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A Descriptive Study of Factors That Support and Hinder Classroom Discourse With English Learners

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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF FACTORS THAT SUPPORT AND HINDER
CLASSROOM DISCOURSE WITH ENGLISH LEARNERS

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has blessed me beyond measure. Next to my family, friends, colleagues, and former students without whom none of this work would have been possible.

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I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my professors at the University of South Carolina. I am grateful for the support, advice, and knowledge that were imparted to me. I am also thankful to my district for allowing me to conduct this research around a topic I am very passionate about. To my husband, Matthew, thank you for being the most supportive husband and my biggest cheerleader. I would not have completed this doctoral program without you and your support. To my mom, Dr. Carmen Smith, thank you for giving advice, listening to my concerns/challenges these past few years, and being an example for me as I also pursue my doctorate. To my children, Levi and Nathaniel, this accomplishment is for you. I hope my example motivates you both one day to grow and learn in whatever field you choose to pursue in the future. Many thanks to my family and friends who checked in on me, cheered me on, and gave me positive words of encouragement. Lastly, I had the pleasure of working with my amazing students and colleagues who inspired this research study and who motivated me to continue to grow and learn to be the best professional I can be. Thank you.

ABSTRACT

The population of English Learner (EL) students in the United States is increasing and is projected to represent 40% of our country by 2030 (Flynn and Hill, 2005). Many educators do not feel prepared to teach this marginalized group of students effectively. Therefore, EL coaches in this urban district in the Midwest collaborate with teachers to support instruction for EL students. However, teachers in this district still have a difficult time implementing classroom discourse, one of many EL components to help EL students achieve Fluent English Proficiency (FEP) status. This dissertation in practice (DIP) seeks to investigate and answer two research questions: *What structures promote high levels of classroom discourse for ELs? What obstacles hinder high levels of classroom discourse for ELs?* Discovering answers to these questions is important because EL students need explicit practice using the English language with their peers and teachers.

To answer these research questions, a descriptive, qualitative case study was created to analyze what teachers are currently doing to support classroom discourse and what areas or professional development (PD) are effective for theory to practice transfer. For this case study, five elementary teachers in the district were asked to participate by being interviewed, answering survey questions, providing lesson plans, and answering journal prompts. Data was then analyzed through the lens of Krashen's second language acquisition theory by finding themes and codes that reoccurred.

This study confirmed Krashen's theory about second language acquisition for ELs through classroom discourse as an effective strategy. Data communicated that EL coaches are beneficial for supporting new teachers with implementing classroom discourse. However, during this study veteran teachers conveyed they did not feel as though coaching and other PD experiences provided met their professional needs. A variety of PD opportunities targeted to individual teachers and their students is necessary. Teachers also communicated that PD experiences directly related to their students and classrooms are more effective for theory to practice transfer. This study revealed that using a larger variety of proven PD models to promote classroom discourse will likely be the most effective intervention to improve EL student's output of language.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCESS for ELLs.....Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners

CFG.....Critical Friend Group

CLT.....Communicative Language Teaching

DIP.....Dissertation in Practice

DOK.....Depth of Knowledge

EL.....English Learner

ELD.....English Language Development

ELP.....English Language Proficiency

ESL.....English as a Second Language

ESSA.....Every Student Succeeds Act

FEP.....Fluent English Proficient

IEP.....Individualized Education Plan

IRB.....Institutional Review Board

IRE.....Initiation-Response-Evaluation

L1.....First Language

LA.....Los Angeles

LEA.....Local Education Agency

NCLB.....No Child Left Behind

PD.....Professional Development

PLD.....Proficiency Level Descriptor

PoP.....Problem of Practice

SEA..... State Educational Agency
SIOP..... Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol
WIDA..... World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment
ZPD..... Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

An English Learner (EL) coach is a teaching position in schools to assist classroom teachers with improving and learning best practices for the benefit of their EL students. EL coaches in a public school in an urban district in the Midwest work with classroom teachers to collaborate, model EL strategies, co-teach, and review the data of the EL students. As a former EL coach who also has experience supervising EL coaches as an EL District Curriculum Specialist, I have had the privilege of sitting in many K-5th grade classrooms and working with different teachers in various elementary schools in the district. My current role as a Language Arts Specialist still allows me to be a consultant to the EL program in this district through professional development (PD) and collaborations. The following are scenarios I frequently see in classrooms.

It is time for a math lesson, and I sit with the 2nd-grade class waiting for the teacher to begin. I purposely sit next to a few students whose EL proficiency scores are on the lower end. The students listen, nod their heads, and even answer a few questions when the teacher asks. The lesson is complete, and students go off to do their seatwork. I then turned to one of the EL students I sat with and asked her to describe the math concept they learned. She looks at me and says, "I don't know." She and her partner could follow along with the lesson and answer guided questions but did not know how to phrase the work in their own words. Later, visiting a different classroom, a 3rd grade teacher asks a question during her lesson and tells her students to turn and talk to their

neighbors about what their thoughts are. There is silence. Not one of the third graders knows how to begin or what to say. Down the hall, a 5th-grade student begins seatwork and I ask the student, "Are you sure that is correct?" He looks at me and begins to erase his answer, even though what he had on his paper was correct. These situations happen in many classrooms in this district, even in ones where the teachers are trying to encourage classroom discourse and conversation with their students.

Problem of Practice

Each year, in the district mentioned above, EL students are frequently scoring lower on the domains requiring output (speaking, writing, and representing) and higher on the domains requiring input (listening, reading, and viewing) (District EL Scores, 2022). Students are frequently engaged in activities that promote input in content lessons and have fewer opportunities to engage with lessons that require output. However, the speaking component of their yearly language assessment, the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) test requires such output. EL students need practice to improve their speaking domain and effective feedback when they plateau in their development. Being able to effectively engage students in classroom discourse is a goal that will directly benefit EL students, increase their speaking proficiency scores, and grow their language development (WIDA, 2020).

According to Jocuns (2012), classroom discourse includes every type of communication that one encounters in a classroom or school setting. Echevarria (2011), published widely on effective instruction for ELs, stated that interaction and conversation are key components of EL instruction. In a classroom with high-quality classroom

discourse, Echevarria (2011) stated that it is very important for EL students to have the opportunity to practice language functions and features in conversation to gain Fluent English Proficiency (FEP) status on their ACCESS for ELLs (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) exam. My Problem of Practice (PoP) is that the speaking domain is consistently a lower score for EL students on the ACCESS exam as well as in everyday lessons, and subsequently, teachers and students have a hard time implementing classroom discourse effectively. As a Language Arts Specialist who also provides PD for the district, this problem is relevant as I help EL coaches, administrators, and teachers find ways to improve their EL student's language proficiency scores to attain a FEP status. Legally, EL students have the right to learn content and language in school (Lau v. Nichols, 1974) and receive language instruction through English Language Development (ELD). By law this should be an embedded practice for all ELs (Lau v Nichols, 1974).

According to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015), EL students are required to be monitored and their progress reported every year as they progress toward FEP status. Every year, EL students are given a language test to determine their English language proficiency. Thirty-five states in the United States, including the state this district resides in, use World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) language standards and integration model (WIDA, 2020). Students are considered EL until they receive a FEP score on their ACCESS test. For students to be considered FEP, a score of 4.8 on the WIDA's yearly ACCESS test is required. The ACCESS assessment measures four different domains in the English language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to the ACCESS data from the district mentioned above, student's

ACCESS scores in speaking and writing (domains requiring output of language) include the lowest scores for students (WIDA ACCESS Score Report, 2022). The WIDA standards (WIDA, 2020) state that in a classroom with effective classroom discourse, students would be able to perform various functions to demonstrate FEP status including being able to give and defend opinions, use technical vocabulary, give presentations, sequence events, explain details, and argue with reason.

According to feedback from current EL coaches, in this district, there are some classrooms where classroom discourse is effectively implemented and used by students and some classrooms where it is not. Classroom discourse effectiveness is measured by the WIDA proficiency level descriptors (PLDs) in the WIDA ELD Standards Framework (WIDA, 2020). Some factors to consider when looking at the effectiveness of discourse in a classroom are student's EL language levels, student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) status, strategies being used or not used to encourage discourse in the classroom, the level of experience of the teacher, and trauma that may affect an EL student. If a student is in a classroom where classroom discourse is not effectively being used, then the risk of that student moving through grade levels without being able to converse on a deep level about new content is high. Puasa et al. (2017) wrote that language and its use in the classroom is vitally important for the teaching and learning process to work effectively. Therefore, without effective discourse in a classroom students could have a harder time developing skills necessary for the learning process including problem-solving skills, original thoughts, and stating opinions.

There are different ways that discourse can be implemented in the classroom and each way will have its own level of effectiveness. Critically investigating and analyzing

the level of effectiveness in the classrooms I enter can yield valuable information. The knowledge that increasing discourse in the classroom will lead to a student's deeper understanding of class concepts is not a new idea in education. McIntyre et. al. (2006) wrote that many researchers and educators for hundreds of years have discussed and argued the benefits of talking about concepts to better understand them. Culatta et al. (2019) stated that giving students the chance to talk about concepts can assist students in text comprehension, fill gaps in understanding, and increase the ability to apply and connect content to their lives. Echevarria (1995) conveyed that when instruction is given in context and students are pushed to develop high-level cognitive skills instruction has more opportunity to be meaningful.

According to district data, 28% of students enrolled in this district for the 2022-2023 school year are classified as ELs (Infinite Campus, 2022). At the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, enrollment numbers in the district reported 4075 EL students from kindergarten to 12th grade, most of whom are in elementary school. Meeting the linguistic needs of ELs in the district is a goal teachers, administrators, and educational leaders strive for. Teachers in this district currently use talking moves in the classroom such as turn and talk, group work, and collaborative learning activities which were derived from an “EL Strategies Playbook” created by district EL leaders. However, they do not always yield results of deeper comprehension and meaning for our students. McIntyre et al. (2006) maintained that not properly giving guidance to how students can talk and not modeling what that talk can look like can be an issue of inequity. According to a study that Echvarria (1995) conducted, the results indicated that classroom discourse

and classrooms rich in linguistic opportunities can yield positive results for culturally diverse students and/or students with learning disabilities.

These opportunities should be scaffolded, and the teacher should be an active facilitator. Culatta et al. (2019) stated that classroom discourse can promote comprehension of texts and content when modified and scaffolded appropriately based on the student's needs and levels. Additionally, Culatta et al. (2019) expressed that classroom discourse should be a critical component of instruction as it is through classroom discourse that students construct meaning and gain an understanding of abstract ideas. Therefore, intentional planning and implementation are necessary components for the successful use of discourse in the classroom. In this district, the EL department has adopted an EL coaching model to assist teachers with lesson planning for ELs, using scaffolds appropriately with ELs, and implementing EL strategies into daily lessons. Further explanation of this coaching model will be described later in chapter two.

Theoretical Framework

Language learning and second language acquisition is a complex and perplexing field still being researched and questioned. Krashen (1982) stated in his work before he addressed his theory that there should be multiple avenues to assist one with deciding on methodology and materials for a research topic. It is therefore important for researchers to look at multiple methods, theories, and factors before diving into specific research. For this study, three specific theories fit well with the research problem being addressed.

Social Development Theory Lev Vygotsky

One of the foundational theorists in many educational settings is Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky's social development theory addressed the important role that social interaction

has when looking at the development of cognition (McLeod, 2014). Prominent components of Vygotsky's social development theory include the role of social interaction, the use of the zone of proximal development, the learning differences of children, adults, native language learners, and foreign language learners. Vygotsky (1978) stated: "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (p. 57). Social interaction leads to the cognitive development of students learning concepts and material (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Owen (2018), Vygotsky is not a linguist, but his theories are a central component in developmental and educational psychology. The social development theory is integral in this Dissertation in Practice (DIP) as social interaction and student discourse work in tandem with each other.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory

Another theorist that can be compared to Vygotsky is Bandura and his social learning theory. In this theory, Bandura (1971) stressed that children learn from their environment and by observing others. Bandura (1971) wrote that individuals learn concepts and behavior patterns by being involved in direct experiences or with the opportunity to observe others performing the behavior. It is the observation of others in social situations that affects and generates learning. Bandura's social learning theory has a foundation rooted in the research and theories of classical conditioning from theorists Pavlov (1926) and operant conditioning from theorist Skinner (1938). Bandura (1971) wrote of the back-and-forth nature of interacting between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors. The social learning theory ties directly to this DIP in that it seeks

to engage EL students in discourse practices through modeling and social experiences to positively affect their speaking proficiency level.

Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory

One of the leading theorists in second language acquisition is Krashen (1982) who developed his theory of second language acquisition. According to this work, second language acquisition is the result of a series of hypotheses' that flow in the following progression: acquisition learning distinction hypothesis, natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis.

The first hypothesis, acquisition learning distinction, discusses the difference between language acquisition and language learning. According to Krashen (1982), both are important for acquiring a second language. Krashen (1982, p. 13) wrote, "Language acquisition is a subconscious process." With language acquisition, students are unaware that they are learning. In contrast, Krashen (1982, p. 20) noted, language learning is "Conscious knowledge of the second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them." The second hypothesis, natural order, discusses a natural order that should occur when teaching the structure of a language. The third hypothesis, the monitor, explains, "Acquisition and learning are used in very specific ways" (Krashen, 1982, p. 18). Krashen (1982, p. 18) elaborated by stating, "Conscious learning is available only as a monitor, which can alter the output of the acquired system before or after the utterance is actually spoken or written." Before spoken and written output occurs three conditions are necessary for second language performers: time, focus on form, and knowing the rules (Krashen, 1982). The fourth hypothesis is the input hypothesis which states, "We acquire, in other words, only when we understand language

that contains a structure that is 'a little beyond' where we are now" (Krashen, 1982, p. 22) (from Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development). Therefore, acquisition precedes learning the rules. The last hypothesis, The affective filter hypothesis, discusses the factors that affect the second language acquisition process: Motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety (Krashen, 1982). Owen (2018) remarked, "Krashen regards communication as the main function of language. The focus is on teaching communicative abilities" (p. 29)

Other theorists and researchers contradict Krashen's theory of second language acquisition. Owen (2018) reported that some language learners acquire a second language through rote memorization of the language and forms. McLaughlin (1987) stated that when looking at the components of Krashen's theory, he fails to define terms with precision and his theory therefore comes off unclear and not as strong as it should be. In an analysis of the five hypotheses Krashen writes of his second language acquisition, Zafar concluded, "Many critics feel that Krashen has postulated a model without properly explaining its many variations and functions, thus rendering it unsatisfactory when empirically tested" (2009, p. 145). While Krashen's methods and theory have merits when it comes to second language acquisition, Owen (2018, p. 31) pointed out that "it should only be considered one of several possible sources of information in determining methods and materials for second language teaching." In this study I will use Krashen's theory to acknowledge and emphasize language learning that should be happening and is happening in classrooms in my district as they relate to the five hypotheses.

Purpose of the Study

In a school with ELs, it is important that teachers use effective teaching strategies for an equitable education for all students. In Krashen's (1982) view, effective language teachers can provide comprehensible input in a low anxiety setting thus leading to comprehension and instructional growth in language and content development.

The purpose of this action research study was to analyze the structure of classroom discourse teachers use in their classrooms and investigate what adjustments can and should be made to coaching cycles, collaborations, and/or PD opportunities to see an increase in EL student's speaking proficiency scores. A second goal of the action research was to investigate teachers' perceptions on what is required for having intentional and planned out instructional conversations and how they can affect an EL student's speaking proficiency and language scores.

Speaking was chosen as the domain to investigate because EL students in the district consistently scored lower in the speaking domain of the ACCESS assessment compared to reading and listening. While the writing score, on average, is the lowest score students received district wide, the writing domain was not chosen because the speaking domain tends to develop first for EL students before the writing domain (WIDA, 2020). Multiple positive outcomes were expected by conducting action research in this district. First, results directly benefit the teachers of EL students in their goal to help students attain FEP status, second, it lead to strategies that can be used in the district so students can better comprehend the content through classroom discourse, and finally it benefited others who can use the results to pinpoint and determine further professional learning opportunities for teachers, colleagues, and administration in this district and in

other districts as well. As the researcher in this action research study, I am an outsider with the teachers in this district. I interacted with teachers to analyze the instructional conversations that occurred in classrooms where classroom discourse was being included. There are currently not many studies that show how teachers structure classroom talk in a way that allows students to construct meaning (McIntyre et al., 2006). With this action research, beneficial information on ways to assist teachers with structuring classroom discourse for EL students and increase an EL student's speaking proficiency score was gained.

Research Questions

The following research questions were specifically developed with the goal of better understanding the bonded system of the EL coaching model in this district. Specifically, these questions are asked to understand what supports and/or hinders the use of classroom discourse with ELs to then tailor future professional learning opportunities for the teachers and administrators in this district.

- *What structures promote high levels of classroom discourse for ELs?*
- *What obstacles hinder high levels of classroom discourse for ELs?*

Rationale

According to Kim et al. (2017), a descriptive study is implemented when research goals aim to gain insight on a phenomenon by asking questions and discovering themes. Considering the specific issues and possible intervention areas for this problem of practice were not yet explicitly known, a descriptive study aligned with investigating possible intervention steps to overcome this problem of practice. This action research helped discover what areas of our coaching model and professional learning experiences

are supporting and/or hindering the use of classroom discourse to support an EL student's speaking domain score on the ACCESS test. The research questions also yielded information on possible options for implementing the best ways to overcome the problem of ineffective implementation of classroom discourse. Data collected led to the continued support of the coaches in the district, the administrators, teachers I collaborate with, and the EL students I support in the district in which I work. Additionally, the study also offered insight into other schools with similar demographics.

Positionality

My role in this action research study was a former EL curriculum specialist in an urban district with plans to lead EL PD in the future. The study was conducted while I held a teaching position of Language Arts Specialist at one of the elementary schools which contains the most ELs among all elementary schools in the district. As an EL curriculum specialist, I had the unique position of working with EL instructional coaches at all elementary sites, administrators at the elementary sites, and numerous teachers from kindergarten through 12th grade in the district. Enrollment data indicated the EL population makes up about 28% of all kindergarten through 12th grade students enrolled in the district. At the elementary level, EL students make up about 40% of the EL population (Infinite Campus, 2022). My partner and I were both in charge of all the paperwork, data, and assessments for the EL students at the district as well as professional learning and ongoing PD through coaching cycles and district wide initiatives. I have lived and worked in our school community for 12 years.

Keeping one's positionality in mind during action research is extremely important because it keeps the researcher honest and reflective about the limitations of various

positions they take compared to the participants in their setting (Herr & Anderson, 2015). In this action research, I was a language arts specialist and former EL curriculum specialist and supervisor to the EL instructional coaches. I also spent time collaborating with administrators and teachers as an EL consultant. In this study, I researched current processes in our coaching model and how they lead to implementing classroom discourse. The research goals supported implementing and continuing practices that can and will increase an EL students speaking language proficiency. As the researcher, I sought to understand what processes and systems support and/or hinder effective classroom discourse use for our EL students in relation to teachers who have been through the EL coaching cycles with an EL instructional coach. My positionality in this action research, according to Herr and Anderson's (2015) continuum, was an insider in collaboration with other insiders. I was an insider because I work in my district and am frequently in classrooms as are the teachers with whom I collaborate. However, I was also an outsider to the teachers as I am not a classroom teacher, but a language arts specialist.

Research Design

Walliman (2008) emphasized that all research is foundationally grounded in philosophies or research paradigms. The foundation of this DIP is rooted in a pragmatic philosophy: the goal of this research was to analyze a problem and discover themes. A secondary goal at the end of study was to then develop an intervention targeted to the specific system (Chilisa, 2020). I accomplished my goals by implementing a descriptive case study. The type of research in this DIP was that of action research. Action research includes teachers, administration, and/or other school stakeholders conducting research

and solving significant problems within their educational work setting (Efron & Ravid, 2020). The methodology was appropriate for this DIP as the study sought to investigate the problem and the effectiveness of discourse practices in the classroom and it also sought to solve the problem of consistently low scores on EL student's speaking assessment. Data collected included a qualitative approach in this research design because this research seeks to understand teacher's perceptions of classroom discourse and how such perceptions can impact a student's speaking proficiency level (Efron & Ravid, 2020).

