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Culture Shock and its Effect on English Language Learners

by
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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 the degree of Master of Science in Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....3

Chapter 1: Introduction.....4

Chapter 2: Literature Review.....9

Chapter 3: Description of the Professional Development.....16

Chapter 4: Conclusion.....22

References.....25

Appendices.....27

Abstract

When English language learners (ELLs) move from one country to another, their social, emotional, and psychological well-being is affected in school. Culture shock impedes ELLs' academic abilities. This problem emerges from the growing number of ELLs in our country today. This number will continue to grow which should motivate teachers to become more informed on the problems that our ELLs face. The literature suggests that there are four phases of culture shock; teachers must advocate for ELLs; and it is imperative for ELLs to keep their identity in school while learning about the new culture. The PD aims to educate participants about how culture shock effects ELLs. This way, appropriate action can be taken. During the PD, participants will collaborate, share stories, and learn about this overlooked reality that students face. Research should continue to be conducted to learn more about how culture shock effects students of all ages throughout their schooling careers.

Keywords: culture shock, English Language Learner (ELL), social-emotional wellbeing, identity, culture shock phases, advocate

Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement

Culture shock is a problem that effects English Language Learners (ELLs) of all ages for many reasons. This is an issue that I can relate to because I experienced it firsthand being a study-abroad student during my college experience. Being in a new country where there is an unfamiliar language is spoken, a different way of life from that of my own, and unfamiliar surroundings is an extremely exciting yet overwhelming experience. However, knowing that I was only going to be abroad for a short period of time, allowed me to have a different perspective about the experience because I knew it would end eventually and I would be able to go back to my home country. For some ELLs, especially the ones that this research will be focusing on, going back home may not ever be an option. These students have to adapt to a new way of life and all the stressors that come along with living in a new country.

Many students today are living in America while originally being from other countries. ELLs are often taken away from all they have ever known and are placed in new schools (sometimes even mid-year), into classrooms that already have routines and relationships established. According to Oxford Languages (2020), culture shock is the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone who is suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes. The capstone will focus on how culture shock effects ELLs coming from other countries to the United States in school. More specifically, how the aspects of culture shock have an effect on the emotional and social wellbeing of the English language learner. I also will be discussing how the effects of culture shock hinder the ELL's ability to learn academic content as well as acquire the target language within the school setting.

Significance of the Problem: How does this issue affect ELLs/Bilingual students?

On a daily basis, English language learners are adjusting to new ways of life. These students are adjusting to saying new things and doing new things as well. It is very important as the teacher to be able to bridge the unknown cultures into the school system. According to Haynes (2005), English language learners typically go through four common stages of culture shock upon arrival to America and their new school.

The first stage is the honeymoon/euphoric stage. ELLs feel excited and hopeful about their new surroundings and are happy to be taking in all of the new scenery and ways of life. The first stage can last anywhere from one day to several months.

The next stage that ELLs experience is the rejection phase. This is also known as the official culture shock stage. During the second stage, rejection and resentment start to form towards the new country. Differences between the American school culture and their home culture start to become more noticed. Language skills during this period are especially limited, making it extremely overwhelming to learn and adapt to their new surroundings in school. These English Language Learners are pressed with “unfamiliar surroundings, unreadable social signals, and unrelenting barrage of new sounds” (Haynes, 2005). Some other symptoms of the second stage is that ELLs seem to be sleepy, irritable, or depressed. Some ELLs may even become aggressive and act out on their hardship towards other students in their class and even on their teachers. It is important for teachers to be mindful of this stage so they understand where the aggression is stemming from. When educators are familiar with the signs of this stage, it gives them the opportunity sympathize with the learner and try to make the conditions better for them. It is also important for educators to keep in mind that all ELLs move through these stages at different paces.

The third stage is known as the integration stage. During the third stage, English language learners start to understand the differences between American culture and their home culture. ELLs also begin to integrate their own beliefs and ideas with their new culture. Some ELLs may even begin to move on from their home culture and start fully assimilating to American culture. Teachers should do their best in allowing/motivating students to keep the prior identity from their home culture. Most ELLs are able to find a happy balance between both home and school culture.

The fourth and final stage of culture shock is the adaptation stage. ELLs are able to feel comfortable in their classroom setting during this time period. ELLs will successfully begin integrating the beliefs of both their home culture and new culture successfully. Once teachers and administrators start to understand how culture shock affects the development of ELLs, they will be able to implement more appropriate training so teachers can help mitigate the effects of culture shock on ELLs in school.

