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Language Environment of Dual Language Learners and the Use of Language Support Practices

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Abstract

The increase of dual language learners in today's classrooms has caused serious implications when examining how the country educates children (McWayne, Melzi, Schick, Kennedy, & Mundt, 2013). Because of the cultural and linguistic differences of these children, it is essential to study teaching practices at the early childhood level. Examining educational practice includes studying the language environment and how it supports dual language learners' (DLLs) language development. The present study examined the language environment of dual language learners, specifically the use of language support practices in four preschool classrooms. This qualitative case study used interviews, observations, and field notes. The participants included two groups: teachers and children. Seven English speaking early childhood educators, five leads/co-leads, and two assistants, taught in classrooms based on an English-only model. There were 24 focal children, six from each class, who were Hispanic dual language learners. The overarching significant finding that emerged from this study was that of intentionality. More specifically, in order to scaffold DLLs' learning and provide a rich language environment, teachers must be intentional in their practices. Being a good teacher does not guarantee that a teacher knows what is appropriate or effective for the DLLs in their class. A major implication for teacher education programs is to offer coursework to ensure preservice teachers have the appropriate training.

The Language Environment of DLLs and the Use of Language Support Practices

Introduction

The changing demographics in the United States are causing educators to reconsider how young children are educated (McWayne, Melzi, Schick, Kennedy, & Mundt, 2013). The linguistic and cultural diversity of young children are increasing and providers of early education can expect to see continuing increases over time. The rising number of children in early childhood programs whose home language is other than English reflects this trend. These dual language learners (DLLs) are learning two languages at the same time; they are still learning to speak their native language at home while learning a new language, English, at school. Within this group, the Latinos are one of the fastest growing populations of children, so it is necessary to take a careful look at the education of this group (Barrueco, López, Ong, & Lozano, 2011).

Scaffolding with Language Support Practices

The theoretical framework for this study was sociocultural theory, specifically focusing on scaffolding. Bruner used Vygotsky's theories to explore how children learn through collaborative interaction with adults (Minick, Stone, & Forman, 1993). This work provided examples of how to

operationalize certain concepts within sociocultural theory. One of these ideas was in regards to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Although Vygotsky called for teaching in the ZPD when introducing new concepts, he was not specific in how to collaborate with children in the ZPD (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Bruner, 1996).

This issue was addressed by Bruner and his colleagues. They presented the idea of *scaffolding* (Göncü & Gauvain, 2011; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Scaffolding provides support until it is no longer needed. It assists a child by breaking down a task, redirecting their focus, modeling, and by affording the child with strategies to problem-solve (Wood et al., 1976).

The tutoring process allowed researchers to more fully understand the concept of scaffolding. Wood et al. (1976) studied this process to determine the relationships between the child and the adult, with the adult being the expert who helps the child whose knowledge is less than the expert's knowledge. The conclusion was that teaching involved more than just the teacher modeling or the child imitating. The process of scaffolding included the social context because it considered both the learner and the one who is more knowledgeable. They saw that social context was important to learning and needed to be considered as well.

Bruner defined scaffolding as "referring to the steps taken to reduce the degrees of freedom in carrying out some task so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill she is in the process of acquiring" (Bruner, 1978, p. 254). He believed that scaffolding was a process that allowed a child to go beyond his understanding by involving someone else who had more *expertise*. It involves helpful, structured interaction between an adult and a child for the purpose of helping the child achieve a specific goal.

One type of scaffolding is the use of language-support practices (LSPs). LSPs that are developmentally appropriate and are based on responsive teacher-child relationships, support children's language acquisition (Burchinal et al., 2008). LSPs that have been shown to be particularly helpful in language acquisition are: child-oriented, interaction-promoting, and language-modeling (Bouchard et al., 2010; Girolametto & Weitzman, 2002; Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2006; Longtin & Fabus, 2008; O'Toole & Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Child-oriented support is used in order to have a conversation with a child. It is based on the child's interest and assists in sustaining communication. Examples of this LSP include listening to the child until he has finished his thoughts; following the child's lead, whether verbal or nonverbal; or participating in a game with the child while maintaining a non-dominate presence.

Interaction-promoting is used to facilitate interactions between children. This may consist of partnering children for projects or providing activities that allow for interactions to take place between children, the teacher asking open-ended questions in order to begin a discussion, or simply helping children to learn how to take turns. It also includes imitating and confirming (Bouchard et al., 2010).

Language-modeling is used to model the correct way to speak. It is not about correcting the child, but about modeling correct language usage. This type of LSP gives children examples of correct linguistic content, forms, and uses. It can be done by expanding on a child's vocabulary by introducing new words or adding new words to the child's sentence

(Justice, 2004). Language modeling can also be accomplished by restating a word that was incorrectly pronounced or used. For example, if a child said, "I don't want no bread," the teacher could then restate the sentence with proper wording, "I see. You don't want any bread, do you?" Another type of language modeling is to extend the conversation with a child by questioning, commenting, or introducing new ideas into the conversation (Bouchard et al., 2010). When teachers use these LSPs they increase their responsiveness to children's language development and limit their directiveness (Justice, 2004). Furthermore, when teachers use these LSPs, children's language increases in complexity and improves overall (Girolametto & Weitzman, 2002).

Children's language is a predictor of their later academic success (Center for Early Care and Education Research-Dual Language Learners (CECER-DLL), 2011; Passe, 2013). With the lack of research in DLLs' education as well as the little that is known about the language environments for DLLs (Atkins-Burnett, Sprachman, López, Caspe, & Fallin, 2011), there is a need to understand what is required in the classroom in order for this population to succeed. Looking at ways to support their language acquisition, specifically at LSPs, will be beneficial to teachers of this group of children as well as add to the limited research on the language environment of DLLs.

The purpose of this study was to examine the language environment in which DLLs were developing their English language and how their development was supported through the use of LSPs. The research question that guided this study was: How do teachers use LSPs with DLLs in the preschool setting?

Methodology

Setting

The four classrooms in this study were in three early childhood centers managed by a community-based agency that focused on educating students from low-income families. The goal of these centers is to provide high quality childcare services and education in order to give students the opportunity to be successful. Each of the four classrooms was a high quality, preschool classroom, as determined by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation and having a high rating with the quality initiative of the state. The children enrolled in the centers were from the surrounding neighborhoods, which had a high population of Hispanic families, therefore each classroom had a large number of DLLs.

The classes that were observed were preschool classrooms: two were 3-year-old classrooms and two were 4-year-old classrooms. The classes were based on an English-only model (Espinosa, 2010). English was used for all instruction and there was limited support for the children's home language. All four classrooms had the following supports in place: assistants or other staff provided some support in the home language through translations; some multilingual materials were available; and all had active family involvement practices.

Participants

In each of the classes, the lead teacher(s) had a bachelor's degree and the assistant teacher had an associate's degree, see Table 1. In Classroom 1, there were two co-teachers. In Classrooms 2, 3, and 4, there was one lead teacher and one assistant teacher, however the assistant teacher in Classroom 4 did not consent to participate in the study. All teachers were monolingual, native English speakers. One teacher, Sandy, identified herself as Latina

because of her family's heritage, however she did not speak Spanish. Each teacher had limited education and professional development in regards to DLLs. All names of teachers and children have been changed to pseudonyms.

Table 1. Classroom Dynamics

Center	Classroom	Age Group	Teacher(s)/ Assistant Teacher	# of years teaching	# of years at school	# of students	# of DLLs
Center A	1	3 yr old	Marsha (Co-Lead)	7	2	17	9
			Susan (Co-Lead)	1	1		
	2	4 yr old	Sandy (Lead)	1	1	20	9
			Bethany (Assistant)	7 wks	7 wks		
Center B	3	3 yr old	Rachel (Lead)	8	3	17	7
			Angela (Assistant)	2	1		
Center C	4	4 yr old	Hannah (Lead)	3	1	20	13

All parents were asked to allow their child to participate in the study. Each teacher was asked to choose six DLL students, who attended regularly from their class to be the focal students for this study. This provided 24 focal children, 11 girls and 13 boys, from the four classrooms. The teachers chose these students based on their English language proficiency: two were highly proficient in English, two were considered moderately proficient, and two spoke little to no English.

Data Collection

Data collection included two semi-structured interviews with each teacher. The first interview took place at the beginning of the study with the second interview at the end of the study. The assistant teachers were not interviewed due to time constraints. How-ever, they were included in observations.

Each class was observed for 1.5 hours twice a week, for six weeks, for a total of 18 hours. One day the observation was done during the first part of the morning; the other observation was during the second part of the morning. This allowed for a more complete view of what happened between arrival and lunch time.

Each observation began with a quick scan of the classroom. This was done in order to determine what each focal student was involved in as well as to determine the overall activity in the classroom. During the quick scan, one focal student was selected and then observed for approximately 10 minutes. Then another quick scan was done and another student chosen. This continued until all focal students were observed for a minimum of 10 minutes. During the 10 minute observations, teachers were observed to see how they interacted with DLLs, the language that was used, as well as the language supports that were used. Observations were documented on a laptop in an observation guide. Not only were the situations described, comments of children and teachers written down, but descriptions of the classroom environments were also documented in the field notebook in order to gain a better understanding of what was happening in the classroom.

The daily observations were transferred from the observation guide into a word document, which became part of the field notebook. As the notes from the observations were read, additional notes were added to clarify and expand on the observations. In addition, the field notebook held reflective thoughts, ideas, and questions (Glesne, 2011).

Data Analysis

Data analysis began the same way for all types of data: interviews, observations, and

field notebook. The data was analyzed qualitatively and grouped into selected categories. The analysis was done based on the theoretical framework, specifically looking for scaffolding that was done by the teacher. The objective of the analysis was to gain insight into the language environment of DLLs; more explicitly, to see how LSPs were used in order to help DLLs' English language acquisition.

Level 1 Analysis

The first phase of analysis was to be immersed in the data (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003). This included reading through the interviews and field notebook. This immersion process was done in order to acquire a feeling for the overall language environment of the DLLs.

Next, all data were coded according to the starter codes found in the literature (Bazeley, 2013). The starter codes for the research question included the three language-support practices: child-oriented, interaction-promoting, and language-modeling. The data were coded using NVIVO software where each category of LSPs was described and themes drawn from it. An audit trail was maintained in order to keep records of decisions made on coding or memos regarding coding in order to explain and justify why decisions were made and how conclusions were reached.

Level 2 Analysis

A within-case comparative analysis (Bazeley, 2013) was the second stage of data analysis. When examining several cases, the researcher needs to consider each individual case in its own context. An interpretation of the data needs to be developed that reflects the experience of each case and can then be applied equally well across all of the cases (Ayres et al., 2003). Therefore, the within-case analysis for this study looked at each classroom individually by examining all forms of the data: interviews, observations, and the field notebook. Data were analyzed through the lens of the sociocultural theory, looking at the scaffolding that took place with LSPs. Significant phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that pertained to the language environment of the DLLs were identified and inferences made and compared allowing me to describe the aspects of the LSPs used by the teachers.

Level 3 Analysis

The third level of analyses was a cross-case analysis. This was done to see if the patterns that were found within-cases held true across cases (Bazeley, 2013). The purpose of the cross-case analysis was to compare the LSPs of all classrooms and identify categories or themes that were common among them (Ayres et al., 2003). A case-based matrix was developed using brief summaries from each classroom. Then the categories or themes that were identified were linked back to each classroom in order to validate the categories. The cross-case analysis allowed for a deeper understanding and increased generalizability (Bazeley, 2013).

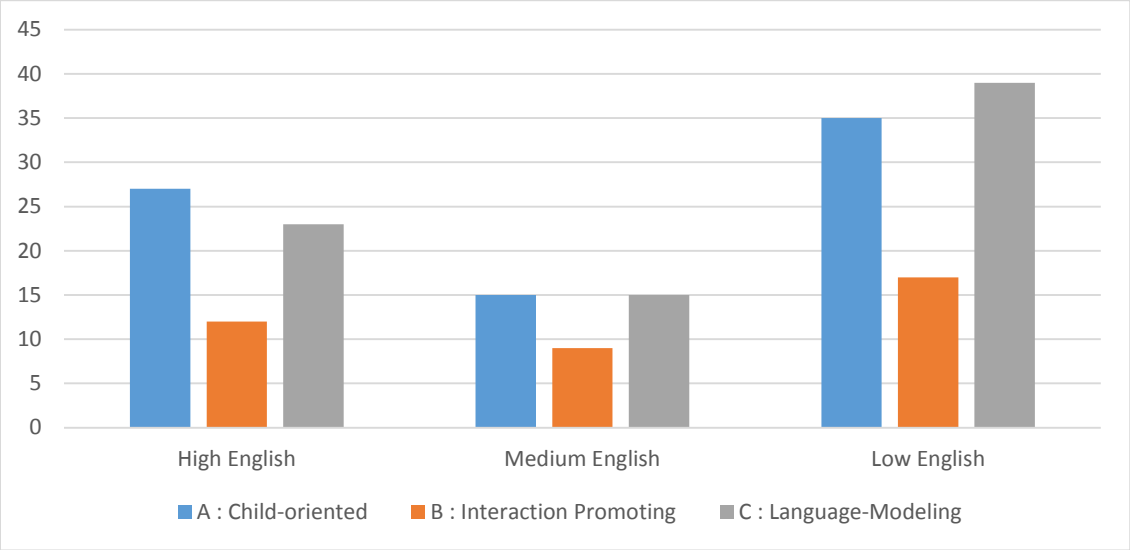
Findings

The three LSPs that have been found to more likely encourage the development of a child's language skills were child-oriented process, interaction-promoting, and language modeling (Girolametto & Weitzman, 2002; Girolametto et al., 2006; Longtin & Fabus, 2008; O'Toole & Kirkpatrick, 2007). Each was examined in order to see if and how teachers used them with the DLLs in their classes. When looking at the three LSPs and how they were specifically used with the 24 focus students, there were differences between the groups.

The most noticeable difference was with the students who fell into the medium English proficiency group. This group had

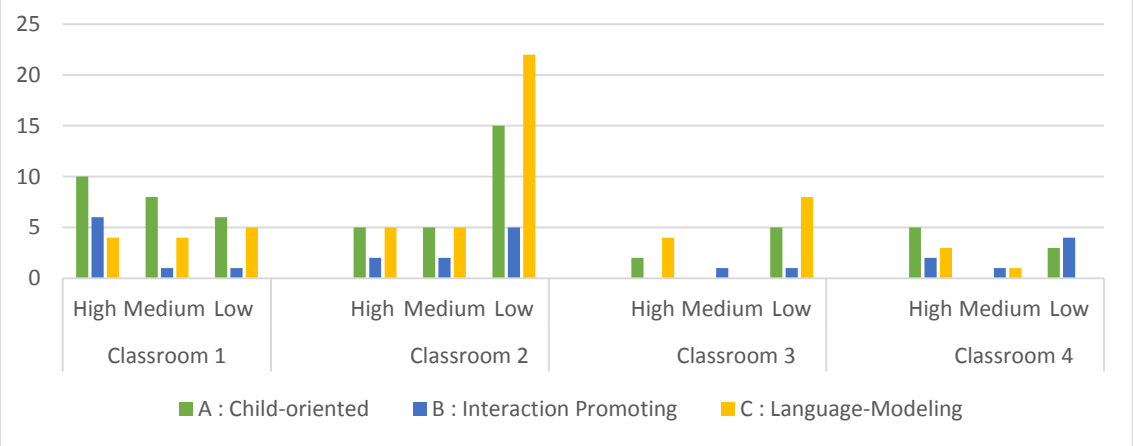
less LSPs used with them than both the high and low English groups (See Figure 1). The teachers worked with the high and low English groups in their ZPD to provide necessary scaffolding, but that was not the case for the middle group. The scaffolding for the middle group was limited.

Figure 1. LSPs by English Level



There were some differences between the classrooms. These differences can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2. LSPs by Classroom and English Level



The teachers' backgrounds, training, and experiences may explain the individual differences between the classes. For example, Classrooms 1, 2, and 3 each had two teachers that consented to being observed, however Classroom 4 only had the lead teacher's participation, which possibly limited the data for that. In Classroom 2, the teacher had extensive training in language modeling, although not specifically for DLLs, but used language-modeling almost exclusively with the students who had a low English level. This may have been because of her experience working with individual adults who were learning English. She had practiced with

adult English language learners and then applied what she had learned with them, to the DLLs with little English.

In Classrooms 2 and 3, there was a day when each of the lead teachers was absent and the assistants were the acting lead teacher. During those two observations, no LSPs were observed. The assistant teacher's language was more directive and almost no language scaffolding was seen. This finding supports Girolametto, Weitzman, and Greenberg (2003) study that stated teachers with more language training tend to be more responsive when interacting with students. Those without the training tend to be more directive in interactions with students. The assistants did not have the same type or amount of training as the lead teachers.

Child-Oriented

The child-oriented LSP begins with creating opportunities for interactions between the teacher and child, based on the child's interests. This LSP is specific to the child to leading the interaction. (Justice, 2004). While this LSP was seen in all four classrooms, the amounts differed greatly. Looking at Figure 2, these differences can be seen not only between the classrooms but also the different amounts between the English proficiency levels.

Interactions and sustained conversations with the DLLs with low English proficiency seemed to be challenging. In her interview, Marsha explained the struggle she sometimes had following conversation with DLLs who had limited English. She described it as a puzzle:

> A child will start off saying something to us in English and we're like, we're with you, we're with you, then all of a sudden it's back in Spanish and we're like, I got nothing. We got like three words from that. So then we try and piece it together—we started talking about horses so maybe that's what they were talking about.

To follow a child's lead in the conversation, the teacher has to be able to understand where the conversation is going. Sandy talked about how using the Project Approach with DLLs helped her support their language development. Project Approach allows students to engage in an in-depth investigation about a topic (Helm & Katz, 2012) by providing them with opportunities to document their experiences, reflect on them, and then share their ideas with others (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Sandy gave an example from the project the class did on buildings. One of the activities was to use the cardboard boxes to create a building. One boy (L) was very engaged in his creation so she went over to talk to him about it. Sandy shared:

> I'm like, "Tell me about your building." I pointed to the box and said, "What's that?" He says, "This is car. Car goes in here." I'm like, "Oh, that's a garage, and that's the door." Then he points to the tape [connects the door to the garage]. I say, "That's a hinge, because it goes like this."

Working on projects not only provided an opportunity for students to engage in something that interested them but also offered opportunities for teachers to engage students in order to begin conversations and encourage them to use language (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Interaction-Promoting

The purpose of the interaction-promoting LSP is to encourage social interactions between students including setting up the students in groups in order to encourage speaking, the teacher asking open-ended questions in order to begin a discussion, or simply helping students to learn how to take turns (Bouchard et al., 2010). Surprisingly, the interaction-promoting LSP was one of the lowest processes used in all of the classrooms and in almost all English levels. While all the

teachers understood the importance of peer interaction, none of them could elaborate on how they incorporated peer interactions into their classes. Hannah said, "We don't really have a problem with them interacting." Other teacher comments included, "We are a family," or "We don't have problems with kids playing together." Marsha and Susan understood that peer interactions were important and in order to allow them to happen, they discussed how they set up the centers so that more than one child could be in the center. However, when asked if they promoted peer interactions, they could not explain what they did.

From the observations, there were multiple opportunities for peer interactions, however, teacher facilitated peer interactions were rarely seen. In these classrooms the teachers did not purposefully facilitate peer interactions. In fact, Marsha said, "I don't feel like we don't purposefully do a whole lot of that. We do some things, like pair them up to do certain things, but I feel like they, especially at this age, they pair up pretty well." This concurs with Girolametto and Weitzman (2007) findings that although the research is available on the importance of facilitating peer interactions, it is not being implemented in classrooms.

While the teachers did not discuss what they did to promote peer interaction among DLLs, they engaged the students in songs, rhymes, and activities during whole group time. These activities had built-in opportunities to help students interact with their peers; however, the teachers did not choose the activities based on developing peer interactions. Classrooms 1 and 2 sang many songs that had students interacting with each other. They also had certain rhymes that they repeated, which allowed students to be acknowledged by their peers. In Classroom 3, Rachel had the students do pair-share. She said, "Look at your friend and tell them what you did last night." Then she asked them to share out to the group. In Classroom 4, Hannah had the students pair-up and share a dry erase board and marker. They worked together to draw a picture and then shared what they drew with the class. As stated earlier, all of the teachers used a variety of active engagement strategies with their children that supported their positive classroom environment, however interaction-promotion LSPs are intentional strategies implemented to scaffold language (Bouchard et al., 2010), and the teachers did not utilize these strategies for this purpose.

Another opportunity for interaction-promoting techniques was during meal times. The tables were set up in a way that allowed for small group interactions. In three of the classrooms the tables were small and arranged separately, which allowed for small groups of students to eat at each table. The fourth classroom had the tables arranged in a U-shape that provided an opportunity for the class to sit together but still interact in small groups. Classrooms 3 and 4 were especially conducive to this type of LSP as their breakfast was served later than the other two classrooms, so all the students sat down together to eat. The other two classes had breakfast early and there were still students arriving during breakfast so there were more interruptions to the conversations. In all four classes, the teachers ate with the students and conversations flowed freely. All students participated in these mealtime conversations using both Spanish and English.

What was rarely seen was purposefully pairing students by their English proficiency. In fact, the only example observed took place in Classroom 3 and those pairings did not work out well. The class was divided in half to make two small groups of eight students. In Rachel's group, she paired English speaking students with her DLLs for a patterning exercise but provided no explanation of why they were

paired or what was expected. There was very little language between the partners. In most pairs, the English speaking child hurried through the activity and wanted to leave the table, while the DLL sat looking confused. One interaction that showed the confusion and frustration happened between Victoria (L) and Michael, who was an English speaker. Hannah put a card in front of them with a pattern of different colors of bears. The students were to match the plastic bears with the pattern on the card, then continue the pattern. Michael matched and extended the pattern and then turned to his neighbor to discuss something. Victoria looked at the bears and turned them around so they were all facing one way. Hannah saw the completed card and gave them another card to work on. Michael was still engaged with his neighbor so Victoria put all the bears on the card and, while they faced the same direction, she did not match and extend the pattern. Michael looked at the card and rearranged the bears in the correct pattern but did not have them facing all the same way. Victoria looked very angry and said, "Don't!" As she began arranging the bears, the time for this activity was up and they had to put the bears away.

Although the students were purposely paired together in order to provide peer language scaffolding, this did not happen. The DLLs with little English did not understand the purpose of the activity. While the English speakers could do the activity, there was little conversation and almost no collaboration. This lack of peer language interaction concurs with prior research regarding children in general, which suggests that there are fewer social interactions and conversations between students in highly structured, teacher-directed activities (Booren, Downer, & Vitiello, 2012; Girolametto, Weitzman, & van Lieshout, 2000). Pairing students is supported by research that states that group size impacts the ability of peers to scaffold DLLs' language development. However, the type of activity may be more crucial than the group size according to research (Bouchard et al., 2010; Girolametto & Weitzman, 2002; Pellegrino & Scopesi, 1990). Rachel used pairs, but the activity did not support language scaffolding, so no language scaffolding occurred.

