



University of
Dayton

The Crucial Role of Social Support in the Academic Development of Adolescent Emergent Bilinguals

Anh Q. Pham

Advisor: Dr. Vanessa Winn

Department of Teacher Education, University of Dayton



Introduction

- **Emergent Bilinguals:** students who are “not only learning to read, write, speak, and listen in English, but also are using and developing these skills in their heritage, or home, language simultaneously” (Rowe, 2018, p. 31)
- **Linguistically Diverse Students:** students who belong to “households where a language other than English is spoken” (Baker, 2017, p. 661)
- Such terms are preferable to “English Language Learner” (ELL) because they highlight an asset-oriented approach: using students’ primary languages as invaluable tools in furthering their overall development in schools.
- **Motivations:** Experiences working with emergent bilinguals in high school and parents having been emergent bilinguals themselves → potential interest in pursuing a TESOL certificate

Objectives

- Critically define the term of “social support” and its multiple facets
- Address the cruciality of social support as a resource for emergent bilinguals in particular
- Confront the topic of separate learning communities (SLCs) and advocate for the inclusion of emergent bilinguals in mainstream classrooms
- Elaborate on the active role that teachers and peers can play as supports for these students

Findings

Defining “Social Support”

- Rooted in the idea of connection
- Enables access to key relationships, resources, and opportunities
- **Bridge:** promoting reciprocal enrichment
- Social capital & social network
- Effectiveness of type and source of support varies by individual
- Encompasses a myriad of other supports; all intricately interconnected



Social Support for Emergent Bilinguals

- Encounter an overwhelming quantity of challenges to academic and social development: family inability to provide necessary supports, managing linguistic and academic demands, navigating culture shock
- **Schools** become the primary reliant environment for access to effective social support resources:
 - 1) Peers and teachers
 - 2) Introductions to additional opportunities outside of the classroom
 - 3) Cultivation of an uplifting community

Separate Learning Communities vs. Mainstream Classroom Inclusion

Role of Peers

- Encourage in-context practice using academic and English linguistic repertoires through subject-focused discussions
- Lack of time constraints: deeper internalization and constructions of personal meaning
- Form affirmative friendships that better mental health and emotion management

Role of Teachers

- Being aware of type of language being employed during lessons: balance between common and academic
- Review class discourse structure to reduce time constraints
- Create group configurations that promote peer collaboration
- Develop instructional activities that highlight different cultures and backgrounds

Conclusion

- Active implementation of and access to social support sources in school positive transforms the academic and personal experiences of emergent bilinguals in school.
- Classrooms must strive to be culturally responsive *and* inclusive to all students
- Diversity is a *core* asset to collective classroom enrichment
- **Next step:** Learning to *practically* create lessons and activities that expound upon students’ diverse experiences and backgrounds; putting it into action!

Select References

- Baker, L. L. (2017). What it takes to succeed: The importance of social support for academically successful middle school English learners. *Youth & Society*, 49(5), 658–678.
- Carhill-Poza, A. (2015). Opportunities and outcomes: The role of peers in developing the oral academic English proficiency of adolescent English learners. *The Modern Language Journal*, 99(4), 678–695.
- Carhill-Poza, A. (2017). “If you don’t find a friend in here, it’s gonna be hard for you”: Structuring bilingual peer support for language learning in urban high schools. *Linguistics and Education*, 37(1), 63–72.
- Carhill-Poza, A. (2018). Silenced partners: Language learning and the role of bilingual peers in high school. *Teachers College Record*, 120(1), 1–28.
- Kajima, T. (2020). Social support for international students in foreign language classroom communities of practice. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 8(3), 25–40.
- Lewis, T. & Fusco, J. C. (2017). What you say matters: Exploring teacher talk in linguistically diverse classrooms. *PeerJ*, 106(5), 83–85.
- Martín-Beltrán, M., Daniel, S., Percy, M., & Silverman, R. (2017). Developing a zone of relevance: Emergent bilinguals’ use of social, linguistic, and cognitive support in peer-led literacy discussions. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 11(3), 152–166.
- Oakes, J., Lipton, M., Anderson, L., & Stillman, J. (2018). *Teaching to change the world* (5th ed.). Routledge.
- Rowe, L. W. (2018). Say it in your language: Supporting translanguaging in multilingual classes. *The reading teacher*, 72(1), 31–38.