Linguistic challenges is an important component of ELLs experiencing culture shock. Language difference is one of the main factors that leads to culture shock in students of all ages because culture and language are often linked together. “In other words, language shock is one of the less recognised aspects of cultural shock as its emotional impact is not so overtly strong that it could cause great harm or destruction to individuals who experience it” (Fan, 2010, p. 42). Students who are new to the culture can become extremely frustrated if they cannot get across the point that they are trying to. ELLs often become upset, and they communicate their feelings in other ways. It is common for English language learners in younger grades to act out with aggression because they do not know how else to express themselves or what they want.

Purpose

The purpose of this capstone project is to inform how culture shock effects students' learning, social wellbeing, and emotional wellbeing at the elementary level. I will be attempting to mitigate the issue of culture shock in school that ELLs face by presenting to teachers the different stages of culture shock and examples of how students cope with and act during each stage. This will be presented in a professional-development format. During the PD, information will be presented to educators on how to be a support system during an English Language Learner's adaptation to their new surroundings. There will also be a question and answer session where educators can ask some of their pressing questions on how to mitigate culture shock in the classroom.

Conclusion

This capstone project strives to look at how culture shock effects learning, social wellbeing, and emotional wellbeing of ELLs. In order to mediate this problem, teachers need to be educated about what culture shock is and what the stages look like. This will be presented to teachers in order for them to get the valuable information they need to know about the students in their classrooms and school buildings in general. The goal is for teachers become more aware of students' lives in a new country, to accommodate social and emotional needs as well as academic needs. It is all a matter of really getting to know a student coming from another country. Once teachers understand the problem of culture shock, research based practices will be shared on how to mitigate the effects of culture shock in the classroom. Practices will also be shared that help support the ELLs social/emotional wellbeing in the classroom as well as how to really support the English language learner's learning.

Chapter 2 will be reviewing the literature on culture shock. I will be looking at literature on culture shock as well as potential solutions. In chapter 3, I will discuss the elements of the professional development presentation. The four different stages of culture shock, examples of what it looks like in the classroom, and how teachers are able to mitigate the effects of culture shock in the classroom will be included in the PD. Finally, chapter 4 will tie together the new information learned from the research, and PD. Final thoughts and recommendations will be given as well.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

English language learners living in the United States come from various backgrounds and home countries. The aspects of culture shock have an effect on the emotional and social wellbeing of the English language learner in school. According to the dictionary (Merriam-Webster(n.d.)), the theoretical framework of culture shock describes the feeling of disorientation that students (ELLs) experience when they are suddenly introduced to a culture that is new or unfamiliar. International students and English language learners of all ages experience this phenomenon when entering a new school in a new country for the first time. “Shock is understood as the stimulus for acquisition of culture-specific skills that are required to engage in new social interactions” (Zhou et al., 2008, p. 65). This phenomenon hinders the student’s ability to learn academic content as well as acquire the target language within the school setting. Culture shock also effects the English language learner’s emotional and social wellbeing.

Principals of Theory

There are three principles of culture shock theoretical framework. This includes cultural learning, stress coping models, and social identification theories. “These theories together with the different components of response such as affect, behavior and cognition (ABC) describe the different aspects of changes that arise from intercultural contact” (Belford, 2017, p. 501). In regards to these theories, culture shock transforms to something referred to contact-induced stress. Culture shock is a period of time in the ELL’s life that is difficult. They are still trying to understand their surroundings as well as navigate through a new school.

Application to ELLs

Aspects of culture shock take a huge toll on the emotional wellbeing of English language learners in school. When moving to a new place, ELLs are likely to experience emotions like

grief and abandonment. These feelings lead to possible mental health changes. “Mental health changes might be a consequence of migration experiences, including negative life events, lack of social support networks, and the impact of value differences” (Zhou et al., 2008, p. 64). This information gives teachers the understanding that there are many different factors of the emotional wellbeing of an ELL in school. Things like this should be taken into account when individualizing instruction and analyzing assessment results. This also reminds teachers that they must be a continued source of support to students adjusting to a new way of life.

Connections to Overarching Questions

When thinking about *how* to benefit the learner going through culture shock socially, emotionally, and academically, there are many different approaches the teacher can take in order to support the learner effectively. As students begin to adapt to their new culture, things start to become easier in school. However, “adaptation and acculturation models are discussed in research literature which refers to other ways of managing and improving social skills” (Belford, 2017, p. 501).

Adapting to a new culture is extremely difficult for international students and English language learners of all ages. However, the longer that the students are exposed to the new country, the more they settle down and become more comfortable. They begin to understand different social expectations and readjust their old lives to their new lives. One of the most important aspects of the smooth transition into a new culture is to make sure the students have a strong sense of identity. Once students develop their identities, the transition becomes smoother. Next, I will be talking about how the identity of the student is a crucial part of the ELL’s transition in school and how it impacts the language acquisition of the student. I will also discuss how the sociocultural status of the child also plays a role in their transition into schools.

Identity

One of the biggest solutions for students experiencing culture shock is the formation of an identity in school. This goes for students of all ages. “The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity; that is, it develops in the given individual as a result of his/her relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process” (Mead, 1934, p. 135). It is important for the teacher to embrace the child’s home identity in school because it provides them a sense of comfort within the school building.

Language Acquisition

Culture shock effects the way students are able to acquire language because students go through a phase of academic adjustment. Factors that hinder academic adjustment include “language proficiency, learning environment, different teaching and learning styles, and different types of educational systems” (Ahrari et al., 2019, p. 614). Thus, limited proficiency in English is one of the top challenges of academic adjustment because “the academic adjustment was negatively impacted by lack of understanding of academic and educational procedures, lack of direction with different teaching and learning styles, and difficulties in completing group work assignments” (Ahrari et al., 2019, p. 614). When students do not understand the language of the new culture, they will have difficulty understanding educational procedures and routines that take place on a daily basis. They will also have trouble with different teaching styles as well as completing group work due to lack of conversational skills with students in a group. “Research literature suggests that international students benefit from an increased contact with the host culture that improves their language skills and helps them to build their confidence and communicate” (Belford, 2017, p. 502).

Sociocultural Challenges

Students experiencing culture shock are likely to be going through some emotional turmoil inside that affects them in school. Students have to adjust to many things when living in a new country. Psychological adjustment is another major factor that needs to be considered because of the depth of the change that students are enduring. Students will become depressed, lonely, have anxiety, become angry, and have homesickness for the country they left. These are all major factors of the psychological adjustment. “Experiencing such difficulties can have significant consequences for overall psychological wellbeing. International students often have high expectations and experience psychological crises when their expectations are unmet” (Ahrari et al., 2019, p. 615).

Students are also adjusting to their surroundings and their new culture. “Socio-cultural adjustment denotes undergoing culture shock, bias, and involvement with novel standards, rules, norms, breaks, and traditions. It also refers to the aptitude to obtain and act on appropriate social and cultural skills to match the host culture” (Ahrari, 2019, p. 615). This adjustment is when students start to learn about their new culture. This is important when collaborating in school and making new friends. Students coming from new countries often experience challenges in this adjustment because discrimination against English language learners is an important factor to be considered. “... such forms of nonprejudiced emphasizing cultural difference as a bias of discrimination appeals to popular notions of cultural preservation of the host nation” (Ahrari, 2019, p. 615).

Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of an English language learner’s success in school. For example, brand new ELLs are assessed as soon as they enter their new school building to

determine the appropriate level that they will be considered. The level that is given after initial screening will explain to teachers what the student's level of proficiency is in English. It will also be a guide for the appropriate amount of support that should be given to students. These results will also assist teachers in considering how they are going to keep in mind students' individual differences in testing. "... there is a significant relationship between students' learning styles for different subjects and their orientations for different kinds of assessment methods" (Reza et al., 2019, p.1240). Studies have been conducted that try to prove that students who are assessed in ways that they prefer perform better when the assessment relates to their specific learning style.

When connecting assessment of English language learners and how culture shock impedes the ELL's ability to perform effectively, it is encouraged to be reminded of how important it is to remember to keep the student as an individual in mind. "The programme of study must consider such issues as how the curriculum is designed and how the assessment strategy is established so making it fair for all. For example, Johnston (2010) debates how centric assessment policy often acts as a disadvantage to ethnic minority students and [higher] education institutions should promote cultural knowledge and context" (Kelly & Moogan, 2012, p. 26). Assessments should always be made to embrace and reflect diverse cultures. Assessments should be made to highlight student strength and individuality, not set them back due to their original home country.

