IDENTIFYING ACADEMIC SUCCESS STRATEGIES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

A Thesis

Presented to the faculty of Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
California State University, Sacramento

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

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in

Education
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by

Ebony Nichole Curiale

FALL
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____________________________________, Graduate Coordinator

Geni Cowan, Ph.D.

Date

Educational Leadership & Policy Studies Program
Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
Abstract

of

IDENTIFYING ACADEMIC SUCCESS STRATEGIES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

Ebony Nichole Curiale

The English language learner (ELL) population continues to grow across the country, particularly in the state of California. The influx of this student sector has impacted the higher education system at every level: community colleges, state colleges, universities and private institutions. This study focuses on identifying the academic success strategies of ELL students at a private institution in Northern California. The researcher used a mixed method approach to spotlight what resources the faculty and academic support staff and students are utilizing to support their success. Results indicated a strong reliance on peer interaction and on-campus support mechanisms.

_________________________ , Committee Chair
José Chávez, Ed.D.

_________________________
Date
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family and friends, I cannot thank you enough for your love and support during this process. I am eternally grateful. Thank you for believing in me.

To Maya Antonia-Grace and Julian Angelo, you are my world. Thank you for choosing me. I Love You.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

The state of California has a rich history as a cultural intersection for residents representing all parts of the world. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, California’s immigrant population has increased from 1.8 million in 1970 to almost 10 million in 2009 (Johnson, 2011). This state has the highest foreign-born population in the country. In 2009, 40% of the births in the state were to immigrant mothers. Ninety percent of the immigrant population is from Latin America, with the next largest group originating in Asia (Johnson, 2011). The steady influx of immigrants and the growing population of children with at least one immigrant parent should not be ignored. Thus the increase of English language learners (ELL) on the K-12 system has impacted the realm of higher education.

Proprietary Education has traditionally been focused on educating students in trades or career-focused curriculum (Zamani-Gallaher, 2004). Within the past decade for-profit institutions have now joined the ranks of traditional colleges and universities and are granting Associates of Arts, Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctorate degrees. Statistics show that a large proportion of students who attend proprietary schools are from disadvantaged backgrounds and minority, which is likely to include students from

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to identify instructional strategies that are being utilized and are contributing to the success of ELL students at Heald College. Specific questions to be addressed are:

1. What resources and strategies are provided and utilized by students, instructors, and academic support staff to aid in the success of ELL students at Heald College-Roseville?

2. What resources and intervention do students, instructors, and academic support staff find the most useful to promote ELL academic success?

Limitations

Based on the methodology utilized there are inherent limitations to the research presented. The ELL data collected through surveys only consist of information collected from students attending the Heald College campus in Roseville, California. Currently Heald College has campuses in eight California locations: San Francisco, Concord, Hayward, San Jose, Rancho Cordova, Roseville, Stockton, Modesto; a campus in Portland, Oregon and Honolulu, Hawaii. Currently Heald College offers education and training that are not usually found in a traditional college or university setting. The college grants AAS degrees in the following fields of study: Health Care Programs,
Business Programs, Legal Programs and Technology Programs. Individualized focus areas include but are not limited to: Medical Assisting, Pharmacy Technology, Business Entrepreneurship, Paralegal and Network Systems Administration. These programs are designed to be completed in as few as 18 months and all campuses operate on an 11-week quarter system. Students can also continue in their studies to attain an Associate of Arts degree. As recently as this year, certain campuses have been designated to offer a limited number of Bachelor degree programs. With this being said, the researcher recognized that the student population may not be consistent with the demographics and supporting literature of local four-year colleges and universities, but may have closer correlations with two-year institutions in the area.

Another limitation of this research is the process of selecting students to survey. Until October 2012 there has been no formal data collected to classify students whose first, second, third, etc. language was English. Even after this point the information was requested but not mandatory. The lack of specific language, race, and ethnicity information presents a difficulty in assessing and identifying how many ELL students are currently in attendance at this campus site. For instance of the 111 male students that reported their ethnicity as “white,” or the 421 who indicated race/ethnicity unknown; there is no way to delineate for example if a Russian or Bosnian student choose this option because it could reflect how they identify or opted not to answer because they were unsure of how to answer. Additional limitations include the possibility of limited or non-participation, from the student population.
Instructors and staff will have to assist in identifying students to participate in the selection process. Given that participation in the survey will be voluntary and the number of enrolled English language learners can vary from quarter to quarter, there is the risk that the number of participants will be limited. In addition to faculty and staff involvement will be on a voluntary basis.

Definition of Terms

Academic Support Staff

For the purposes of this study, this term includes staff members of the Library and Learning Resource Center and on campus tutors.

English Language Learner (ELL)

Students whose primary language (or in some cases 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 3\textsuperscript{rd}, etc.) is not English.

Proprietary Institution or School

A privately owned for-profit educational institution, establishment, agency, organization, or person offering or administering a plan, course, or program of instruction in business, trade, technical, industrial, or related areas for which a fee or tuition is charged.

