

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Proposal

Effective Instructional Models for English Language Learners

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Introduction:

What is the most effective English as a Second Language (ESL) instructional delivery model for my English language learners (ELLs)? This question is an important one for me to answer. National organizations like the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), the National Clearinghouse of English Language Acquisition (NCELA), and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) have for the most part stayed away from endorsing a particular instructional model over another. They have instead promoted various teaching strategies based on language acquisition theories, such as Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition (Krashen, 2009), Chomsky's Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory (Chomsky, n.d.), and Cummins' Common Underlying Proficiency Theory (Cummins, 2003). Not until the last couple of years have CAL and CON begun to address the effectiveness of ESL instructional models used by school districts in the United States (Moughamian, Rivera, & Francis, 2009; Smallwood, 2010). Currently the State of Georgia has authorized school systems to use one of six delivery models: pull-out, push-in, cluster center, resource center, scheduled class period, and an alternative [model] approved in advance by the Department of Education (Alston, Johnson, Lacher, & Wlazlinski, 2010).

Currently the Carroll County School System is approved by the Georgia State Department of Education to deliver ESL instruction via an alternative pilot program. The district serves approximately 265 ELLs, across 26 schools covering 500 square miles in a rural community (Watson & Ingram, 2010). The system's current model is one of consultative English language instruction to some ELLs, while others receive instruction mainly through a pull-out model. As I reviewed my district's "consultative" model of delivery, I came to believe that I could not implement the current plan as written and approved by the state. I came to believe this in part because the plan calls for one full-time teacher to be a "facilitator" and visit all of the students in the district that are not part of a pull-out model outside of their academic block. When the calculations were done last year, it was discovered that the facilitator would need 20 full days a month to visit each of the students on his or her caseload for 20 minutes. This calculation did not take into account travel time, meeting with regular education teachers, or planning. This academic year (2010-2011) facilitation of ESL services are administered by the individual ESL teachers in the district. Furthermore, the state of Georgia has allowed other districts to use the plan based on my district's implementation.

For me the most important idea at the forefront of this study is finding the most effective instructional model for my

students and advocating for it. As Dr. Margo Gottlieb said at a recent lunch and learn; our "advocacy role is primary" (Gottlieb, 2010). All students need teachers to be their advocates, but ELLs especially need teachers to be their voice where they and their parents may not fully be able to express themselves to schools and districts.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine and describe the effectiveness of my current ESL instructional delivery method and determine whether it is the most effective model in meeting the needs of my ELLs. This action research project is guided by the following questions:

1. How does my current ESL instructional model exceed, meet, or not meet the needs of my ELLs?
2. What are the most effective ESL instructional models according to the perceptions of ESL teachers?

Literature Review:

The discussion of how to instruct ELLs and what model to use for instructional delivery is a decades old debate that is fraught with challenges and polarizes political discussions. The choice of instructional model is an important one. In the last few years, there has been a call for ESL teachers to push-in, collaborate, and be a part of inclusion models. Classroom and ESL teachers alike are confused about how to implement such

models. More research is needed to examine effectiveness of various ESL instructional models that are being proposed by policy makers and ESL practitioners at different levels.

Smallwood (2009) in her survey notes that there is widespread discontent among teachers as they relate to the instruction of ELLs. There is pressure at the local, state, and national level to ensure that ESL instructional models and practices are effective (Moughamian, Rivera, & Francis, 2009). Rural and urban districts alike find funding and resources for ESL instruction difficult (Batt, 2008). In Georgia, ESL instruction is seemingly successful, with only 8 out of 2173 schools that did not meet Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) in Title III of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB). In fact, 4 out of 5 ELLs either "met" or "exceeded" on the CRCT in Georgia last year (Alston, 2010). Yet with these successes, there are also concerns as the pendulum swings back in the direction of "English only". Any use of another language is seen as a threat to the establishment of the nation state and stand-alone ESL programs are the only source of instruction to meet the linguistic needs of ELLs (Johnson & Brandt, 2008-2009; Mitchell, 2005; Ochoa & Rhodes, 2005). Mitchell (2005, p. 263) puts into words the feelings of many ESL teachers when she says; "The struggle at times seemed so overwhelming that it felt as if we in ESL were trying to move

an ocean beach to a new location a grain of sand at a time.”

Over the years ESL instructional models in the United States have included bilingual immersion, developmental bilingual education, dual language immersion, early-exit, English language development, heritage language, indigenous language program, late-exit, maintenance education, newcomer, pull-out, push-in/inclusion, resource, self-contained, sheltered English instruction, structured English immersion, transitional bilingual education, and two-way immersion (Alston, Johnson, Lacher, & Wlazlinski, 2010; Moughamian, Rivera, & Francis, 2009; Ochoa & Rhodes, 2005; Smallwood, 2010). At best the myriad of instructional models and the lack of continuity between schools, districts, and the federal government have caused disconnects between federal mandates for ELL education and ESL practice (Moughamian, Rivera, & Francis, 2009; Smallwood, 2010). There is more confusion when other school support programs like Response To Intervention (RTI) and Special Education are considered (Murawski & Hughes, 2009; Orosco & Klingner, 2010; Rivera, Moughamian, Lesaux, & Francis, 2009). As ESL teachers we understand the benefits of bi-literacy, desire to advocate for it actively, and know that literacy in L1 and L2 enhances learning for ELLs (Krashen, 2009; Manyak, 2007; Romanova, n.d.). Yet for many school districts, it is impossible to provide instruction in an ELL's first language (Chamot, 2005).

With the move backwards towards "English only", there has been a renewed push for inclusion and collaboration between regular classroom teachers and the ESL teacher. Both inclusion and collaboration look good on paper but take a considerable amount of planning and paradigm shifting to implement well (Murawski & Hughes, 2009). There are concerns on the part of ESL teachers that they become a glorified teacher's aide in the regular education classroom and that their expertise is not respected (Duke & Mabbott, 2000; Murawski & Hughes, 2009; Smallwood, 2010). There are also concerns that regular education teachers are not prepared to meet the educational and linguistic needs of ELLs (Batt, 2008; Honingsfeld & Dove, 2008; Johnson & Brandt, 2008-2009; Murawski & Hughes, 2009). Teaching ELLs has become the responsibility of all teachers (Yoon, 2008); and we need classroom instruction that takes into account and is familiar with the beliefs, values, social, cultural, and linguistic influences of ELLs and engage them in learning (Chang, 2008; Ellis 2008; Manyak, 2007; Orosco & Klingner, 2010). In Georgia, there is a new call for deeper, more meaningful collaboration between ESL teachers and general education teachers with the former taking on the role of a language acquisition expert. It is suggested that content teachers will be asked in the future to teach content objectives as well as language objectives side-by-side (Alston, 2010;

Sherris, 2008). All of the confusion regarding ESL instructional models, discontent of ESL teachers, and the renewed calls of "English only" has caused some to formulate a declaration of linguistic human rights to protect the first language and mother tongue of ELLs and their families (Waters, 2001). Waters (2001, p. 299) puts into perspective the tragedy of the renewed push for "English only" when she says: "How much loss of human potential and language are we willing to accept?"

What are the best ways to teach ELL students? A review of literature indicates that there is a lack of recent research in the area of effective ESL instructional models. Scholars have suggested that more research is highly needed in order to better serve the increasing number of ELLs in U.S. classrooms (Moughamian, Rivera, & Francis, 2009; Ochoa & Rhodes, 2005; Smallwood, 2010; Tong, 2010). There is a bright spot in that bilingual and sheltered English instruction (SIOP) has been shown to have favorable results connecting ELLs with academic language (Moughamian, Rivera, & Francis, 2009). There is a concerted effort to use a combination of programs, a mixed model, that meets the needs of ELLs, that is flexible, and steers clear of a one-size-fits-all mentality (Moughamian, Rivera, & Francis, 2009; Reider & Zimmerman-Orozco, 2009; Smallwood, 2010). Lastly and most importantly, some recognize that in the process of determining which is the most effective

ESL instructional model, teachers' voices must be heard on the local, state, and national levels (Smallwood, 2010). As Yoon (2008, p. 517) states; "teachers are the most important factor in promoting students' opportunities to learn."

Methodology:

This action research project will employ a mixed methods research design. For the qualitative part of the study, I will use an observational case study as defined by Mertler (2009) for data collection, focusing on the ESL department in my district, comprised of six teachers, with myself as a full participant observer. I will keep a data research journal as well as a personal teacher journal. I will conduct semi-structured interviews using a prepared interview guide with members of the ESL department within my district (Mertler, 2009). For the quantitative part of the study, I will use a survey (Appendix A) built on a Likert-type scale similar to Smallwood's (2010) study to collect data from within and outside of my district to get a broader view of effective ESL instructional models. In 2008-2009 there were 2,075 certified/licensed teachers working with ELLs in the State of Georgia (C. Johnson, Personal communication, November 17, 2010). These teachers will be recruited through their ESL coordinator from a list published by the Georgia Department of Education. I hope to capture data from 1,000 participants in this way. This number would double the amount of

participants and substantially add to the foundation of research started by Smallwood. Additional quantitative data in the form of test scores and grades will also be collected for ELLs in my district to compare with state and national scores. All participant data will be kept strictly confidential according to the ethical principles of beneficence, honesty, and importance (Mertler, 2009). All participants will be asked to sign an informed consent form (Appendix B).

Data Analysis:

Inductive analysis will be used to reduce qualitative data that is collected. Narrative data in the form of interview transcripts, a data research journal, and my personal teacher journal will be analyzed using a coding scheme to group data that provide similar information. I will describe the features and characteristics of the categories resulting from the coding of the data, and look for connections and answers to the research questions posed earlier. I will also endeavor to interpret the data looking for challenges and guidance to current or future practice in the use of ESL instructional models.

I will be conducting open and axial coding on the field notes and my research notes looking for themes that emerge. Peer review in my graduate research class will be incorporated to validate the procedures, the calculations, and the

interpretation. Issues of trustworthiness will be addressed, one measure being a detailed researcher journal that addresses each stage of the research, another, peer review of coding and interpretation.

The quantitative data in the form of survey results will be analyzed using a deductive process, looking for the mode in each Likert-type question. I will use Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 15 to create the database and analyze survey data. Descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, range, standard deviation) will be used to analyze the collected participant data. The number and percentage of responses will be compiled for each item listed in the survey instrument. Frequencies will also be completed for the demographic items. An independent measures t-test will be used on the data collected in the form of student test scores on the ACCESS, a test given to ELLs to assess their English language proficiency (ELP) across the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The t-test will compare students who received ESL instruction through the consultative model (control group) verses those who received instruction via the pull-out model. This comparison will look for any statistical and practical significance in student's test scores to help determine which instructional model is most effective.

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Appendix A

Sample Survey Instrument

1. What is your current position? Check all that apply.

- ESL teacher
- ESL teacher assistant
- Grade level or content area teacher
- ESL resource teacher or teacher specialist providing direct service to ELLs
- Other teacher specialist or literacy coach
- Other position?
- For other teachers and positions, please specify area:

2. What is your highest level of education?

- Bachelors Degree
- Masters Degree
- EdD or PhD
- Other
- Please list your major or field of study:

3. How many years have you taught or worked with ELLs?

- 0-4
- 5-10
- 11-19

20+

4. What Georgia school district do you currently teach or work in?

District/City

5. Do you primarily teach English language learners?

Yes

No

6. Are you a full-time teacher (90% time or above)?

Yes

No

7. In how many schools do you teach each week?

1

2

3

4

5+

8. About how many ELL students are you responsible for, including M1/M2 students. In other words, how many students do you have on your caseload?

20 or less

21-40

- 41-60
- 61-80
- more than 81

9. In which grade levels do you teach? Check all that apply.

- PK-5
- 6-8
- 9-12
- Other

10. Please describe the size of the groups you typically work with. I mostly work with the following grouping of students. Check as many as apply:

- Individually (one teacher with one student)
- Small groups (2-7 students)
- Middle/large groups (8-14 students)
- Whole class (more than 15 students)
- Other (please specify)

11. I teach (or provide direct support to students) via the following ESL model. Check all that apply:

- Pull-out
- Push-in/Inclusion
- Cluster center

- Resource center/laboratory
- Scheduled class period
- Alternative model approved in advance by my State
Department of Education (please specify)

12. In your opinion, how **EFFECTIVE** is the program model for your ELL students in developing their English language proficiency, their overall academic achievement, and for you as an ESL professional?

- 5 = highly effective
- 4 = mostly effective
- 3 = effective
- 2 = somewhat effective
- 1 = not very effective

Consider the statements below. From an **IDEAL** perspective, your own experience, knowledge, and research, evaluate each program description by selecting: 5 - highly effective 4 - mostly effective 3 - effective 2 - somewhat effective 1- not very effective.

13. **Program Model 1: (Pull-out)** This is a separate program, which has its own curriculum and often own materials. The

instructional focus can be English language arts/reading and/or content-based ESL, where integrated language skills are developed primarily through content areas. Its goal is to prepare ELL students for success in grade-level and content classes, with students “pulled out” of their regular classroom into an ESL classroom or setting. A pull-out program sometimes takes place in a separate area within the grade-level classroom with the ESL teacher providing different instruction, not directly following the activities or lessons of the grade-level teacher.

5 = highly effective

4 = mostly effective

3 = effective

2 = somewhat effective

1 = not very effective

14. **Program Model 2: (Push-in/Inclusion)** The ESL teacher works with a grade-level or content-area teacher within the main classroom to meet expectations for all students. ELLs are mixed with the grade-level students, but the ESL teacher works primarily with them to support their learning and individual needs. ELL students are following the same basic program, curriculum, and likely using the same materials as the rest of

the class, but the ESL teacher provides additional scaffolding or differentiation, as needed.

5 = highly effective

4 = mostly effective

3 = effective

2 = somewhat effective

1 = not very effective

15. **Program Model 3: (Resource center/laboratory)** This model provides mostly school-based support to classroom teachers about best practices for teaching ELLs students, but may sometimes involve direct instruction to ELL students. The roles in this position include consulting with classroom teachers about ESL students, providing resources, making suggestions on curriculum modifications for ELLs, evaluating potential candidates for ESL services, testing students currently in ESL programs, advising administration about ELLs and providing staff development.

5 = highly effective

4 = mostly effective

3 = effective

2 = somewhat effective

1 = not very effective

16. **Program Model 4: (Sheltered instruction model)** This model facilitates student access to content concepts and promotes the development of academic English, using small amounts of native language strictly to supplement an English-only curriculum. The teacher modifies their use of English by adjusting the language demands of instruction by modifying their speech rate and tone, simplify vocabulary and grammar, repeat key words, phrases, or concepts, use context clues and models, relate instruction to the students' background knowledge and experience, and uses demonstrations, visuals, graphic organizers, and cooperative work in instruction.

5 = highly effective

4 = mostly effective

3 = effective

2 = somewhat effective

1 = not very effective

17. **Program Model 5: (Transitional bilingual model)** Builds students' English skills and use through native language instruction in the service of learning English. Instruction in the native language tapers off as ELLs' English language skills increase and students can access English language instruction more easily.

5 = highly effective

- 4 = mostly effective
- 3 = effective
- 2 = somewhat effective
- 1 = not very effective

18. **Program Model 6: (Dual language model)** Develops students' skills in two languages. The model serves both English learners and monolingual English speakers. The aim is to reinforce students' native language and foster the development of a second language. The program creates an additive bilingual environment in which all students are expected to develop bilingual proficiency. Much of the academic content is presented in English so that students develop the proficiency in English they will need to succeed in school.

- 5 = highly effective
- 4 = mostly effective
- 3 = effective
- 2 = somewhat effective
- 1 = not very effective

19. **Program Model 7: (Alternative model)** The alternative model approved in advance by the Georgia Department of Education for your district (Please describe below and rate).

- 5 = highly effective

- 4 = mostly effective
- 3 = effective
- 2 = somewhat effective
- 1 = not very effective

20. **Program Model 8: (Other model)** An alternative model not mentioned in this survey (Please describe below and rate).

- 5 = highly effective
- 4 = mostly effective
- 3 = effective
- 2 = somewhat effective
- 1 = not very effective

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Principal Investigator (PI): Derek S. Spalla

Phone: 678-796-5096

Project Title: Effective Instructional Models for English Language Learners

You are invited to participate with no obligation in a research study which has as its main purpose to examine and describe the effectiveness of current English as a Second Language (ESL) instructional delivery models and determine which model is the most effective in meeting the needs of English language learners (ELLs).

If you choose to participate in this research study, I would simply like to use your confidential responses to a survey instrument containing 48 items that I have helped to create. For the purpose of the research study no personal identifiers will be requested. The PI will not know the personal identities of any of the participants. The information obtained in from this study will be kept confidential and will only be reported in statistical analyses with no specific connections made to individuals. At no point will your identity be revealed. Any printed data will be stored in a locked file cabinet, only accessible by the PI.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not

interfere with your employment or current or future relationship with your employer. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and the PI may choose to cancel your participation at any time.

Do you have any questions? (Circle one) **NO** **YES**

If you circled YES, please contact the PI, Derek S. Spalla, at the above phone number or by email at derek.spalla@carrollcountyschools.com before signing this form.

If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Cindy E. Saxon, the Director of Teaching and Learning at Carroll County School System at 770-832-3568, or at cindy.saxon@carrollcountyschools.com. Do not sign this form until these questions have been answered to your satisfaction.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO ALLOW THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR TO USE THE RESULTS OF A SURVEY YOU ARE BEING ASKED TO COMPLETE FOR RESEARCH AND PRESENTATION PURPOSES ONLY. YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW ALSO INDICATES YOU ARE OVER THE AGE OF 18.

I **AGREE** **DO NOT AGREE** (circle one) to participate in this research study.

Participant's Name (please print):

_____ Date: _____

Participant's Signature:
