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Patrick Chin
pchin1@brockport.edu

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Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies for ELL SLIFE

By

Patrick Jacob Chin

A capstone project submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of The College at Brockport, State University of New York in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

MS. Ed. in TESOL

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Abstract

The dynamic of the United States public education system is always changing and a response to those changes is always required. Recent trends highlight a rise in ELL SLIFE students, with a response by teachers that often reflects frustration and confusion. Teachers are unaware of who this student population represents and the challenges that these students face. This group of students are unique and one that needs more attention than most, as they face both academic and social emotional challenges due to their prior traumatic experiences. Through a culturally responsive teaching approach, the highest possible learning outcomes are feasible. Actionable practices and resources can be implemented by educators to meet the needs of this population.

Keywords: ELL SLIFE, culturally responsive teaching

Chapter 1: Introduction

The changing demographics of the United States population is represented in classrooms, and just like the case with technology, this change has brought and will continue to bring about a change in response by educators. In recent decades the number of English language learners (ELLs) has risen, especially in urban areas. In 2000, 8.1% of United States public school students were ELLs, and in 2017 that percentage rose to 10.1% (Nation Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Many of ELL students with a limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) have experienced interrupted formal education due to war and migration and have not had the opportunity to engage in schools before they arrived in the United States (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). DeCapua and Marshall (2015) further add that these students may have experienced a limited education before arriving in the United States because of a lack of access to certain resources and a lack of trained teachers. This is a contributing factor as to why meeting the needs of SLIFE is a considerable challenge for many educators. Thus United States public school teachers must find the best practices for teaching SLIFE.

As SLIFE students enter into schools, teachers may face the challenge of instructing these students. These challenges take various forms, such as aligning the curriculum to meet the needs of these students, offering opportunities for students to learn a new culture as well as educate others about theirs, and providing the appropriate materials (Newcomer et al., 2020). These problems, in turn, can affect SLIFE's learning. Research shows that many SLIFE are falling even further behind, increasing the achievement gap and thus decreasing their opportunity for success (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2017). In essence, both the students and the teachers are struggling, despite there being a common goal of having the best learning outcomes. A contributing factor

for this achievement gap is the lack of knowledge on this demographic of student. Due to this lack of knowledge, there is little understanding by teachers on how to effectively ensure the best learning outcomes for students. There are public schools throughout the country that have an already high number of ELLs, with an insufficient number of ENL teachers to service this population. Now with the addition of SLIFE students, often times these students are left behind but the education system continues to chug on. Often times teachers are overwhelmed and do not have the knowledge, time, or resources to effectively service the needs of their students (Morgenegg, 2019).

Thus the purposes of this study are to shed light on the issues facing teachers who are instructing ELLs with a limited or interrupted formal education and provide feasible solutions and strategies for teachers. In Chapter 2, I will review the literature on challenges faced by SLIFE and teachers' experiences with SLIFE. Research shows teachers' use of culturally responsive teaching strategies to enhance learning outcomes for this demographic of student . In Chapter 3, I will describe the product to address the issues facing teachers and SLIFE students. I will include with implications for teaching Your Workplace.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter offers a review of recent literature that highlights the challenges that SLIFE face. Teachers of SLIFE struggle as well to meet their needs and achieve the highest possible learning outcomes. The overarching challenges entail a lack of proper teacher training for this population, academic challenges due to prior traumatic experiences. These three challenges are hindering the academic performance of this population, which has serious implications for the futures of these students. The various forms of literature reviewed represent an eclectic mix of methods and populations that primarily conduct qualitative studies in rural, suburban, and urban areas.

A previous theory that is well documented and studied in relation to meeting the needs of ELLs is culturally responsive teaching. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) first introduced the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy and its efforts to provide “a new theoretical perspective to address the specific concerns of educating teachers for success with African-American students” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 466). This theory stresses the importance of incorporating the cultures and customs of students in school curriculum, because this will allow them to see themselves in the content. Students who are typically underrepresented in school curriculum will feel more comfortable, cared for, and motivated to learn. Her theory challenged current educational practices of the time and laid a foundation for the effectiveness of tying students’ culture into the classroom.

Since the conception of the United States public school system, the demographic of the student body has been consistently changing. In a country as large as the United States, certain demographics demonstrate that change in different ways. Rural, suburban, and urban schools are all unique in their own ways, and this is a reflection of the groups of students in the school

system. In order to meet the needs of these changes in student demographics, school systems adapt to increase learning outcomes. For example, there has been recent growth in the use of technology in the classroom to meet the technological growth in society. Teachers are using social media to communicate with students, which allows students to interact with each other as well (Ahamdi, 2018).

