Teaching Strategies, Methods, and Procedures for English Language Learners in Early Childhood Education Part 1

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Abstract

Immigration into the United States has led to English Language Learners (ELLs) being represented in PreK-12 classrooms across the US. Students with a first language other than English are required to be proficient in English in order to gain knowledge in the classroom, communicate effectively with teachers and peers, and participate in standardized assessments which are state and nationally mandated for school-age students. Unfortunately, much of the research on effective strategies for this population focuses on older aged ELLs. This study documents strategies that the current research has deemed effective and appropriate for working with ELLs in a preschool setting. This research was then compared with current strategies reported in a survey of local early childhood educators who work with ELLs in their classrooms. The researcher documented trends in the survey data and offered suggestions for strategies and further research.

Methodology

- Qualitative study – descriptive survey research
- Quantitative study – analysis and comparison of published research and survey data

Research Questions

1. What are the most commonly used instructional strategies for teaching ELLs according to published research, and what is the success-rate or known effectiveness of these strategies?
2. What are the most commonly used strategies for teaching ELLs as reported by local ECE on the survey utilized in this study?
3. Are the strategies reported by local ECE considered to be developmentally appropriate for the preschool age, or are they being used without consideration of DAP?
4. Are local ECE documenting the effectiveness of ELL instructional strategies with their students?

Findings

- Verbal and nonverbal strategies favored in published research and survey results
- Survey results revealed a lack of DAP
- Survey participants also disclosed that in some cases, one or no forms of documentation for effectiveness are used
- As a result, researcher believes that more professional development in ECE for instructing ELLs is necessary

Characteristics of Survey Participants

- Current early childhood educators
- Had ELLs in their preschool classrooms
- Teaching in preschools in the surrounding area
- In urban, rural, suburban, and private preschool locations