a case study piece about one or more students including information about their home life and a more in-depth study of their school life. The researcher also recommends further study in the area of what staff development is need to support the staff at the research site in working with English Language Learners. The researcher would also recommend study as to what the best model or program would be most useful in servicing the ELL students at the research site in the most effective and efficient way possible.



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Appendix A – Survey Forms

Staff Survey

(Please circle the best answer and return to Katie Krueger)

- ELL students are happy at HOP.
 1 2 3 4 5
- ELL students participate in school activities at HOP.
 1 2 3 4 5
- ELL students participate in classroom activities.
 1 2 3 4 5
- ELL students make adequate language growth yearly.
 1 2 3 4 5
- HOP values different cultres.
 1 2 3 4 5

Parent Survey

(Please circle the best answer and return to Katie Krueger)

- ELL students are happy at HOP.
 1 2 3 4 5
- ELL students participate in school activities at HOP.
 1 2 3 4 5
- ELL students participate in classroom activities.
 1 2 3 4 5
- ELL students make adequate language growth yearly.
 1 2 3 4 5
- HOP values different cultures.
 1 2 3 4 5

Student Survey

(Please circle the best answer)

- I am happy at HOP.
 No Sometimes Yes
- I participate in school activities at HOP.
 No Sometimes Yes
- I participate in classroom activities.
 No Sometimes Yes
- I know more English this then I did last year.
 No Yes
- I feel like my culture is valued at HOP.
 No Sometimes Yes

Appendix B – Observation Form

Observation Sheet

Date _____

Student _____

Transition: 1 2 3 4 5

Affective Domain: 1 2 3 4 5

Participation: 1 2 3 4 5

Language Growth: 1 2 3 4 5



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Appendix C – Consent Form

January 5, 2009

I _____ give permission for Katie Krueger to conduct her research at Harold Oliver Primary.

She will be observing and interviewing 10 students in second grade and will not use pictures or names in/on any information reported to the public therefore does not need formal consent from these 10 parents.

Thank you,

Barbara Hicks
Principal
Harold Oliver Primary
Centennial School District



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