An augmenting trend in the United States has been an increase in ELLs in public schools. The last decade has shown significant growth in the number of ELLs and future statistics indicate a growth in the immigrant population in the United States (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2017). Teachers have been faced with various challenges in achieving the highest learning outcomes with SLIFEs.

Academic Challenges of SLIFEs due to Prior Traumatic Experiences

Many academic challenges such as prior gaps in SLIFEs' language development are due to prior traumatic experiences such as war, migration, and poverty. DeCapua and Marshall (2015) examined ELLs from rural and urban areas who have missed years of schooling due to "poor educational infrastructures" (p.49). SLIFEs are expected to perform at a level of their peers but face "cultural dissonance" (2015).

In the classroom ELLs face various academic challenges such as prior gaps in their language development and less experience spent in an academic setting. Second language acquisition is no easy task and ELLs put in tremendous work to achieve English fluency. SLIFEs face these academic demands as well as a multitude of external factors. ELLs categorized as SLIFE as well can come from refugee camps, countries with little opportunity for upward mobility, and simply from a completely different world. DeCapua and Marshall (2015) examined ELLs from rural and urban areas who have missed years of schooling due to "poor educational

infrastructures”. SLIFEs are expected to perform at the level of their peers but face “cultural dissonance” (2015) as well.

Newcomer et al. (2017) furthers on the findings of DeCapua and Marshall and her sentiments express how SLIFEs often have trouble maintaining their native language, culture, and customs. Pressure from mainstream society to assimilate academically, socially, and culturally is sometimes an impossible task with the proper support system and resources. Newcomer’s research aligns with DeCapua and Marshall (2015) in that when arriving in the United States many SLIFEs have never entered a school before. Their formal educational experience is little if not non-existent. Various reasons exist for this, which stem from war, migration, poverty, and much more (Newcomer et al., 2017).

When entering Western societies and schools such as the United States, these students bring with them what they know and have experienced, which is typically informal ways of learning. These styles of learning are rooted from the practices engrained in their culture and customs, which can be jobs foreign to those considered the status quo in Western cultures. This leads to SLIFEs to be unprepared for the academic challenges in Western schools. For many SLIFEs what they learn and know is directly influenced by their upbringing, which often lacked a traditional academic setting. DeCapua sheds light on the lives of ELLs who identify as SLIFE before they enter United States public schools. Before proper instruction can be achieved, teachers must know and understand their population.

Newcomer’s thorough multi-year study dives deeper into the challenges SLIFE’s face through a qualitative case study. Her research expands on DeCapua and Marshall’s focus on the traumatic experiences of SLIFEs by providing more case studies over a longer period of time with a more specific focus on refugee students, who made up 75% of the school she used for her

study. The analysis of interviews, observations, and artifacts reveals the courage and resilience of refugee students, because of the fact they were forced to escape their country. Similar to DeCapua and Marshall (2015) Newcomer et al. (2017) elaborated on the reasons many students leave their home country and the challenge of learning a new language and “adapting to many novel sociocultural practices” (Newcomer et al., 2017). SLIFEs face both academic and cultural challenges and their prior traumatic experiences are a part of that.

Many teachers struggle when teaching SLIFEs and develop negative mindsets, however the studies of DeCapua and Newcomer offer insight for how teachers can understand their population better and use their backgrounds to enhance instruction in the classroom. When teachers are aware of the previous experiences of their students they will have a more successful relationship with them.

SLIFEs can represent a variety of ages. These students can arrive in United States public schools when they are very young, or when they are much older and towards the end of their public school education. This leads to further challenges for teachers such as minimizing the achievement gap with the limited time these older students have. The yearlong ethnographic research of Hos (2016) of an urban High School with high numbers of ELLs and SLIFE provides insight on the challenges SLIFEs face at the secondary level. Hos’s research stresses how SLIFEs at the secondary level are the most at need and highest risk, as they have much less formal education experience and even less time to make up for that lack of formal schooling. By the time sufficient English instruction is met, these students are still considerably behind their peers.

Teachers lack of awareness about their students’ prior traumatic experiences can negatively influence their instruction. In comparison to other groups of students, SLIFEs

experience more stress. The various factors that have caused them to abandon their home country are a part of the reason why they might not be educated in their native language. SLIFE's needs go beyond the classrooms and secondary level students are a delicate population (Hos, 2016).

Hos (2016) suggests that "sufficient support is often not available in schools". Regarding adolescent students, they may face psychological factors such as social disruptions, changes in their roles and responsibilities, impoverishment, and increased vulnerability.

Ross and Ziemke (2015) take a closer look at the subpopulation of ELLs that identify as SLIFE and further on the academic challenges this group faces due to their previous experiences. ELL SLIFE students have social needs and challenges and they cannot be labeled the same as solely ELL. ELL SLIFE need to be valued as a group of their own because their needs and required forms of instruction are a group of their own.

Current literature unanimously agrees upon the severity of the various challenges ELL SLIFE students face due to their prior experiences. Authors stress the importance of teachers and administrators taking the time to understand their population in order to provide the best possible instruction.

A Lack of Teacher Training

The combination of the academic demands in the classroom with external factors can be extremely overwhelming for this student population and for teachers as well. Teachers and schools may not be aware of how to meet the social emotional needs of this population of student. Aside from academic instruction, SLIFE's may require other services to allow them to adjust to a new country. Due to this lack of social emotional training, teachers can develop negative views toward this group of students. Thus teachers can perceive SLIFE's as academically inadequate and question why they cannot reach their expectations. Furthermore,

teachers may pay more attention to the gaps in learning SLIFEs may have, instead of focusing on why those gaps may exist (Newcomer et al., 2017).

As SLIFEs face challenges adjusting to life and school in the United States, so do their teachers who are tasked with achieving the highest learning outcomes for their students. Morgenegg (2019) offers qualitative anecdotes about her experience teaching ELL SLIFE and how ubiquitous the lack of teacher training is.

Fareed et al. (2016) suggest that SLIFEs are behind academically in part because “untrained teachers and ineffective teaching methods are also influential in developing learners’ writing skill” (Fareed et al., 2016, p. 87). Fareed’s qualitative research discusses the importance of writing as a skill to language production. His analysis of student interviews indicated why ELL writing levels are low, and in this attempt his research suggests that effective feedback from teachers plays a crucial role in language development. Aligned with the sentiments of Morgenegg (2019), Fareed et al. (2016) state “only trained teachers can carry out these responsibilities in an effective and productive way” (Fareed et al., 2016, p. 88).

Across the country many teachers are often unaware of misinformed of how to meet the needs of their students. School systems fail to provide the proper training and resources that teachers need to achieve the highest learning outcomes for their students. This dynamic is frustrating for the teachers and troublesome for the students. Furthermore, this dynamic can lead to teachers becoming unmotivated and uncomfortable in the classroom, as they may feel incompetent at the profession they chose.

Even in schools that have an adequate number of ENL teachers, these teachers still have limited knowledge on teaching SLIFE. Montero et al.’s (2014) qualitative case study of secondary school teachers highlights the lack of preparation many teachers report when teaching

ELL SLIFE. Her research focuses on the academic needs of the students and how many teachers report they have received little to no professional development on how to prepare such a delicate group of students for the academic rigors of secondary school (Montero, et al, 2014).

ENL teachers are trained and knowledgeable on improving the language functions of their ELL population. However, many ENL teachers are not trained on how to meet the social emotional needs as well. They have received little professional development on age-appropriate resources and culturally responsive resources to improve learning outcomes for their students. In turn, this can lead to teachers feeling as though they are tasked with doing more than teaching (Montero et al., 2014). They can feel overwhelmed and frustrated, which is mutually negative for the students and teachers.

ELL SLIFE are underrepresented in professional literature and Cohan & Honigsfeld (2017) research attempts to identify the challenges ELL SLIFE face and what practices and programs teachers can implement to improve instruction, graduation rates, and meet the needs of this growing population. Her year-long study that was conducted in three diverse, near-urban school districts explored the service delivery models and instructional practices designed by secondary schools. The findings suggest that teachers struggle when they are not given proper planning time and opportunity to work with other colleagues. This collaboration should not just be at the teacher level, but from a top-down approach with an emphasis on “strong teacher involvement, district-wide planning, access to quality materials, and a keen understanding of the cultural and economic circumstances of the SLIFE population” (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2017). In-depth interviews with teachers and administrators working with ELL SLIFE suggest that teachers struggled when they did not consider the abilities of the students upon their arrival in the United States.

Moreover, Hos (2016) found that a lack of support from administrators often leaves teachers frustrated and misguided on how to achieve the highest learning outcomes for their population. Her study involving Mrs. Smith indicates that teachers often try to create their own curriculum and supports but fail to implement them effectively and at appropriate age level.

Current literature highlights the struggles teachers currently face when teaching ELL and SLIFE students. As this student demographic grows throughout United States public schools, teachers who do not have the certification for ELLs or the experience with SLIFEs become frustrated with their practices. However, research indicates the resilience of this student population and the existence of actionable teacher practices to improve student performance.

Dropout Rates and Falling Behind

Due to the lack of teacher training to both academically and social emotionally meet the needs of SLIFEs, these students face higher dropout rates. When arriving in the United States, these students face a tremendous task and without the proper support system or resources, students can be left behind in the education system. Hos (2016) indicates in her research that her case study teacher Mrs. Smith represents many teachers who have “scarce resources at the school” (Hos, 2016, p. 495). Moreover, Christensen (2018) sheds light on the relationship between attendance and the age of ELL SLIFE students. His findings suggest that the dropout rates of ELL SLIFE students surpass the general population in High School. When SLIFEs and families are not receiving the proper English instruction at school, this in turn makes upward mobility and the navigation of education system much more difficult. As SLIFEs get older, the more challenging English proficiency gets. These students can fall further and further behind their peers and this can lead to eventual dropout (Hos, 2016).

The tasks ELL SLIFE students face in and out of the classroom is tremendous and Ross and Ziemke (2016) research indicates that ELL SLIFE are “challenged to perform triple the work of bridging the gaps in knowledge and literacy they failed to learn in their home countries” (Ross & Ziemke, 2016). These gaps pose threats to this student population and are heightened in High School because these students have limited time to graduate. ELL SLIFE students often become frustrated and this leads to them dropping out of school. The number of ELL SLIFE has grown in United States public schools and this is also mirrored globally. Research through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) indicate that in 2013, 124 million children between ages 6 and 15 have dropped out. Ross and Ziemke’s (2016) research expands on the severity of SLIFEs, especially those in High School. Ross and Ziemke (2016) further that all members of the education field must understand the challenges ELL SLIFE face as well as the statistics behind it.

Therefore, a lack of proper teaching training and the inability to academically and social-emotionally meet the needs of the ELL SLIFE population can lead to dropouts. Researchers indicate the relevance of this phenomenon and who is highest risk. Current literature does offer both macro and micro methods to combat these dropout rates and mitigate them in the future.

As a microcosm of American society, the public school classroom reflects the changes brought about in the United States. Increased growth in the number of ELL SLIFE students in the United States has brought considerable challenges to school districts. The challenging experiences of SLIFEs in their prior experiences coupled with a lack of teacher training for this population poses various consequences, one of the more severe being dropouts.

ELL SLIFE is a unique population of student that has seen considerable growth in United States public school in recent years. Considerable literature is available on ELLs, as well as the

SLIFE population. However, gaps in research appear when providing actionable solutions for the combined sub population of ELL SLIFE. These students require further attention and bring with them the unique challenges, needs, and experiences of both groups.

Current literature indicates the effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching and specific strategies. There is a plethora of strategies and teachers can use them and modify them based off the needs of their students. For example, one strategy can center around media literacy. Students today are exposed to more forms of media and technology than ever before. News platforms, social media accounts, and other platforms are not ubiquitous in society. Whether in the classroom or outside of it, students must be competent at making sense of various forms of media. Research has proven that acknowledging the students previous traumatic experiences and providing outlets for expression and sharing can be greatly beneficial for SLIFE development (Hos, 2016; Newcomer et al., 2017). Furthermore, scaffolding instruction to meet SLIFEs where they are at while including a culturally responsive approach will lead to academic gains. In terms of family support, bridging the gap from the home to school will cater towards the social emotional needs of SLIFE and their families.

Teachers can create the best learning outcomes for ELLs with a limited or interrupted formal education by teaching through a culturally responsive lens that focuses on giving students the tools to be aware of the world around them. Chapter 3 will provide a Professional Development for teachers of the ELL SLIFE population that provides them with actionable practices and approaches that meet both the academic and social emotional needs of these students. Teachers are often left misguided, helpless, and frustrated with how to achieve the highest possible learning outcomes for this demographic and chapter 3 will offer a solution.

Chapter 3: The Product

ELL SLIFE students bring with them great diversity and offer unique perspectives and experiences that hold great value in the classroom and beyond (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). However, as research shows in Chapter 2, due to a lack of proper teacher training of this population, the negative effects of prior traumatic experiences on academic growth, and high dropout rates, the ELL SLIFE population is struggling (Hos, 2016; Newcomer et al., 2017). These students are often placed in the wrong academic setting, given inappropriate supports, or simply placed in a school that has little to know knowledge on how to meet their needs and achieve the highest possible learning outcomes. As a result, the teachers of this population grow increasingly frustrated as they feel misguided on how to instruct these students (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2017; Montero et al., 2014). Indeed, the academic needs of this population are coupled with their social emotional needs, and teachers are unaware of how to offer the best supports for that area of concern as well (Newcomer et al., 2017).

The immediate answer is not to have teachers become ENL certified because that will take an enormous amount of time and money. What needs to happen immediately and what is feasible is to offer Professional Development workshops to schools. Through a guiding PowerPoint as a tool, a teacher/administrator who is knowledgeable on the ELL SLIFE population will facilitate a presentation that discusses culturally responsive teaching strategies. This workshop will offer background knowledge on who ELL SLIFEs are, what makes them a unique and delicate demographic, and actionable practices for teachers to implement in their classrooms.

Description of the Professional Development

This Professional Development will be conducted at I.S. 230, a 6-8 public middle school located in Jackson Heights, NY. This Professional will be held in the Fall, on a Monday after school in the designated Professional Development time slot. All teachers, paraprofessionals, and support service staff will be in attendance.

This workshop will take the form of two days. The first day will be a PowerPoint facilitated by an experienced teacher/administrator, where teachers are taking more of a listening and learning role. After this workshop day, the teachers will take the strategies that apply to their population and will be given a month-long period to test these strategies. After a month, a second workshop day will be held for teachers to come together in groups to share what worked and did not work.

Background Knowledge on ELL SLIFE Population

The beginning of the workshop must offer background knowledge on who this population is. Due to the fact that ELL SLIFE population is a more recent population and that many teachers do not have prior experience teaching this population (Montero et al., 2014). I must offer background knowledge, which can take the form of PowerPoint slides that define the group, include what makes them unique, and explain why this group is unique and delicate. This section will include the academic gaps these students face and the challenges of learning a new language as well as a new culture simultaneously.

One of the most concerning obstacles inhibiting ELL SLIFE students is having teachers who do not understand how challenging their prior experiences may have been. The case study in Newcomer et al. (2017) provides a 6 month study in 2016-2017 of elementary teachers of SLIFE students. Many of the students faced various difficulties adjusting to life in the United States.

The interviews conducted highlight these challenges, as one teacher (Dina) stated “Most of our kids live in poverty ... It was eye-opening that there’s so many different kids from different areas just living here ... It gets you on your toes!” (Newcomer et al., 2017, p. 8). SLIFEs have been forced out of their home countries due to war, poverty, persecution, and various other factors. When these students arrive in the United States, their lives are often not much easier. ELL SLIFEs face academic challenges in the classroom as well as learning the customs and cultural norms of a new culture. This can be as simple as how to hold a pencil, walk properly in the hallway, or ask a teacher to go to the bathroom (Morgenegg, 2019). Teachers need to take on a more understanding approach. This starts with teacher education of the traumatic experiences many SLIFEs have been through. The information in the PowerPoint will be from sources of research.

CRT Strategies

I will provide strategies in the PowerPoint for how to begin to understand their students. For example, one theme that will be stressed is that caring is not enough. That teachers need to provide ethical care and see themselves as “responsible for empowering their students” (Hos, 2016, p. 1). This requires a proactive approach and takes many forms. Such as: treating all students with respect, believing in students, being patient, and engaging students. Moreover, this ethical care approach is tied to academic attention, where work must be scaffolded and modified for the needs of the students. This can be adjusting the workload, providing extra time, accepting more than one answer to a question, and willing to change classroom rules if necessary. Hos (2016) used Mrs. Smith, a secondary teacher and her 15-year-old student Phan from Thailand to demonstrate the effectiveness of certain CRT strategies. One of these implemented by Mrs. Smith was offering students additional supports. This one conversation highlights this:

Mrs. Smith: “Phan, this homework is very easy and I am sure you can do it easily. Why have you not been doing your homework?”

Phan: “I forgot”

Mrs. Smith: “If you can’t remember, I can call you to remind you about your homework at 7 p.m.”

Phan: “[chuckles] OK, that’s good. Thank you.”

Teachers must be eager to change their instructional strategies to meet the needs of their students. Another example of this is scaffolding work for ELL SLIFEs by “using a great deal of modeling, schema building, and contextualizing” (Newcomer et al., 2017, p. 12).

Furthermore, many teachers need specific academic instructional activities and one common strategy is using visuals and manipulatives. For example, students can create drawings, use maps, videos, and graphic organizers. Furthermore, this can take the form of hands-on activities, using pictures, and pre-teaching needed language. Teachers must take an ethical care approach to get to know their students and this will enhance academic instruction.

When learning and beginning to understand their students’ experiences, teachers can use these strategies to guide academic instruction by meeting the students where they are. This means “combining the learning processes they are accustomed to with those of Western Classrooms” (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015, p. 50). New activities must be created to provide SLIFE with new opportunities to develop language and academic ways of thinking. This can include personalized learning strategies where students can see themselves in the curriculum. This can include teaching about their home countries and cultures. Newcomer et al. (2017) included examples of CRT poster projects where students created poster for a culture night. The students created “a world map indicating countries where families came from”. Two teachers,

Kylee and Dina, “proudly showed us the student-created posters for Culture Night hanging in the hallway. These colorful posters displayed visuals and information about the families’ home countries” (Newcomer et al., 2017, p. 10).

Another actionable strategy is a mutually adaptive learning paradigm. This ethical care approach also requires teachers to examine their own assumptions and this will be a crucial part of the workshop. They must reflect on their assumptions and the assumptions of their students. This requires teachers to “start with the conditions and processes SLIFE bring with them to the classroom so that they can access and develop language, content knowledge, and academic ways of thinking” (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015, p. 50). When taking an ethical approach to get to know students and guide academic instruction, this falls under the umbrella of culturally responsive teaching.

Another actionable practice is bridging the gap between school and the student home. Parent outreach is crucial because it allows families to stay connected and support their child academically when at home, and the workshop will offer solutions to do this. This includes stating the importance of having strong relationships between educators, ELL SLIFEs and their families. Families of SLIFEs need to feel supported and teachers need to educate themselves on the struggles their families might be facing. An actionable strategy that is included in the workshop is offering students a time to share their thoughts, opinions, and prior experiences. A teacher from the study of Newcomer et al. (2017), stated her reflection on the culture poster project:

“Seeing how, not just their homeroom teacher, but the specialists and people that work with the kiddos, go above and beyond Learning math or learning adjectives isn’t the main

priority How do we keep them engaged in our classes, and ... feeling like they are safe and cared for and loved?" (p. 10)

The components of the workshop were chosen based off of the recent literature. The growing trend of ELLs and SLIFEs in U.S. public schools has led to teachers who feel frustrated to meet the needs of their students. Actionable practices taking on a culturally responsive approach have been proven to work and this workshop allows teachers to concisely learn about this population and strategies. This is a culturally responsive approach that supports the “socioemotional and academic needs of refugee students” (Newcomer et al., 2017).

This professional development resolves the problem because teachers will be given specific and actionable practices that they can implement immediately. Crucial background information is given in the first workshop and the month gap in-between offers sufficient time for teachers to apply these strategies. The second workshop allows for teachers to come back and reflect on their strategies. They will work in groups to discuss with other teachers and have an opportunity to meet with the facilitator.

The intended outcome of this PD is for teachers to feel supported and more comfortable when teaching their ELL SLIFE population. The PowerPoint is intended to provide actionable and indispensable information but in an easy to follow format. The combination of the PowerPoint with a facilitator who is knowledgeable on ELL SLIFEs will effectively deliver the goals of the workshop. After the two days of the workshop, the goal is for teachers to more effectively instruct ELL SLIFEs, and result in higher learning outcomes for this population.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This paper has discussed teachers' lack of awareness about how to meet their academic and social emotional needs. Research has shown that teachers were unclear on who ELL SLIFE is and what makes them a unique and delicate population of student (Newcomer, 2017, Hos, 2016). This project serves to identify the questions teachers have about the background of this group and what is required to deliver effective academic instruction. Furthermore, many teachers are unaware of the social emotional needs of this group (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015, Morgenegg, 2019) and this study and professional development tool serve to offer actionable practices to meet these needs. Various questions were considered, such as: Who is this group? What challenges does this group face both in and out of school? How does their prior experience impact their future learning? What actionable strategies can be implemented to better serve these students?

The purpose of this study was to provide background information for teachers of the ELL SLIFE population and to provide actionable practices for these teachers to implement. These actionable practices take on a culturally responsive role which will produce the highest possible learning outcomes for this population of student. In this chapter, I will first summarize research findings. Next, I will discuss implications and conclude with recommendations for future research.

Summary

Research has documented many of ELL SLIFE are forced to come to the United States because of poverty, war, civil unrest, and forms of persecution that exist in their home countries (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015, Hos, 2016). When these students arrive in the United States, they face academic challenges as well as social emotional needs (Newcomer et al., 2017). They bring

with them their own unique culture and customs and often have to learn a new culture. By implementing a culturally responsive teaching approach, ELL SLIFE students can receive more effective instruction and higher learning outcomes (Christensen, 2018; Hos, 2016). This entails connecting the content to the students' lives (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015), bridging the gap from home to school (Newcomer et al., 2017), providing opportunities for students to share (Newcomer et al., 2017), taking on an ethical and caring approach (Hos, 2016), and providing visuals, manipulatives, and scaffolds (Hos, 2016).