Various elementary schools in this urban district participated in the study for eight weeks in the school year. Six of those weeks included artifact data collection and two weeks included surveys and interviews. Participants from 13 elementary schools who were willing to participate in the study were vetted to determine if they met the criteria for the study. Mills et al. (2010) defined a descriptive case study as "one that is focused and detailed, in which propositions and questions about a phenomenon are carefully scrutinized and articulated at the outset" (p. 289). Five teachers participated in the descriptive case study to better understand and analyze the bonded system of EL support through coaching cycles while focusing on classroom discourse use. Criteria for teacher participation included at least three years with experience in the current EL coaching program, the teacher has EL students on their class list, and they must be a kindergarten through fifth grade teacher. The descriptive case study took eight weeks to complete with two weeks for interviews and survey data collection and six weeks for artifact data collection. After teachers who meet the criteria were selected, initial interviews began to better understand the participants involved and their level of comfort with classroom

discourse. I then set up a six-week data collection schedule to collect lesson plan artifacts and journal entries from journal prompts (filled out and collected through Microsoft Forms) to gather qualitative data about classroom discourse used in their classroom. Lesson plans and journal prompts were used throughout the six weeks to collect qualitative data about teacher's perceptions while looking at instruction through the lens of classroom discourse use. Finally, at the end of this study, I conducted a post interview and exit survey in the form of a Likert scale to collect their perceptions and reflections for using classroom discourse with their ELs.

Data Collection and Analysis

Based off the data collection mentioned in the previous section, this study included a qualitative approach to action research and data collection. Qualitative data was collected, as there is value in this method to answer the research questions. For this qualitative study, I used an embedded design in which qualitative data was used as the primary data source and quantitative data was used as a secondary support in data collection (Efron & Ravid, 2020). Cohen et al. (2018) maintained research collection methods are not always entirely one way or the other. The study used a case study design for data collection, as information was being sought and investigated from a bonded system, the EL coaching program in the district, and how it supports or hinders classroom discourse for ELs. Since this DIP included a qualitative approach, interviews, lesson plans, journal entries, surveys, and an observation were be collected as data from the participants and analyzed throughout the study. Merriam and Tisdale (2016) stated that if given the opportunity, researchers conducting qualitative research should collect and analyze data simultaneously to increase research validity and reliability. Tools to collect

the data included surveys through Microsoft forms before and after the descriptive case study, Zoom web conferencing tools for meetings with predetermined interview questions, journal prompts given and collected through Microsoft Forms, and lesson plans artifacts collected through email.

It is advised when undergoing action research using a qualitative study that a system of organizing and analyzing data be predetermined and explicitly written out before the data collection process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To analyze the data collected, coding, categorizing, and looking for themes and patterns was used in this study. The following was used to increase the validity of the study: triangulation amongst data sources, plenty of time spent collecting data, peer review, and documentation explaining how the data will be collected and reviewed. At the end of the study, the data was analyzed for patterns and indicators of the original research questions. Analysis focused primarily on one case study participant. A more detailed plan for the methodology of this descriptive study is outlined in chapter three of this dissertation.

Significance and Limitations of Study

Action research is a worthwhile endeavor as it seeks real-world change in the context of the researcher (Gillham et al. 2019). Action research was selected for this study because change is needed in our district. There is a real problem with EL students consistently scoring low on their speaking portion of their ACCESS test. There is also consistent frustration from EL coaches not seeing classroom discourse being used even when teachers are taught and modeled its value for ELs. EL students are in dire need of explicit language instruction on how to effectively engage in academic classroom

discourse in the classroom. It is also an issue of equity if EL students are not receiving content and language instruction in the classroom (Lau v. Nichols, 1974).

The results of this study directly benefited teachers and students on their journey of deep comprehension and discourse practices. While this study was expected to add to the wealth of knowledge on the topic of classroom discourse, it, however, is not a generalizable study. Themes and results, however, could be beneficial to settings with similar demographics. Generating ideas to solve the problem of EL students scoring low on their speaking proficiency domain was a goal of this study. Readers might find the ideas presented to be equally beneficial to their settings as they engage with the conclusions of this study.

While every research study has great potential for knowledge and understanding, there are also limitations to consider. Some limitations in this study included time restraints on meeting and planning with teachers, challenges of teachers being at school every day, and classroom management being an issue in the classroom. These limitations were considered when reviewing the results of this study.

Summary of Findings

The conclusion of this action research led to findings that were expected and findings that were surprising. While data was being collected, a priori coding was used to analyze the data as it related to Krashen's second language acquisition theory. This is the main theory to which data were analyzed. Codes that became evident during data collection became themes that connected to components of Krashen's theory as noted in Table 1.1. Throughout the case study that was being analyzed, data were connected to Krashen's theory of second language acquisition in the areas of lesson planning, lesson

delivery, and PD/collaboration for the goal of answering the research questions on practices and systems that support and hinder classroom discourse use for ELs.

While there were five participants who engaged in this action research study, only one was chosen as the focus for this case study analysis due to time restraints, participants opting out of the study during the study, and an overwhelming amount of data to analyze in the form of an action research study. Sam is the participant who is featured in this case study. Her data of lesson planning, lesson delivery, and PD/collaboration yielded valuable information for this problem of practice. During interviews and journal responses Sam claimed that classroom discourse is a daily embedded practice with her ELs, and she explained what she has done to set up a culture of classroom discourse. Her lesson plans and instructional presentations supported these claims; however, when visiting her classroom for observation, it was evident in the recording that EL students were using a simple level of classroom discourse and not engaging in deeper and meaningful ways with each other. For example, while viewing Figure 1.1 of the WIDA proficiency level descriptors (PLDs) (WIDA, 2020) and examining observation transcripts from Sam's classroom, students were using the criteria of "discourse: organization of language" at the end of level two and three by using short and predictable sentences in their collaborative groups.

This led to an analysis of the research questions. The first being "*What structures promote high levels of classroom discourse for ELs?*" Data from a few different participants in this study concluded that current PD, collaboratively working with coaches, having time to practice new strategies, and having a quick reference guide for teachers all contribute to deeper and more meaningful discursive learning were all

beneficial to promoting classroom discourse. The second research of “*What obstacles hinder high levels of classroom discourse for ELs?*” included surface level PD rather than deeper and targeted PD for veteran teachers and the difficulty of meeting the needs of EL students with various proficiency levels in one class. These findings communicated the need for alternative professional learning opportunities targeted at individual teachers for their individual student needs rather than a blanketed program for all teachers in the district.

Significance

This action research is significant for multiple reasons. First, EL students are underperforming in output of language, and it is important for teachers and school leaders to address the situation and take steps to remedy it. It is a matter of educational equity. Second, this research led to modifications based off what teachers need and what they are currently doing in their classrooms to see positive changes in student output of language. Finally, this research started the process of developing interventive measures to assist with seeing deeper levels of classroom discourse with EL students.

Organization of the Dissertation

The chapters that follow detail the DIP and all aspects necessary for a valid action research dissertation. Chapter two will present the literature review in detail focusing on the theoretical framework, the history of EL rights in our country, the history and effectiveness of discourse research, and the various coaching models used in schools today. Chapter three will detail the process and implementation of the methodology in greater lengths than mentioned previously. Chapter four shares an analysis of the findings and results of the study presented. Finally, chapter five states the implications,

conclusions, and recommendations of next steps in concluding this study. Additionally, I have included a list of definitions that will assist the reader in better understanding the topic of classroom discourse in the context of the district in this DIP. References, an Appendix page, charts, and tables are mapped out at the end of this dissertation.

Definitions of Key Terms

ACCESS for ELLs- Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners. The large-scale test addresses the academic English language proficiency (ELP) standards at the core of the WIDA Consortium's approach to instructing and evaluating the progress of English language learners. The ACCESS for ELLs® test is the annual language assessment required by NCLB and ESSA. (WIDA, 2020).

Curriculum Specialist- a role in an educational setting that supports curriculum decisions in a district by researching best practices in the field, planning professional learning opportunities for teachers in the district, creating and sharing curriculum goals, and evaluating curriculum resources (Ambrosie & Haley, 1991).

Classroom Discourse- The term classroom discourse refers to all forms of talk that teachers and students use to communicate with each other in the classroom. Talking, or conversation is the medium through which most teaching takes place, so the study of classroom discourse is the study of the process of face-to-face classroom teaching. (Cazden, 2001; Jocuns, 2012; Nuthall, 2020).

English Learner (EL)- students whose first language is one other than English (Freeman, 2002).

EL Instructional Coach- A school position to provide leadership in the development of the teaching and learning of teachers at a school by pushing into the classroom and forming a collaborative partnership with teachers. (Union Public Schools Job Description, 2018).

English Language Development (ELD)- “Refers to specific instructional practices that teachers use to develop EL students’ oral and written language skills in hopes to help them achieve language proficiency” (Onchwari & Keengwe, 2021, p. 10).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)- A test plan enacted in 2015 to ensure high-quality tests are used to educate students, measure progress, and include equity in our schools. (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Fluent English Proficiency (FEP)- Having an ACCESS score of 4.8 or higher, therefore, proving fluent in the English Language. (WIDA, 2020).

Language Features- “examples of language resources students may need to carry out particular functions” (WIDA, 2020).

Language Functions- “Showcase common language patterns students might use to meet grade-level cluster language expectations as derived from academic content standards” (WIDA, 2020).

Microsoft Forms- An online and secure data collection tool used to easily create and analyze surveys, quizzes, and polls (Microsoft Forms, 2022).

Output- Spoken or written communication to deliver a message (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

Professional Development- Learning and coaching that takes place in person or virtually to see growth and to develop in a certain area of your career (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2019).

WIDA- An EL resource for schools that stands for "World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment." WIDA offers "proven tools and support to help educators and multilingual learners succeed." (WIDA, 2020).

Zoom Web Conferencing Tool- An online video conferencing tool to connect people together over live video feeds (Zoom, 2021).

Chapter 1 Table

Table 1.1 Themes and Codes that Apply to Krashen's Language Acquisition Hypotheses

Krashen's Language Acquisition Hypotheses	Definition	Deductive Themes that Apply
Acquisition Learning Distinction Hypothesis	Language Acquisition (natural) vs language learning (planned).	Intentional and Clear Language Learning Opportunities: Natural vs planned, issues with time (teacher and student), clarity on language development
Natural Order Hypothesis	The structure of language occurs in a natural order.	Systematic Delivery: Targeted PD, moving beyond initial discourse strategies, using language scores to improve discourse (PLDs) (difficult but powerful), and intentional language scaffolds
The Monitor Hypothesis	Acquisition and Learning are used in specific ways, before output is evident, time, focus on form and rules should be addressed.	Models and Accountability: Modeled examples, planned discourse, documented quick checks
Input Hypothesis	Language is a structure that builds on what we already know	Cyclical Learning: Collaboration, application, reflection, repetition
The Affective Filter Hypothesis.	Factors that affect lang: motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety	Growth Mindset: Observation vs video PD, collaboration, teacher vs student control, community, personal goals student/teacher ownership

Chapter 1 Figure

Grades 4-5 WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors for the Expressive Communication Mode (Speaking, Writing, and Representing)
Toward the end of each proficiency level, when scaffolded appropriately, multilingual learners will...

Criteria	End of Level 1	End of Level 2	End of Level 3	End of Level 4	End of Level 5	Level 6
DISCOURSE Organization of language	Create coherent texts (spoken, written, multimodal) using...					
	short sentences linked by topic to convey an emerging sense of purpose (to inform, explain, argue, narrate)	sentences that convey intended purpose with emerging organization (topic sentence, supporting details)	short text that conveys intended purpose using predictable organizational patterns (signaled with some paragraph openers: <i>first, and then, then</i>)	expanding text that conveys intended purpose using generic (not genre-specific) organizational patterns across paragraphs (introduction, body, conclusion) with a variety of paragraph openers	text that conveys intended purpose using genre-specific organizational patterns (statement of position, arguments, call to action)	text that conveys intended purpose using genre-specific organizational patterns with strategic ways of signaling relationships between paragraphs and throughout text (<i>the first reason, the second reason, the evidence is...</i>)
DISCOURSE Cohesion of language	Connect ideas across a whole text through...					
	some frequently used cohesive devices (repetition, demonstratives)	some formulaic cohesive devices (pronoun referencing, etc.)	a growing number of cohesive devices (emerging use of articles to refer to the same word, synonyms, antonyms)	an expanding variety of cohesive devices (given/new, whole/part, class/subclass)	a flexible number of cohesive devices (substitution, ellipsis, given/new)	a wide variety of cohesive devices used in genre- and discipline-specific ways
DISCOURSE Density of language	Elaborate or condense ideas through...					
	a few types of elaboration (adding familiar adjectives to describe nouns: <i>maple syrup</i>)	some types of elaboration (adding newly learned or multiple adjectives to nouns (<i>thick, sweet, sticky maple syrup</i>))	a growing number of types of elaboration (adding articles or demonstratives to nouns: <i>the dark syrup</i>)	a variety of types of elaboration (adding in a variety of adjectives including concrete and abstract nouns: <i>the long, slow process...</i>)	a wide variety of types of elaboration (adding in embedded clauses after the noun: <i>the sap which boiled for six hours...</i>)	flexible range of types of elaboration that includes embedded clauses and condensed noun groups (elaborating: <i>a sweet sap that turned into a delicious syrup after hours of boiling</i> and condensing through nominalization: <i>this tedious process</i>)

Figure 1.1 WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors for the Expressive Communication Mode (WIDA, 2020, pg. 137)

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To better assist with the education of English Learner (EL) students and to help teachers feel more confident in educational decisions to support EL students, the role of EL instructional coach has been created in many schools in the United States. Historically, many teachers do not feel confident to effectively teach EL students (Brubacher, 2013). Low teacher efficacy, as it relates to teaching ELs, will often result in teachers using strategies and practices that are better suited for non-EL students. An EL instructional coach will enter a classroom, observe the students and teachers, collaborate, share knowledge based on student data, plan lessons with teachers, model and co-teach new practices, collect data on the effectiveness of these new practices, and debrief while analyzing the results. Using an EL instructional coach to support teachers with ELs is one way to address the serious lack of teacher efficacy with EL best practices. EL instructional coaches explain requirements to meet the needs of EL students and address the lack of educational equity in how we teach EL students.

Statement of the Problem of Practice

There are many areas an EL instructional coach can target when attempting to raise the level of effective EL instruction in a classroom. As stated earlier in chapter one, for this study, the topic of classroom discourse use with ELs will be researched. My PoP is that the speaking domain is consistently a lower score on an EL student's ACCESS exam as well as in everyday lessons. Additionally, teachers and students have a hard time

implementing classroom discourse effectively. The promotion of classroom discourse and using open-ended, thought-provoking questions helps EL students understand concepts on a deeper level and grows their language development. A higher level of comprehension can be seen when a student is able to explain and extend their thinking according to Webb's (2007) Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels. When applied to classroom instruction, these DOK levels can increase deeper thought processes, promote and encourage classroom discourse use, and increase an EL student's speaking domain score on their language assessment.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to analyze the structure of classroom discourse teachers use with their ELs as well as analyze teacher perspectives for implementing classroom discourse after going through coaching cycles, PD, and collaborations. EL instructional coaches currently implement coaching cycles targeted at supporting ELs and a teacher's ability to teach ELs effectively. Gaining clarity about how teachers use classroom discourse for ELs and discovering information about which possible interventions could be useful for teachers with ELs is one goal for this research. For ELs, having intentional classroom discourse in daily lessons will increase their understanding of classroom concepts and the effectiveness of increasing an EL student's speaking domain on their language test. Research questions for this DIP include:

- *What structures promote high levels of classroom discourse for ELs?*
- *What obstacles hinder high levels of classroom discourse for ELs?*

These questions were designed to take steps toward solving the problem of classroom discourse use with EL students. My positionality as a researcher and as a

language arts specialist who also provides PD and consultation to the district is that of an insider in collaboration with other insiders (Herr & Anderson, 2015). I work in a school in the district with other classroom teachers, but I also support and deliver PD to teachers in the district. It is also important to note my outsider status and the outsider status of teachers as it relates to our EL students. There are not many teachers in our district who are ELs and fully understand ELs. Therefore, most teachers and the EL instructional coaches are considered outsiders to their EL students.

Chapter Organization

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, is organized to explain a clear organizational history of linguistic theories, Federal civil rights laws for EL students, discourse research and use throughout the years, studies using classroom discourse, and a justification for using the EL instructional coaching model. It is also important to note that the connection to social justice issues that relate to effectively instructing EL students will be mentioned throughout this chapter.

Literature Review Methodology

This study began by exploring notable researchers in the field of discourse instruction. Peer-reviewed articles, books, and works-of-study were searched that have a foundation in social language theories. These articles, books, and works-of-study were researched using the University of South Carolina online library Journal Search Tool. Peer-reviewed articles and books were found on ProQuest, Ebsco host, ERIC research database, and Google Scholar. From there and using an annotated bibliography, I was able to synthesize authors who repeatedly showed up in the research and discover a rigorous amount of research relevant to the topic of classroom discourse.

Theoretical Framework

The next section discloses the historical theories that relate to the topic of this DIP. Three foundational theories are discussed that connect to the topic of classroom discourse. The first is Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory, second is Bandura's (1971) social learning theory, and third is Krashen's (1982) second language acquisition theory.

Social Development Theory

Lev Vygotsky is a foundational theorist that many in the field of education are aware of and learn about beginning with undergraduate preservice teacher programs. Vygotsky (1978) maintained that logical thinking and language development in children is attained in greater lengths when social interactions with adults, peers, and the world are included in their day to day lives. Vygotsky's social development theory addresses the important role that social interaction has when looking at the development of cognition (McLeod, 2014). An educator, using social processes and activities, helps foster cognitive learning starting with where students are and connecting known concepts to new learning through social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky's work evaluating the relationship between a teacher and students in the social aspect is seen as superior to others with theories of how students learn. Part of his theory includes using the zone of proximal development (ZPD) which is defined as the gap or distance a learner has between their current academic or linguistic level in which they can perform alone and the level they have potential to grow towards (Vygotsky, 1978). Looking at a learner's developmental zone and delivering verbal interactions to help a learner grow toward higher stages of learning is the goal of using the ZPD (Eun,

2017). Considering a learners ZPD is crucial to an individual student's learning as various learners at different levels will react and grow depending on their personal ZPD. Eun (2017) stated teaching learners in the exact same way and the exact same environment even when they have different levels of ZPDs will result in not all learners being able to master and perform with the rest of the class.

Vygotsky's theory of social development also addresses the differences between adult and children language learners. Both adults and children work within their ZPD by imitating and experimenting with language (Vygotsky, 1987). The difference between adults and children when it comes to language learning involves language delivery. Adults tend to focus on getting the language precisely correct while focusing on the grammar. Children, however, tend to experiment in a free environment since they are not yet conditioned to focus on the right answers (Wertsch, 1991).

Lastly, Vygotsky's theory of social development discusses the difference between native language learners and foreign language learners. Vygotsky (1987) contends that native language learners have an easier time acquiring and using the grammar and phonetic features of the language in a subconscious state. On the other hand, school aged children and adults know and are aware of the grammar and phonetic features that differ from their native language. It takes foreign language learners longer to use the language easily and develop mastery (Vygotsky, 1987).

Vygotsky's theory connects to this DIP in a few ways. First, this DIP seeks to promote the use of social interactions to boost academic learning. Second, keeping in mind Vygotsky's ZPD in this study will be important when considering the confidence and growth of student learners and adult learners. Third, promoting classroom discourse

and making it a normal habit in classes will help to promote the natural flow of language rather than students feeling self-conscious about getting the words and grammar correct. Finally, Vygotsky's theories of foreign language learning are important to keep in mind to help with language mastery for second language learners.

Social Learning Theory

The social learning theory developed by Bandura (1971) highlights the theory of learning that states that it is essential for a learner to observe, learn from modeling, and imitate the behaviors of others for true learning to occur. Bandura's social learning theory ties closely with the theories of classical conditioning discovered by Pavlov (1926) and operant conditioning devised by Skinner (1938). In Bandura's theory, learning is behavioral, and children learn best from their environment and by observing other's behaviors (Bandura, 1971). Social situations create opportunities for learners to observe and learn from others which can lead to developing learners with deep concept development.

Bandura (1971) wrote that the social learning theory explains human behavior with the framework of back-and-forth interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors. There are three features that Bandura (1971) highlights in his theory. The first feature is that observation and direct experiences can influence a learner's thoughts and behaviors. The next feature discusses a learner's ability to use symbols to represent and communicate information, experiences, and events with others. The third feature involves a learner's ability to self-regulate their own behavior when outside influences are involved.

Bandura's theory directly connects with the study in this DIP as it seeks to discover targeted strategies to positively change and help progress the discourse behaviors and abilities of EL students. Through interviews, artifact collection, and surveys, this study seeks to discover what steps can be made to see a positive change in the output of classroom discourse while keeping in mind the theory of social learning presented by Bandura.