Student or Student Population

Unless otherwise noted the terms student or student population would refer to individuals enrolled at the Heald College – Roseville Campus.
Significance of the Study

According to the Migration Policy Institute, in 2010 there were 25.2 million Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals over the age of five in the United States (Pandya, Batalova, & McHugh, 2011). The term "Limited English Proficient" refers to any person aged five and older who reported speaking English "not at all," "not well," or "well" on their survey questionnaire. California had 6.9 million LEP residents in 2010. With evidence showing such a significant ELL population and literature concluding that proprietary schools expand postsecondary opportunities for historically disadvantaged students (Oseguera & Malagon, 2011), it would be remiss for institutions of higher education, including proprietary colleges to not have the necessary resources in place to provide adequate support to this student population.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The English Language Learner (ELL) population presents a complex facet in higher education. Across the country colleges and universities have a continuous flow of ELL students, also known as ESL (English as a Second Language) students on their campuses. As cited in the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS) ESL Task Force Report (Conley, 2007), nowhere in the United States have educational issues concerned with English language learners been more prominent than in California, where language minority students comprise nearly 40% of all K-12 students and an ever-growing population of postsecondary students. In the 10 years between 1994 and 2004, while the total K-12 enrollment growth rate in California was only 7.8%, the Limited English Proficient (LEP) enrollment growth rate was more than 30%. How to effectively support and address the academic concern of this ever-growing contingent is a natural concern for any institution of higher education. Many variables can impact the extent to which services are offered within a private, for-profit or public college or university. This is in addition to the legal influences of legislation such as Title VII and Proposition 227 in California (Garcia & Curry-Rodriguez, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2005).
The following review of current literature presents a theoretical perspective to address language acquisition, ELL demographics, faculty preparation and student support. Due to the limited amount of research that has previously been conducted on ELL students in for-profit higher educational settings, the researcher utilized documentation from the closely related community college settings. The literature that focuses on for-profit institutions often compares the characteristics and quality of these schools [community colleges], as they are also major providers of postsecondary occupational training. As cited in the research conducted by Oseguera and Malagon (2010) and Apling (1993), theorists contend that the traditional lines between these institutions are blurring. Whereas for-profit institutions have long operated on the fringes of the postsecondary sector because of the perceived differences in their institutional missions and functions, both proprietary schools and community colleges attract students preparing for occupational careers. Proprietary schools have also moved in the direction of hoping to attract students who seek a conventional four-year degree program, thus increasing the competition for not only community colleges but also four-year degree-granting institutions (Hawthorne, 1997; Lee & Merisotis, 1990).

The remainder of this chapter presents a discussion of theoretical frameworks that will assist in understanding the ELL population, the importance of ELL academic success, understanding the need and demands of faculty support, and finally exploring factors that propel student success.
Theoretical Framework

The importance of addressing English language learners and their academic success is more than a conversation about skill or curriculum, but a comprehensive dialogue that must and should include a theoretical perspective. Language and language acquisition is fundamental to accessibility and advancement in any given society. In their research, Oropeza, Varghese, and Kanno (2010) reference Yosso’s (2005) idea that language is “capital” that adds to the wealth of a community (p. 69). In her endeavor to emphasize what she calls “community cultural wealth,” which are defined as valuable resources possessed by communities of color, Yosso named six forms of capital that together comprise such community resources. They are identified as aspirational, navigational, social, resistant, familial, and linguistic capital. For the sake of this study the researcher spotlights the idea of linguistic capital. This refers to the communication skills accumulated by multilingual communities of color. If the minority culture lacks the linguistic skills of the dominant culture, there inherently is an additional layer of marginalization that occurs. Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn (2010) present in their text Student Development in College: Theory, Research and Practice and number of theories including Critical Race Theory (CRT). Among a number of other components, CRT argues the belief that our current understanding of race privileges white people and marginalizes people of color and that people from disenfranchised groups are systemically prevented from accessing resources that can help them succeed (Oropeza et al., 2010).
In terms of language acquisition, Vygotsky’s Constructivist Theory of language presents that learners construct and consolidate their own learning through experience, reflection, and social interactions with others. According to Christy (2013) rather than seeing cognitive and linguistic development as being principally the unfolding of an internal imperative, Vygotsky thought more in terms of a symbiotic relationship between individual and environment, a relationship in which each did not simply register an input on the other, but in which, instead, the result of this interaction manifested emergent properties. These perspectives solidify the idea that the ELL will acquire the necessary language skills both in and outside of the classroom, but also that those in command of instruction would be remiss to not utilize a pedagogical style influenced by a global perspective and cultural competent approach.

