English Language Learners: Moving towards a more effective classroom (with a focus on Cooperative Learning).

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Student diversity is growing in many classrooms across the United States and Canada, especially the number of students with non-English speaking backgrounds. From 2000 to 2016, ELL enrollment has drastically increase from 3.8 million to 4.9 million students and are the fastest growing subpopulation of students in the US (Abedi et al., 2020). Representing approximately 10% of the students in public schools, ELL enrollment has grown to more than 5 million in 2018 (Abedi et al., 2020). From 1992 to 2003 total student enrollment in U.S. schools increased by 11%, however the number of limited English proficiency students in public schools increased 84% (Echevarria et al., 2006). In 2005, one in five children over age eight were of Hispanic origin in the U.S; and these children accounted for approximately 80% of English language learners (ELL) (Tiedt, & Tiedt, 2009). In 2007, "19.5% of the population over five years old spoke a language other than English at home" (Tiedt, & Tiedt, 2009, pg. 10). By 2050, the Hispanic population in the U.S. is expected to triple from one in six to one in three, over 30% (Tiedt, & Tiedt, 2009). It is widely accepted that while U.S. population growth is driven by natural increases and a high fertility rate, the majority of Canada's increase results from immigration, expanding the diversity of spoken languages in Canadian schools.

In light of these statistics, the U.S. and Canada need to continuously rethink their educational approaches if ELL students are to be given equal academic opportunity. The biggest challenge that many schools are facing is the lack of teachers with ELL training (Pahl, 2007). Before 2000, many U.S. schools placed ELLs in special education, and many school districts ensured that most, if not all of their ELL students were isolated in low performing schools (Pahl, 2007). Currently, as North American schools grow in cultural diversity, educators must ensure that their teaching practices support the diversity in their classrooms. However, some evidence indicates that ELL students are falling behind other minority groups. Students who struggle academically are more likely to develop problem behaviors related to escaping or avoiding academic assignments (Preciado et al., 2009). Exploring previous and current research, this paper will first examine some of the main problems ELL students have faced in the classroom over the past 20 years. Next, based on the theoretical framework of Lev Vygotsky, that optimal learning involves social interaction, this paper will investigate successful teaching strategies to help non-native English language learners. Finally, this paper will provide a detailed focus on the well researched positive benefits of cooperative learning (Gillies, 2020), which can also be used to help these struggling students.

The Main Problem faced by ELL students: Lack of Background Knowledge.

The most difficult aspect of living in a foreign country is conquering the language barrier. Limited background knowledge about the English language and associated customs can negatively affect comprehension for language minority students. Before moving to the U.S. and Canada, many ELL students have little or no formal education in their own language. Sixty-one percent of Latino students are ELL students who come from backgrounds of limited reading, vocabulary and language skills (cited in (Preciado et al., 2009). Students from low socio-economic households have limited access to literacy materials such as books, magazines and writing supplies. These students may have limited exposure to travel; the arts; specialized camps or specialized lessons (Grant, & Sleeter, 2008). ELLs face the overwhelming task of learning the academic curriculum and new language concurrently. Compounding the problem, they often know conversational English but not formal, academic English (Pahl, 2007). The vocabulary and language used in textbooks, especially history, math, and social studies, which are often difficult for native English speakers, create an even greater difficulty for ELLs (Pahl, 2007) (Abedi et al., 2020). ELL students are often confused by syntax and figurative language in English literature. These students, unfamiliar with the culture in literature, may try to understand it by using references from their own cultural and historical backgrounds. Despite accommodation studies over the past two years showing signs that accommodations are helping ELL students take standardized tests, in addition to aiding student learning, they do not level the playing field, nor bring ELL performance to the same level as their non-ELL peers (Abedi et al., 2020). Research has indicated that the differences between native and non-native English speakers is partly due to their difficulty of understanding assessment language (Abedi et al., 2020).

In the US: The previous "No Child Left Behind Act" and the newest Replacement: "Every Student Succeeds Act".