Second Language Acquisition Theory

Krashen is one of the leading researchers and theorists in the field of linguistics and second language acquisition. According to Krashen (1982) second language learners have an easier time acquiring a second language when meaningful interactions exist and come about in a natural way. It is also helpful when more importance is put on the message and understanding as opposed to the grammar and form of the conversation. When students are allowed to converse in low anxiety situations and have clear and highly scaffolded directions for the conversation topic, second language acquisition is more likely to occur in a natural way and the learner is developmentally prepared (Krashen, 1982).

The theory that language learning occurs in a natural order is detailed in a series of hypotheses' that flow in a progression: acquisition learning distinction hypothesis, natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis.

The first hypothesis, acquisition learning distinction, discusses the difference between language acquisition and language learning. According to Krashen (1982), both are important for acquiring a second language. Krashen (1982) writes that language

acquisition occurs in the subconscious realm. With language acquisition, students are unaware that they are learning. In contrast, Krashen notes, language learning is consciously considering and learning the rules of language and using them in the correct way.

The second hypothesis, natural order, discusses a natural order that should occur when teaching the structure of a language. The natural order hypothesis supports a student's language development so that they can successfully reach language mastery (Krashen, 1982). For example, having time to reflect on a student's current language level and taking appropriate steps supports this hypothesis. Another example of the natural order hypothesis can be seen when an educator of ELs uses a student language proficiency to scaffold instruction in meaningful and powerful ways to support a student's growth and development (WIDA, 2020).

The third hypothesis, the monitor, explains that acquisition and learning have specific ways of being used. (Krashen, 1982). Krashen elaborates by stating that the monitor of conscious learning can change what is trying to be communicated before or after something is spoken. Before spoken and written output occurs three conditions are necessary for second language performers: Time, focus on form, and knowing the rules (Krashen, 1982).

The fourth hypothesis is the input hypothesis which states that language learners acquire the language, while on the other hand, non-language learners understand the structure of the language (Krashen, 1982). Language is made of a progression that is appropriate to where we are in the learning process. Therefore, acquisition precedes learning the rules.

The last hypothesis, the affective filter hypothesis, discusses the factors that affect the second language acquisition process: motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety (Krashen, 1982). These variables are influential in how successful or detrimental language learning can be for an EL. For an educator of ELs, considering the affective filter can lead to successful language acquisition and confidence for ELs in using their second language.

Owen (2018) summarizes Krashen's work by stating that being able to communicate is the most important aspect of language. The theory of second language learning directly relates to this study in that it highlights the importance of language acquisition to direct learning of educational concepts. Especially when teachers look at factors of EL students and understanding of educational objectives and standards.

Historical Background of an EL Student's Rights to Education

The next section of the literature review discusses the historical background of an EL student's right to education. The section will first explain the laws that were enacted and govern State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) in meeting ELs legal right to an equitable and comprehensive education comparable to their non-EL peers. Next, a summary of documents and mandates for SEAs and LEAs from the US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and the US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights will be discussed. Following suit, options for meeting those mandates are listed as well as barriers SEAs and LEAs face when trying to meet these mandates and legal obligations. Then the connection of meeting these legal mandates and how it ties to social justice is made. Finally, a justification for using EL instructional coaching and coaching cycles is given.

Civil Rights Laws for ELs

The United States has been a country of immigrants since its founding in 1776 (McCurdy, 2020). As a foundational educational system grew in our country, so did governing laws and regulations created by the government for the sake of a meaningful educational system. In this educational system were students from many different backgrounds including immigrant and EL students. Beginning in the mid-1900s, lawsuits were developed because of EL students not receiving an equitable education as compared to their English-speaking peers. In 1974, *Lau vs Nichols* ruled that under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, schools receiving federal funds must give ELs instruction that is meaningful to participate in educational programs (*Lau vs Nichols*, 1974). In another lawsuit, *Raymondville Independent School District* was charged as out of compliance when it came to addressing the needs of EL students according to the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974. The result was an assessment created to hold bilingual educational programs accountable for meeting EL student's needs. (*Castaneda vs Pickard*, 1978). Finally, *Plyer vs Doe* (1982) ruled that it is constitutionally illegal for states and educational programs to deny students free public education based on their status as an immigrant (*Plyer vs Doe*, 1982). These foundational lawsuits paved the way for more equitable education decisions for EL students.

Legal Obligations for ELs

Implementing and maintaining an EL program has proven to be more difficult than it seems. To assist SEAs and LEAs with meeting EL students' legal obligations for an equitable educational program, the US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and the US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights provided resources for SEAs

and LEAs to successfully implement EL programs. The US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights penned a letter for SEAs and LEAs. The letter explains the legal obligations ELs have to an equitable education under civil rights laws in order for SEAs and LEAs to stay in compliance (Llamon & Gupta, 2015). The US Department of Education also created a toolkit to provide SEAs and LEAs with resources to be able to meet the needs of ELs by law. The toolkit includes ten chapters related to all aspects of creating and maintaining a legal EL program that meets obligations. (King & Gil, 2016).

Options for Meeting Legal Obligations

The US Department of Education allowed SEAs and LEAs choice when determining which EL programs worked at their perspective sites. Options emerged for SEAs and LEAs to use in their schools that provided researched practices for supporting EL students. (Llamon & Gupta, 2015; King & Gil, 2016). To support SEAs and LEAs, a list of optional language assistance programs for SEAs to choose from to assist their students was written and posted online. These optional language assistance programs include English as a Second Language programs, English Language Development programs, Structured English Immersion programs, Transitional Bilingual Education, and Dual Language programs (Llamon & Gupta, 2015). The US Department of Education also created a tool kit for SEA and LEAs to use as needed to ensure their EL program meets all standards of excellence that the tool kit and state departments have in the form of a checklist (King & Gil, 2016).

Barriers to Implementing EL Programs

Unfortunately, even with all the research, resources, and support SEAs and LEAs are given from the state department for meeting the legal needs of EL students, SEAs still have difficulty maintaining absolute compliance (King & Gil, 2016). It is up to the SEAs and LEAs whether they apply and use the resources provided to ensure their EL programs comply with civil laws (King & Gil, 2016). Lack of compliance with civil rights laws could result in an audit of the SEA or LEA and possibly result in further consequences which often happens when a civil right is not being met (Llamon & Gupta, 2015).

The Importance of Equity for All

Keeping all of the components of the legal requirements for ELs in mind is an act of equity in and of itself. Over the years, EL laws have been enacted to ensure the legal obligations of ELs are met and many SEAs and LEAs have sought to make their EL programs more equitable. A study in Los Angeles (LA) school districts wanted to determine if the LA school districts who received extra funding for EL programs have evidence of more equity for EL students. The school system recognizes that a lack of equity in ELs is a problem that needs to be addressed (Lavadenz et al., 2019). Another study concluded that EL students have been marginalized throughout history receiving instruction from curriculum that is not in their best interest for meaningful education for all. ELs deserve equitable, quality education, and this starts with school leadership (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). There is power in meeting a student where they are and delivering instruction with their unique learning styles in mind. Understanding after a lesson may not exist for all learners. Therefore, different approaches to meet the specific needs of individual learners must be put into action in the classroom (Cazden, 2001). Johnston (2004) writes that students outside the hegemonic culture (i.e., ELs) experience

difficulty when teachers do not stop to consider cultural differences, background knowledge, or assume they know how to converse or respond. Teachers are not always explicit with how to do things. They often assume all students can do what is asked of them in the classroom, and that is not equitable for our EL population.

Justification for EL Instructional Coaching and Coaching Cycles

To ensure a just and equitable education for ELs that meets civil rights laws, one option of support is the use of EL instructional coaching or student-centered coaching (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2019; Pierce, 2014; Sweeney, 2010). According to Sweeney and Mausbach (2019), student-centered coaching is “setting specific goals for students and working collectively to ensure that the goals are met” (p. 32). Included in the student-centered framework are collaborations with teachers, sharing researched-based practices, testing out those practices, and debriefing over the student data to decide if the chosen practice was successful. Pierce (2014) confirms that coaching decreases the research to practice gap that teachers have a difficult time with. According to Sweeney’s (2010) student-centered coaching approach, a SEA or LEA will see a higher impact on student learning when a teacher and coach look at how the student is performing with data and success vs looking at how the teacher is performing. Allen (2006) confirms in the book “Becoming a Literacy Leader” that as an instructional coach it is important to remember that most teachers desire a professional conversation and collaboration with coaches and not to be told they are doing everything wrong. Therefore, student-centered coaching, focusing on the student and their data, can greatly help in this aspect. The EL students that are being taught benefit as well.

Historical Foundation of Discourse in the Classroom

There are many areas and aspects of EL growth that are effective in supporting second language acquisition. One leading researcher in the area of second language acquisition for ELs is Echevarria et al. (1995; 2008; 2016) who writes of several components necessary for ELs success in the classroom. These include “Lesson, preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice and application, lesson delivery, and review and assessment” (Echevarria, 2008, p. 43). For this study, the component of interaction and strategies as they relate to student discourse will be investigated. The following lays out the history of discourse in education as a learning tool, the various models and frameworks for using discourse, and the barriers and justifications for discourse in education when it comes to EL students. The end of this section will also relay a link to social justice implications for ELs.

Historical Timeline of Discourse Models

Classroom discourse has been given many names throughout history. These include educational dialogue (Muhonen et al., 2018), dialogical pedagogy (Skidmore, 2006), dialogic teaching (Alexander, 2006), dialogic inquiry (Wells, 1999), dialogic instruction (Nystrand, 1997), exploratory talk (Mercer & Dawes, 2008), accountable talk (Wolf et al., 2006; Cazden 2001), collaborative reasoning (Rheznitskaya et al., 2001), transactive talk (Azmitia, 1998), and cooperative talk (Gillies, 2013; Newman, 2017). For this study, the term classroom discourse will be used concerning the foundational work of Cazden (2001) on the topic of discourse.

Models and Framework Theories Researched

There is quite an extensive amount of research on the various frameworks that encompass classroom discourse (Culatta, 2010; Nuthall, (n.d.); Nystrand, 2006; Jocuns, 2013; Badwan, 2018). Classroom strategies historically started with “drills, demonstrations, objects and pictures, graded tasks, controlled dialogues, correction of pronunciation, and banning classroom use of learners’ first language(s)” (Badwan, 2018, p. 2). Then a new approach started to be introduced: communicative language teaching (CLT), intending to boost student’s communication skills with “pair and group work activities, games, songs, and information-gap and other learner-centered exercises” (Badwan, 2018, pg. 2). Finally, task-based language learning was introduced as an effective instructional approach, and this included authentic communication.

Culatta (2010) maintained that classroom discourse is a critical component of effective classroom instruction and results in a deeper understanding of the topic. Further, Culatta (2010) wrote that students construct meaning with classroom discourse by being emotionally involved in the topic, by having contributions acknowledged and elaborated on, by being asked various types of questions, and by listening to relevant comments on the topic. Nuthall (n.d.) wrote that different types of questions cause students to understand the curriculum in deeper ways. Certain mechanisms can assist students in achieving a deeper understanding of topics. These include encouraging students to construct explanations, ask questions, challenge beliefs and knowledge, and seek out help when needed.

For the most part, teachers agree that discourse in the classroom is a beneficial practice resulting in a deeper understanding of topics and teaching points (Nystrand,

2006). Nystrand reported that EL students showed growth in comprehension and elaboration after discourse practices were used in their classroom as opposed to EL students in the classroom using a read and study method of learning. One framework frequently used in the classroom is that of the Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) framework (Jocuns, 2013). Jocuns stated that the IRE structure limits the amount of conversation from each student. Secondly, a complex array of conversation behaviors occurs in the classroom when discourse that moves beyond the IRE model is analyzed.

Barriers to Implementation

Even with teachers agreeing that classroom discourse is a beneficial practice for students, maintaining a discourse rich classroom is not an easy task to accomplish. There are some barriers to achieving this goal. Students often look for the right answer instead of formulating a meaningful response (Candela, 1998). Teachers are also used to having control of the classroom and conversations, and discourse encourages teachers to give up this control to develop student efficacy of confidence in participating in classroom discourse. Lastly, Candela (1998) wrote that a teacher's instructional style can affect a student's participation in classroom discourse. Therefore, it is imperative to look at all factors that could lead to success when implementing classroom discourse.

Equitable Education as a Civil Right

Overall, looking at the civil rights lawsuits, laws, and government documents, the goal of education for ELs is that it is equitable, research-based, and effective. If teachers and schools continue to teach curriculum using strategies and practices that do not consider the unique needs of ELs, then schools will continue to be in a place of inequity

for EL students. Unfortunately, many educational stakeholders have an unclear understanding of what is required to effectively teach ELs (Lavadenz et al., 2019).

One of the biggest factors of an equitable school for ELs is a strong partnership and collaboration between the school principal, general education teacher, and the EL teacher (Theohatis & O'Toole, 2011). Theoharis et al. (2011) stated that studying ongoing collaboration between the general education teacher, the EL teachers, and the paraprofessional leads to closing the achievement gap between ELs and English-speaking peers. When schools took steps to reform their ESL program for the betterment of EL equity, growth in language and content knowledge was the result (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

If equity for all is the goal of education, it is important to note that research suggests that students outside the dominant culture need to be taught the social norms and expectations to be successful with classroom discourse (Jocuns, 2013). Cazden (2001) stated that understanding after a lesson may not exist for all learners. Therefore, support for learners who do not have a strong background in discourse and conversations needs to be provided. As stated previously, Johnston (2004) discussed the importance of considering multiples factors to see the success of discourse use with ELs. These factors include culturally responsive teaching, understanding and support the development of background knowledge, and teaching students the conversation rules to be successful based off their personal proficiency levels.

Effective Use of Discourse and Language in the Classroom

Classroom discourse, as mentioned previously, is not a new concept in educational conversations and research. Various studies have been enacted and delivered

showing how classroom discourse supports academic learning and gaining content knowledge. The following studies include research that is related to the study and research goals of this DIP.

Discourse Studies and Their Results

Numerous studies have been created to determine the effects of classroom discourse in schools and with student comprehension and learning of content topics. Understanding and considering the studies previously implemented around classroom discourse will help guide this study to be presented in a unique way to add to the research. The following paragraphs summarize these studies and reports what their results and findings were.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Echevarria is one of the leading researchers in the field of second language acquisition for EL students. Echevarria (1995) held a study to determine the effects of using instructional conversations on the language and development of Hispanic students with learning disabilities. The study also sought to determine if instructional conversations influence student achievement. To determine these research questions the “10 Elements of Instructional Conversation” format was implemented. After comparing both teaching methods (instructional conversations and traditional lesson structures), the results indicated that instructional conversations yield higher levels of discourse and greater participation within the conversation topic than that of the traditional basal reading instruction.

Newman (2017) wrote of a “metatalk” discourse pedagogy created specifically for the study and argued it as an effective strategy for increasing dialogue between peers and increasing classroom talk. Newman (2017) stated that discourse in the classroom has long

since been recognized as an effective strategy, yet it is rarely used correctly, even with research claiming its benefits. The study sought to add to the existing research base on discourse being an effective classroom strategy. Information collected shows a progressive flow of how talk and language relate to bigger vocabularies in early childhood education, which leads to better self-regulation in young children, which then leads to better early literacy. The study began with one group of students only being able to list characteristics of quality talk instead of linking their thoughts to specific points they observe in the lesson. After a few lessons on quality talk, students started to show connections between the characteristics and the language frames they were taught about metatalk, but still somewhat relying on categorizing. By the final lessons, students could process metatalk with more quality conversations. Their understanding of what quality talk was had solidified and increased from the beginning of the lessons.

At a suburban school, McIntyre et al. (2006) implemented a study to explain how the teacher guided her students to be successful in a dialogue conversation with their peers. The goal of this study was to “Describe how one primary teacher promoted small group dialogue about books and literary concepts” (McIntyre et. al., 2006, p. 36). The study resulted in the knowledge that explicit scaffolding and modeling of talk moves in lessons led to the overall success of classroom dialogue. The teacher’s experience led her to adjust instructional practices based off what her students needed at the time rather than follow the planned-out lesson. This resulted in more powerful dialogue and successful conversations. The positive culture of the teacher’s classroom led to trust and students being more willing to take conversational risks with each other and show respect for one

another which helped to enable dialogue between students in the class (McIntyre et al., 2006).

Muhonen et al. (2018) conducted a study to discover if quality educational dialogue is associated with students' academic performance in the areas of language arts and physics/chemistry. The study analyzed various teaching patterns of different levels of quality during lessons by coding patterns of quality educational dialogue. Quantitative results indicated that quality educational dialogue resulted in students increased academic performance. The higher the rating of educational dialogue, the higher student's grades were in subjects. Qualitative results revealed mostly teacher-initiated patterns of educational dialogue that were beneficial to students in both subjects (Muhonen et al., 2018).

In a bilingual classroom, this next study analyzed how classroom talk (teacher talk and pupil talk) was used and determined its effects on the students involved (Puasa et al. 2017). The study highlighted the benefits of facilitating more pupil talk. Research suggests that teachers do most of the talking in the classroom (Puasa, 2017). Next the study explained pertinent ideas around the framework of classroom talk: Teacher talk, organizing and managing content, asking questions, giving feedback, correcting, modifying speech; Pupil talk- reciprocal conversation, questions, responses to questions (Puasa et al., 2017). The results of this study indicated that teachers attempted to use classroom conversations in English rather than students' first language (L1 language) and using the talking techniques in these bilingual classes proved difficult. There was more student talk in their home language since their vocab and confidence was low in English. The study resulted in a list of recommendations for the teachers: vary linguistic inputs;

avoid translation to encourage problem solving and student voice; avoid the expression, “Do you understand?”; do not answer for students; use wait time for them to discover the answer; introduce useful expressions that could be used daily during conversations to offer support; deliver clear input; maintain teacher excellence in both target language and content knowledge.

Almost all studies and articles researched on the topic of classroom discourse reference Cazden in their literature. Cazden (2001) in chapter three of the book “Classroom Discourse” compared traditional and nontraditional (discourse driven) lessons. Cazden (2001) explained and gave examples of IRE (traditional) discourse lessons and discourse-intensive (nontraditional) discourse lessons. The results were that students in the lessons with discourse intensive instruction had a deeper understanding than those in the traditional lessons. However, Cazden went on to write that comparing the discourse in the traditional and nontraditional sense is not to belittle one or the other. It is to help teachers see the benefit of having multiple ways to teach and determine which way is the most effective course of action for certain objectives, learning styles and cultural differences (Cazden, 2001).

In the specific content area of science instruction, Groves (1997) conducted a study that investigated teacher’s attempts to encourage student voice in the classroom and facilitate scientific dialogue. The goal of this study was to see if encouraging student dialogue would benefit and support a student’s ability to build theories based on evidence and their understanding. The study videotaped eight different dialogue attempts in the classroom, reviewed the dialogue in each session, and made a progression from the first session to the eighth session. Groves (1997) sought to see progress in both content

knowledge, understanding and progress in dialogue participation and mastery. The results showed that by intentionally including dialogue in the science lessons, the students were able to display higher levels of dialogue use as opposed to when traditional lessons were taught. The study did point out the limitations and further investigations needed to steer students away from simple discussion and toward genuine dialogue amongst peers.

Another article focused on science education and discourse practices and included a unique analysis of two different science classrooms. Barber (2018) investigated two science classrooms teaching the same content (density) but employing two different methods. In the first classroom, students were taught what density was, shown the equation for solving density, and allowed to practice finding the density of various objects in centers they rotated through. In the second classroom, the teacher embedded conversation throughout an investigation before students ever attempted to practice solving for density. The teacher connected new learning to what they already knew, scheduled plenty of time for conversation and collaboration, and students were able to build their understanding of density. Barber (2018) found the only thing that was different in the two classrooms was the fact that the second classroom used a simulation that allowed for cooperative learning, prediction making, analyzing conclusions, and being able to justify conclusions with evidence. The students from the second class were able to explain density in their own words whereas the first class was only able to regurgitate facts and use the formula (Barber, 2018). The second class, Barber (2018) maintained, had a conceptual understanding of density through the teacher's use of higher levels of thinking activities in Webb's (2002) DOK chart. Barber (2018) reports that "Applying DOK to lesson planning and instruction allows students to develop critical

thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as conceptual understanding needed to be successful in today's society." These higher-level DOK activities can be and are supported by classroom discourse and student conversations (Webb, 2002).

One final author to analyze is the work of Johnston (2004) in his book titled "Choice Words." Johnson's book, as stated earlier in this chapter, discussed the power of teacher and student conversations in classroom as he maintains that "children grow into the intellectual life around them" (Johnston, 2004, p. 65). For a teacher to build a caring, respectful community of learners who converse with each other, Johnston suggested using the following "choice words" with students in the classroom to positively affect the discourse environment:

- "We"
- "Who else would like that book?"
- "How do you think she feels about that?"
- "Any compliments?"
- "You guys say such important things, it amazes me you would talk while others are taking."
- "I wonder..."
- "Are there any other ways to think about that? Any other opinions?"
- "What are you thinking? Stop and talk to your neighbor about it."
- "You managed to figure that out with each other's help. How did you do that?"
- "I notice... that when he was talking it sort of jogged your mind—what were you thinking?"

- “You know...that just gave me a memory. Thank you. I’ll just write it down.
- “How do you know when a conversation is finished?”
- “This is how you go about making a large decision with a lot of parts. You take it in parts. Discussion is now open on how to decide which ones”
(Johnston, 2004, pp. 66-74).

Transforming the language of the classroom and using words that promote student thinking and problem solving, according to Johnston (2004), will lead to students being able to think on a deeper level and result in a more thorough understanding of classroom concepts and objectives being taught. It is important to note, however, that true change in language, questioning, and classroom interactions and habits can only take place with the right support and a meaningful understanding as to why the change is necessary.

The Importance of Strategies for Marginalized Groups

Using practices that directly relate to increasing the learning of marginalized students is an act of social justice. Theoharis (2011) maintained that focusing on mastery on instructional techniques is key to an inclusive classroom for ELs where being different is normal and seen as an asset. Teachers also need to know their students and know which students need more support and which need less support with instructional strategies, like classroom discourse (Johnston, 2004). Cazden (2001) also stated that different levels of support and approaches to individual learners must happen for a truly equitable classroom to exist.

Related Research on EL Instructional Coaching Models for Classroom Discourse

Based off the research shared above, strategies and scaffolds are needed to effectively teach EL students and help them achieve FEP status in their language development. The following section outlines how an EL instructional coaching model at a school can positively affect discourse and the language development of EL students. The section will begin with laying out the reasons a coaching model is beneficial, then it will describe coaching options schools have used and do use with teachers, and finally it will list strategies for implementation of the EL instructional coaching model.

Justification for Needing Coaching for ELs

Even though many teachers agree that discourse in the classroom is a beneficial practice resulting in a deeper understanding of topics and teaching points, it is still not being utilized in most classroom situations (Nystrand, 2006). Professional learning takes place to better equip teachers with tools to effectively teach ELs. However, Sweeney and Mausbach (2019) stated that coaching cycles and working one on one with an instructional coach make more of an impact on student learning than PD, book studies, and evaluations. Pierce (2014) explained what the research says about coaching and shared effective coaching techniques: PD, which does not happen often and is not usually delivered in context of classroom teachers, can result in only 20% of new practices being transferred in the classroom. However, a coaching model, which lasts six to eight weeks, can result in 80%-90% of new practices being transferred to the classroom (Pierce, 2014). One-on-one collaboration with teachers to see better educational understanding and outcomes from EL students will lead to a stronger sense of teacher efficacy in classrooms (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2019; Pierce, 2014).

Options for Coaching Models

Supporting teachers in their classrooms is the goal of many educational leaders, including myself as the research in this study. Principals and administrators see a benefit in a teacher being able to collaborate with an educational professional outside of the stressful evaluations and observations that administrators need to complete. There are many coaching models used in the United States for student and teacher achievement and support.

One coaching model the district in this study considered was from Knight's (2017) book "The Impact Cycle." In this book, Knight (2017) illustrated the steps and model necessary to see powerful improvements in teaching through coaching conversations. The book highlights three approaches to coaching: facilitative coaching, directive coaching, and dialogical coaching. The book primarily focuses on dialogical coaching and using deep coaching cycles to impart deep learning on teachers through the cycle. Since learning takes place in a deep way with this approach, coaching cycles can last up to 10 weeks at a time.

Another coaching model the district in this study considers is Sweeney's (2011) student centered coaching model. Student centered coaching is described as, "setting specific goals for students and working collectively to ensure that the goals are met" (Sweeney, 2011, p. 7). In student centered coaching, coaching goals include imparting highly effective teacher instructional techniques and increasing student results in the classroom. Effective coaching includes observation of students, teachers, and the data they produce, modeling of effective best practices, feedback that is specific and timely,

and alliance building to gain trust and effective collaboration (Pierce, 2014; Sweeney, 2011).

Sweeney and Mausbach (2019) added to what Sweeney (2011) originally wrote about student centered coaching in an article about powerful partnership between a coach and principal. Teachers and coaches should find “the thing” that effects student success which could include but is not limited to professional learning and coaching cycles, having clear expectations for practice in the classroom, and having and seeing high-quality instruction. Educational leaders should be knowledgeable of effective practices to use when looking at curriculum and instruction, and educational leaders should have classroom “look-fors” that are evidence-based practices.

For this district, Sweeney’s (2011) student centered coaching model better fits with meeting the legal obligations of the civil rights laws discussed early and to have a bigger impact on all EL students in the school. The EL department could not implement Knight’s deep coaching and meet federal requirements as it requires far too much time with individual teachers within its framework.

Strategies for Student-Centered Coaching Model

To effectively implement a coaching model in a school, it is helpful to look at the research of what has worked for coaching models in the past. There are research-based strategies schools, administration, and coaches have used to help achieve success in their coaching endeavors. These include effective strategies, limitations to consider, and the importance of a strong relationship.

Effective EL programs and coaching models make the learner the priority, make time for collaboration, reframe the curriculum using the lens of culturally responsive

teaching, seek bilingual educators, connect schools to families, and have a sound foundation of second language acquisition (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Pierce (2014) also mentioned that effective coaching includes observation of teachers, modeling of effective best practices, feedback that is specific and timely, and alliance building to gain trust and effective collaboration. A school having strong partnerships between the principal, coach, and teachers will also strongly benefit from an established coaching model (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2019).

The relationship between the principal, coach, and teachers should be one of balance and trust. Therefore, a possible limitation to consider is a poor alliance foundation and mistrust from teachers. To build alliance and trust from the teachers, Allen (2006) wrote that coaches should consider and listen to what teachers need, make time for reluctant teachers, time and practice are essential when teachers, coaches, and students trying new classroom techniques, breakdown and test new strategies before trying it with the whole school, establish trust, and use research as an aid for justification. Coaching strategies to build effective alliances with teachers include building interpersonal skills, collaboration skills, and having expertise in teaching practices. Also included is using the correct language with all three (Pierce, 2014).

After considering what strategies are needed at the school site and building relationships between principals, coaches, and teachers, then one can begin to consider school wide coaching goals. Coaching goals include imparting highly effective teacher instructional techniques and increasing student results in the classroom (Pierce, 2014).

Summary

There are many areas one can focus on when attempting to grow the language levels of EL students: lesson planning; building background; comprehensible input; strategies; interaction; practice/application; lesson delivery; review/assessment (Echevarria et al., 2011). Although each factor of second language acquisition has importance in a classroom, for the purpose of this study student interaction in the form of classroom discourse will be the focus. Many researchers have reported the positive effects of using classroom discourse for EL students and non-EL students alike. These researchers agree that classroom discourse leads to students who can think deeply about concepts and an increase in classroom interactions.

As stated earlier in this chapter, there is a low transfer of theory to practice when teachers receive sporadic PD, attend workshops, and participate in book studies that are all not directly related to the context of their classrooms. The EL instructional coaching model that focuses on student centered coaching will directly relate to a teacher's classroom and will result in a higher transfer of theory to practice from the teachers involved. Having this type of collaboration and support in the classroom and in context to specific students will benefit all stakeholders involved.

The research and components of this study support each other and lead to a more just and equitable education for ELs. Equitable education for ELs is accomplished by considering the laws and rights of ELs, implementing a strategy (classroom discourse) that will directly result in increasing the language proficiency and comprehension of ELs, and providing teachers with a collaborator to help plan, reflect on practices, and implement effective discourse strategies. An equitable education should be the overall

goal of educating all children, to find individualized strategies and support systems for all students, especially marginalized students who are often overlooked and undertaught. Since this coaching model is already established in this district, this study seeks to determine what specifically will support classroom discourse use and what factors are currently hindering classroom discourse use for educators in this district.

The following methodology in chapter three will show the design for this study and rationale for the research choices in this DIP.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Developing a clear plan in action research is very important as it allows the reader to apply the research in broader contexts (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The following chapter outlines the methodology for this DIP. The methodology includes the steps and procedures used to implement the study (Efron & Ravid, 2020). The chapter begins with an overview of the study and the research design. Next, will be an explanation of the study participants, the setting, and the data collection processes. Finally, the research procedures and data analysis plan are listed.

Overview of the Study

Every year, English Learner (EL) students in the United States are required to take a language proficiency exam that determines their level of English language development (WIDA, 2020). In 44 states, including the state the district in this study is located, that exam is known as the ACCESS exam. The ACCESS exam measures an EL student's ability to use English in four domains: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. EL students remain with an EL status until they score a 4.8 composite score on the ACCESS exam and demonstrate a FEP status (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2021). Over the last few years, the district in this study has seen an average composite growth of 0.4 from ELs year to year (WIDA ACCESS Score Report, 2022). While the average EL student shows growth in all domains from year to year, the domains that

usually score lower are those using expressive language. These include speaking and writing, requiring student output. In this urban district in the Midwest, the speaking domain is consistently a lower score on an EL student's ACCESS exam and according to feedback from EL coaches teachers and students have a hard time implementing classroom discourse effectively. Results of this exam can be seen in Table 3.1.

In this study, I seek to investigate steps that could be taken to increase the speaking score of EL students in my district. These steps include first investigating what measures and processes are in place that support the use of classroom discourse. Then investigating what measures and processes impede the use of classroom discourse by a teacher and/or student(s). It is also important to note that the other domain requiring output of language, writing, is consistently the lowest domain for most of the 13 elementary schools in this district. The writing domain was not chosen for this study because speaking generally precedes writing with second language acquisition (WIDA, 2020). Further research studies could include investigating what writing processes are in place to support an EL student's growth and development in writing.

The context of the district and low ACCESS scores on the yearly language proficiency exam in the domain of speaking led me to my research questions and research goals. I seek to answer two questions with this study:

- *What structures promote high levels of instructional discourse for ELs?*
- *What obstacles hinder high levels of instructional discourse for ELs?*

Asking and investigating these research questions will help to solve the problem of teachers and EL students not effectively using classroom discourse to help students achieve

FEP status on their ACCESS exam and specifically in their speaking domain. It will also give a clear reflection of the current instructional processes that are used by the staff in the district in which I work. The study and research questions will lead to more equitable education for ELs as their individual needs are targeted on their language journey.

Research Design

The next section outlines the research plan and justification for research design decisions. There are various ways a researcher can approach and implement qualitative research and the research design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Validity increases in a DIP when alignment is evident within the research design and research questions. The research design will include the type of study that will be conducted, the research philosophy that is foundational for the study as it relates to the problem of practice and the research questions, and finally, an explanation of the research design chosen.

This study is an action research study. Action research is a unique form of research that allows the practitioner to study a problem directly related to their professional environment (Efron & Ravid, 2020). The PoP of a lack of effective classroom discourse used by ELs and how it affects their speaking score is a good fit for action research because it is a problem I see frequently in my district as a language arts specialist and EL consultant who supports PD. The PoP will include a qualitative approach as mentioned previously in the form of an embedded design seeing as qualitative data will be the primary data source collected (Efron & Ravid, 2020).

All qualitative research studies also have a foundational philosophy on which they are grounded. As mentioned previously, there are many directions a researcher can guide

their research. For this study, the research will be grounded in a pragmatic philosophy. A pragmatic philosophy is foundational for research that seeks to solve problems and develop interventions (Chilisa, 2020). The conclusion of this study will help to develop interventions for the problem of low speaking scores on EL students ACCESS test as well as the goal to develop professional learning opportunities for teachers and coaches in this district to grow in classroom discourse practices.

Action research that seeks to investigate a bonded system, such as understanding how EL coaching and classroom discourse currently support ELs, can be described as a descriptive study. Descriptive studies are used in qualitative research when the researcher seeks to understand more about the events of a phenomenon and design appropriate interventions based on that data (Kim, et al., 2016). The study design will inform me as the researcher of possible areas that need improvement in the current coaching process to yield better results on an EL student's speaking score.

Finally, this research study will be collecting qualitative data through a case study approach to research. The study will use the qualitative design of a case study as it seeks to better understand and analyze the bonded system of EL support through coaching cycles (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The research will include a qualitative description study of teachers who have had at least three years of EL coaching in a case study format. A descriptive case study approach is an appropriate choice because case studies seek to analyze a bonded system that is already in place. (Mills et al., 2010). As the researcher, I will analyze the EL coaching system and professional learning opportunities and how it supports or hinders classroom discourse for ELs. I will also investigate what measures teachers are taking to support or hinder classroom discourse.

The use of action research that uses a pragmatic philosophy and utilizes a pragmatic descriptive case study approach will be the goal of this study and directly aligns with the research questions and research goal. The research seeks to better understand the coaching system and what processes are in place that support or hinder classroom discourse from being used for ELs to have better results on the speaking component of the ACCESS test. Joyce and Showers (1995) are resolved in their idea that it takes twenty to twenty-five times of practicing a new instructional practice in the classroom before it truly becomes comfortable and routine for the educator. Dole (2004) stated that it is difficult for a teacher to learn a new skill and be able to use it in their teaching toolbox without being exposed to the theory behind the skill or strategy, seeing a demonstration of it, being able to practice it, receive feedback from it, and participating in “In-class” coaching. Allen (2006) emphasized repeatedly in the book “Becoming a Literacy Leader” the necessity for a teacher to repetitively practice and use new strategies in their classroom for them to become lasting changes. These statements from researchers are motivation for why teachers who have already received three years of EL coaching are required for this study, since they have already completed coaching cycles and seen district professional initiatives. As the researcher, I will look at the coaching model that has been used in the district since 2017 and investigate processes in that model that may help or hinder classroom discourse in the classroom for ELs.

Among experts in qualitative research is the consensus that qualitative researchers need to include a description of why their study is credible (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Validity and reliability are important pieces to publishing a credible research study. There are five components to maintain the validity of this study. First, I will use triangulation in

my study by including participants from all thirteen sites and collecting data over an eight-week period instead of all at one time on one day. Second, researcher reflexivity is included in chapter one of this dissertation to really highlight and clearly communicate my personal bias and assumptions. Third, member checking will be used for survey, interview, and journal responses to ensure that themes and ideas recorded during data collection match ideas and opinions research participants wanted to communicate. Fourth, I will include a rich description of the setting, professional learning system in the district, the participants, and themes outlined from the data. And finally, I will use peer debriefing or reviewing to help view the study from an outsider's perspective. With these five components, the validity and reliability of the study are more grounded and credible. The next section details the research procedure from start to finish.

Research Setting

The action research study will take place in an urban district in the Midwest. The district's EL population makes up about 28% of its student population (District Overview, 2021). According to Flynn and Hill (2005), the number of ELs in the US has grown every year and the projected statistics indicate that the EL population is likely to reach 40% of all students by the year 2030. Since the number of ELs in schools is increasing and not decreasing, educational stakeholders need to ensure ELs are receiving a quality education to increase both their academics and their language proficiency. When reviewing the ACCESS data each year in this district, the results show that the speaking domain on the ACCESS test is consistently one of the lowest scores (WIDA ACCESS Score Report, 2022). Low speaking scores have been reported regardless of the district implementing the current EL coaching program and coaching model in 2017.

In 2017, district leaders started using EL coaches to work with teachers and administration to meet the needs of EL students in the 13 elementary schools and five secondary schools. In our district, if teachers are not EL certified or are EL certified but would like support with their EL students, all kindergarten through 12th grade teachers can go through a 6-week coaching cycle with an EL coach. The district adapted their coaching model to loosely fit that of student-centered coaching which involves teachers and coaches setting goals for EL students to grow in content and language (Sweeney, 2011). Currently, teachers can choose from eight topics to determine an EL focused goal they feel they or their students need to grow in. These topics are adapted from the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model: planning with language objectives, building background, interaction, scaffolding, comprehensible input, output of language, strategies and differentiation, and review and assessment (Echevarría et. al., 2017). While teachers and coaches choose one goal to focus on for their 6-week cycle, coaches will still encourage growth in all areas as seems appropriate for their teachers. One such area that is promoted most often among coaching cycles is that of student interaction and student output, in other words, classroom discourse. Appendix A details an overview of the coaching model and the PD opportunities afforded to teachers in this district.

Participants

For this study, the participants will need to match criteria on a preset list of requirements for the study to truly investigate the research questions. Appendix B details the criteria list for teacher participants to qualify for the study and includes the following requirements:

1. At least three years of participation in the current EL coaching program in the district.
2. Currently has ELs on their class roster.
3. Kindergarten through fifth grade teacher.
4. Willing to participate in interviews, surveys, and submit lesson plans and journal artifacts of classroom practices over the eight-week study.

With these criteria, I am hoping to include enough participants in the study that leads to a point of saturation or redundancy in the interviews, surveys, and artifact data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). At least 5 teacher participants will be included in the study.

Once the participants are selected, the research plan will be implemented for the study. The research questions will be answered by the participants fitting these criteria because patterns and themes will emerge from the experience and daily lives of the participants. The research questions are focused and targeted specifically to classroom discourse, the coaching process, and EL PD opportunities. The data collected should bring to light various factors that support or hinder an EL's use of classroom discourse in the classroom.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers should always seek to keep their positionality at the forefront of their minds when undergoing research as it helps bring clarity about the limitations the researcher may or may not have when compared to the differing or similar experiences of the participants in the study (Herr & Anderson, 2015). As in many cases of research, my

positionality in this study is not easily defined and shifts from an insider to an outsider when looking at differing variables. In this study, I am an outsider because I work as a language arts specialist at one site and do not regularly work at the other schools with students and teachers in this study. However, I am also an insider as I have also been involved in recent teaching and coaching experiences that the participants in this study are also involved in. Lastly, while this study does not directly collect data on the EL students that will be in the classroom, data will be collected in the form of lesson plan artifacts that can note a student's opportunities for classroom discourse use. It is also important to note that I am an outsider to the EL population, as I am not an EL.

Ethical Considerations

It is very important for any researcher to reflect on ethical considerations and have a list of principles that will be used to guide the research practices with ethics in mind. The following considerations are listed to maintain ethics in this DIP. First, this DIP has undergone and received approval through an Institutional Review Board (IRB) with the University of South Carolina. It was necessary that confidentiality of personal privacy be maintained for this DIP to receive approval for the protection of the rights and welfare of all participants in this study. For this study, participants will be able to voluntarily participate in the DIP through an invitation to participate letter that I will email out to teachers who meet qualifications for this study. To maintain confidentiality, names and locations of the district, schools, and teachers will remain anonymous. To maintain data security, information collected through this study will be stored on my computer with restricted access to only myself where it will remain until the study and dissertation defense is complete. The entire study will be presented to the district and

participants resulting in open and honest communication. Taking these steps will support the ethical consideration of this study.

Data Collection, Tools, and Instruments

Having a clear and concise data collection plan increases the validity of any research study. Since this study includes a descriptive case study, there will be two levels of sampling. First the sample of teachers in the district who have been a part of the coaching process and second the teachers who specifically meet the criteria outlined in Appendix B. To determine the sample, a Microsoft form survey will be emailed out in the form of an invitation letter to teachers who meet the requirement of being in the coaching program for at least three years.

Surveys

Surveys will be used two different times in this study. The teachers will first fill out a survey to determine if they meet the criteria of being a teacher in the EL program for at least three years. The first survey will be created through Microsoft forms as stated above and the details of that survey can be found in Appendix B. The initial survey will include closed response items to collect data on whether or not they fit the criteria for the entire study. Participants who fit the criteria and who decide to participate will be recorded on an excel spreadsheet to organize information for the study. The second survey will be administered at the end of the study after interviews and artifact collection practices have been completed. The second survey will include open-response items and closed-response items in the form of a Likert scale survey and will feature reflection questions related to EL coaching and classroom discourse. The survey will also be

completed on Microsoft forms and emailed to participants. A data chart will be used to help keep track of which participants have and have not completed the survey and can be found in Appendix I. Detailed information for this survey can be found in Appendix G.

Interviews

In this study, teachers will be interviewed twice. First after the initial survey is administered and final participants are decided based on the criteria list and second after the six weeks of artifact collection has concluded. The first interview will take place as a “get to know you” interview to learn about their educational background, collect data on their current classroom discourse practices, and to provide a description of the entire study. The first interview will take place using the zoom web conferencing tool depending on availability. For this interview, guiding interview questions for teachers can be found in Appendix D. Interview data will be recorded through the zoom call and handwritten notes. The second interview will also be collected through the zoom web conferencing tool. Included in the second interview will be questions about the teacher’s and student’s level of classroom discourse, their personal experience in the coaching program, and reflection on the ELs in their classroom and how they use or do not use output when classroom discourse is planned in lessons. The interview will be recorded through zoom and notes will be taken on a recording paper as well. The second round of guiding interview questions can be found in Appendix E.