Demographics

The current student population in higher education has gone through significant changes. The idealized vision of middle-class teens packing belongings, leaving home and settling into dorms at their college of choice, is no longer an accurate description of incoming freshman at colleges and universities around the country. In this case traditional student will be defined as individuals who immediately following high school graduation, enroll in a college or university on a full time basis. More often than not they do not work, live on campus or with parental figures and are single with no children. Reasonable scholars may disagree about the degree to which "traditional" students have
or do not have all of these characteristics, but one fact is undeniable: traditional students are no longer the majority on college campuses and their numbers will continue to decline. Today, traditional students comprise only 16% of college students (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Approximately a quarter are taking online courses and over a million attend for-profit institutions such as the University of Phoenix, Argosy University, DeVry University, and others (Russo, 2006). In addition to the previous characteristics the following add to the intricacies of this group. These students are:

- Often are foreign born. If not foreign born, their parents are; and they may well be the first person in their family attempting a college experience;
- Often use English as their second language; having been reared with another language being the first language spoken in their homes;
- Frequently have meager financial resources;
- Often work minimum wage jobs; and do not have access to employer-sponsored employee tuition assistance programs; and
- Typically have extensive needs for remedial/developmental education (English language proficiency, writing skills, reading skills, study skills, math competency, etc.) in multiple areas. (Falk & Blaylock, 2010).

Although California’s postsecondary ESL learners are extremely diverse in their ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, they tend to belong to one of several very broadly defined populations. One group consists of long-term immigrants or American-born children of immigrants who reside in non-English linguistic communities. These
learners, sometimes called “Generation 1.5” students, have done most, if not all, of their schooling in the United States, yet are still striving to reach competency in college-level oral and written academic work. A second population includes more recently arrived immigrant students, who may or may not have developed first language literacy and who may have completed several years of schooling in the United States; these students are generally more easily identifiable as second language learners than the longer term immigrants. A third population, the size of which varies significantly from campus to campus, consists of international students, who exhibit a wide range of different native languages and cultures and have typically developed first language literacy skills. There are many students in each of these groups who still need special assistance in using English effectively in their academic work, and who, therefore, present challenges for institutions, programs and individual teachers (Conley, 2007).

Faculty Support and Preparation

What teachers choose to do in their classrooms depends on their own skills, experience, education, and beliefs about their students’ academic potential and about how their students’ learn (Rios-Aguilar, Gonzalez-Canche, & Moll, 2010). One of the most significant challenges in this discussion is the minimal preparation and the lack of support that many faculty find within their institution. Faculty without a background in ESL instructional methodology may not feel competent to address the needs of these students but still bear the responsibility for instructing them. Washburn (2008) noted in
her work that although many teachers already find ELLs in their classrooms, only 12.5% have participated in more than eight hours of training or professional development on how to work with ELLs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Most colleges offer ESL classes, but some do not mandate ESL placement if students prefer to enroll in English classes, and some students who have taken and passed ESL classes are still not ready, in the instructors’ views, for English courses (Kozeracki, 2005). Unfortunately the burden is not solely on the student, faculty struggle with having the tools to properly support the academic achievements of this group of students. The lack of preparation can be traced back to teacher education. Faculty identify a number of areas where graduate training could more adequately prepare them for their teaching responsibilities. Although courses in pedagogy are integral to graduate programs in education, faculty who have served on hiring committees indicate there is still a general preference to hire individuals with English degrees rather than education degrees. Therefore, universities should include one or more pedagogy courses in English programs that primarily produce college instructors. These courses should address both general teaching strategies and skills such as grammar that are specific to teaching English (Kozeracki, 2005).

Staff development becomes a critical link to the success of these instructors with ELL students. To provide successful faculty development programs, colleges must have strong administrative support, including appropriate rewards for participation, but faculty must also take ownership of the programs (Murray, 2001). Kozeracki (2005) references Angelo’s and Maxwell and Kazlauskas’s works that recommend an approach that focuses
on improving student learning rather than teaching; promotes faculty and student self-awareness, self-assessment, and self-improvement; and helps faculty understand how traditional research might be applied to their particular courses and students. A number of effective practices in faculty development: expert consultation with colleagues on specific teaching matters, growth contracts or professional development plans, small grants for developing new teaching methods, faculty exchange programs with other institutions, funds for travel and attending professional meetings, and temporary course load reductions.

Unfortunately, Murray’s (2001) national study revealed that there is “no evidence that faculty development at most community colleges is anything more than a randomly grouped collection of activities lacking intentional coordination with the mission of the college or the needs of faculty members” (p. 497). According to Kozeracki (2005) similarly report that faculty are overloaded and isolated, partly in deference to the principle of academic freedom, partly due to the proliferation of part-time faculty and lecturers, and partly because of the lack of activities to draw instructors together around teaching. Kozeracki’s (2005) study revealed that at the seven colleges included in this study, faculty development takes place in three venues: formal college-wide programs, official department meetings and activities, and informal conversations among colleagues. Similarly, unscheduled hallway and office conversations remain a central source of learning for faculty. Across the seven campuses, there is a clear consensus that the informal sharing of information among colleagues is a tremendous socializing
experience. As one professor reports, “Most important is really informal contact with colleagues.” Frequent, easy access to colleagues is necessary if these types of interactions are to occur. Unfortunately, opportunities for these types of conversations are substantially reduced for part-time faculty, especially those without offices, and for instructors whose offices or classrooms are not in close proximity to those of their colleagues.

Fostering Student Success

When preparing for academic success of ELL in college and university settings it is important to acknowledge that learning, literacy and acquisition of language skills will take place not only in the classroom, but on campus, in the home and in the community at large (Sherry, Thomas, & Wing Hong, 2010). Learning communities, summer bridge programs and linked courses offer campus-based opportunities for ELL to succeed (Kibler, Bunch, & Endris, 2011). The academic and student affairs departments of a given college or university, can greatly enhance the education of ESL students through curricular and supportive services (Smith, 2010). California has recently passed legislation that aligns with the researchers belief and in addition supports consistent themes in higher education; improving support services, resources, and educational planning. School districts and institutions of higher education across the country have taken recommendations from their respective student success initiative task forces and are launching programs to assist and ensure student success, including the ELL student
population. Using California Community Colleges as an example the Student Success Act of 2012 which was approved by the legislature and signed into law will propel a number of changes including the following:

Restructure the way student support services are delivered to improve the assistance that students receive at the beginning of their educational experience. The bill targets existing student services resources to support orientation, assessment and education planning services and lays the groundwork to expand these services as more resources become available. (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2012, para. 5)

The use of learning communities as a support service for ELL students can assist this demographic in not only feeling like an integral part of the campus community, but in addition allows ELL students to meet and interact with similar peers who can learn and practice English together. Learning communities have the potential to reduce self-consciousness, increase intellectual confidence, and help students build relationships with peers and faculty members. “ESL learning communities can be constructed entirely of courses that teach English as a second language, or they can be linked to credit-bearing general education courses, such as business or history, thereby increasing the students’ connection to the campus” (Smith, 2010, p. 266).

From a biological perspective, there is a debate on how to address the issues of language acquisition with adult learners. In her research Elizabeth Bifuh-Ambe (2009) noted that some linguists believe that the age of university-level ELLs could be a barrier
to rapid language acquisition. The Critical Period Hypothesis (Gass & Selinker, 2001; Krashen, 1987) states that children can become more proficient in a language than adults and can acquire native-like accents faster. This is because maturational changes in the human brain during puberty make it difficult for adults to reach native-like proficiency in the grammar of a foreign language (Chomsky, 1965; Cummins, 1994). However, other researchers challenge this point of view, finding that although younger children pronounce the new language better, older students and adults perform at a higher level in controlled language learning situations (Marinova-Todd, Marshall, & Snow, 2000; Snow Hoefnagel-Hoehle, 1978). The pace at which an adult learner grasp a new language may have less to do with brain function, but more to do with exterior variables and anxiety.

ELLs at the university may be beset with various forms of anxiety tanging from emotional and sociocultural, to financial and academic. These conditions may make it harder for adult ELLs to master the second language well enough for academic use. Consequently, they need to find strategies to help them successfully accomplish academic tasks in the university context (Bifuh-Ambe, 2009).

English Language Learner college students may face numerous challenges in reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college level. Although some students possess a fluent oral vocabulary, many ELL students struggle with achieving the reading level necessary to function at the appropriate grade level (Wallace, 2007). Vocabulary is the first and foremost important step in language acquisition (Lei, Berger, Allen, Plummer, & Rosenberg, 2010). “Vocabulary knowledge has been identified as the most
important indicator of oral language proficiency, which is particularly important for comprehension of both spoken and written language” (Lei et al., 2010, p. 95). Practical strategies to boost vocabulary acquisition include: use of dictionaries, reading frequently and extensively, use of media, and note taking. In addition to instruction strategies, the campus culture and engagement strategies for the ELL, is just as important. The psychological, social and academic issues must be addressed for these students to effectively engage in the college or university setting (Anderson, Carmichael, & Harper, 2009).

Conclusion

The English language learner is a complex population that will continue to challenge educators and institutions of higher education around the country. Although there is a significant adult ELL student population, particularly in California, the majority of research focuses only on ESL programs at traditional two-year and four-year institutions. Most for-profit institutions do not officially recognize nor do they designate program curriculum to specifically address English as a second language. It is likely that depending on previous academic preparation and ability to complete entrance exam requirements successfully, the majority of language learners would be placed in developmental English and Writing courses. This is not to say that native English speakers are excluded from these courses, given that current research provides evidence that incoming college students are not as academically prepared for college level
coursework as they should be (Conley, 2007). Although these courses can be helpful, they unfortunately are not tailored specifically toward language acquisition for students learning a second, third, or possibly fourth language. It is the researchers belief that certain strategies are being utilized by instructors and academic support staff to aid in the academic success of ELL students on proprietary campuses of higher education. In addition English language learners are taking the initiative to secure their own resources and support to succeed and persist in their chosen course of study. The intent of this exploration is to spotlight the resources that both students and staff are utilizing and recommend ways in which all of the techniques and instruments can be accessed and reinforced on a campus level; ensuring an optimum environment for ELL academic success, retention and ultimately degree achievement. In addition the researcher contends that this study will assist in creating and sustaining an environment that is supportive of the college’s mission: Heald College prepares students for academic, personal, and professional success through quality career-focused programs that develop skills to last a lifetime (Heald College, 2012, para. 4).
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Setting of the Study

The research collection took place at the Heald College Campus in Roseville, California. The current (October 2013) population is 1288 students. To review the historical enrollment trends the researcher offers that according to The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) information from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012 the school race/ethnicity demographic totals break down as follows for the Roseville Campus: of the 610 male enrollments during this time period, 35 indicated they were of Latin/Hispanic descent, 19 reported Asian descent, 111 indicated White, and 421 reported Race/Ethnicity unknown. Of the 1,722 female enrollments, 134 indicated that they were of Hispanic/Latina descent; seven reported Asian descent and 1,180 reported Race/Ethnicity unknown. There are a number of variables that support the lack of race/ethnicity and language disclosure, these could include but or not limited lack of understanding of the questions, fear of legal or immigration issues due to disclosure, fear of being ostracized from the general student population and withholding the information because it is deemed unnecessary or not required by the enrolling institution.

Sample Size

The survey was distributed to 45 instructors and academic support staff. Of the 45 potential participants, twenty-one responses were received, indicating a 47%
completion rate. Student participation was less favorable. Instructors and support staff identified twenty students during the survey period to participate. Six participants responded. Indicating a 30% response rate.

Design of the Study

Data Collection

The data were collected electronically via the online service Survey Monkey (see Appendix A). The participant was emailed a link to their respective survey (instructor or student). If survey was sent to multiple addresses “blind carbon copy” was utilized to ensure participant privacy. Given that this research utilized the participation of human subjects, the researcher was vigilant that confidentiality and consent were ensured to the best of her ability to protect the privacy and safety of respondents. No names or personal information was disclosed at any point of the research and participants were all advised that they could choose not to continue participation at any time.

Instrumentation

The researcher conducted this quantitative research by utilizing a survey as the main data gathering mechanism. Two separate questionnaires were created, one for instructors and academic support staff and a second for students who identify as English language learners. An introduction letter was attached to both surveys (see Appendix B). Both surveys contain demographic questions. The student version of the survey went further to ask the students their perception of their language skills and allowed the
participants to share their resource choices for addressing language barrier issues (see Appendix B). The instructor/academic support staff survey explores the participant’s skill level, campus climate and perceived resource availability (see Appendix C).

All survey materials were written in English and not translated. The researcher based this decision on the fact that entrance requirements for the institution indicate that a student must be able to pass an English exam in which the minimum scores indicate at least an eighth grade reading and writing ability. When compiling the questions for the survey, every effort was made to insure that the instrument adhered to this guideline.

Data Analysis Procedure

At the close of the survey period, completed questionnaires were gathered from participants and reviewed. The researcher studied the information seeking out related themes in responses and also gathered participate statistics based on answered demographic answers.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

The following chapter will organize the results of the data by the research questions asked on the given surveys. The researcher utilized a survey to assist in identifying from a students perspective, what resources are being utilized to assist in their academic success and from an educators perspective, what experience and what resources are they accessing to promote and assist in the academic success of English Language Learner students.

Instructors and Academic Support Staff Responses

Demographic information from Instructors/Academic Support Staff was collected from questions 1-4. Almost one-quarter (23.81%) of respondents were between the ages of 30 and 39, 28.57% were between the ages of 40 and 49, 4.76% were between the ages of 50 and 59, and 42.86% were 60 or older. Just over half the participants (57.14%) were female, with the remaining 42.86% being male. When asked what subjects the respondents taught or tutored, almost all areas of study offered at the institution were represented, with the exception of Pharmacology. Two participants did not answer this question (see Table 1).
Table 1
Question Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>31.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>42.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice/Paralegal</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical (Medical Office Manager, Medical Assisting, Medical Insurance Billing and Coding)</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacology</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Assisting</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to the last demographic question of: Do you have any experience working with students whose native language is not English? Nearly all participants (95.24%) responded “Yes” and 4.76% said “No.” Further analysis of the data collected would suggest that the respondents consist of experienced instructors or staff, who have almost all worked with the ELL population. With the exception of Pharmacology a good representation was made from all majors.

Question 5 on from the Instructor/Academic support staff survey asked participants to describe how prepared they felt as educators to address the needs of English Language Learners. They were given the choice between “Not at All,”
“Somewhat Prepared,” “Adequately Prepared,” and “Proficient.” The submitted answers are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent responded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at All Prepared</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Prepared</td>
<td>57.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequately Prepared</td>
<td>23.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instructors were then asked to report what resources they utilized the most in assisting them with the academic support of ELL students. The two most common responses were the campus L.L.R.C. (Library and Learning Resource Center) and Online resources. The third most frequent response was the educator’s own expertise followed by books. Other instructors, other students, and visual aids were the least common responses that were also given.

Question 7 was a follow-up to question 6 and asked the participants what resources they felt their campus provided them to support them in addressing the needs of ELL students. Nearly 40% of the respondents felt that there were no resources available to assist them. Close to 20% reported that the LLRC was available and another 20% said online sources were what was provided to assist them. The least frequent response (10% each) was contacting Student Services or Program Directors.
To gauge the respondents perception of campus support for ELL students, question 8 asked participants to rate the support from “Not at all,” “Very little,” “Some,” or “Excellent.” Their responses are shown on Table 3.

Table 3
Question Eight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Little</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last question of the survey asked the instructors and academic support staff what resources would they request be available to help their efforts is addressing the success of ELL students. Training and frequent workshops were the most requested resources. Webinars and self taught language programs were also suggested. A number of the responses were student centered and included the request for more tutors, bilingual aides, formal ESL classes and seminars for students were the responses received.

Student Survey Responses

Demographic information for the student survey was collected from questions 1-6. All students were women. The researcher expected that there would be more men
than women to respond, given that nearly 75% of the student body is female. The lack of male responses can be due to a lower of pool of male ELL students this quarter and/or the lack of interest to respond to the survey. The researcher will not disregard the responses received but is aware that findings could be considered lacking in that they can only speak to the female population of ELL.

Fifty percent of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 20. Both the age groups of 21-29 and 30-39 responded at a rate of 16.67%. An additional 16.67% were responses from part of the 50-59 age bracket. In response to question 3: Describe what language(s) were primarily spoken in your childhood home?, the breakdown is shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Question Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Percent Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian and Ukrainian</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish and English</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions 4 and 5 asked the following questions: In what languages can you speak fluently? and Currently what languages do you mainly speak at home? Table 5 illustrates the responses.

Table 5
Questions Four and Five

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>What languages do you speak fluently?</th>
<th>Currently what language do you mainly speak at home?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>English, Spanish</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Russian, Ukrainian</td>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Spanish, English</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>English, Spanish, Hmong</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 50% of the respondents felt that they spoke English fluently and only 33.3% spoke English at home. In response to question 6, all respondents attended high school in the United States. Referring back to the discussion in Chapter 2, these students could be considered part of “Generation 1.5” defined as students who have done most, if not all, of their schooling in the United States, yet are still striving to reach competency in college-level oral and written academic work.

Questions 7 and 8 on the student survey asked the students to choose between “poor,” “so-so,” “good,” and “excellent” on how well they spoke English and how well
they wrote in English. The results were split equally between the choices of “good” and “excellent” for both questions.

Question 9 aimed to gain insight on where students went or who students asked for help. Question 10 followed up this line of questioning by asking students to identify which campus resources they utilized most for help with schoolwork. All of the students responded in part that their instructors were who they mainly asked for help. This was further supported by the fact that 100% of participants indicated that “teachers” were one of the campus resources that they used the most on question 10. The second most popular answer to question 9 was that students went to “other students” for help with schoolwork or questions. Again question 10 confirmed that 83.3% of the participants used “other students” as their second most popular campus resource. Additionally the Library Learning Resource Center, internet/computer programs and tutors were answers given as responses to where students went for help and what campus resources they utilized the most.

Student Interview

To take a closer look at ELL students on the Heald-Roseville Campus a brief interview was had with a current ELL student on campus. For the purposes of this study and identifying information has been changed to protect anonymity. The student is a 4.0 student and in the 18-25 year old age range. She would be considered high functioning on the reading/writing scale of ELL students. Her experience is different from others that
may have participated in this study but it illustrates the impact that early intervention in the K-12 system, the benefits of informal English practice and the importance of instructor attitude and perception. Some questions from the original interview protocol were skipped to reduce redundancy. A transcript of the student’s response follows and the interview protocol used is shown in Appendix D.

Researcher: What is your ethnic/cultural background?

Student: I am Mexican; I was born in Oaxaca, Mexico and was brought here by my parents when I was almost 9 months old.

Researcher: What languages do you speak, read and write?

Student: I can speak, read and write both Spanish and English.

Researcher: What language do you speak at home?

Student: I speak both English and Spanish at home. Spanish I’ll speak mostly with my mom but I’ll talk to my siblings or my dad in Spanish when I’m frustrated with them. They tend to listen to me more when I talk to them in Spanish. I think it’s because they hear me say something in Spanish and they either didn’t hear me or they don’t understand what I’m saying and ask me to repeat myself. I also talk to my dog in Spanish a lot too.

Researcher: Where did you go to high school?

Student: I went to high school here in Northern California. (actual name of high school omitted to maintain students privacy).

Researcher: What did classroom teachers do that helped you learn English?
Student: Well, my preschool and kindergarten teachers would send me home with flash cards that had a picture and a Spanish word on one side and the picture and the English word on the other side. The other kids didn’t get those flash cards, I felt special for a little while back then.

Researcher: What strategies do you do or use to practice your English skills at school?

Student: At school, the only thing I can think of is asking questions when I don’t understand something. I usually ask another student first but I’ll ask my professor as well to double check.

Researcher: What strategies do you do or use to practice your English skills at home?

Student: I’m pretty fluent in English so I don’t really do anything out of the ordinary to practice my English skills at home. When I’m teaching my mom something in English though, I tend to break things down to their smallest parts and translate those parts into their Spanish equivalent. I find it helps her grasp and understand more.

Researcher: What classes, instructors, or students have helped your English skills the most?

Student: My kindergarten teacher, I don’t remember his name anymore but man that guy was awesome. It wasn’t like he held my hand through kindergarten; he treated me like every other kid in class. He always asked me and the other
Mexican girl in class if we needed help with anything. He went out of his way to make sure we were on the same page as everyone else and he made sure that my parents were on the same page as the other parents too, which made it easier for me to get on board.

Researcher: Thank you very much Angela for sharing.

Analysis of the interview data received, granted the researcher insight to the ELL student population at survey site and presented continual support of current research. As a long-term immigrant who has done all of her schooling in the United States, the interviewee would be considered part of “Generation 1.5” (Conley, 2007). Data collected in this study is further supported by the interviewee’s recollection of early academic support and positive interaction with her teacher. Instructors are students initial and main source of support, especially for the ELL population. The student reported working with her mother and “breaking down” things for her mother in English and Spanish. Vocabulary knowledge is a key factor to oral language proficiency (Lei et al., 2010, p. 95). Inadvertently, the students interactions with her mother, supports the literature and the interviewee’s academic success.

Conclusion

The results from the student survey and interview confirm the students main source if academic support comes from their instructors. However, instructors report that they are at best only “somewhat prepared” to address the needs of this population, in
addition the majority report that there were no resources currently available to them to draw from. Both students and instructors surveyed reported a strong dependency on the L.L.R.C. as a campus resource. The campus environment is reported to be supportive to ELL student academic success. This is useful when considering future student and staff collaborations. Only two of the student participants reported speaking English at home, leading the researcher to believe that the majority of English speaking and practice is coming from classroom and campus interaction. The researcher was surprised that there was such a high indication of peer-to-peer support, however the research supports the idea of student engagement through peer interaction. Academic support staff and instructors have a strong desire for supplemental workshops and training in the area of English language acquisition and also report a need to see additional structured programing for the ELL students on campus.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY

As of 2010, there were 6.9 limited English proficient individuals in California and this number continues to grow. As students move through the K-12 system and enter the realms of higher education system, institutions need to recognize the needs of these students and implement systems that will support their academic success. Recognizing the importance of language development in the classroom and beyond is the obligation of the institution. Research also shows that the majority of faculty is not adequately prepared to address the language development needs of their ELL students. Fostering staff development creates learning and sharing forums for faculty and staff, which is beneficial to the ELL student and campus culture.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to identify instructional strategies being utilized and are contributing to the success of ELL students on this campus. In conjunction with the data collected in the research and the supporting literature the researcher presents the following recommendations.

Recommendation One: Increased identification procedures of ELL students on campus

Although the institution does not formally recognize English Language Learners there are potential steps that could be taken to increase the probability the these students are getting access to and receiving the resource information they may need. Utilizing
current Student Services orientation surveys and option can be added to receive more information or help with language skills. The student can also indicate which language they speak. From this information the students’ instructors, L.L.R.C. staff, tutors and student mentors can be notified of the students request and be proactive in making contact.

Recommendation Two: Increased focus on Instructor and Academic support staff training. Quarterly staff development in-services recommended.

The data show that the majority of students are heavily relying on instructor and/or tutor services available to address their language needs. The faculty/instructor/academic support results show that they are in need of tools to adequately address the ELL issues in their classrooms. Literature confirms that the majority of faculty have no more that eight hours of training in how to address ELL students in their classrooms (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Quarterly trainings are recommended to address this need. Furthermore it is suggested that staff members of the Library and Learning Resource Center (L.L.R.C.) attend additional workshops and or webinars to the aforementioned because of the integral role they play for this student population and instructor pool.

Recommendation Three: Increased social and academic student clubs

Over 80% of the students surveyed reported that they went to other students for help with their academic endeavors. Research also shows us that student engagement and campus involvement is one of the highest indicators of student success and retention.
This can be even more important to minority (language/race/culture) students (Anderson et al., 2009). The researcher recommends that the campus foster more student organizations, study groups and social groups that students can lead and be a part of, specifically those that spotlight language and/or cultural groups. This not only connects them to the campus culture, but allows them to define their involvement beyond the classroom setting, which will ultimately lead to higher engagement.

