Con cultura e idioma

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Introduction

The California Department of Education (2013) identifies 22.1% of students as English learners, representing 1.3 million students in California, with over 330,000 identified as long term English learners. These statistics demonstrate California's growing need to find a solution to the increasing and large number of English learners and long term English learners in our state. Especially, since these staggering numbers represent students vulnerable for dropping out of school, presenting social ramifications, such as poverty, lower parent educational rates, and lack of access to resources (Callahan, 2013; Kim, 2011).

In this study, I highlight the SEAL approach which is a recent model stemming from research analyzing the societal impact of long term English learners (Olsen, 2010). I argue that the SEAL Model is an approach that is rooted in culturally and linguistically responsive practices, which I define as a pedagogical approach embracing students' social, linguistic, and cultural contributions to assure academic success.

Methods

This research consists of a qualitative study, comprised of a document review, interviews with five teachers and two administrators, classroom observations of three teachers, and artifact reviews. This research was conducted in an elementary school in a rural school district in Southern California.

Research Questions

1. What are the elements of SEAL observed and documented in the SEAL materials (strategies) that promote culturally and linguistically responsive practices, impacting the development of academic English language of English learners?

2. What do teachers say are their culturally and linguistically responsive practices to address the development of academic English language of English learners?

3. What are the impacts of culturally and linguistically responsive practices on academic language, as self-reported by teachers and administrators, obtainable assessment measures, and in classroom observations?

Results

➤ Based on observations, interviews, and review of artifacts, all participants (5 teachers and 2 administrators) approach instruction with a culturally and linguistically responsive lens

Culturally Responsive: *We were talking about celebrations during our SEAL unit back in December/January, and talking about the different cultures that people bring in. Like, a lot of kids didn't know what Posadas was, and it really surprised me. It's like, "Oh okay," but this little girl that knew what Posadas was, because she came from Mexico, and she's like, "Oh, I've done the Posadas" and I said, "You know what? Can you come up and explain what Posadas are?"*
(Transitional K/Kinder Combination Teacher)

Linguistically Responsive: *I think that being bi-lingual and being able to know more than one language is an asset to the student if they can speak both languages and if they can include them both in their lives.* (3rd grade Teacher)

➤ Based on Interviews, all participants articulated that SEAL strategies positively impact their students' development of academic English language.

"…within a unit they have a form that they're working on. Are you describing? Are you sequencing events, or whatever it is? Throughout that whole unit, you're focusing on that different grammatical form, so that the kids really understand what that means. Then it's embedded into everything that's going on." (Administrator)

➤ The following key findings were made based a document review, observations, interviews, and review of artifacts

Finding 1- Culturally responsive practices create a safe, familiar environment for learning academic English.
Finding 2- SEAL integrates research-based strategies to integrate academic English language.
Finding 3- SEAL provides strategies to promote student to student discourse to practice spoken academic English.
Finding 4- SEAL Units involve thematic planning to expand precise language.
Finding 5- The variety of SEAL strategies allows for the reprocessing of Academic English language.

Conclusion

Based on qualitative data, SEAL teachers and administrators use culturally and linguistically responsive practices to positively impact the academic English language of their students. SEAL culturally and linguistically responsive strategies are utilized to develop the academic English language skills of English learners. This study provides evidence that the SEAL Model exposes students to strategies to help students choose precise language, expand their vocabulary, teaches the completeness of grammatical forms, and develops the full explanatory nature of discourse in English learners, descriptors for academic English language (Banks, J.A., 2012).

References

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