Tools Researcher Presented

Tools that researchers use to understand culture shock themselves vary. Studies are conducted to gather data on student experiences and cross-cultural transitions. "An inductive approach to analysis and interpretation was used to present the multiple perspectives from the

participants and these were reported as narratives of their context-specific stories and experiences” (Belford, 2017, p. 503).

Materials that will be useful in the PD are carefully constructed activities that will encourage participants to share their personal experiences in a meaningful way. Research explains that friendship is extremely important in the cultural adaptation realm for students. Intercultural friendships take a little bit of time and understanding for them to work. “it is important for international students to share similar values and beliefs” (Belford, 2017, p. 513). Something that teachers can do to bridge this gap between students is to provide them with cultural texts from different parts of the world to expand their knowledge. Once students learn more about culture in a manner that is appropriate and engaging for them, the more likely they will be to start understanding new cultures and cultivate new friendships within the classroom setting. The developing of friendship is extremely important for a language learner and their emotional wellbeing in school. Friendship is the leading factor to how students are able to tend to their emotional needs because it provides students with contentment and social support. “Maintaining social interactions ... through social clubs influences international students’ adjustments and increase the well-being and academic performance of international students” (Belford, 2017, p. 502).

The methods teachers use to help ease in ELLs experiencing culture shock must be age-appropriate. For example, the use of social media is a great resource to use with secondary students. However, teachers must remember that they have to teach internet safety to the students. “Social networking facilitates interaction and connections with others. Cultural modeling and dialogue are equally important in building social ties” (Belford, 2017, p. 502). The use of social media allows for students to be in touch outside of school. It also gives students

more exposure and practice to the new culture. With this platform, students can interact socially about academic and non-academic topics, play games, and discuss/learn about any shared interests.

Methods of Instruction to Reduce Culture Shock

There are many methods of instruction that are considered useful to international students/English language learners. Psychological principles often govern behavior and social interactions. Social Learning Theory (SLT) suggests that learning is contingent on the interaction between “the environment, personal factors (beliefs, preferences, expectations, self-perceptions, and interpretations), and the individual behavior” (Corey, 2013, p. 237). This is important to keep in mind when differentiating and individualizing instruction for ELLs. A specific method of instruction that teachers can use regarding ELLs and international students is pairing each international student/language learner with another student in the class that can act as the mentor. This can aid in the adjustment process because psychologically, humans need a sense of belonging as well as social interaction. “international students must understand that despite the seemingly precarious position they find themselves in, they also have to be willing to make appropriate connections with others to hasten their skills in adapting to a new environment” (Boafo-Arthur et al., 2017, p. 1077).

Empirical Findings

The findings from the research explain that in order to have a successful period of time in school, international English language learners need to have various psychological needs met. The PD that follows in chapter 3 will discuss the stages of culture shock, how culture shock affects ELL’s in school, and ways to continue to support these students in school. “Respecting

another's culture does not mean that we agree with it, but that we understand the person's right to their own culture" (Banda, 2018, p. 494).

Chapter 3: PD

Day 1 of PD

During this Professional Development (PD) segment, participants will be discussing how culture shock affects English language learners socially, emotionally, and academically in school by diving deep into the four phases of culture shock. Educators will be participating in collaborative group activities having to do with supporting students during this difficult transition. The four states of culture shock are explained in chapter 1, with the reasons why and how culture shock makes the transition into school extremely challenging. Furthermore, teachers will learn how to pinpoint culture shock in the classroom. Lastly, knowledge will be imparted to the audience about how the teacher can use the knowledge learned from the PD as a guide to make the English language learner's experience transitioning into school a bit smoother.

Before getting started with the PD, I would like to start by discussing any instances of culture shock participants have seen in their classroom. I would like to know how these educators have dealt with any of the social, emotional, or academic issues that have arose because of the students' experience of culture shock and start the PD from there.

Goals of the PD

The main goal of this PD is to present interesting and engaging information to educators of English language learners. Teachers should be comfortable of with the idea of being a lifelong learner so they can to continue supporting students in the classroom. The first goal is to help teachers understand what culture shock may look like in order for them to spot it in their own classrooms. The next goal is for teachers to learn and thoroughly understand the four stages of culture shock. Lastly, teachers will take what they have learned and apply it to a mock scenario where they can identify the problem and provide appropriate support. Once teachers are taught

these important stages, the next goal is for them to understand appropriate methods and strategies to teach students that support their social, emotional, and academic wellbeing in school.