Artifact Review – Lesson Plans and Journals

While the entire study will last over an eight-week period, weekly artifact data collection will take place for just six weeks of the study. The data collection method will

include collecting weekly artifacts in the form of lesson plans and open-ended, typed journal responses. Lesson plans will be reviewed to determine the use of classroom discourse with students during the lesson. Lesson plans will be requested by Monday, the week the lesson plans will be administered, so I have an idea of what classroom discourse practices are in place in the classroom. Calendar invitations will be sent to teachers to remind them to send their lesson plan artifacts to me each week for six weeks. These will be collected through email as an attached document in whatever form the teacher already uses (Microsoft Word, PDF, PowerPoint, Smart Notebook, Google Slides, etc.). Lesson plan artifacts will be analyzed to determine the use of classroom discourse in the weekly lessons.

Secondly, journal questions will be provided to teachers over six weeks of instruction through Microsoft forms. Each week, teachers will read and respond to an open-ended journal prompt in relation to the topic of classroom discourse use with EL students in their classroom. Participants will be sent the weekly journal prompt at the beginning of the week. Journal responses will be reviewed to determine themes and patterns that support and/or hinder classroom discourse use in classrooms with ELs. Calendar invitations with journal prompt links will be emailed to teachers weekly to remind them to answer the journal prompt for the study. Journal prompt questions and links to the Microsoft form can be found in Appendix F.

Research Procedure

The following outlines the research procedure for conducting this study:

1. Analyze the entire list of elementary teachers in the district and determine which staff have been a part of the coaching program for at least three years.
2. Reach out to the teachers and ask for participation in the study through invitation letter and the initial survey on Microsoft forms (Appendix B). Detail what their role will be and explain the goal of the study. Invitation letter can be found in Appendix D.
3. Compare the results of the survey to Criteria Page (Appendix B) and make a list of final participants. Communicate with teachers through email which meet requirements for participation, and which do not meet requirements for participation.
4. Schedule the first interview to explain their role in the study and expectations. The first interview will include collecting basic information about the teachers and their experience with classroom discourse and the teacher will be able to ask any further questions about the study. An overview of the interview procedures and protocols will be explained to sample participants.
5. Over the six-weeks of data collection, request lesson plans and send out weekly reminders with journal prompt links for teachers to fill out.
6. Schedule the final interview to answer any questions and collect any final thoughts about classroom discourse use over the six-week period with ELs in the teacher's classroom.
7. Email surveys will then be sent out through Microsoft forms to be completed and analyzed for further data. An Excel spreadsheet will help organize who has and has not completed the surveys.

8. Consider data collected for its relevance to the research questions and PoP.
9. Debriefing statement communicating appreciation for participation will then be sent to participants in the study to confirm that information collected accurately reflects the participants experience and opinions. (Appendix H).

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis can be a daunting task that can be overwhelming if started only after collecting all the data involved (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, data will be analyzed as it is collected throughout the study. After every interview, survey, and weekly collection of data, I will review the purpose of the study, research questions, and theories related to this study as I read the data from all teachers, write out possible themes, reflections, and ideas to use for the study. The data analysis process will be repeated for every teacher encounter and results will be continually compared to other teacher encounters. After all the data is collected, data analysis will highlight themes and ideas that will help answer the research questions.

One method of data analysis that will be utilized in this study is to use Bogdan and Biklen's (2011) ten data analysis suggestions throughout the data collection process.

These suggestions include:

Force yourself to make decisions that narrow the study. Force yourself to make decisions concerning the type of study you want to accomplish. Develop analytic questions. Plan data collection sessions according to what you find in previous observations. Write many "observer's

comments” as you go. Write memos to yourself about what you are learning. Try out ideas and themes with participants. Begin exploring literature while you are in the field. Play with metaphors, analogies, and concepts. Use visual devices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 197-198).

These suggestions will be used throughout the data collection process until themes and ideas begin to show saturation and redundancy during data collection. Another method that will be used in data collection and analysis is to use coding throughout note collection and data collection. Coding will help to organize themes and ideas systematically. The analysis process will then continue bouncing back and forth between individual data encounters and reflecting on the overall purpose and study goal. These codes, themes, and ideas will also be analyzed under the umbrella of Krashen’s second language acquisition theory. Data from participants will also be analyzed to determine its relevance to the PoP. Any participants whose data is irrelevant to the PoP, will not be included in the analysis and findings to answer the research questions.

As the researcher, my positionality and personal bias should be considered throughout the data collection and analysis process. I plan to use thematic analysis steps to analyze data collected in this study. To help categorize the deductive data, I will collect and prepare my data through transcriptions and printed copies, I will spend time reading and rereading data for familiarization, I will jot notes on the data, begin to code the data, and I will transfer codes to themes (Lester & Lochmiller, 2020). Being organized with charts, notes, and printed copies of data will help me see all the

qualitative data in a case study and sort through categories and themes without being overwhelmed and lost in the data.

Summary

The methodology of this qualitative, descriptive case study supports my research goals. My goal as the researcher is to investigate and have a better understanding of the bonded system of the district's EL coaching model and its effectiveness in supporting teachers to use classroom discourse for EL students to increase their speaking proficiency levels. Sample selection and participants are outlined using specific criteria to fit the research goals. The data from this study will include qualitative data in the form of surveys, interviews, and artifact review (lesson plans and journal responses) and quantitative data will be collected through a survey. Data will then be analyzed in an ongoing process after each encounter with participants to narrow and better sort through the enormous amount of data that will be collected. Categories and themes will then emerge and be analyzed through thematic analysis steps. Data will lead to conclusions being determined that directly relate to the research questions, overview of the study problem, and educational theories mentioned.

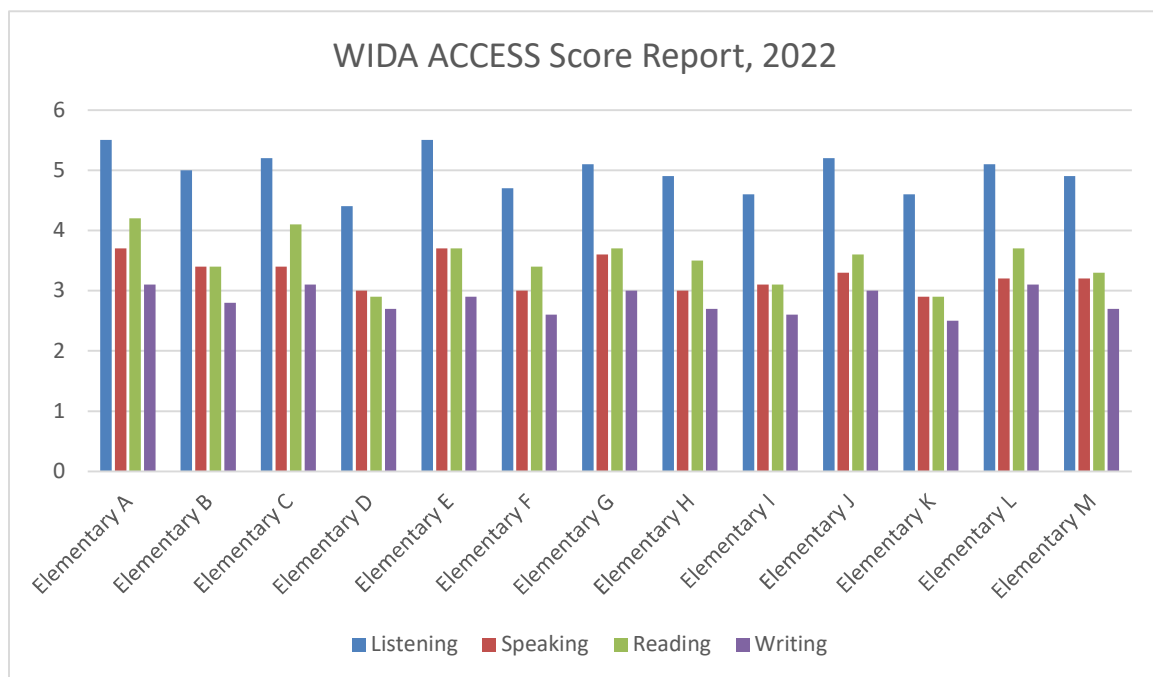
The study is significant in a few different ways. First, increasing classroom discourse in a classroom with ELs will increase a student's speaking domain (Echevarria, 2011) on the ACCESS exam. Secondly, EL students have a legal right to be taught grade-level content as well as language instruction in schools which includes being able to speak English at a high proficiency (Lau v. Nichols, 1974). And finally, this study will bring to light ways in which our EL program can better assist EL instructional coaches

and teachers on ways to achieve effective classroom discourse for EL students in classrooms in this district. These statements are why a descriptive study on what factors support or hinder classroom discourse will be a beneficial investigation.

The following chapter will include a comprehensive overview of the findings of the study and data collection results. Next, implications will be listed in chapter five based on the results and time spent reflecting and engaging with the data and how it relates to the original problem and research questions.

Chapter 3 Table

Table 3.1 WIDA ACCESS Score Report, 2022



CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Overview of the Study

Intentionality in education is a complex topic (Snoder, 2017). For this study, intentionality refers to the degree in which deliberate and effective educational decisions are made for EL students to see growth and development of educational goals (Snoder, 2017). Intentionality in lesson planning and lesson delivery for EL students is very important since students have the added challenge of growing in content as well as in language during their educational career. The difficulty in this statement is that teachers who have EL students in their classrooms often do not feel equipped to effectively teach ELD to their ELs (Brubacher, 2013; Lavadenz et al., 2019). My PoP in this action research study is that the speaking domain is a consistently lower score for EL students on the ACCESS exam in the district in which I work as well as in everyday lessons and according to feedback from EL coaches teachers and students have a hard time implementing classroom discourse effectively. To help counter the stress that teachers feel when expected to teach ELD to their ELs, the district in which I work developed coaching cycles where teachers work one on one with an EL coach to help implement ELD and support their ELs. However, even with six years of coaching cycles underway in the district, teachers still seem to be having a difficult time focusing on and implementing the output domains, speaking and writing. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- *What structures promote high levels of classroom discourse for ELs?*

- *What obstacles hinder high levels of classroom discourse for ELs?*

To measure whether a classroom is using higher levels of classroom discourse with their ELs, the “WIDA proficiency level descriptors (PLD) for expressive communication mode (speaking, writing, and representing)” (WIDA, 2020, p. 137) will be used. The PLD rubric supports teachers as they attempt to see where a student falls in their discourse use and supports them to grow to the next level. An example of this rubric for student discourse use can be seen in Figure 1.1.

This study is significant for many reasons. First, it could lead to the progression of the current coaching system my district has in place. Second, it could pinpoint more effective ways to educate and coach classroom teachers. Finally, it will also positively impact the language growth of the EL students in our district, especially in the speaking domain. I used a qualitative descriptive case study to investigate what structures should be kept, what structures could be changed, and what structures could be added so that teachers felt more confident to use classroom discourse daily with their ELs.

Theories for Study

There are various educational theories that support the use of classroom discourse, for example, Vygotsky’s (1978) social development theory, Bandura’s (1971) social learning theory. However, for this descriptive study, the main theory that will be considered when analyzing these research findings will be Krashen’s (1982) second language acquisition theory. This was chosen as it is a more recent theory that aligns with themes that emerged from the data collection process. Krashen’s (1982) second language acquisition theory stated that language learning occurs in a natural order and is detailed in

a series of hypotheses that flow in a progression: the acquisition learning distinction hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982). Definitions of these hypotheses can be seen in table 1.1.

General Findings/Results

As I began my study, I decided to analyze data using a priori deductive coding based on the EL second language acquisition theory of Krashen. This was completed while my study was still ongoing instead of waiting for the study to be completed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These codes led to noticing recursive themes that arose from the data during the study. Upon completion of my study, the following themes were finalized: Intentional and Clear Language Learning Opportunities, Systematic Delivery, Models and Accountability, Cyclical Learning, and Growth Mindset. Each of these themes aligned with different hypotheses in Krashen's theory as stated in Table 1.1.

The process of deductive a priori coding started with listing components of Krashen's language acquisition theory, rereading my notes from the collected data, transcribing the interviews conducted through zoom, and printing out and coding all data sources (journal prompts, surveys, and lesson plans), and finally aligning codes with Krashen's theory. With each of these data pieces, I read through and highlighted information and codes that were recurring throughout the study. These codes aligned with Krashen's (1982) language acquisition hypotheses' and will be woven through the data analysis of the study participant.

The following case study analysis will recount how one of the sample participants engaged with the research study. This participant was chosen as the focus of this study out of the five participants for four reasons. First, she is a teacher who values EL coaching but is not required to participate since she is EL certified. Second, being a departmentalized teacher who teaches all 5th graders in her school, she sees multiple students with various language levels. Next, classroom discourse is a constant in her classroom according to data collected through this study. This data yielded valuable information to answer the research questions of what supports and/or hinders classroom discourse. Finally, she has a growth mindset and values classroom discourse as seeks ways to improve her teaching practices for the betterment of her students. Her participation led to themes emerging and research questions being answered. These themes were then explained through Krashen's theory of second language acquisition and the five hypotheses. While the data and stories below are true, the name of the participant and the name of the school have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved.

Study Participant – Sam

Sam is a very experienced teacher in our district. She has been with the district for seven years after coming from another district in the area. She is a fifth-grade departmentalized teacher who teaches math, science, and social studies. In this district, several schools organize fourth and fifth grade classes by departmentalization, meaning one teacher will teach one to three subjects for the entire grade level and students will rotate to multiple teachers for various content throughout the day. Sam has spent five years in the district teaching at Billings Elementary (pseudonym) and the community has a high EL population. She loves her school and the students she gets to work with. Sam is

EL certified meaning she is not required to go through EL coaching with her EL coach, however before she received that certification, she was able to go through two coaching cycles to support her ELs. Even though she is EL certified, Sam mentioned “Having some methods that apply directly to the subjects I teach... [and] more specialized training [with a coach]” would continue to be beneficial as she continues to support her ELs. Interviews, surveys, journal responses, and classroom observation yielded valuable information for this DIP. Sam has an internal desire to constantly grow, improve, and seek out best practices in our district and even outside of our district when she can. The following sections depict Sam’s efforts to advance her EL students in language development through the lens of Krashen’s five hypotheses in his second language acquisition theory.

Acquisition Learning Distinction Hypothesis

Intentional and clear language learning opportunities is a theme that directly relates to Krashen’s first hypothesis, the acquisition learning distinction hypothesis. The acquisition learning distinction hypothesis discusses the difference between language acquisition (natural development of language) and language learning (planned development of language structures). Natural language acquisition usually occurs easily amongst peers and in social settings, however language learning with the mastery of language structures requires time and clarity of language expectations (WIDA, 2020).

Sam stated in her initial interview that with time, she feels comfortable with new classroom discourse strategies that have been introduced to her. These strategies help

progress language learning and language structures for her ELs. The following is an example that Sam shared to support this claim:

As a teacher, when I am trying a new strategy, time is very important. I need planning time to make sure that I know what I'm doing. I also need to allow extra time in class for directions and clarification. If it is new to me, it is probably new to students as well. Depending on the strategy, I may also need to model what I am expecting. This takes time as well.

Having time to explore and master strategies has been beneficial for her and her students as learners. On the contrary, time is also something that Sam struggles with as it relates to providing time for her students to use and engage in classroom discourse. There is only so much time in the day and there are so many objectives to teach as seen in the follow-up conversation from Sam:

To help combat the time issue, I try to compensate between subjects. So, if I know that we need more discussion time in science, we may do less in Social Studies. If we need more discussion time in math, I may shorten the day's assignment. Time is always an issue because we are departmentalized and have limited [time to teach content].

The following introduction to a science lesson illustrates Sam's intentionality for taking time to set her EL students up for success in the vocabulary activity they participated in. Sam uses five minutes and thirty seconds to explain the activity and answer questions the students may have.

Sam – “Ok, so I’m gonna go over what we’re doing. The list of names for the groups is [kind of] small but it is randomized.... So you’re going to get [in] each group [and] you’re going to get a paper like this. It has the vocabulary words we’ve been working on. There’s just a couple [of] new ones. So, most of them are the words we’ve been using because we’ve just been adding a few each time.... Then since they’re vocabulary words, we need definitions. So, you will get a little packet of definitions. They’ve already been cut out for you. The third thing your group will get is a bag of study slips, ok? If your name is the first one on the list, you are your group leader. That means you need to make sure that everybody’s name gets on this paper, you need to make sure you have all your supplies, and you need to try to keep your group on track.

Student – “Wait how do you know if you’re the group leader?”

Sam – “If you’re the first name on the list.”

Student – “Ahh, let’s go!”

Sam – “Ok, second name on the list, you are in charge of the glue sticks, so when your group decides ‘yes those match’ you’re going to glue the definition on the word that matches it. Who can tell me something you are not going to do with the glue stick?”

Student – “Don’t put it in your mouth.”

Student – “Don’t use your fingers.”

Sam – “Ok, don’t eat it, ok good choice there.”

Student – “Don’t play with it.”

Sam – “Don’t play with it.”

Student – “Don’t throw it.”

Student – “Don’t put it on your fingers.”

Sam – “Don’t put it on yourself. You are not being glued to anything.”

Student – “Don’t damage it.”

Sam – “Yes, don’t take it apart.”

Student – “Don’t put it in your eyes.”

Sam – “Ok, so we’re not going to put it on other people, we’re not going

to try to glue something besides paper. Ok? Glue only goes on paper.

Alright, if you are a third or fourth name, some groups only have three,

you’re in charge of this bag. This bag is very important. Each of these

little slips of paper has a word, the definition that matches it, and a picture

that helps explain it. So, for example, This one says food web so if I

wasn’t sure, maybe I’m confused about food chain and food web, [and I

ask] ‘which one goes where?’ [I can] pull out food web and look at it.

When I open it up, it has a picture of a food web...”

Student - “And a definition.”

Sam – “And it has the definition that goes with it. Ok? Questions so far?”

Multiple S’s – “No.”

Sam – “These do not get glued. These, when you’re done, you can put them back in the bag.”

Student – “Then what do we glue?”

Sam – “You are gluing the definition to the word that it matches. Only if you’re the second name because they’re the only ones that need a glue stick. Ok, tell me any questions you have.

Sam Pauses for questions.

Sam – “Whose name goes on the paper?”

Student – “Everyone’s.”

Sam – “Everyone in the group. What do we do with the paper when we’re done?”

Student – “Turn it in.”

Sam – “Where do we turn things in?”

Multiple S’s pointing to the back of the room – “Finished Work.”

Sam – “Thank you. Ok, so I’m going to come around and check in with you and your groups. I’m gonna give you about 20 minutes to do this. You won’t need more than that. In the last class some groups were done within

about 10 minutes. I just want to make sure though that you have plenty of time so we're starting with this today. Alright. So, if you are a group leader you need to come [and] get your supplies and your group needs to decide [on] a place to sit.

Students start collecting items and finding a spot to work.

With the above example, Krashen's acquisition learning distinction hypothesis in which he claims that natural and planned language learning activities require time is evident. Sam is intentional when she offered clear directions for clarity of the assignment and allows students to ask questions before they begin. She also builds in time to allow students to begin and complete the activity.

Natural Order Hypothesis

The support and intentionality that Sam provides with systematic delivery for her EL students illustrates Krashen's (1982) notion of the natural order hypothesis. The natural order hypothesis recognizes that there is a structure of language that occurs in a natural order. This natural order is supported by appropriate scaffolds and strategies based on an EL student's language level (WIDA, 2020).

In this classroom interaction, students are often working without the assistance of Sam and are therefore forced to rely on each other and on classroom scaffolds to progress in an activity. Sam stated in her initial interview,

I have a couple [students] that are pretty low still on speaking and listening and sometimes academic vocabulary can be really difficult. I try

to provide as many visuals as I can and we talk about [vocabulary] several times, so it is not just one introduction to it.

The following group interaction demonstrated students not being sure about a few of the vocab words, using the resource (scaffold) that Sam provided to help them through the activity, and confirming with each other before making a final decision.

Interaction in a small group without Sam present:

Group 4:

Student 1: "It's this one." (Holds up a card).

Student 2: "Are you sure?"

Student 1: "Yes, it says..." (Student reads the card).

Student 2: "Yes, you're right. Ok, let's do this one." (Holds up a new card).

Student 1: "Oh, I saw that one a while ago. Here it is!"

Student 3: (Glues card down).

Student 2: "Still looking for consumer."

Student 3: "It has to be this one." (Reads the definition to the group).