Language-Modeling

Language-modeling provides students with examples of correct linguistic forms, content, and uses by expanding a child's vocabulary through introducing new words or adding new words to the child's sentence (Justice, 2004). Language-modeling was seen in all four classrooms to varying degrees and was the most used LSP with DLLs with low English proficiency.

How language-modeling was used by the teachers differed between the DLLs based on their level of English proficiency. The students in the medium and low groups received mostly language extension such as when they pointed or spoke one word, the teachers responded with a sentence. For example, Carla walked over to Rachel and said, "Miss Ramsey." She held up her finger and had a very sad face. Rachel asked what happened and Carla pointed to her chair and then to the table. Rachel said, "Use your words." Carla replied "Chair, table." Rachel responded by expanding on Carla's vocabulary, "You pinched your finger between the table and chair?" In this way, Rachel extended Carla's nonverbal language into words.

Another example was observed with Sandy, a teacher who was very capable using language-modeling. Xavier brought a set of bongos that had been damaged to Sandy who looked at the ripped bongos and asked Xavier, "What's the problem?" Xavier responded with a single word, "Ripped." Sandy then asked him, "How can we solve

this problem?" Xavier thought for a minute and then said, "Tape." Sandy acknowledged his solution but added words to form a complete sentence, "We need to get some tape to fix it." These examples show how simplified language models provided scaffolding for each child's language development. Tabors (2008) uses the term *expanding and extending* to explain this phenomenon. The teacher uses the child's word and then develops verbal constructions to expand and develop the child's language.

Although language-modeling was used in the same way for the DLLs in the high and low groups, there were fewer instances of language-modeling with DLLs in the medium group. This was probably due to the students' increased level of English proficiency; medium DLLs do not need as much support with forming correct sentences as low DLLs. For example, during the whole group time, Hannah discussed whose birthday was in each month. Alanzo (M) said, "My birthday April." Hannah responded, "That's right, your birthday is in April." She had to add very little to his sentence to complete it. However, she could have used this opportunity to expand and extend his vocabulary by giving an additional sentence with new vocabulary (Tabors, 2008).

For DLLs in the high group, the teachers tended to focus more on connecting the language to the correct concept. This was seen with Faron (H) and Sandy during centers.

> Faron yelled: "Miss Sandy, can you help me?"
>
> Sandy sat down and asked: "What do you need help with?"
>
> Faron did not answer but he handed her a game piece.
>
> Sandy responded: "Oh, you want me to play?"
>
> Faron: "Yes."
>
> Sandy explained: "When you said you wanted help I thought you had a problem. If you want me to play then you need to say, Miss Sandy, do you want to play the game with me?"

Another example of language-modeling for a DLL in the high proficiency group happened at breakfast one morning. Hannah made a comment about being a grandma. Alberto (H) looked perplexed and said, "You not grandma. You Miss Ramsey!" Hannah explained what a grandma was and that she could be both a grandma and Miss Ramsey. This interaction not only provided a new word, *grandma*, for Alberto, but it also helped him understand that Miss Ramsey could be more than just his teacher.

In the interviews, Hannah explained how she and Angela encouraged language development with their DLLs. "When a child doesn't have the verbiage necessary for a particular situation we help them. We give them the words to use." Hannah discussed what she believed was important for language development, stating that, "It's very important to just talk, talk, talk, and expose them to the vocabulary through read-alouds, through everyday activities, through conversation at breakfast and at lunch; the more words they hear the more words they will pick up." All the teachers seemed to have an understanding of language-modeling. However, Wasik and Hindman (2011) contend that teachers who do not have specific training in this area do not spend much time engaging in these types of interactions. This can be seen in Classroom 2 where the lead teacher had extensive training in language-modeling and in showed in the observations.

Discussion

The first finding was that the training and experience of the teachers impacted the amount and type of LSPs that they used. The second finding was that the interaction-promoting LSP was the least used LSP. Although the teachers knew the importance

of peer interactions, they were unsure how they should promote it and did not intentionally use it as a language scaffolding strategy. The third finding was that there was a difference in how language-modeling was used with the high, medium, and low groups. The teachers use the expanding and extending technique for the low English proficiency group. With the high and medium groups, the teachers focused more on expanding and extending the conversation and not the structure of the sentence.

Each of these classes were in NAEYC accredited centers, with degreed teachers. Although what they were doing for the whole class was considered good teaching, the DLLs did not all receive the same types or amounts of support. Specifically, interaction-promoting LSP was lacking in all classes for all three groups of DLLs. The teachers may have understood the importance of promoting peer interactions but they did not understand what they needed to do to ensure those interactions were taking place. This is an important factor to consider when viewed from the sociocultural theory perspective. Vygotsky (1978) believed that the social environment played a major part in language development. Without the opportunity for intentional social interactions, DLLs will have a much more difficult time acquiring English.

The overarching significant finding that emerged from this study was that of intentionality. Good teaching is not enough for DLLs (Lake & Pappamihiel, 2003). In order to scaffold DLLs' learning and provide a rich language environment, teachers must be intentional in their practices. As the findings illustrate, it is important for teachers to determine the English proficiency levels of DLLs in order to assure that they meet the needs of children in each of the three groups: low, medium, and high. None of the teachers observed reached the DLLs in the middle group. Therefore, understanding where each child is and having a plan for him, would help teachers stay focused on the needs of their children (Chen & Shire, 2011), which is especially important for DLLs in the medium English proficiency group. Epstein (2007) described being an intentional teacher as one who has specific outcomes or goals in order to support children's development and learning. Although she was not specifically talking about DLLs, the point holds true for them. Without this intentionality, teachers may overlook the children who need this support.

Implications for Teacher Education

The changing demographics of young children in the United States is causing a transformation in how we educate children (McWayne et al., 2013). In all educational settings, there is an increase in the number of students whose home language is other than English with Latinos being the fastest growing population (Barrueco et al., 2011). This study examined the language environments of DLLs in four preschool classrooms because of the lack of research regarding the language environment of DLLs (Atkins-Burnett et al., 2011). Just like teachers need to be intentional in their practice, so do teacher educators. As stated above, being a good teacher does not guarantee that a teacher knows what is appropriate or effective for the DLLs in their class. Teacher educators have the responsibility to prepare preservice teachers to go into the classroom and meet students at their level. In order to do this, they need to have the appropriate tools. One of these tools would be the use of LSPs and specific training strategies for their use with DLLs.

Understanding that good teaching is not enough and that additional training for DLLs is necessary for their academic success is

one reason that many states, which have inclusive classrooms, now require teachers to be ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) or ELL (English Language Learner) certified. For the states that do not have this requirement, it becomes important for the teacher education programs to offer coursework to ensure preservice teachers have the appropriate training.

Limitations

There were several limitations of this study. The school settings were not representative of all preschools; therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to other schools or regions. In addition, not every DLL was observed due to concentrating on specific DLLs. This may also limit the generalizability of the findings for other DLLs.

A second limitation of the study was limited participation of the teachers. In Classroom 4, only the lead teacher consented to participate. The assistant teacher did not participate. The other three classrooms had a teacher and a co-teacher or assistant who provided data for both the interviews and the observations. Limiting the data to only one teacher in the classroom may have altered the results to some degree.

Of the four classrooms, three had lead or co-teachers who were in their first year as lead teachers. Because first year teachers are still working on their strategies, routines, and classroom management, they may have had a more difficult time working on being intentional (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Therefore, this may also be a limitation of the study.

The fact that all four classrooms had a population of approximately 50% DLLs may also limit the study's generalizability. Because of the large number of DLLs, the teachers had to focus on their needs to some degree. The results of this study may have looked quite different had there been only a few DLLs in each class. One or two DLLs in a class may be more likely to go unnoticed.

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