Strength Base Opener

In order to initially engage teachers into the PD, a video will be shown for about 5 minutes teaching all about how stress affects the brain (see Appendix, Figure 2). Once participants acquire the content taught in this video, they will have a better understanding of why the stress culture shock brings is a relevant complication for ELLs in school. In chapter 2, literature was discussed having to do with some major topics of culture shock. Before the first activity, I will ask participants for different opinions. The first question to engage the entire audience is, “What do you think is the best way to mitigate the effects of culture shock for English language learners in school?” Secondly, participants will be asked, “What is your opinion on how administrators react to/support students going through culture shock?” Having the information from the audience after asking these questions will give the presenter an understanding on what kind of information the audience needs to know.

Activity 1: Creating a Working Definition of Culture Shock

The first collaborative activity of the PD will be sharing stories of English language learners as a whole group. This will allow teachers to share their experiences with others and get everyone’s minds thinking about past, present, or future students. This should take around 20-30 minutes based on the amount of people who are willing to share out their stories. A page will be provided to members so they have the opportunity to record their memory before sharing (see Appendix, Figure 3). Teachers will also be encouraged to record another teacher’s input for future reference.

The second activity of the PD will be an ice breaker within the small table groups rather than the entire room like the first strength base opener. Teachers will be broken up into smaller groups that are predetermined by their table seating to get started with the day. Even though ice breakers usually make people feel awkward and/or uncomfortable, it is a relevant way to start the PD. Participants are able to make the connection to our ELLs who come from other countries who are feeling uncomfortable or out of place in their new surroundings. According to Yeganehpour (2016), implementing ice breaker activities in English speaking classes directs students to positive moods towards learning as well as use conversational English. In this scenario, the teachers will be acting as the students during this PD. Once teachers are in their assigned groups, they will be working together to find any commonalities between themselves. This allows teachers to find out about each other's interests, a common thing they should do with students on a frequent basis. This activity is beneficial to start out with PD with because this is something extremely important to do with ELLs going through culture shock. This activity reflects finding commonalities as well as interests between people and students and should take about 15-20 minutes depending on group responses. This strategy and academic rationale will be explained with the participants of the PD during the PowerPoint presentation of the day.

Activity 2: Walk a mile in someone else's shoes

After the groups share out, they will begin the actual work of the day. Teachers will start learning all about how culture shock effects students in school and how teachers can mitigate these effects. The first thing that teachers will receive are made-up scenarios (see Appendix, Figure 4). With these scenarios, they are expected to "walk a mile in someone else's shoes" regarding leaving a home country and coming to a new one. Reading and connecting with these stories personally will give teachers the opportunity to try to understand what it is like for

English language learners to leave everything they have ever known to come to a new country and be in a new school. Once teachers read the stories, they will come together and work as a table group and write down their feelings and thoughts on a large piece of paper. “Collaboration and interactivity, which contributes to the improvement of pedagogical activities, can improve the personal achievements of students” (Greshilova et al., 2020, p. 102). Collaboration is extremely important to incorporate into the session because it is a vital piece of an English language learner’s wellbeing in school.

One teacher will volunteer to share out their group’s findings and each group will post their poster paper in the front of the classroom. These posters will act as materials that members of the PD can look back on for the duration of the day. Reading the passage should take 5 minutes, discussing the reading should take 5 minutes, collaborating, discussing the reading and coming up with feelings should take 10 minutes, each group sharing aloud should take 10 minutes giving this activity around 30 minutes to be completed.

Part 2 of Session

PD presentation

The next part of the PD is the presentation portion of the day. “A continuity of education involves not only the assimilation of knowledge by a person and the acquisition of the appropriate abilities, skills, and methods of activity but also the formation of their worldview, cognitive interests, abilities, and value orientations” (Greshilova et al., 2020, p. 105). Teachers will listen and learn from a presentation that talks all about culture shock: what it is, why it happens, how to spot it in the classroom, and how to help students through this time. “It is important to consider the cognitive, social, and emotional components of personal and professional development, which involve coping with conflict, self-understanding, empathy,

leadership skills, and collaboration skills” (Greshilova et al., 2020, p. 106). The presentation should take about 30 minutes with 10 minutes at the end for questions and comments. The presentation will be 40 minutes total. Each member of the PD will receive a handout of the PowerPoint to take notes on and highlight key parts of the presentation.