Student 2: "Yeah, that's it."

Student 3: "We still need ecosystem."

Student 1: “Maybe it’s this one.”

Student 2: “This is it.”

Student 1: “What’s a niche?”

Student 3: Have ya’ll covered this one?”

Student 2: “Yes we did.”

Student 1: “what’s a niche?!”

Student 2: “Let’s do niche.” (reads the card for niche).

This group interaction correlates to Krashen’s natural order hypothesis in that language occurs in a natural order when appropriate scaffolds and supports are in place and available for EL students. Sam also mentioned in one of her journal responses that “At the beginning of the year students were very unsure [about working in collaborative groups]. Now, students are more comfortable working together in groups and with partners.” Students responding to each other, supporting each other with statements of agreement, and using the scaffolds appropriate for their language levels demonstrate this natural order hypothesis.

The Monitor Hypothesis

The strategy of accountability with discourse relates to the theme of models and accountability and Krashen’s (1982) monitor hypothesis. The monitor hypothesis states that acquisition and learning are used in specific ways which means that time, focus on form, and language rules are needed before mastery of output is evident (Krashen, 1982).

To support this, questioning strategies can lead EL students to engage with language rules and language forms. Without direct accountability of language forms and language rules, true language acquisition suffers.

When collaborating with her colleagues, Sam included built-in sentence stems and discussion questions to encourage classroom discourse. This intentional planning helps her as the teacher and helps the students to feel comfortable the more discourse is incorporated into daily lessons. Even with this intentional planning Sam also mentioned, “I always add some extra [questions that were not planned but developed through the lesson] by having students answer questions or work in groups.” The following reflection provides an example of when Sam had to adjust her questioning to meet the needs of her students:

Sometimes, even when questions are planned, I realize that I need to ask a different question to get students to [better] understand what is expected. Something great that comes with experience is the ability to change lessons as they happen to fit what the students need. For example, this is one of the questions asked [in a previous] lesson: “Can you recall or think of new reasons why an organism might be removed from a food web?” I had to add a question: “What kind of changes to an ecosystem can humans cause? What about changes that might be caused by a natural disaster?” Before adding this question, I was getting a lot of blank stares and many students were not sure what I was asking. Once they were telling me what some changes were, I wrote them down in list form and we went through each of the changes on the list and applied the first question to that

change. “You mentioned that an ecosystem could be changed due to a fire. How could a fire change an ecosystem? What organisms would be removed in the case of a fire?”

The following example demonstrates Sam’s role when students are engaged in classroom discourse activities during her class. Sam, in this example, is using questioning with her students to help them solidify a plan of action for the activity, encouraging students to check their work, and making sure they are on task.

Group 1 Check In:

Sam walks up to group 1

Sam – “Ohh, you have your names written down right?”

Student 1 – “Yeah.”

Sam – “Ok so what is your strategy for this [activity]?”

Student 2 – “Ummmm.”

Student 1 – “Alright, so maybe we can go by alphabetical order.”

Student 2 – “Oh yeah.”

Sam – “Ok, do you want to spread these out so you can see them better?”

Student 1 – “Yeah”

Student 3 – “So we write all of our names right here?”

Sam – “Yes ma’am.”

Group 1 Revisit:

Sam – “Ohhh, you already know that one. You don’t want to double check it?”

Student 1 and Student 2 – “No.”

Sam – “So you say that’s a producer?”

Student 1 – “Yeah. Right?”

Sam – “So find producer over here, and double check. And then if that’s right you can put your study slip back in the bag because you’re done with it.”

Student 2 – “Ok.”

Using questioning and adjusting to the needs of your ELs correlates with Krashen’s monitor hypothesis as it encourages focus on language forms and structures. The questions that Sam asked promote confidence in their answer, language development, and use of language from the content. Sam adjusts to the needs of the group to encourage accountability in the group’s use of language during this activity.

Input Hypothesis

The theme of cyclical learning which was observed in data collection correlates to Krashen’s (1982) input hypothesis. The input hypothesis stated that language is a structure that builds on what we already know. Students who are acquiring a language

have an easier time when they can make connections to previous learning and known concepts.

One example of successful classroom discourse where students built on previous knowledge was during a lesson where Sam reflected on the following:

In math this week, we started talking about how we could use clocks and money to help us with fractions. We worked on this as a class and in groups. We also had meter strips and the students walked around the room comparing their meter strip to different objects. It was great to hear their conversations and the connections that were being made. It was hard to give them the time they needed because I always feel so rushed. It was also hard to let them explore when the teacher in me wants to have complete control. But I am practicing giving students an opportunity to explore and own their learning.

This is an example of how students use classroom discourse in Sam's classroom and made connections to previous learning experiences. Sam and her students used the specific strategy of wait time that the district encourages teachers to use with ELs.

To illustrate the above claim, I was able to record and observe a science lesson in which Sam's used classroom discourse with her students in a small group lesson. In the lesson, students were required to work in groups and discuss which vocabulary words matched certain definitions from the content. Students were split into small groups encouraged to work together, come up with a strategy to do the assignment, and check their work. They were also given a scaffold of resource cards to use if they got stuck on a

definition. The following is an example of a lesson procedure that Sam delivered to a section of her ELs and how her students participated in collaborative learning.

Interaction with Sam and a small group:

First Visit with Group 4:

Sam – “So if you’re not sure where it goes, what are you going to do?”

Students look and point to cards.

Sam – “Yeah. So, you might start with looking at the word, and if you’re not sure where that goes you can put them on the side. And then pick up another one and see if you know where that goes. And then any that are left you can find those words in your pile.”

Student 1 – “I don’t know what an omnivore is.”

Student 2 – “Yeah, I explained it to you all.”

Student 3 – “I think it’s something that eats animals and plants, right?”

Student 2 – “I literally just told you.”

Second Visit with Group 4:

Student 1 – “That’s not it, that’s not it.”

Student 2 – “An organism that eats only other consumers. A meat eater.”

Student 1 – “That’s not it.”

Sam – “So what did you think it was?”

Student 1 – “It was him [that picked it].”

Sam – “What about this one?”

Student 2 – “Yeah.”

Student 1 – “See, the teacher.”

Sam – “So what does that one say.”

Student 2 – “An organism that depends on eating other organisms in order to survive.”

Student 1 – “This is it; this is it, producer.”

Sam – “So it has to eat.”

Student 3 – “This is it producer.”

Sam – “Do producers eat something?”

Student 3 – “Yeah they eat...”

Sam – “Because it looks like a flower in the picture.”

Student 1 – “Oh, omnivore. Omnivore is something that eats anything.

Sam – “Eats anything?”

Student 2 – “Yeah.”

Student 3 – “What’s the first letter?”

Sam – “What’s the first word?”

Student 1 – “An organism that depends on eating other organisms in order to survive.”

Student 2 – “Yes”

Sam – “So something that has to eat to survive.”

Student 1 – “So something that starts with organism.”

Student 2 – “Omnivore.”

Student 3 – “A Consumer! A consumer!”

Sam – “Yeah, good job.”

Student 1 – “You are so smart.”

Student 3 – “Ok, let’s do omnivore.”

Sam – “What’s an omnivore?”

Student 3 – “I was writing it. Something that eats...”

Sam – “Something that eats plants and animals.”

Student 2 – “Where’s... Ok so.”

Student 3 – “Right here!”

Student 1 – “That’d be omnivore?”

Sam – “So you’re looking for a definition that says they eat both.”

Student 3 – “Those ones have the answers. You know the definitions.”

Sam – “Are these all your definitions right here?”

Student 1 – “An organism that eats only producers. Yeah, that’s wrong.”

Student 2 – “What?”

Sam – “That’s right. This is omnivore. So, omnivore is right here. Yeah good. You guys are working well.”

Student 3 – “Ok let’s do carnivore.”

Student 1 – “Carnivore?”

Student 3 – “Yeah”

Sam – “Oh are you guys going straight down the list?”

Student 3 – “Yeah”

Sam – “So which one are you working on right now?”

Student 2 – “Carnivore”

Sam – “So what’s a carnivore?”

Student 3 – “Something that eats meat.”

Sam – “Something that eats meat.”

Student 1 – “I’d give a tiger some meat that wasn’t cooked. And I’d also give him meat that was cooked.”

Sam – “What about this one that you put on consumer?”

Student 2 – “Oh not that, that goes over here.”

Sam – “So how can you prevent that from happening next time?”

Student 3 – No uh, skip that one for now.”

Sam – “OK. So, if you’re not sure you could skip it and come back. What do you have as a resource that you could use?”

Student 2 holds up resource cards.

Sam – “So you could also use these maybe to double check what you have right? Remember it’s not a race to see who’s first done. You’re trying to get them all right.”

In this example, one can see Krashen’s input hypothesis in action in which he claims that language is a structure that builds on what we already know. This interaction corresponds to Krashen’s input hypotheses because students were given familiar vocabulary words as well as some unfamiliar vocabulary words during this activity. This supports students using previous knowledge to build on new knowledge as students attempted to figure out which words matched with which definitions. In this interaction Sam also supports her ELs with reminders of previously learned strategies by asking them to think of options to approach the activity, especially when they seem stuck. Sam reflected,

I try to make the question as specific as possible without giving the answer. If questions are too vague, they don’t know what kind of answer I

am looking for. We use the term “strategy” across various subject areas, so they are familiar with that term. It is something they will see in tests as well.

Krashen’s Input hypothesis is also reflected a few times when Sam listened to the language that the students produced and then rephrased what they said using appropriate language. Sam explained,

I prefer to build on student statements. This builds on prior knowledge and gives a “train of thought” so that we can both understand the thinking behind an answer. It gives an excellent chance for clarification on either what the student is answering or what the answer should be.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The theme of a growth mindset which is evident throughout Sam’s data relates to Krashen’s (1982) affective filter hypothesis. The affective filter hypothesis stated that factors that affect language growth include motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety (Krashen, 1982). With motivation, self-confidence, and a low anxiety setting, ELs who are working on acquiring language and content will often feel more connected to a classroom and take risks when trying to use and master their language development (WIDA, 2020).

To support motivation and self-confidence in her classroom, Sam has implemented two norms. First, in her classroom, conversation is constant, and students have gotten used to the idea that they will work with partners and in groups for most of their time in her class. Sam stated that, “At the beginning of the year students were very

unsure [about working with peers]. Now, students are more comfortable working together in groups [collaboratively].” In the example below and throughout the school year, Sam worked to create a classroom environment where students are comfortable taking language risks and grow as a class. During this interaction, students used supportive statements with each other which illustrates their comfort level of interacting with groups. The following conversation from group 4 in the science lesson I observed demonstrates how comfortable students feel discussing content in Sam’s classroom:

Sam– “What’s the first word?”

Student 1 – “An organism that depends on eating other organisms in order to survive.”

Student 2 – “Yes”

Sam – “So something that has to eat to survive.”

Student 1 – “So something that starts with organism.”

Student 2 – “Omnivore.”

Student 3 – “A Consumer! A consumer!”

Sam – “Yeah, good job.”

Student 1 – “We are so smart.”

Student 3 – “Ok, let’s do omnivore.”

Sam – “What’s an omnivore?”

Student 3 – “I was writing it. Something that eats...”

Sam – “Something that eats plants and animals.”

Student 2 – “Where’s... Ok so.”

Student 3 – “Right here!”

While the previous interaction included the teacher as a guide and support through this part of the activity, the students on their own are supportive and collaborative using phrases such as “good job” and “you’re so smart”.

The previous interactions correlate to Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis as Sam has worked throughout the year to support her students in their discourse use and lower anxiety in her class. The students conversing in this group are motivated and self-confident which according to Krashen’s affective filter theory, will aid in their language development.

Research Questions

The first research question in this DIP is “*What structures promote high levels of classroom discourse for ELs?*” Sam states in her data that there are multiple areas in which our district promotes classroom discourse through professional learning. Sam stated, “The training that you do for the certification test is really good” and “because you have new people every year, [the district does a good job of presenting] basic things [for EL instruction]”. Sam believes that collaborations with EL coaches help promote classroom discourse when she stated, “We have talked about our EL goals and what

strategies we can use to reach those goals.” She also stated that “having a quick reference guide” would be beneficial as well. She shared,

So, you can flip through different [strategies], depending on what you’re looking for. I really appreciate those. So, something that is just quick that you can pull from or even a list of teachers that they can go watch. The videos are good that we do every year, but it’s nice too to be there in person so you can ask the teachers questions.

The district currently has a reference guide for language scaffolds to use in the classroom. Finally, giving teachers time to practice and master new classroom discourse practices multiple times would also be beneficial. Sam stated earlier that “when I am trying a new strategy, time is very important. I need planning time to make sure that I know what I’m doing. I also need to allow extra time in class for directions and clarification.”

The second research question in this DIP is “*What obstacles hinder high levels of classroom discourse for ELs?*” One of the main observations from Sam’s data that hinder high levels of classroom discourse for ELs is the makeup of the professional development opportunities that the district provides. Sam stated, “So as far as the beginning of the year stuff, I do feel like there are a lot of repeats [for professional development]” and “having some methods that apply directly to the subject I’m teaching... [and having] more specialized activities]” would be beneficial. Sam is often discouraged that professional learning opportunities in the EL department often include fundamental strategies for newer teachers. PD opportunities are often repeated professional learning opportunities

from previous school years. For a seasoned teacher such as Sam, there is not a lot of new learning she can attain from repetitive professional learning opportunities.

Secondly, having EL students with various language learning levels, especially low levels of output, also proves difficult. Another participant in this study, when asked about various language levels in their class, stated that language levels, “varied more, because I had one that was close to FEPing out, and then I had other [students] who were quite a bit lower. I’m pretty sure that I [was supposed to have] the class that was some of our higher ELs.... There was a range [with grouping ELs] but some of [ranges end up getting off] with new students moving in.” Meeting the language needs of the various levels of so many students prove difficult when this participant stated, “last year sometimes it was just the number that I had, meant that there were fewer students to help model for them if they didn’t understand.”

Finally, Sam stated that having a list of resources, within the district and outside of the district, could be beneficial for teachers who are at varying levels of mastery when it comes to classroom discourse. Sam also mentioned, “a lot of teachers don’t always know what opportunities there are [inside and outside the district] if they are looking for something [specific and targeted].”

Summary of Sam

Analyzing Sam’s interviews, journals, and lesson plans was a very informative process. Her data indicates that district professional learning opportunities kickstarted her targeting EL instruction in multiple areas, including classroom discourse. Sam feels confident in her delivery of classroom discourse and the promotion of language

development for her EL students. Information gathered from Sam, however, also indicated areas that the district could improve to better serve veteran teachers in the district. This data proves extremely valuable when considering what next steps the district could take to better serve the teachers and EL students in the future.

Research Questions Map

This descriptive case study originally started with five participants to collect a teacher's perspective of factors that support and/or hinder an EL student's use of classroom discourse in their classrooms. The factors on tables 4.1 and 4.2 were presented to teachers in the form of a survey in which teachers could rank which structures promoted high levels of discourse and which hindered classroom discourse use. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate survey data from all five participants as they provided answers to the two research questions.

Additional Questions

After analyzing the data from the study participants, I am left with a few questions that could lead to future studies. First, considering teachers do grow from professional learning opportunities from the EL department but prefer in-person PD, what adjustments can be made to our current in-person EL PD process? How can these adjustments be made to better meet the needs of the variety of teachers who have a variety of teaching experiences and expertise? Another question I wonder is would small professional development cohorts at various district sites be more beneficial to individual teacher needs rather than whole district-wide training? How could a system of individualized training be set up and implemented if so? Finally, what theories support individualized professional development and would this theory lead to more personal

ownership from the teachers involved? Could this work be done without adding too much pressure and obligation on the teachers during an already stressful and busy school year?

Summary

Implementing this research study, analyzing the data, and discovering answers to the research questions has been a very enlightening experience. This descriptive study was analyzed through the lens of Krashen's language acquisition theory that acquisition of language develops in natural order and progresses through a series of hypotheses (1982). The data analyzed in this study demonstrates this theory and can lead to possible interventions that could be implemented to support teacher's use classroom discourse for their ELs to see and growth and development of their second language acquisition.

Interview and observation data from one teacher, Sam, revealed that classroom discourse is not being implemented on a deeper level according to the proficiency level descriptors for the speaking domain. This data is not generalizable to the entire district but leads to further questions and areas to be researched around this topic. The following chapter, chapter five, outlines the implications of this study by discussing future actions that can be taken as a result of the data collected and the research questions answered.

Chapter 4 Tables

Table 4.1 Structures that Promote Classroom Discourse

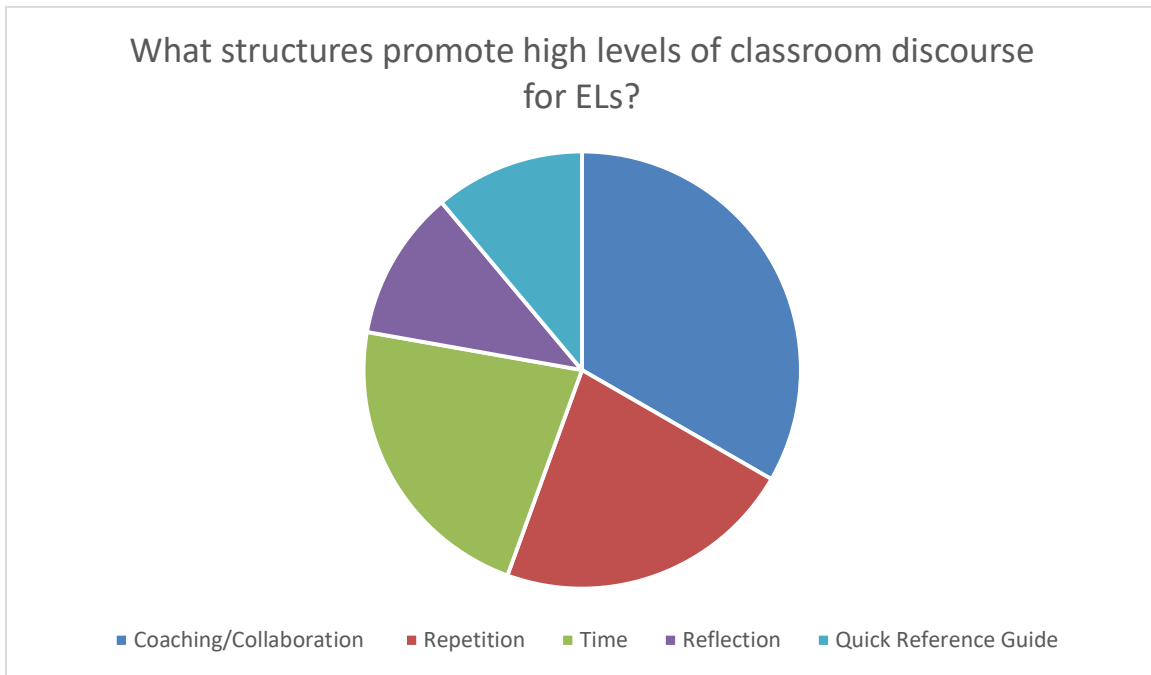
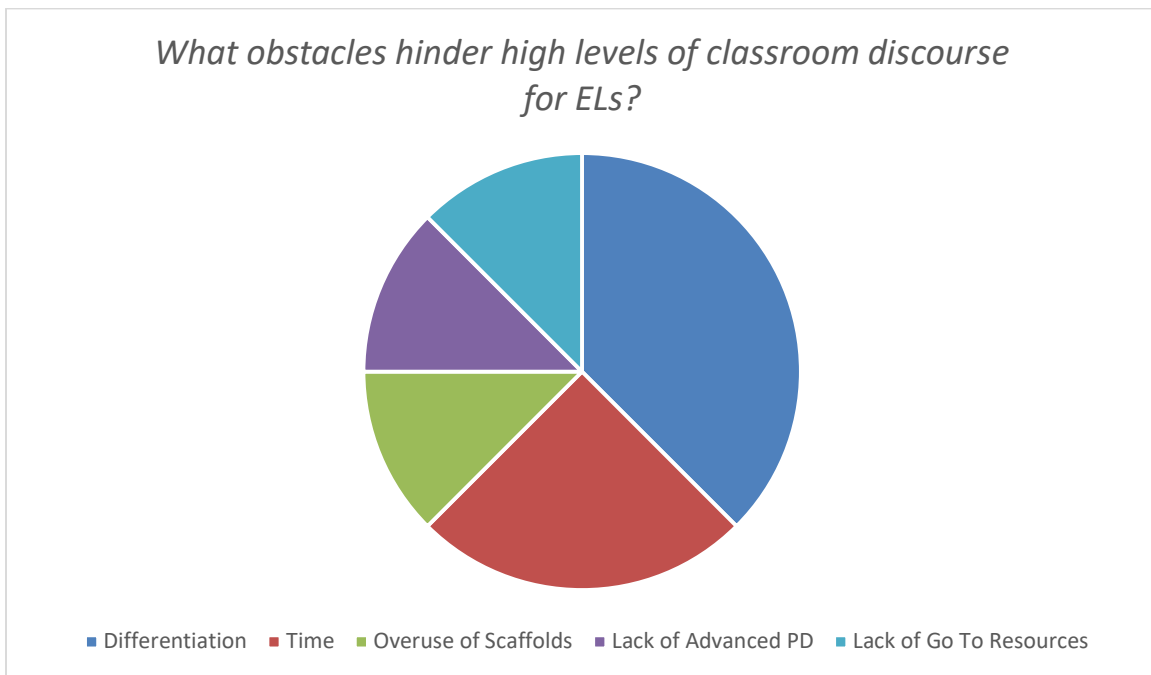


Table 4.2 Obstacles that Hinder Classroom Discourse



CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS

Overview of Study

As mentioned in the previous chapters, this DIP seeks to analyze the district problem of EL students continuing to score lower in the speaking domain as well as teachers and students not effectively using classroom discourse to help raise the speaking score for an EL student's language growth and development. This research was developed in the form of a qualitative descriptive case study to analyze and reflect on a teacher's use of classroom discourse in the classroom with ELs specifically and how the district can deliver future professional initiatives to support classroom teachers. The research questions being answered include,

- *What structures promote high levels of classroom discourse for ELs?*
- *What obstacles hinder high levels of classroom discourse for ELs?*

Overall, findings indicate that the district does support novice teachers in their professional learning of the importance of classroom discourse but falls short on delivering targeted professional development for veteran teachers to continue their professional learning journey in the area of classroom discourse.