In 1974, the U.S Supreme Court decision in Lau vs. Nichols ruled that schools were required to provide non-native English speakers help when learning English as well as instruction in the student's native language. Since then, federal and state governments have disputed how to teach English most effectively rather than how to promote bilingualism (Grant, & Sleeter, 2008). However, in 2002, the Federal government dramatically changed the education system with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act, effectively eliminating ELL students' access to native language instruction. The NCLB's goal, by 2013-14, was for all children to have equal access to education and be proficient in reading, math and science. Schools needed to demonstrate yearly progression, by meeting grade-level performance benchmarks on standardized tests. The test results were used to hold the district, schools, and students accountable, with serious sanctions for those who failed to meet federal criteria. Despite the NCLB's worthy goals, there was a catch; the tests were administered in English.

Many bilingual and English as a second language educators (ESL) were concerned with the inequitable

policies of the NCLB testing of ELLs (Pappamihiel & Walser, 2009). ELLs lagged behind almost all minority groups on levels of achievement (Gandara & Baca, 2008). For example, "in 2007 nearly three times as many sixth grade ELLs scored below basic in English Language Arts as did English Speakers, 57% vs. 20 %" (Gandara & Baca, 2008, pg. 203). In addition, researchers argued that the NCLB, which prioritized reading first, had more negative consequences for teaching in low income schools, for example, stripping teachers of their autonomy and professional identity (Dennis, 2017). Teachers merit was based on whether they could follow the adopted standardized curriculum, not their own personal pedagogy. NCLB led to more teachers leaving the education industry sector because the law undervalued their professional teaching skills.

The previous NCLB legislation focused exclusively on English acquisition, disregarding the benefits of a bilingual education; appreciation of cultural differences; and understanding multiculturalism. Linguistic minority students entered classrooms with an English-only environment (Wright, 2005). This unilingual framework of instruction diminished the expertise of ESL teachers and bilingual education (Harper et al., 2008). The legislation mandated that these teachers, highly qualified in content knowledge, must teach core subjects (Harper et al., 2008). This relegated the pedagogical skills of teaching ELLs to secondary importance (Gandara & Baca, 2008); (Harper et al., 2008). The results of test scores often forced ELLs into intervention classes that typically failed to address their needs (Harper et al., 2008). Furthermore, moving ELLs into English-only classrooms changed bilingual education into low-level remedial instruction which possibly resulted in lower track education for these students.

Language minority students had to pass NCLB standardized tests one year after arriving in the U.S., often before becoming proficient in English. Most ESL educators agreed that the academic proficiency necessary to pass the NCLB standardized tests was acquired only after multiple years of intensive study (Pappamihiel & Walser, 2009). Research demonstrated that the participation of ELLs who did not understand the assessment questions in English could produce undesirable results (Abedi, 2008). ELL students who lived in the U.S. had to take the same state tests as mainstream students with few, if any, accommodations (Wright & Li, 2008). Exacerbating the problem, recently arrived ELLs were not exempt from the state math and science tests. Wright and Li (2008) argued that the language skills needed for the NCLB math tests were beyond the ability of an ELL, and that newcomer ELL students were not given an opportunity to learn grade-level math content. Pappamihiel and Walser (2009) concluded that all high stakes assessments, such as math, science and language, should be administered only when students have sufficient English language skills.

Most NCLB standardized tests relied heavily on linguistic proficiency and were developed for students who were fluent in English (Menken, 2006) (Abedi, 2008). Since the tests were geared to native English speakers, ELLs needed to achieve proficiency in English to meaningfully participate in the standardized tests. Furthermore, Pappamihiel and Walser (2009) provided evidence that the development of standardized tests did not include ELLs in norming groups, questioning the validity of using tests for these students. ELLs, as well as native English speakers, have diverse socio-economic, cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds which must be considered in field test groups. Abedi (2008) offered many

recommendations for improving the quality of English Language placement assessments, namely: each state must 1) use multiple criteria for assessing ELL students, for setting standards and defining cut-off scores for achievement levels; 2) use ELP assessment results along with other sources to decide about the participation of ELLs in NCLB standardized testing; and 3) continue to research and develop high quality ELP assessments. As the years passed, newly developed tests are now based on theoretical frameworks of second language acquisition and other linguistic principles.