Gallery walk activity

In order to tie together everything that the teachers have learned through the “walk a mile in someone else’s shoes” activity as well as the presentation that was shared, teachers will close this professional development session with a gallery walk with visuals around the classroom (see Appendix, Figure 5). “A gallery walk is a discussion technique that gets learners out of their seats and invites them to become active participants in the learning process” (McCafferty & Beaudry, 2017, p. 49). Each visual will model/depict a certain phase of culture shock. The teachers are required to identify what stage of culture shock the student is in, how they know this, and what they can do to support that student in the moment based on the picture. This will give the teachers practice thinking about the different stages of culture shock and how they can use what they have learned from the PD to help mitigate the effects. Once the gallery walk is completed, participants will be able to reflect on all of the new information that they have learned and share out any final thoughts or ideas to the rest of the session about how to continue to support ELLs in the classroom.

The outcome of for the gallery walk activity is to pull all of the information learned from the session that day. Participants are expected to put themselves in the situation as if it were really happening in the classroom and decide how to attend to the needs of the English language learner on the spot. The measure of success of this entire PD session is to learn about this layer of an ELL’s life in order to be a constant support for them whether that be socially, emotionally,

or academically. The next PD session will be covering English language learners who are experiencing culture shock along with PTSD when coming from countries that were unsafe.

PD Final Thoughts

The outcome of this PD will bring awareness to culture shock through video, presentation, collaboration, note-taking and reading. This PD will also introduce real-life scenarios so that participants can take notes on what to do and what not to do in terms of handling ELLs experiencing culture shock. Through these scenarios, teachers will also be taking a hands-on approach to solidify their understandings of handling an ELL who is effected by culture shock. The next chapter, chapter 4, will wrap up the final thoughts about culture shock and its effect on ELLs as well as my recommendations after completing the research having to do with this topic.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Introduction

This capstone project serves to identify the problem of how culture shock affects ELLs in school. This problem is important for many reasons. Research in chapter 2 suggests that students feel disoriented when they are suddenly introduced to a culture that is new or unfamiliar to them. There has been a lot of discrepancy as to how to teach ELLs effectively. Many of our ELLs come from different backgrounds, cultures and situations. Each child is different and needs to be supported on an individual basis. Some students have no formal education while others have interrupted formal education. There is a lot at stake for the teacher to grapple with and try to understand. When students move from one country to another, everything they knew from their previous life in their home country is likely much different compared to their new country. This migration certainly has a psychological effect on the student as culture shock that can be very overwhelming as well as anxiety-provoking. This information is important for the teacher to understand at the classroom level because students have psychological needs that must be met at all ages in order for optimal learning.

Conclusions

To meet the criteria of this capstone project, I was responsible for becoming an expert in the realm of culture shock and its presence in school. I learned many different aspects of culture shock in conventional ways by researching my topic as well as talking to experts in the field. One of the biggest takeaways of this research that I have done is how essential the ENL teacher and teachers in general are for the integration of these students into the mainstream school setting. “Due to the fact that English language learners (ELLs) often do not have the same educational opportunities or outcomes as non- ELL students in the United States, the professional standards for initial certification for teaching English for speakers of other

languages (ESOL) call on ESOL teachers to advocate for them” (Linville, 2016, p. 98). The research in chapter 2 explains that when teachers create adaptation and acculturation models, this is a beneficial way to help manage and improve social skills of students. ELLs are relying on teachers for simple things like how the bathrooms and cafeteria systems work. Another takeaway from the research about the effects of culture shock in school is the importance of recognizing the phases of culture shocks the ELLs go through. This provides the teacher with valuable information about how to work with the student as well as how learning can be effected negatively during this time. Lastly, keeping the ELL’s identity in school is crucial to their development. Language learners should learn the new expectations of their school culture, but should always remember that who they are and where they came from will always come first.

Implications for Student Learning

When teachers have an understanding of what students experience, it is likely that their instruction will become more tailored to meet their specific needs. This was the goal of the PD because getting to the root of student discomfort in school is a prime example of how teachers can intervene to recognize the problem and make it better. Academic challenges in terms of language and assessment will ultimately suffer if the ELLs’ emotional needs are not met in school first. Chapter 2 reminds us that keeping the students’ home identity in school is crucial because it gives them a sense of comfort in their new surroundings. Individualized instruction and differentiation are key components of ELL success in school. When teachers understand students are going through psychological trauma, the appropriate support will follow.

Implications for Teaching

All teachers working with ENL students can benefit from this research and professional development. It is our job as educators to make *all* students comfortable in school, not certain

groups. When working with ELLs, teachers should want to understand them and understand their culture. Once teachers gain a solid understanding of emotional needs of ELLs, the design of student-centered curriculum and lessons will become easier for targeted instruction. “Student learning needs should be the foundation on which teaching is based, and thus coteaching should be centered around students rather than teachers” (Percy et al., 2017, p. 233). Ultimately, the goal ENL teachers have for ELLs is to promote academic success and minimize any sociocultural challenges that these students face in schools. For example, “variations in vocabulary acquisition among ELLs have also been attributed to sociocultural variables” (Chen et al., 2012, p. 1996). Vocabulary is an example of one aspect in school and sociocultural challenges affect.

In the Application to ELLs section in chapter 2, research suggests that mental health changes occur in students. This happens because of migration experience and negative life events. This concept should remind teachers that they must be more sympathetic to these students on a daily basis so students look up to teachers for support emotionally and academically.

Recommendations

In my opinion, much more research should be done about culture shock in the classroom. I feel as if I learned more when talking to teachers in the field of ENL than I did from the research articles and journals. I also recommend that there should be more research done about how culture shock impedes the social, emotional and academic wellbeing of the ELL at the elementary level. I think this age is imperative because their brain is still developing and it would be interesting to see how culture shock effects students as they get older. Most of the researched

focused on students at the higher education level, I would have liked to learn more about culture shock at the elementary level.

Final Thoughts

This capstone project is just a reminder of how inspiring English Language Learners are to the field of education. They leave everything they have ever known to come to our country and go through a lot of social, emotional, and psychological issues that can easily be looked over by the teacher. I think this capstone project should remind educators the importance of being there for the student and being their biggest advocate. It is our job as teachers to speakers of other languages to help ELLs succeed in school, always holding them at the highest standard possible while mentoring and guiding them through their new life.

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Appendix

Figure 1

Agenda for Culture Shock in the Classroom PD Session

9:00-9:30- Check in

9:45-10:00- Assemble into predetermined groups

10:00-10:05- Video on how stress affects the brain played for all

10:05-10:35- Members of PD will share experiences of ELLs and culture shock they have encountered thus far

10:35-10:55- Ice Breaker Activity

11:00-11:30- “Walk a Mile in Someone Else’s Shoes” Activity

11:45-12:30- Presentation

12:45-1:30- Gallery Walk

1:45-2:30- Final shares, closing remarks

Figure 2

Video to Explain how Stress Affects Brain Function

How stress affects your brain – Madhumita Murgia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuyPuH9ojCE>

Please take down any important notes from the video in this box:

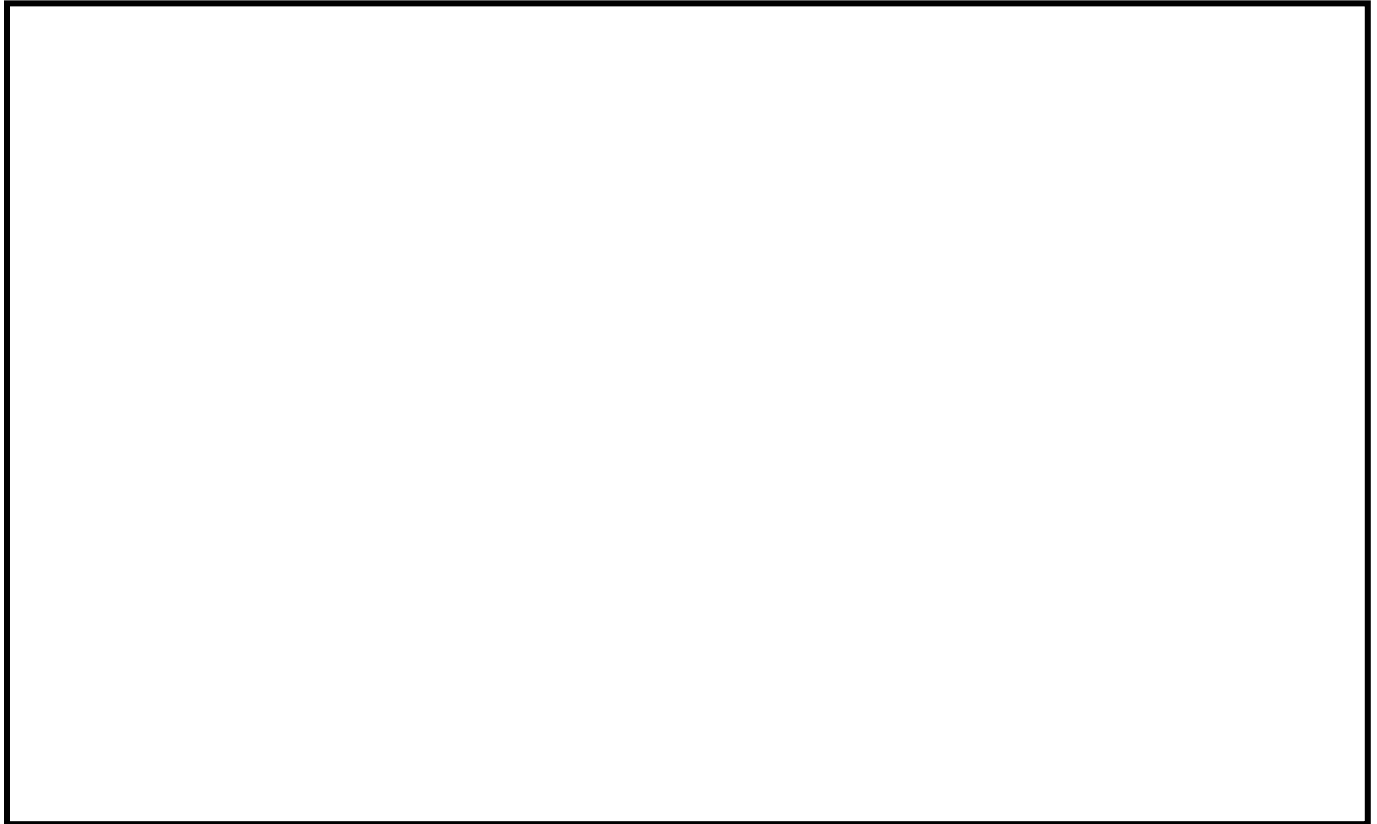


Figure 4*“Walk a Mile in Someone Else’s Shoes” Activity*

The scenario to think about :

You are 10 years old. You come from an extremely impoverished background and it is up to you to provide for your family. You started your first job at the age of 7, leaving you no choice but to leave school to work on the field to make money so your family can survive. You work on a strawberry farm in Mexico from sunrise to sunset 6 days a week. Your formal education in Mexico was interrupted so you have limited literacy skills in your home language of Spanish. Your family decides that you should live a better life so they send you to live with relatives in the Rochester City area of New York. You know your aunt and uncle, but you have never lived with them before and you miss your mom, dad, abuela, and siblings dearly. Your first day of school is coming. When you get to school, you are surrounded by noises, smells, tastes, and feelings that are overwhelmingly new to you. You have no one to turn to other than your ENL teacher. However, you do not know how to communicate effectively with any of the people trying to support you. You start to miss Mexico dearly. You become extremely angry and withdrawn from everyone in your new life.

If you were this student, what thoughts and feelings would be going through your head?

Please list below. Be prepared to share with the entire group at the end of the activity.

Figure 5

Gallery Walk

Image 1: The Honeymoon Phase



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/four-toddler-forms-circle-photo-754769/>

Image 2: The Rejection/Crisis Phase



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/photo-of-boy-holding-white-smartphone-1534847/>

Image 3: The Recovery Stage



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/two-girls-doing-school-works-1720186/>

Image 4: The Adjustment Stage



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/elder-sister-and-brother-studying-at-home-3769981/>

With each picture and stage of culture shock, please write one or two ideas you have that will help support the student in school. Please keep the stages in mind when formulating your response as a student's emotional response may be different when they're in differing stages. Be prepared to share your response and ideas as this can help other educators understand and work with students going through culture shock in their own classroom.