The following chapter will analyze the results as they relate to the literature review, provide recommendations that arose from analyzing the data collected in chapter four, provide a plan of implementation for practice recommendations, and provide a reflection on the action research process delivered in this DIP. Next it will detail

limitations and suggestions that were discovered during the research study. After that it will summarize recommendations for future research because of this DIP. Finally, this chapter ends with a summary of the complete DIP.

Results as they relate to Lit Review

Results from this study confirmed two claims in the existing literature as they relate to the literature review. First, data collected from Sam and her classroom confirmed Krashen's (1982) second language acquisition theory when he stated that ELs acquire language with meaningful interactions that occur in a natural way without stressful conditions (Echevarria, 1995; Newman, 2017; McIntyre, 2006; Puasa, 2017; Cazden, 2001; Barber, 2018; Johnson, 2004). The claim of social interaction to develop one's cognition also aligns with Bandura's social learning theory and Vygotsky's social development theory.

During the classroom observation, Sam's students engaged in discourse to complete the class assignment given by the teacher. They also received support from Sam to complete the assignment and guide them if their group was having a hard time. While observing, I noticed her students were comfortable and used to engaging with each other in class and most students shared their voice.

While opportunities to engage in classroom discourse were evident in Sam's classroom according to the classroom observation, interviews, and journal prompts, it was also evident that Sam's classroom discourse practices could develop further. According to the WIDA ELD Standards (2020) the criteria of discourse use between

Sam's students seem to fall at a level two or three on the proficiency level scale with six being the highest level of proficiency.

Sam is a teacher who sees the benefit of classroom discourse and frequently plans for interactions amongst her students. However continued learning could be implemented to improve her practices to acquire results where students are using higher and deeper levels of classroom discourse. Sam even illustrates this interpretation. When asked what is most helpful when it comes to professional learning she stated "seeing it modeled for sure, or even seeing a part of an activity is helpful. Sometimes, when you're just talking about it or just reading about it, it's hard to visualize it or know how it would work in my classroom." This aligns with Krashen's notion of the acquisition learning distinction hypothesis that emphasizes a difference in natural language acquisition vs planned language learning.

The next claim is that the student-centered coaching framework and teacher collaboration is effective for professional learning. When considering the most effective professional learning methods, student-centered coaching ranks higher than that of scheduled PD days with teachers (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2019; Zepeda, 2019). With student-centered coaching and collaboration, colleagues discuss practices, test/observe modeled practices, debrief over student data, and decide if the chosen method was successful with students (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2019; Allen, 2006; Zepeda, 2019). Interestingly, this claim was confirmed and disconfirmed from survey data collected from teachers during this study. When asked what structures promote high levels of classroom discourse, coaching/collaboration ranked highest when compared to the options of repetition, time, reflection, and having a quick reference guide. However, when asked

what their professional learning preferences are, options used in the district were ranked in the following way: In-person PD, team collaborations, EL coaching, self-paced modules, and then book studies and articles. Results of this survey can be found on Table 5.1. This data is informative and beneficial when considering the future professional development needs of teachers in this district. Our district has offered all of these professional development opportunities in the past.

This information leads me to ask, if student-centered coaching, according to theorists, is a more effective approach to professional learning, why then does it rank third in preference of learning opportunities? There may be factors in the current coaching model that could have led teachers to rank professional learning preferences in this way. Hinnant-Crawford (2020) stated, “the current educational system is perfectly designed for the results it produces” (p. 96). Perhaps the current coaching model in our district should next be analyzed to ensure the system is set up for the best outcome for our teachers and our EL students.

Data analysis led me to ask additional questions about my study. The first being why aren’t teachers employing more authentic discourse practices in their lessons? Secondly, what are teachers’ perceptions about student discourse and current systems in place to help students increase their language scores specifically in the speaking domain? These questions could lead to further action research that could be conducted to better support the EL program in my district, EL students in their English language acquisition journey, and support teachers as they grow in their EL practices in the classroom.

During the implementation of my DIP and analysis of my data, I discovered new literature that is related to my PoP and my findings. A prominent figure that also promotes dialogic inquiry in the classroom is Gordon Wells. He stated that teachers at all levels need to see effective learning opportunities that are constructed through classroom discourse and dialogue (Wells, 2015). EL students engaging in classroom discourse during various academic subjects allows for students to practice appropriate language structures according to the content being discussed, gives students an opportunity to co-construct knowledge with peers, allows for students to improve their social and language skills with content, and at times provides students with the opportunity to hear different opinions and perspectives on a topic (Haneda & Wells, 2008). Chapter two of this dissertation expresses that the promotion of classroom discourse in classrooms for ELs is not a new idea, however, researchers and educational leaders agree that "...there is a need to focus on the creation of classroom communities that value meaningful dialogic inquiry, since this is one of the most effective ways to enable all students to making progress in achieving their full potential" (Haneda & Wells, 2008, pg. 133).

This study was conducted as a descriptive case study to gain knowledge of what practices could be continued and adjusted to promote and encourage the use of classroom discourse of ELs in this school district. Analysis and interpretation of these conclusions as they relate to current literature on classroom discourse has led to a possible plan of action for addressing the PoP in this research study. The next section communicates my practice recommendations based on the results and data collected from this research study.

Practice Recommendations

The current EL coaching model in my district is set up so that any teacher that is not EL certified is required to do yearly coaching cycles with the EL coach. Any teacher who is EL certified participates in EL PD but is not required to go through a coaching cycle unless they would like to. With this coaching model, the PoP is still an issue for many teachers and students in the district. Therefore, after analyzing and reviewing the findings in this study, I recommend the following practices to be continued and added for my personal context to see classroom discourse implemented effectively for ELs.

Findings from this study, given by multiple participants, communicated that our current coaching model does work and is effective for teachers, especially new teachers. As a result, I will continue coaching cycles for new teachers, teachers unfamiliar with EL strategies and scaffolds, and teachers who prefer this model of professional learning. Figure 5.1 explains the EL coaching model that is currently used for all non-EL certified teachers in our district.

My next recommendation derived from this study applies to teachers who have been in our district, who have gone through coaching cycles, and who have EL certification. Teachers communicated through survey data in this study that the top two learning preferences were in-person PD and team collaborations. Participants also indicated that our district is great at providing foundational EL strategies and scaffolds but does not tailor professional learning to veteran teachers who have been with the district and need to go deeper with EL professional learning vs surface level learning. Therefore, my recommendation is to create alternative professional learning options to

give veteran teachers autonomy of their EL learning goals through various professional learning models outside of the one-on-one coaching.

Figure 5.2 displays EL learning goals that have been used in the past. I will create a job embedded learning opportunity for veteran teachers through the model of critical friends as an interventive action research study. A critical friends group (CFG) is a form of professional learning that can be defined as “a collaborative form of professional job-embedded learning where teachers address concerns of mutual interest” (Zepeda, 2019, as cited in Curlette & Granville, 2014). This form of a teacher support group is a powerful way for teachers to share ideas, support their claims of what works in their classrooms, increase confidence to try and reflect on new practices, and have the opportunity to share with colleagues (Wells, 2015).

To begin this professional work, I will first survey veteran teachers to see which of the EL learning goals they feel like they would like to study for the growth and support of ELs in their classroom. Next, I will sort collected data and group teachers into a CFG based on shared interests of professional learning from the options in table 5.2. Finally, I will choose one group, explain my alternative professional learning approach, and ask if they would like to participate in the CFG throughout the school year. I will then meet with the CFG regularly to help guide professional learning throughout the school year.

To see a greater chance of success for this alternative professional learning model, I as the EL coach will be mindful that, “Effective professional development has a specific set of goals and learning objectives, activities that support the goal and objectives, and

the results from ongoing formative and summative evaluation that extends, add, or improves skills while simultaneously extending knowledge” (Zepeda, 2019, p. 10).

There are five group development stages that I would implement throughout the school year with the CFG as stated in Table 5.2 (Zepeda, 2019, p.148, as cited in Tuckman, 1965). Other components of the CFG that would be embedded in these stages would be to analyze student work, provide assignment between CFG meetings, observe the classrooms of CFG members, give reflective feedback to all members of the group, review evaluations/evidence of learning, and modify practices based off data collected (Zepada, 2019).

Since this action research endeavor is the result of the descriptive study in this DIP, it would be wise to attempt to find a CFG that would like to grow around the topic of EL student output. Data and information collected during this year long action research would be beneficial to see if this form of professional learning has an impact on classroom discourse as an effective practice for teachers and for students. Speaking scores of EL in the classrooms of the CFGs could be compared before the CFG and after the CFG is concluded. Results and findings could then be transferred to other teachers and elementary sites in the districts for other EL coaches to try.

Implementation Plan

Implementation of any plan for educational progress has a better chance of success when certain measures and factors are considered and enforced. One methodology for implementing change in a school system is that of using improvement science. Hinnant-Crawford (2020) defined this methodology as

a methodological framework that is undergirded by foundational principles that guide scholar/practitioners to define problems, understand how the system produces the problems, identify changes to rectify those problems, test the efficacy of those changes, and spread the changes (assuming that the change is indeed an improvement) (p. 29).

The first three steps of this methodology have already been completed with the problem being defined, data being collected about why the problem exists in the system, and a change being identified in the previous section to resolve the problem. Since I completed these three steps, I would then implement the change of using a CFG with the implementation plan in table 5.3.

To ensure that this implementation plan is put into action, I would first need to get approval from my EL director and building admin to attempt this action research at the beginning of the school year. I would then seek out a trusted colleague to collaborate with and help refine all the details needed to implement this plan of action. Finally, I would set goals for myself to accomplish to ensure that I do not lose focus on the goal of using CFGs to encourage classroom discourse with ELs in my school. The next section will detail my personal reflection on the action research process and methodology for this DIP.

Reflection on Action Research and Methodology

Implementing action research for this DIP has been an eye-opening experience. Certain aspects of the DIP turned out as I expected while other aspects were unexpected. Components that turned out as expected included the confirmation that teachers who

participated in this action research study appreciated EL coaching and collaboration time with the EL coach. Multiple sources of data communicated the benefit of teachers working with an EL coach, especially for newer teachers who are unfamiliar with EL strategies and ELD. This notion relates to all three educational theories mentioned in this DIP (Krashen's second language acquisition theory, Vygotsky's social development theory, and Bandura's social learning theory) as they relate to a person being able to build and attain knowledge through conversation and discourse. I also expected teachers would state that they already use classroom discourse with ELs since the teachers in the study are those who have been with the district and have participated in coaching cycles in the past.

What was unexpected in the methodology of this action research was the fact that in the final survey, teachers scored in-person PD higher as a preference than that of EL coaching. Considering how effective EL coaching is (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2019; Pierce, 2014; Knight, 2017; Allen, 2006), I originally thought that teachers would rank coaching higher than in-person PD. After considering the context of the district, schools, teachers, and coaching model we have in my district, I hypothesize that coaching was ranked lower than in-person PD due to the nature of our current coaching model. Teachers communicated in the data the desire to have diversified professional learning experiences rather than one learning experience that they must participate in year after year. Another unexpected component of my DIP was that more teachers did not volunteer to participate in my study. I thought I would be able to secure at least ten teachers, however, securing the five I was able to attain was a difficult task. This could be due to

the stressful nature of education and teaching in general. It is a lot to ask one more thing of teachers who already feel overwhelmed and overloaded with work.

If I could go back and initiate this DIP again, I would make a few changes to my methodology. First, I would try to meet with teachers face-to-face who met the criteria of this study to better inform them of what is required of them and better explain the purpose of this work. Next, I would include more classroom observations to collect data of teachers modeling and demonstrating the claims they made in their interviews and journal responses. Unfortunately, I was only able to conduct one classroom observation because of additional data I needed and due to the constraints of my position as a reading specialist. Finally, I would ask teachers to choose an EL focus student during the study and asked that they reflect and journal how this student does and does not use classroom discourse during class as well as how they do and/or do not support this student in their classroom discourse use.

Even without the previously mentioned changes and additions, new insights were made because of this study. I was able to gain the knowledge about how impactful targeted PD can be to a teacher and how teachers in this case study desire PD targeting to their classrooms and their sites rather than foundational PD for newer teachers. I was also able to reflect and begin brainstorming about the benefits of a learning menu for teachers to map out their plan for their professional learning experiences rather than mandating the same PD for every teacher regardless of experience level and needs.

There was value in this research to me on a personal level and on a professional level. On a personal note, this research allowed me to take steps toward a solution to a

problem I am very passionate about, classroom discourse with ELs. I desperately want to see EL students placed in classrooms that are equitable and meet their language as well as content needs. I also want to see teachers succeed and feel confident in their abilities to deliver ELD to ELs and use more classroom discourse. I personally have also grown in my confidence and ability to connect a problem of practice, to theory, to methodology, to data, and to a solution. This will benefit me personally as I grow in my educational career.

On a professional level, this research gave me the confidence to use and deliver an action research study by choosing a problem of practice in my context and seeking ways to find a solution through research. This research will drive my future professional endeavors and lead to more action research studies based due to questions and thoughts that arose from this research study. I see myself using this action research process with other educational issues and problems that arise in my setting. I also look forward to next steps beyond this action research study which could include publication of research, presentations at national conferences, and consultations of those education leaders/teachers who are interested in my work and research.

Limitations or Suggestions

Design Limitations

Including limitations in your research study supports the validity and transparency of the research and its findings (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). The first limitation encountered in this DIP includes two changes in my professional position with my district. When I originally designed this DIP I was an EL coach hoping to include

teachers from my school site in my case study. However, an opportunity for career advancement led me to apply to a district wide position as an EL curriculum specialist. This position aligned with the problem of practice and my research study while also giving me more freedom to observe and communicate with teachers at all 13 sites. Unfortunately, after a year in this role, and various factors of difficulty, I decided to step back from the district wide position and return to a site as a reading specialist. This role was not as aligned with the DIP, and it did not easily allow for me to observe teachers in my study. However, I was still able to conduct the research and fulfill the DIP requirements I planned out with the support of my administration.

Another limitation of this study includes the stress levels of teachers in our district and in education in general. Since the COVID Pandemic started, teachers have been “experiencing high levels of stress and low levels of positive feelings such as joy, positivity, and contentment in their work” (Billett et. al., 2023, p. 1394). In our district, frequent and necessary changes in instruction models and building processes have led to what seems like stressful working conditions. This school year alone has produced many teachers leaving the profession which supports what Walker (2022) stated in their article by reporting that, “In February 2022, the National Education Association released a nationwide survey of teachers that showed 55 percent of respondents said the pandemic was forcing them to plan on leaving the profession sooner than they had originally planned” (p. 1).

Finally, the last limitation in this DIP involved the many demands that are placed on teachers in the school year. Our district and our teachers are required to meet certain conditions with the Department of Justice and mandatory PD that is required each year.

Another factor that puts a lot of demands on teachers includes how the pandemic has affected the academics of the students in our district. Teachers are having to work extra hard to make sure that learning loss from the pandemic is resolved. These demands on teachers and the overwhelming workload may have led to teachers opting out of my research study.

Recommendations for Improvements

After having time to reflect on my DIP and the methodology, there are two components that could have led to better results for this DIP. The first would be creating or finding a rubric for classroom discourse use for ELs during classroom observations. This rubric could reflect the WIDA (2020) proficiency level descriptors. Having a rubric would allow for clarity of which students in classrooms use classroom discourse in effective ways based off the rubric. A rubric could have also shown a measure for how students started the school year with their discourse levels and how they end the school year after discourse strategies and procedures have been implemented.

Another component that could have led to better results would have been to include a focus group in my methodology. Colucci (2007) explained that robust research is important, but there is some benefit to including activities in the form of a focus group so that data is rich, participants may have an easier time discussing the topic with each other as opposed to just the researcher, and participants often have an easier time remembering aspects of the topic. If implemented, I would have included the focus study in the middle of my research study to allow for individual voices to be heard in initial interviews, for some journals responses already collected, and a few observations to also

be conducted. This data collection component also aligns with the three theories of social learning (Krashen's second language acquisition theory, Vygotsky's social development theory, and Bandura's social learning theory) that are foundational to this DIP.

Recommendations for Extensions/Delimiters

One final factor that could have influenced this DIP includes the professional development focus the EL department decided on for the 2022-2023 school year. During the summer of 2022, I discussed professional development needs of teachers in our district with the new EL curriculum specialist and my PoP from this DIP came into the conversation. I communicated that EL coaches often feel frustrated that classroom discourse practices with ELs are not transferring to practice after an EL coach concludes a coaching cycle with the teacher. This conversation led to a yearlong professional focus on discourse and PD days centered on "Moving Beyond Turn and Talk." Teachers in my study participated in this classroom discourse PD throughout the year that I implemented my study, and this could easily have contributed to some of the results and data collected.

Recommendations for Future Research

One of the benefits of conducting action research is that it has a cyclical nature that can lead to more questions and more problems of practice to focus on and investigate (Herr & Anderson, 2014). Reaching the conclusion of this DIP has led to three possible recommendations for future research related to the concept of classroom discourse.

The first idea for future research could be an action research study focusing on EL coaches using alternative professional learning models rather than just one-on-one coaching. The desire for alternative professional learning experiences was mentioned a

few times in the data collection of this DIP. I believe that implementing alternative professional learning experiences would be worth researching to see how using those alternative models affects ELs, teachers, and classroom discourse use.

The next idea for future research could be a case study of a cohort of EL students and a teacher who is seeking an EL professional goal of seeing students use more output of language (classroom discourse) in class. This data could be beneficial as it would focus on students and what they are able to produce and how they are able to grow because of interventive classroom discourse measures.

Finally, another idea for future research could be to conduct action research on the benefits of a CFG centered around the topic of classroom discourse. This could be an expansion of my DIP using a yearlong cohort of teachers or partnered cohorts to focus on, grow, discuss, and implement EL goals, including but not limited to classroom discourse. The concept of a CFG is also outlined as a practice recommendation earlier in this chapter and could help address why teachers aren't employing more authentic discourse practices in their classrooms.

Summary

Providing an equitable education for all students is one of the most important things educational leaders and teachers can do, especially for marginalized students who have various hurdles to overcome besides just learning the content. ELs specifically have the right to grow in language and content through ELD as they progress through their education. Classroom discourse and discourse use is one way to address the need for students to grow in ELD as theorists (Krashen's second language acquisition theory,

Vygotsky’s social development theory, and Bandura’s social learning theory) communicate that social learning is of vital importance, especially to ELs. The problem of ELs not growing as much as they could in their output of language is therefore an important topic to investigate.

In conclusion, finding ways to increase classroom discourse and an EL students output of language helps students grow. This descriptive action research study helps continue research of this PoP because it investigates a teacher’s understanding of classroom discourse, investigates what a teacher is doing well with classroom discourse, and reflects on how the district can do better.