Recommendation Four: Heightened awareness of useful campus resources

Resources on this campus are not limited to L.L.R.C. staff, tutoring sessions, but an expansive online library is available as well. Programs such as Mango languages and English tutorials are available to all students and staff. In addition immediate access to digital dictionary thesaurus and translation programs are available. All of these programs include an audio component as well. It is important to note that a few respondents to the survey indicated that they have knowledge and/or expertise in working with ELL students. It would be beneficial to the campus to work with those individuals and brainstorm ideas and techniques that can contribute to support this student population.

Conclusion

The researcher believes that this study will be beneficial not only to this institution of higher education, but to further research of the student population, particularly to those attending a proprietary school. Given that these colleges do not necessarily structure their curriculum to include ESL instruction it would be beneficial to
create ways to supplement the potential learning gap that the lack of formal instruction presents. Through instructor enrichment and continued campus support, academic staff intervention and student led support and social groups the ELL academic success rate is strengthened.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Student Survey

Academic Success Strategies of English Language Learners

Researcher: Ebony N. Curiale, Graduate Student at California State University, Sacramento

Purpose: To identify any and all instructional strategies utilized and contributing to the success of English Language Learners.

Questions (Students):

1. What is your gender?
2. Which category below includes your age?
3. Please describe what language(s) were primarily spoken in your childhood home.
4. In what languages can you speak fluently? (Please select all that apply)
5. Currently, what language do you mainly speak at home?
6. Did you attend high school in the United States?
7. On a scale of 1 to 4 (1 being poor and 4 being excellent) how well do you speak in English?
8. On a scale of 1 to 4 (1 being poor and 4 being excellent) how well do you write in English?
9. In general when you need help with your schoolwork, who do ask or where do you go for help?
APPENDIX B

Survey Introduction Letter

Greetings, you are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Ebony N. Curiale, a candidate for a Master’s in Educational Leadership at CSU Sacramento. The purpose of the research study is to identify any and all instructional strategies utilized and contributing to the success of English language learners. E.L.L. are defined as anyone whose native (1st) language is not English. These students may range from low level to highly proficient speakers and writers. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may end your participation at any time without penalty. Completion of this survey will serve as consent to participate in this study. To participate in this research study, you must be 18 years or older. While there will not be any monetary compensation for your participation, copies of the study results may be requested. Participants will be asked to complete a confidential online survey and/or participate in one on one interview with Ms. Curiale. Your responses will be kept confidential to the degree permitted by the technology used. However, no absolute guarantees can be given for the confidentiality of electronic data.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, the survey, or your role as a consenting volunteer, please contact me at (916) 780-4458 or at ecuriale@csus.edu. If, for some reason you cannot contact me, or have concerns, which you feel I am unable to answer, you may contact my supervising professor, Dr. Jose Chavez via email chavez@csus.edu, or if you wish, I can have him call you.

Thank you your time and consideration,

Ebony N. Curiale
Library and Learning Resource Center Manager
Heald College, Roseville Campus
APPENDIX C

Staff Survey

Questions (Instructors/Academic Support):

1. Which category below includes your age?

2. What is your gender?

3. What subject(s) do you teach or tutor? Check All that Apply

4. Do you have any experience working with students whose native language is not English?

5. On a scale of 1 to 4 (where 1 is not at all and 4 is proficient), how prepared do you feel as an instructor/academic support staff to address the needs of English Language Learners?

6. What resources do you utilize the most to assist in your academic support of English Language Learners?

7. What resources do you feel your campus provides you to support you in addressing the needs of English Language Learners?

8. On a scale of 1 to 4 (1 being not at all and 4 excellent) how supportive do you feel your campus is to the academic success of English Language Learners?

9. What resources (ex. Trainings, workshops, etc.) would you request be available to support your efforts in fostering the success of English Language Learner students you work with?
APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol

Project Title: Academic Success Strategies of English Language Learners

Time of Interview: 1:00pm

Date: November 5, 2013

Place: Head College- Roseville-Library and Learning Resource Center

Interviewer: Ebony Curiale

Interviewee: Angela S.

Description of project: The interview will take place as follow up to a student survey distributed for the researchers thesis project. The thesis: Academic Success Strategies of English Language Learners will focus on identifying the academic strategies that assist the academic success of E.L.L. students in higher education.

Interview Questions:

1. What is your ethnic/cultural background?
2. Were you born in the United States?
3. What languages do you speak, read and write?
4. What language do you speak at home?
5. Where did you attend high school?
6. What do you classroom teachers do that help you learn English?
7. What challenges do you identify at the Institute in your ability to learn English?
8. What strategies do you do or use to practice your English skills at school?
9. What strategies do you do or use to practice your English skills at home?
10. What classes, instructors or students have helped your English skills the most?
11. Any additional comments?
REFERENCES