The various strategies that fall under the umbrella of culturally responsive teaching have tremendous positive impacts. Taking a caring and ethical approach towards students is the foundation of culturally responsive teaching and allows for effective academic instruction to come after (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Hos, 2016). Students must first feel cared for and that starts with understanding who your students are. Teachers must take an interest in their students and students must feel cared for. Furthermore, making connections to the home life of the students can improve relationships because the families will also feel cared for and invested in their child's education. When these strong relationships are created then the best possible learning outcomes can be achieved, and instruction can reflect the student's cultures.

Research highlights that when implemented properly, these strategies are beneficial both for the students and their teachers (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Montero et al., 2014). When teachers take on an ethical and caring approach, they begin their relationship with the students with an understanding approach (Hos, 2016). They leave their assumptions behind and this allows for a strong relationship to foster (Newcomer et al., 2017). Students notice this behavior and gradually develop trust in their teachers, which allows for effective academic instruction (Christensen, 2018; Cohan, et al., 2017). Often times teachers are unaware of what materials and

resources to provide, and simple scaffolds like sentence starters are effective for ELL SLIFEs (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). Furthermore, providing opportunities for students to connect with the content through hands on activities that contain visuals is an effective instructional approach (Hos, 2016). When teachers provide opportunities for families to connect with schools, this builds a relationship between home and school which allows for the instruction in school to be emphasized at home (Newcomer et al., 2017).

Implications

Research has created various implications for teaching strategies and student learning. These strategies for ELL SLIFEs can take place in and out of the classroom. Teachers must be aware of proper background information for ELL SLIFEs (see Appendix A, numbers 1-3). In order to properly instruct students in the classroom, teachers must take an interest in their students and know who they are. They must acknowledge their assumptions and understand their group.

Once teachers understand their students, they must interact with them in a caring and ethical approach (See Appendix A, numbers 4-6). This entails providing a classroom environment that makes students feel cared for, respected, and comfortable. Research provides evidence that students respond positively when a caring approach is provided.

Research suggests that a culturally responsive teaching approach is most effective to achieve the highest learning outcomes. Actionable practices and exercises can be implemented that all teachers can use. Examples of this are hands-on projects that allow the students to reflect their culture in the classwork (See Appendix A, numbers 9-11). Further actionable strategies include sentence starters that help to enhance student writing (See Appendix A, number 16).

In order to counteract teacher frustration when teaching ELL SLIFEs, Professional Development workshops are the most effective. These workshops offer opportunities for background knowledge, teacher collaboration, and reflection on practices (See Appendix A, number 1).

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research needs to build upon culturally responsive teaching strategies and continue to provide teachers actionable strategies. Further research needs to be conducted on how specific culturally responsive teaching strategies should be adjusted for various groups of students and languages. ELL SLIFEs arrive at different ages, come from different countries, and speak different languages, and the strategies need to be catered for individualism of each student. This can take the form of connecting the individual cultures of each student into the classroom, and having opportunities for students to work on hands on projects.

Final Thoughts

ELL SLIFE is a growing demographic in United States public schools and one that can be frustrating for many educators to teach. ELL SLIFEs have unique backgrounds and arrive in the United States facing many challenges. It is essential for educators to take time to understand their students, take on a caring approach, and incorporate various culturally responsive teaching strategies to have the highest learning outcomes.

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Appendix A

Professional Development Presentation

1. <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1hp8c9yFt5lM9VzPNMPFehWtAlplnu0jZ0iAqNxS2kAw/edit?usp=sharing>
2. <https://voicethread.com/share/14906087/>

Appendix B

Resources and Materials

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94HX4UiQII0&feature=emb_logo
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=StQxnIQAtxA&feature=emb_log

3.

Amiir was placed in the fourth grade and expected to pass the exams that would determine his options for future middle schools, though he could not yet hold a pencil.

4.

No content teacher was trained in differentiating for SIFE. There was one ENL teacher servicing the building and she was responsible for over 90 ELLs. I was the only ENL student teacher, and so Amiir became my shadow.

5.

SLIFE in the classroom. However, because of the lack of support from administrators, she was limited in her efforts of providing the best education for the SLIFE in the newcomer program. She tried to create curricular and instructional materials for the students through using various instructional resources but did not have a curriculum that was on appropriate grade level.

6.

needs. Dina explained, “Most of our kids live in poverty It was eye-opening that there’s so many different kids from different areas just living right here It gets you on your toes!” (Interviews, 2/23/17, 3/3/17). Kylee described a Syrian refugee student who had endured a particularly traumatic experience (Interview, 2/23/17): “The boys had seen too much. The oldest one was a 2nd-grader He had no control over the things that came out of his mouth, or his immediate reaction to things.” A moment later, she added, “Dad did not make it over.” Dina explained, “They come from really, really hard backgrounds.” (Interview, 3/3/17).