The consequences of the NCLB Act for ELLs were simple to observe: higher-income students consistently scored higher than linguistic minority students; ELLs were forced to take a test in a language they did not fully understand; and there were severe consequences for failing standardized tests. In December 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The ESSA act demands that teachers give more comprehensive literacy instruction, and places a more valued emphasis on continuous professional learning. ESSA recommends a more balanced approach to testing, with less classroom time spent on teaching the test, and less emphasis on the results of any state assessment (Dennis, 2017). The new act encourages the use of more formative assessments, and allows teachers to make decisions based on their own class diversity. Ultimately, the bill's main objective is to narrow the United States federal governments role in elementary and secondary education, giving instruction to be decided by each state, and allow for more flexible assessments by the classroom teacher. Hopefully, this new shift will allow ELL students to preform better when teachers can make more individualized instruction, accommodations and assessment. On a positive note, some recent studies have shown that ELLs who receive appropriate accommodations have shown significant improvement compared to the students who do not receive appropriate or no accommodations (Abedi et al., 2020).

Vygotsky's social-cultural theory

Lev Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist who believed that human mental abilities develop through the individual's interaction with the world. Vygotsky's work emerged in the 1920's and 1930's; translated into English in the 1970's, and is still actively followed today (Vygotsky, 1978).   The three main principles in his socio-cultural theory in relation to learning are: 1) full cognitive development requires social interaction through language; 2) cognitive development is limited to a certain range at any given age; and 3) a child uses scientific and spontaneous concepts to aid in learning. First, Vygotsky (1978) postulated that mental processes exist between and among people in social settings, and it is from these interactions that the learner assimilates new strategies into his/ her own psychological realm. He called this process semiotic mediation; a concept used to describe how information moves from the social plane to the individual plane. What begins as an interpersonal process, occurring among teachers, peers and the child, becomes an intra-psychic process, occurring within the child. Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level and then later on the individual level (Vygotsky, 1978). This general progression characterizes the development of all the 'higher mental processes'. Individual beliefs, attitudes and goals are simultaneously affected and, in turn affect social cultural practices and

institutions. The main tool of semiotic mediation involves interaction through language with diagrams, pictures and actions also playing an important role. The acquisition of speech is of major importance to the growing child (Vygotsky, 1986). Language enables the child to participate in social interaction, and also, more importantly, facilitates a child's individual thinking (Vygotsky, 1978).

The second main concept of Vygotsky's theory is that learning occurs depending on whether it is within the student's zone of proximal development (ZDP); (Powell, & Kalina, 2009). This is the difference between a learner's assisted and unassisted performance in a learning task. ZDP theory states that a student's range of knowledge may not be attainable on his/ her own, but is possible if the student has support of his/ her more knowledgeable teacher or peers (Powell, & Kalina, 2009). Full development of the ZPD depends upon full social interaction. Once students achieve the goal of an activity, their learning zone expands outward and the students can learn more.

Finally, Vygotsky (1986) believed that there are two concepts that a child uses in learning: a) scientific concepts: concepts that are taught in school, for example, science, math, social sciences etc. and b) spontaneous concepts: concepts that children learn on their own. He argued that scientific concepts, such as "condensation, provide children with broader frameworks to place and understand their spontaneous concepts", for example, "water droplets on the window", (Vygotsky, 1986). Spontaneous concepts are saturated with experience, full of rich sensations, imagery *and specific to different cultures*. In school, a teacher might explain an idea that challenges the student to think in more abstract terms. Initially, the child will have difficulty understanding the new concept; but with the aid of spontaneous concepts they will eventually comprehend. For ELLs, Vygotsky might have argued that they have learned different spontaneous concepts than their English native classmates, and, therefore, be at a disadvantage. They may misinterpret the teacher's instruction because of their previous spontaneous concepts or not understand at all because of a lack of one.

According to Vygotsky, conventional tests are inadequate (Crain, 2004). Such tests are merely yardsticks that measure the child's development at a specific mean age; but they tell us nothing about the child's ability to learn new material. Conventional and standardized tests only evaluate work that is accomplished independently. Educators need to see how well their students can perform when offered some assistance to determine their true potential for learning, i.e. to optimize their ZDP (Crain, 2004). By focusing on the abilities a child can accomplish with assistance, you can reveal the talents that are just beginning to develop (Crain, 2004). The implications of Vygotsky's ideas stimulate interest in the three main teaching processes: scaffolding, reciprocal teaching and co-operative groups.

Scaffolding

This teaching method involves the teacher helping a child to solve problems or use strategies that are initially beyond the student's ability. For example, a child is learning to count but makes a sequential mistake when counting alone. However, if a teacher counts aloud with the child, the student can then count correctly alone. Scaffolding's support system ultimately allows the student to solve the problem (Powell, & Kalina, 2009).

Reciprocal teaching

Reciprocal teaching involves the teacher initially showing the students a new learning strategy and then the students take turns in groups 'being the teacher', leading the group using the new strategy. This method has produced positive results, especially for ELLs (Pilonieta, & Medina, 2009).

Focus on Co-operative groups

Vygotsky would consider co-operative groups to be a very effective way for ELLs to foster personal linguistic development. For Vygotsky, internalization occurs more effectively when there is social interaction; therefore, co-operative groups are a means of attaining this objective (Powell, & Kalina, 2009). The community of learners in co-operative groups is affected by the class culture created by the teacher and the broader social culture of peer interaction within or beyond the classroom. "Students have a lot [of knowledge] to offer one another" (Powell, & Kalina, 2009, pg. 244). Before students can perform a task alone, they can perform them in collaboration with others, receiving some guidance or support, thereby, optimizing their ZDP. The internalization of knowledge occurs at different rates for each individual, according to individual experience, after the completion of an activity in a group. Over the past 20-30 years, research on cooperative groups have clearly demonstrated that when teachers create clearly defined cooperative work groups, students gain both academically and socially (Gillies, 2020). Near the end of this essay, there is a more detailed focus on Co-operative groups.

In summary, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory or constructivism, states that learning is dependent on the learner's ZDP, the social interactions in the classroom, and the culture and language within and beyond the classroom. Vygotsky believed that if a child's minds were simply the products of their own discoveries and inventions, their minds would not advance very far. In reality, children benefit from the knowledge and conceptual tools handed down to them by our culture and social interactions. Teaching strategies that enhance social interaction will enhance the social and academic advancement of ELL students.

Research Supporting the Viewpoints of Vygotsky

Past research on learning, for example, cooperative group work research, has continued to support and extend Vygotsky's premise (Gillies, 2020). All students can benefit from social collaboration and social interaction. Understanding Vygotsky's theories and encouraging student interaction helps develop effective learning environments (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Students need activities that help them create relationships and express their personalities. Group projects allow students to choose an activity that meets individual interests. The more activities that involve students in inquiry, discovery, discussion and conversation, the more adept students, especially ELLs, become in thinking and communication (Powell, & Kalina, 2009). Learning occurs when students are open, comfortable and challenged, while giving their full attention through social interaction (Powell, & Kalina, 2009).

We know from field tests researching Vygotsky's ideas that ELL students benefit from a social environment where they interact with proficient speakers of English (Purdy, 2008). All students have a desire to communicate and be understood. However, one recurring problem is that ELL students

often do not contribute during classroom discussions and guided reading sessions (Purdy, 2008). The dilemma teachers face in this situation is why there is no response: is it due to not understanding the text; language; or cultural constraints? Based on her research, Purdy (2008) offered four different ways to invite conversation about the text for the benefit of ELL students. First, teachers should prepare insightful questions that encourage interaction and thoughtful responses. ELL students can benefit from both closed questions (e.g. what does "*reptile*" mean?) which check for understanding, and open-ended questions (e.g. why do you like "*reptiles*"?) which invite higher-order thinking. Teachers should give ELL students extra time and opportunity to answer questions, and encourage them to elaborate on their responses. Second, studies indicate that vocabulary development is essential for the reading success of ELLs (cited in Purdy, 2008). Teachers should pre-teach important vocabulary and encourage ELLs to ask questions about words they do not understand. Thirdly, teachers should allow for collaborative talk in structured discussions. The teacher should initially guide the conversation, and then encourage the children to direct the topic of conversation. Finally, the teacher must acknowledge and consider the ELL's culture and diverse background in a caring learning environment. "One way to do this is to encourage ELL students to share their first language and cultural stories" (Purdy, 2008, pg 50).

Iddings, Risko, and Rampulla (2009) postulated the importance of social conversation in text comprehension for ELL students. The majority of ELLs in the U.S were in English-only classrooms taught by unilingual teachers (Iddings et al., 2009). Their study focused on Vygotsky's concept that teacher's assistance can move students to the next phase of ZDP. Their research recommended teaching strategies that can help ELLs make better connections in the classroom, such as: 1) provide instructional space and time for using language and knowledge building collaboratively. This includes reiterating what ELL students say, validating their use of language and recasting corrected language use; 2) share instructional space with the students: relying on students who have strong dual language skills to mediate learning for their ELL peers; 3) create group conversations involving several roles, where students elaborate on each other's statements about text content, translating to native languages where necessary; and 4) activate and build on students' knowledge and main text concepts (Iddings et al., 2009). When students have proper support, linguistically diverse students can develop proficiency in English, enabling them to actively participate and learn from text discussions (Iddings et al., 2009).

Finally, research suggests that the critical stumbling blocks for ELLs in reading comprehension are decoding and vocabulary skills (Preciado et al., 2009). Latino ELLs often attain lower academic achievement than English speaking students, dropout of school more often and are more likely to be placed in remedial classes (Preciado et al., 2009). As a result, these students are at risk for engaging in escapism or avoidance of difficult academic tasks. Reaffirming previous research, Preciado, Horner and Baker (2009) found that combining behavior intervention and classroom academic supports for ELLs students can increase their success in reading tasks and reduce escaping and avoidance of academic tasks. These intervention classes involved one-hour instructional sessions with a bilingual instructor, teaching a) decoding skills; b) reviewing content and vocabulary; and c) more socially acceptable social skills. The classroom strategies were a) reviewing vocabulary words from the story; b) reviewing directions and

providing examples; and c) encouraging students to work with peers (Preciado et al., 2009).

Teaching Tools for ELLs

This segment of the essay will expostulate successful teaching strategies that can be used that promote esteem, empathy and equity for ELLs. Building self-esteem is an important element of teaching; it maintains students' confidence and motivates them to take risks. Empathy facilitates ELLs to connect with others, accepting differences and similarities, and to collaborate effectively. Equity ensures that all students have the same resources and support, an element important for ELLs, who already are at a disadvantage because of the "double workload" of learning proficient English and academic content at the same time.

There is a great need to continuously adapt and improve the way educators teach ELLs. With increased performance accountability mandated by standardized tests, schools are under pressure to help these students, who could be learning too little, becoming disengaged, or dropping out of school. (Gibbons, 2008).

> I was silent for a long time. I was afraid to raise my hand. They always labeled me as shy, but the truth was I felt odd and different. And I did not want to tell anyone that I spoke a different language at home (Kilman, 2009, pg. 16).

This is a common feeling for students new to a country. Why do ELLs often sit in the back of the room, possibly afraid to speak? With English-only policies in place, many non-English speaking students may believe that speaking their native tongue is regarded as a problem rather than an asset, and may eventually refuse to speak it at home and in school (Grant & Sleeter, 2008). Teachers often blame the students' cultural background as the reason for their silence in class. However, part of the problem might be our method of teaching. Removing students from class for separate instruction may be robbing them of valuable time *interacting* with their peers.

As ELL student populations increase, a growing number of schools are offering more supportive social relationships for ELLs by launching 'social inclusion' classes. These programs and class activities allow ELLs to learn as equals beside their English speaking peers, optimizing social interaction, and, thereby, increasing their self-esteem, confidence, acceptance and pride. This set up allows the use of dual language education; where ELLs are called upon to teach their native language, and English-speaking students are called upon to help their non-English speaking peers. Social inclusion teachers can modify their classroom instruction to meet the needs of ELL students, which ultimately benefits all students. "Just as social inclusion helps ELL students to learn the culture of their new community, inclusion exposes all students, including native English speakers, to multiple ways of thinking, solving problems" and surviving in a culturally diverse world (Kilman, 2009, pg.20). But be aware, inclusion often begins with ignorance. Many native English students often physically and mentally bully any student they deem 'different'. Some students tease others who cannot speak properly, have a strange accent, or wear different clothing. In these situations, the teacher must address these problems as quickly as they occur; stressing more respectable ways of communication, eliminating stereotypes where possible and promoting pro-social behavior.

The challenge that teachers of ELLs face is to motivate students to the highest possible level of academic achievement while, at the same time, teaching English proficiency (Gibbons, 2008). This can be attained by activating an ELL's prior knowledge along with proven, research based, instructional strategies. The following teaching methods will help minority language students as well as English as a second language students:

Advance Organizers – such as semantic mapping, KWL charts, T-charts and concept webs. In semantic maps, the teacher writes a word on the board that is central to the topic, and students brainstorm any ideas related to the word. The students and the teacher discuss the central concept, the listed words, and the inter-relationships among the words. Group discussions can help students, who have little individual knowledge about a topic, to pool their information and expand their knowledge. Diagrams can show ELL students how words are connected in meaning to each other.

Language Use in the Classroom – The teacher should adapt the level of questions to the ELLs language acquisition stage; explain the activity, using gestures, visuals and demonstrations repeatedly. The teacher should allow meaningful use of ELLs' mother tongue to help clarify directions, build esteem and expand comprehension. Teachers could also learn some school-specific phrases, special expressions and words in their ELLs students' native languages to make them feel more welcome in the classroom.

After School Classes and Special Activity Classes – Schools can create after school classes to extend their ELLs' native languages or special activities structured around cultural and scientific themes for both English and non-English speaking students, stressing the importance of communication between these groups.

Multiple Intelligence Strategies and Diverse Lesson Plans – The teacher should employ various instructional techniques to address all the multiple intelligences. Some appropriate techniques for ELLs are:

✓Read Aloud – use oral reading as much as possible. Oral reading by the teacher serves as a model and allows students to experience literature they might not be able to read on their own. Hearing literature aloud gives ELLs an opportunity to hear the intonation and rhythm of English in meaningful contexts and to become familiar with the structure of the language. Furthermore, it enhances listening skills, expands vocabulary and builds background knowledge.

✓Big Books – ELLs benefit from observing printed English characteristics and directional patterns. During big book exercises, the teacher can help students learn to read English by reinforcing reading strategies, modeling good reading, and inviting students to read along.

✓Reader Response – silent reading or read aloud in pairs is very beneficial. These exercises allow students to respond to literature in terms of their own cultural background and level of English proficiency.

✓Role Play – ELL students often feel successful in role-plays because there are no right or wrong answers. The students can enhance their responses to any subject and discover underlying meanings. Role play gives the student a chance to experiment with vocabulary and sentence structure as they discover individual feelings in real life situations.

Scaffolding and Reciprocal Teaching – children learn more effectively when they have teachers, peers,

or other adults to support them. While the teacher is explaining a concept, they must find ways to build background knowledge through concrete and vicarious experiences, for example, using objects, illustrations or photographs. Assisted learning activities help a student move on to the next level of ZDP.

Student Lead Classroom Discussion – must be designed to allow the maximum amount of social interaction. Teachers initiate discussions and provide thoughtful questions. Students then take ownership of the discussion while the teacher acts as the mediator.

Dual Language Classrooms – Whenever possible, dual language texts and reading materials should be available in school districts with high percentages of non-English speaking populations. It is important for educators to teach in a way that fosters transfer of concepts (spontaneous concepts) and skills learned in their native language into English. However, cross-language transfer can be problematic for classrooms with ELLs who speak multiple languages. Teachers will have more success with ELLs when they create activities that affirm their students' identities and enable them to invest their identities in learning (Cummins et al., 2005). One example of this is the Dual Language Identity Text. In this integrated assignment, ELLs choose a topic relating any positive statement about themselves: they create a story, play, artwork, song, etc. in both their native and English languages. Students write initial drafts in the language of choice, and work with parents and older students literate in the other language to create a dual language text.

Final Focus on Cooperative Groups:

Cooperation promotes higher learning and achievement than interpersonal competition (Gillies, 2020). This type of learning has strong positive effects on various categories, such as achievement, socialization, motivation and personal self-development (Gillies, 2020). Students should be given the opportunity to work with a partner or work in a group to complete a task. Co-operative groups are an integral part of creating a deep understanding for all students. In smaller more structured group situations, ELL students have a chance to practice and feel comfortable before interacting in large classroom discussions. However, simply placing students in small groups and expecting them to succeed will not necessary be successful; there are certain elements that must be fulfilled:

1. All group members must understand that they need to help each other to finish the task. The dependence must be positive and they students should understand the value of working together.

2. All group members must understand they are accountable for their individual efforts, for example, sharing to the class the task they have worked on.

3. All group members must actively listen to others and understand that anybody can express their own opinions.

4. All group members should encourage and facilitate each member's efforts.

5. All group members should reflect on what they have achieved, and learn how to adapt and/or change to reach their next task.

The teacher's role is vital in establishing not only well-structured work-groups, but also in promoting discourse and positive social interaction within the group, especially with ELL students. In cooperative groups, students will learn that knowledge is created by interacting with others (i.e. teachers and students) by modeling different ways of reasoning, motivation, and speaking.

Conclusions and Further Research

The composition of an ELL group is culturally and linguistically diverse; it encompasses different socio-economic status, educational backgrounds, life experiences and age of arrival to the new country (Pappamihiel; Walser, 2009); (Echevarria et al., 2006). There is a constant flux as new students arrive and proficient students leave (Pappamihiel; Walser, 2009). Standardized tests should include variables specific to ELLs, such as, years of education prior to arrival, native and English language proficiency and socio-economic status (Pappamihiel; Walser, 2009). Student assessment should be based on multiple measures, such as attendance, student progress, course passage and classroom performance on tasks. Government resources must be allocated for research on the validation and reliability of standardized tests for ELL groups. Resources are also needed to determine the benefit of current accommodations, such as oral translations or bilingual dictionaries, and develop new accommodations as needed. Investment should be made to hire educated and effective teachers trained to help all students with special needs.

ELLs come to schools with many resources to share in classrooms, including the resource of their native language (Echevarria et al., 2006). They enter schools with a wide range of language proficiencies (in English and in their native languages) and of various subject-matter knowledge We must recognize the linguistic and cultural diversity of ELLs, allowing 'social inclusion' classes combined with dual language education and utilize the success of cooperative group learning. There is much evidence that ELLs benefit from the development of their native language, in order to study any second language (Gabriele et al., 2009); (Karathanos, 2009). Schools need to incorporate the ELL's native language into assessment, instruction and support. For example, educators can create after school programs or in-class programs where all students can learn another language and non-English speaking students look to their ELL classmates for guidance. This way, ELL students are not viewed as remedial, but rather as a valuable resource, which will greatly increase their confidence and esteem.

If educators want to increase the social and academic success of the growing number of ELLs, they must realize that the way they value and utilize the experiences of these students create the best potential for learning. Using a variety of instructional techniques, teachers must be responsible and ensure that ELLs have access to a rich curriculum. To understand diversity, students must interact socially and engage in classroom activities that allow the maximum amount of social interaction (Powell, & Kalina, 2009). Social interaction and cultural influences have a great effect on how learning occurs and teachers should embrace the differences and diversity of their class (Powell, & Kalina, 2009). Class discussions and activities that encourage social interaction give students the opportunity to discuss the material being learned as well as their different cultures. It is vital that teachers and students develop trust and openness, where all students, especially ELLs, feel comfortable and confident enough to present their ideas without inhibitions or fear.

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