The culmination of analyzing these factors leads to possible interventive measures that can be used in schools and with districts that have similar demographics. Teachers need effective ways to grow professionally with EL strategies through practices that work, feedback that is timely and targeted, and collaboration focusing on accomplishments and adjustments that can be made to reach the goal of adequate linguistic growth for EL students. Doing this work helps to support our “linguistically gifted students” (Urtubey, 2022, September 28-30) (EL students). Ultimately, marginalized EL students benefit from teachers, school leaders, and researchers who focus on ways to support and implement effective, lasting, and impactful change aimed at helping them achieve life-long linguistic and academic success.

Chapter 5 Tables

Table 5.1 Professional Learning Preferences of Study Participants

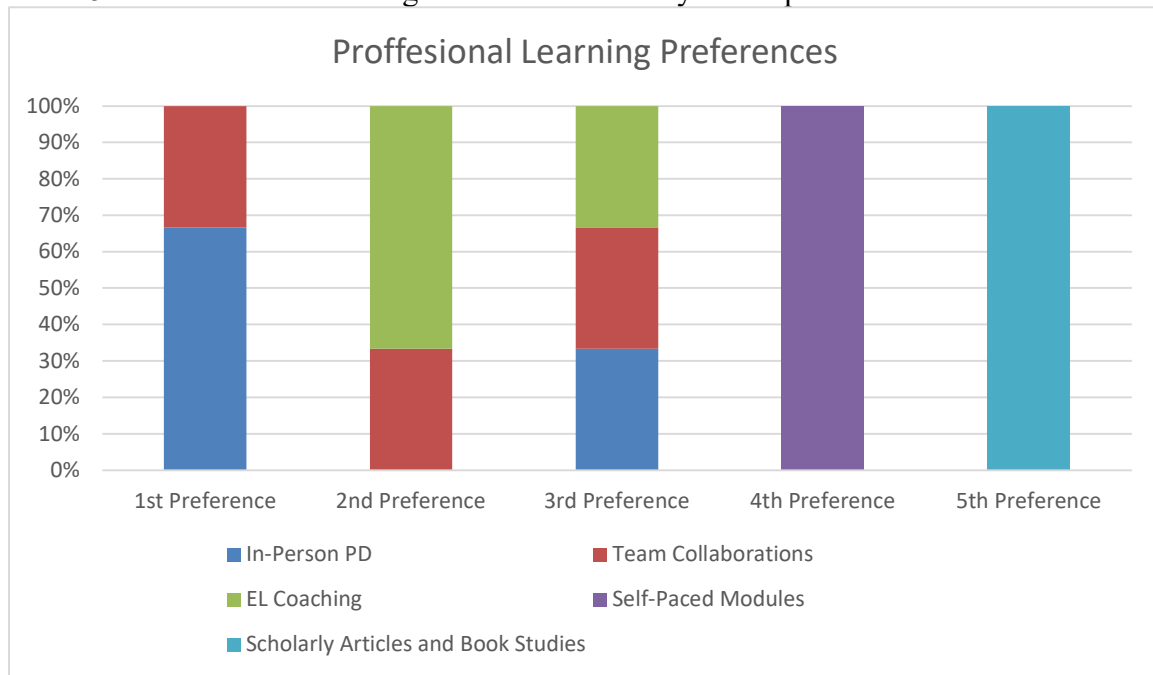


Table 5.2 Five Common Developmental Stages of Critical Friends Groups

<p><i>Stage 1: Forming.</i> Members scan the group looking for sources of leadership; controversy is avoided; members look for safety and engage in guarded conversations. The forming stage is the orientation to the work, tasks, and goals of the group. Initial concerns emerge. To get to the next stage, storming, members begin to take risks and offer differing points-of-view that lead to storming.</p>
<p><i>Stage 2: Storming.</i> The storming stage is marked by testing the waters and conflict. Without storming, agreeing to disagree with one another, the team members will not move toward independence (see the norming stage). Conflict occurs because members are preoccupied with proving themselves and their role relative to expertise, leadership, and position in the group. Members move from an individual orientation to a group orientation to organize group work. This move involves conflict. Conflict arises over positioning individual members' responsibilities, deadlines, authority to make decisions, and possible power struggles among members of the group. Members learn that they have to make concessions about their own beliefs to achieve the work of the group. Interdependence between team members will not occur until the group has unearthed distrust and conflict. Conflict subsides, and the group is ready to transition to the next stage, norming.</p>
<p><i>Stage 3: Norming.</i> Group members adapt a common method of working together. During this phase, members are able to reconcile their own opinions with greater needs</p>

of the group. Cooperation and collaboration replace the conflict and mistrust of the previous phase.
Stage 4: Performing. The emphasis is now on reaching group goals rather than working on group process. Relationships are settled, and group members are likely to build loyalty toward each other. The group is able to manage more complex tasks and cope with greater change.
Stage 5: Adjourning. The work of the team is complete, and the end result has been reached. For some team members, adjourning includes feeling a sense of loss for the work of the team and bonds of interdependence formed through the team development process and through the completion of meaningful work.

Table 5.3 CFG Intervention Implementation Plan

Step 1	Collaborate with a colleague to design the CFG model for teams of teachers. Collaboration is a foundational component to improvement science (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020).
Step 2	Present the Critical Friend Group Model to the EL Director and the administrator of my school site as an option for EL Professional Learning. A strong principal and coach relationship is important to school improvement and student achievement (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2019; Zepeda, 2019).
Step 3	Survey Teachers at my school site to identify EL goals preferences and determine who meets qualifications for a CFG in student output. Giving teachers the autonomy to drive their learning and providing resources, time, and space to collaborate creates a strong culture of professional learning in a building (Zepeda, 2019).
Step 4	Invite teachers who meet the qualification of student output as a goal to join the CFG. Implement one CFG for action research purposes as it is an effective strategy to breakdown and test new strategies before trying it with the whole school (Allen, 2006).
Step 5	Implement the stages of CFGs as well as any other creative components designed during step 1. This gives teachers the opportunity to drive their learning by looking at student achievement in EL student output (classroom discourse) while creating an collaborative environment of growth mindsets, belonging mindsets, relevance, and purpose (Zepeda, 2019).
Step 6	Collect data by documenting what happens during CFG meetings and in classrooms as a result of this new professional learning model. This would include “collecting data in a timely manner that can inform what you do next to keep you moving toward your aim (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020, p. 146).
Step 7	Analyze and reflect on data collected by asking, “Did it work? Is it working? How is it working? Is it working as intended?” (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020, p.146).
Step 8	Share findings with the EL director, school admin, and other EL coaches. Reflecting and sharing the same problem of practice with colleagues in leadership and coaching roles will lead to a network of leaders who achieve more for teachers and for students (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020).

Chapter 5 Figures

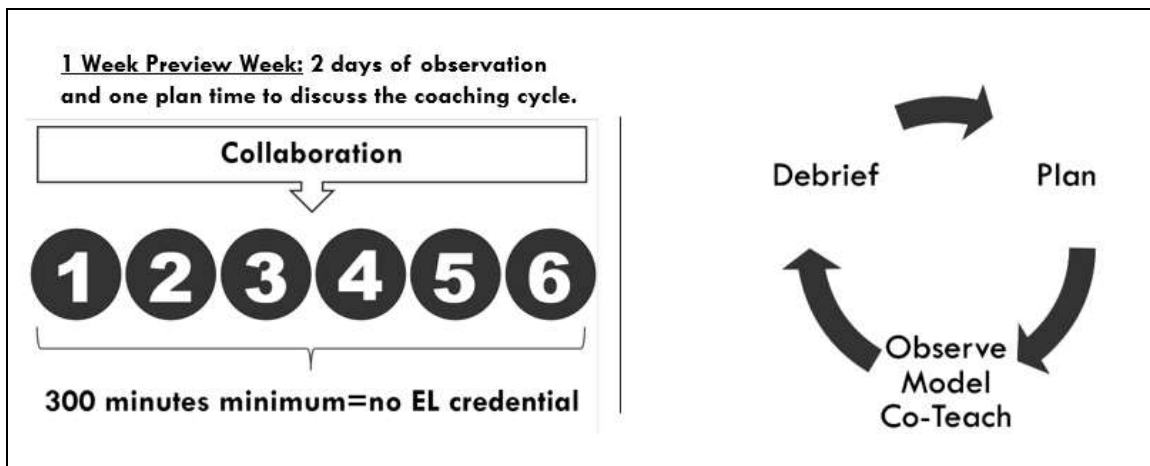


Figure 5.1 District EL Coaching Model

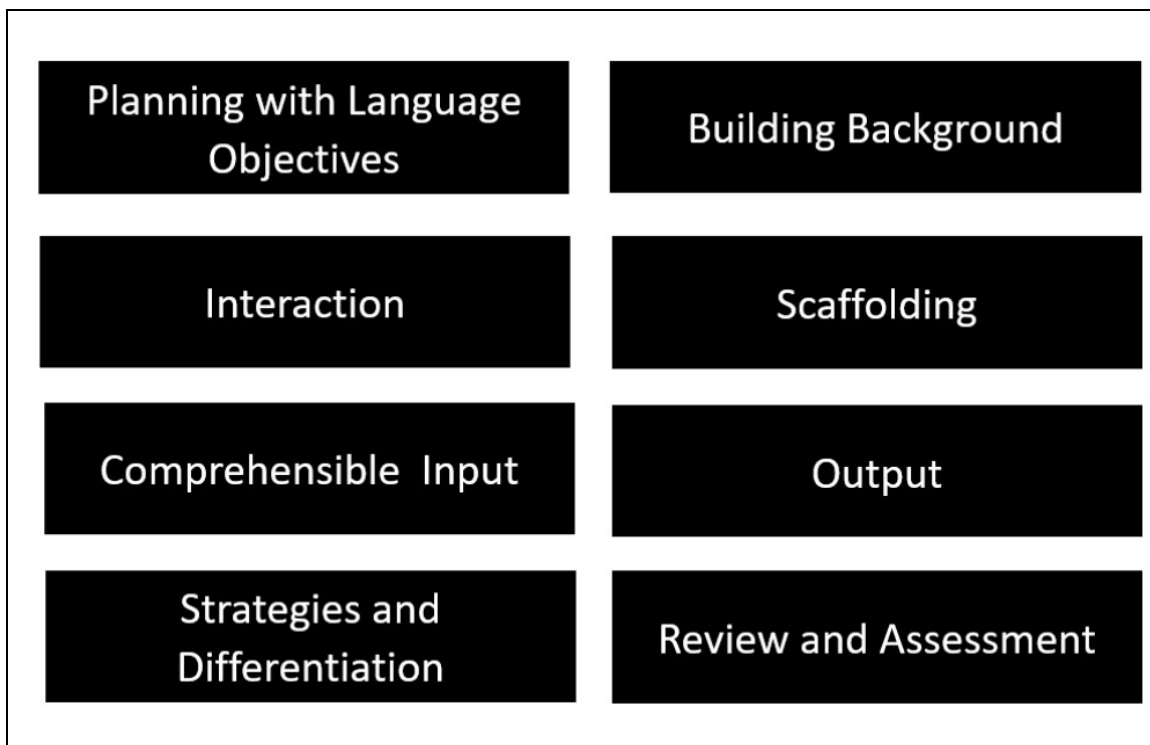


Figure 5.2 District EL Learning Goals

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APPENDIX A

OVERVIEW OF DISTRICT COACHING MODEL AND OTHER PROFESISONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Teachers can participate in a 6-week coaching cycle to collaborate with the EL instructional coach at their site. Collaborations target instruction to the EL students in the classroom. During this cycle a teacher and EL instructional coach will plan lessons for ELs, observe, model or co-teach the planned lesson, and debrief by discussing formative data collected and possible next steps for their ELs.

The focus and goal of the coaching cycle is determined by the teacher. There are eight optional EL goals a teacher can focus on listed on the right. While a teacher chooses one goal to focus on during the 6-week coaching cycle, all goals are important and may join the coaching conversation at one point or another. The goals of interaction and output are goals specific to classroom discourse.

Other professional development opportunities in the district include professional development days, online self-paced learning modules, and built-in team collaborations. Topics for professional development include ESL Certification, Sheltered English Instruction, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Integrated ELD.

APPENDIX B

CRITERIA FOR TEACHER PARTICIPANTS AND MICROSOFT

FORM FOR TEACHER PARTICPATION:

1. At least three years of participation in the current EL coaching program in the district.
2. Currently has ELs on their class roster.
3. Kindergarten through fifth grade teacher.
4. Willing to participate in interviews, surveys, and submit lesson plan and journal artifacts of classroom practices over the course of the eight-week study.

Please fill out this quick Microsoft form to provide necessary information for this action research study about English Learner (EL) students in your classroom:

1. Name:
2. Email Address:
3. How many complete years have you taught in Union Public Schools?
4. What grade do you teach?
 - a. Kindergarten
 - b. First Grade
 - c. Second Grade
 - d. Third Grade
 - e. Fourth Grade
 - f. Fifth Grade
 - g. Other
5. For the 22-23 school year, will you have EL students on your class list?
6. How many EL coaching cycles have you been through?

7. Are you ESL Certified?
8. Are you willing to participate in interviews, surveys, and submit lesson plans and journal artifacts (confidentially) of your current classroom practices for eight weeks?

APPENDIX C

INVITATION LETTER FOR EXEMPT RESEARCH

Hello, my name is Jillian Plum. I am a teacher at Ellen Ochoa Elementary School. This is my twelfth year working with Union Public Schools. You are invited to participate in an action research study focusing on teachers in Union Public Schools. I am working on my Ed. Doctorate in Educational Practice and Innovation in Curriculum Studies at the University of South Carolina. This study will help fulfill degree requirements for me to attain the Ed. Doctorate.



The study is seeking to investigate teacher's perceptions of classroom discourse with English Learner (EL) students, especially for those teachers who have participated in an EL coaching cycle with the district. The entire study will take about eight weeks to complete, but you will not be asked to do activities that require too much of your time. Participation will include:

1. An Initial 30-minute interview (in person or through zoom).
2. Six weeks of data collection (lesson plans and simple journal prompts once a week).
3. Final Survey collected through Microsoft forms.
4. Final 30-minute interview (in person or through zoom).

To preserve your confidentiality, measures will be put into place. Your participation in the study will be confidential by using pseudonyms for yourself, your school, and your classroom.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free not to participate or to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason, without negative consequences.

For consideration in this study, please fill out this quick Microsoft form:
<https://forms.office.com/r/eLibWk0n7N>.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject see optional contacts below:

Researcher: Jillian Plum, phone number: 918-565-6523, email: plum.jillian@unionps.org
University Advisor: Dr. Aisha Haynes, email: haynesa@email.sc.edu

University of South Carolina's Office of Research Compliance: (803) 777-6670

Thank you so much for being willing to support these educational pursuits!

Best,
Jillian Plum

APPENDIX D

INITIAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

- Please share your educational journey that led you to this school year.
- Tell me about your experience with classroom discourse and student talk in your classroom.
- Tell me, in detail, what kinds of things you've done to promote classroom discourse with your EL students. (What did you do first?)
- What kinds of challenges do you experience with using classroom discourse with ELs?
- What kinds of things do you do to keep track of how classroom discourse is being used by your ELs?
- I understand you have gone through a few coaching cycles in the district. Tell me about your experience with coaching cycles.
- What kinds of things have you changed in your teaching practice because of an EL coaching cycle you've gone through?
- What other professional opportunities have you experienced that supported EL instruction?
- What professional learning opportunities fit best with your learning style? (PD Days, Coaching Cycles, Team Collaborations, Scholarly Readings/Book Study, Self-Paced Modules, Podcasts, etc.)
- What else would you like to share about classroom discourse and student talk with ELs?

APPENDIX E

FINAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Tell me about professional development opportunities you've had related to EL instruction?
- What do you feel is most helpful when professional learning opportunities are available?
- What types of learning opportunities are most beneficial for you and why?
- What types of learning opportunities have the least impact on your professional growth?
- If a teacher is new to the idea of classroom discourse, what approaches do you think would be best to introduce classroom discourse in their classroom?
- Considering you've gone through a few coaching cycles, what do you feel is best for you to continue to grow in EL strategies and instruction?
- What feedback would you give about current EL professional learning opportunities the district currently offers?
- What else would you like to share about EL professional learning opportunities in the district?

APPENDIX F

JOURNAL PROMPT QUESTIONS – MICROSOFT FORMS

Week One <https://forms.office.com/r/h7Csn77q0L>: Think back to the beginning of the school year. Compare how students engaged in classroom discourse at the beginning of the year and how they engage in classroom discourse at this point in the year. What has changed? What led to that change?

Week Two <https://forms.office.com/r/xP9QDW1yun>: This week, reflect on how you used classroom discourse for your ELs to engage with the instructional topic of one subject you taught. What went well? What was hard?

Week Three <https://forms.office.com/r/RvMu3d9Rf7>: Reflect on your last coaching cycle. How often was classroom discourse included in your coaching collaboration? What do you remember about your coaching collaboration surrounding the topic of classroom discourse?

Week Four <https://forms.office.com/r/Nd901ErSEN>: Consider team planning and collaborations you've had this school year. Have conversation come up around how to engage ELs in classroom discourse and what discourse will look like in your content areas?

Week Five <https://forms.office.com/r/iZfk6dfv5k>: Think back on your lesson plans the last four weeks, how often was classroom discourse intentionally planned and written out in your lessons? Describe what planning looked like.

Week Six <https://forms.office.com/r/JtUk2mjYkp>: What types of strategies do you most often use when considering classroom discourse for your ELs? (Optional strategies can include but are not limited to question and answer, turn and talk, debates, group work, Think-Pair-Share, or any other strategy you use to promote student discourse).

APPENDIX G

FINAL SURVEY:

<https://forms.office.com/r/8jTmX97RWc>

- Name:
- Email:
- Question 1: Classroom Discourse is used daily with my EL students.
 - 1- Strongly Disagree
 - 2- Disagree
 - 3- Agree
 - 4- Strongly Agree
- Question 2: Classroom Discourse used in my classroom aligns with the language levels of my students.
 - 1- Strongly Disagree
 - 2- Disagree
 - 3- Agree
 - 4- Strongly Agree
- Question 3: Classroom Discourse is intentionally written into my lesson plans.
 - 1- Strongly Disagree
 - 2- Disagree
 - 3- Agree
 - 4- Strongly Agree
- Question 4: Previous coaching cycles with the district have supported my use of classroom discourse with my ELs students.
 - 1- Strongly Disagree
 - 2- Disagree
 - 3- Agree
 - 4- Strongly Agree
- Question 5: Previous professional development with the district has supported my use of classroom discourse with my EL students.
 - 1- Strongly Disagree
 - 2- Disagree
 - 3- Agree
 - 4- Strongly Agree

- Question 6: What has been the biggest factor for where you are in your educational journey in terms of using classroom discourse with your ELs?
- Question 7: What changes, if any, would you make to EL coaching you've received or EL professional development you've received?
- Question 8: List options in order of preference when considering professional learning opportunities. Place options you prefer the most at the top and the options you prefer the least at the bottom:
 - EL Professional Development Days
 - EL Coaching Cycles
 - Team Collaboration
 - Scholarly Research/Articles/Book Studies
 - Self-Paced Learning Modules
 - Podcasts

APPENDIX H

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Thank you for participating in this research study to investigate classroom discourse use of teachers in Union Public Schools. Your willingness to meet and engage with the research topic and share your thoughts about your experiences was extremely helpful and informative.

Based on the transcripts from interviews and journal responses, I am attaching a description of what and how you responded to classroom discourse use in your classroom and your experience with professional learning opportunities for ELs. Would you please be able to review this description and verify that this information is accurate to your teaching experience? Please let me know if anything needs to be corrected, clarified, or added. Your willingness to do this will guarantee that I am accurately understanding and summarizing your point of view and your experience.

I have really enjoyed getting to know you and your participation in this research study. If you have any questions or concerns about the research study, contact me at 918-565-6523 or email me at plum.jillian@unionps.org.

Questions about your rights as a research subject are to be directed to, Lisa Marie JOHNSON, IRB Manager, Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, 1600 Hampton Street, Suite 414D, Columbia, SC 29208, phone: (803) 777-7095 or email LisaJ@mailbox.sc.edu.

Thank you again for your participation!

Best,
Jillian Plum
Doctoral candidate

APPENDIX I

DATA COLLECTION CHART

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
Initial Interview					
Week 1 Journal					
Week 1 Oct 24-28 Lesson Plans					
Week 2 Journal					
Week 2 Oct 31-Nov 4 Lesson Plans					
Week 3 Journal					
Week 3 Lesson Plans Nov 7-11					
Week 4 Journal					
Week 4 Lesson Plans Nov 14-18					
Week 5 Journal					
Week 5 Lesson Plans Nov 28-Dec 2					
Week 6 Journal					
Week 6 Lesson Plans					

Dec 5-9					
Final Survey					
Final Interview					