7.

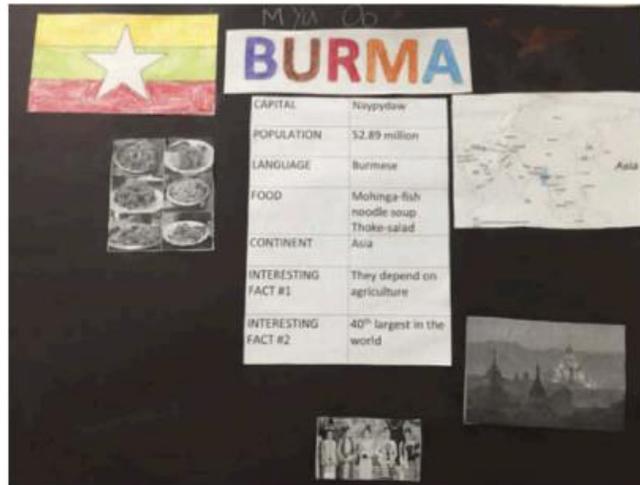
Mrs. Smith: Phan, this homework is very easy and I am sure you can do it easily. Why have you not been doing your homework?

Phan: I forget.

Mrs. Smith: If you can’t remember, I can call you to remind you about your homework at 7 p.m.

Phan: [chuckles] OK, that's good. Thank you. (Field notes, 9/23/10)

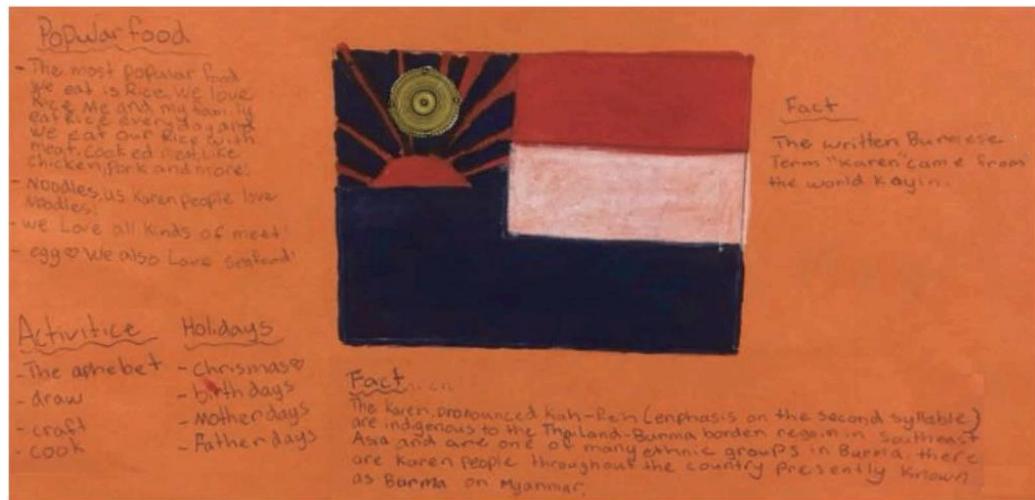
8.



9.



10.



11.

Kylee and Dina proudly showed us the student-created posters for Culture Night hanging in the hallway. These colorful posters displayed visuals and information about the families' home countries (Field Notes, 2/24/17-6/1/17). The steps involved in completing these included teaching students

12.

Giving them a chance to ... share their traditions with the whole class. It's exciting ... we are such a diverse [group] and they really get into sharing their traditions, saying, "Well, at home we" "The things we celebrate" The kids are used to it now and excited. They're so open, they want to share. (Interview, 3/3/17)

13.

14.

Seeing how, not just their homeroom teacher, but the specialists and people that work with the kiddos, go above and beyond Learning math or learning adjectives isn't the main priority How do we keep them engaged in our classes, and ... feeling like they are safe and cared for and loved? (Interview, 3/3/17)

15.

SENTENCE STARTERS

Introduction or Conclusion 	To Share an Opinion 	Add Information 	Compare & Contrast 	Show Time 
When If It We I The My In Some As	The best My favorite The worst In my opinion It is important I prefer I believe I think I feel	One reason Another reason Also In addition For example Another Another reason Additionally One way Another way	Just like However Even though Both Either/or Similarly In contrast	First Next Then During Later Earlier Before After Soon Finally

16.

K-W-L Chart		
Topic: _____		
What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned