Voices of Beginning English Language Learners: Perceptions of the Programming for English Language Learners in Upper Elementary at an English-Medium International School

Sarah Mueller

Messiah College
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Abstract

This research outlines the level of assistance given to upper elementary English Language Learners at an international school and the perceptions and attitudes of the students, teachers and parents involved in the program. The first phase of this project reviews the literature on the types of programs commonly utilized for English Language Learners in similar settings and factors involved in language acquisition. The next phase examines the information gathered through interviews with English Language Learners, parents, and teachers of these learners in order to better understand their perceptions and attitudes about the provided program. The final phase suggests ways the school could improve its program, specifically by providing additional instructional time with the English as a Second Language teachers, individualized programs, improved communication with parents, and increased teacher development related to language acquisition. The project concludes with research limitations and a proposal for future research.
Voices of Beginning Language Learners in an English-Medium International School: Understanding the Programming for English Language Learners in Upper Elementary

Imagine you are ten years old, and you are on your way to a new school. At this new school, you do not speak the language nor do you know anyone. Your family has recently moved to a new country, and this is your first time to be surrounded by people who don’t speak your language. You recognize their language as English, but you struggle to comprehend even the simplest of sentences and directions.

You enter the new school with your parents, who introduce you to your new teacher. Your teacher seems kind and caring, however you wonder how you will know what to do since your teacher does not speak your language. You tentatively enter the classroom and look around as other students are engaging with each other, laughing and talking in English. You wonder if you will be accepted by them as your head fills with all of the unknown words you hear them speak. The teacher gets the attention of the students and points them towards the directions that are written on the board. You look at the unknown text and become worried that you’ll never succeed in this school.

This is the experience of many of my former students. During my time teaching fifth grade at an international school for four years, many students entered my classroom with little knowledge of English. However, their teachers and peers were native or fluent speakers of English who often did not speak a common language of these newcomers. As I worked with these English language learners (ELLs), I was drawn to their story and their experiences. I wanted to hear their perspectives about their experience learning English at their new school. For the purpose of this study, I will use the pseudonym Grace School when describing these experiences.
For this research project, my main research question was, “What are student perceptions and attitudes towards the type of instruction and level of support received when entering an English medium school in upper elementary?” In my review of the literature, I will define and elaborate on English-medium international schools and practices related to English language acquisition. I then present the methodology and findings from my research. Finally, I share implications and suggestions for supporting ELLs, and conclude with a proposal for further research.
Literature Review

Around the world today there are over four million students seeking an education at English-medium international schools, and the demand for these types of institutions continues to grow (Keeling, 2015). However, many of these students come to these schools with little English proficiency. The purpose of this study is to hear the perspectives of the students who enter this environment with low English proficiency in order to better understand how to best meet the needs of these students in the future. In this chapter, I will define English-medium international schools and content based language acquisition and then outline different models for mainstreaming English learners into regular classrooms. From there, I will define two types of mainstreaming models: immersion and submersion, and identify strengths and weaknesses of the two. Finally, I will discuss some additional factors in language acquisition that international schools should take into consideration when working with students who are learning a language.

English-medium International Schools

Clark (2014) states that the international school market is diverse, and the definition for what makes up an international school is up for debate; however, he states that most would agree that a common characteristic is that they utilize a curriculum that is different from that of the host country. International schools may utilize national or international curricula (Clark, 2014) such as the International Baccalaureate or the National Curriculum of England (Marsh, 2015). Many governments restrict the attendance of local students at these schools and therefore, traditionally, the population of many international schools is mainly composed of students from nations other than the host country (Clark, 2014). However, “Today, it is the aspirational and growing middle classes of developing economies that are the key drivers of growth within the sector” (Clark, 2014, “Changing Demographic,” para. 2) and 80% of all enrollments at
international schools come from the local population (Clark, 2014). The International School Consultancy estimates that around 80% of students at these schools come from non-English speaking families (Marsh, 2015). Both expatriates and affluent families wish to send their children to international schools for varying reasons such as continuity in instruction and language, or the opportunities provided to students who speak English (Ezra, 2007, Keeling, 2015, and Marsh, 2015).

**Content-Based Language Acquisition**

Content-based language acquisition, also known as content-based instruction (CBI) is the combination of content learning and language objectives. Brinton, Snow and Wesche describe this combination as “the form and sequence of language presentation dictated by content material” (as cited in Brown, 2007, p. 55). With the integration of language aims and content, classrooms are able to better fit the authenticity of language learning and teachers are able to create tasks that are relevant to the learner. While some basic survival-type phrases could be considered content-based (for example asking how much an item costs), Brown (2007) states that content-based language acquisition is often most appropriate for intermediate to advanced language learners. Different models of content-based practices have emerged since their initial introduction. Some schools include two teachers; one to focus on the language acquisition and one to focus on the content. Other schools implement theme-based instruction which directs special attention to relevant themes in meaningful ways to allow offshoots for language focus (Brown, 2007). Regardless of the model of content-based instruction, when teaching, Brown (2007) argues, “You are first and foremost teaching geography or math or culture; secondarily you are teaching language” (p. 56).
Many international schools around the world utilize a content-based curriculum from the International Baccalaureate. At the elementary level, the International Baccalaureate program is called the Primary Years Program (PYP). This program consists of connecting knowledge through transdisciplinary inquiry learning in concept-based units. Through this curriculum, many students learn English through content-based instruction (also called CBI). Brown (2007) states that through CBI, “language becomes the medium to convey informational content of interest and relevance to the learner. Language takes on its appropriate role as a vehicle for accomplishing a set of content goals” (p. 55). In the international school setting, language is used in an authentic manner instead of rote learning of rules or vocabulary out of context.

Lyster (2007) describes an ideal class that utilized a content-based curriculum where it was difficult to decipher what subject-matter class was being taught because they combined the concepts of vocabulary learning with the content at hand, therefore it was difficult to know if it was a language focused lesson or science lesson. Lyster (2007) suggests that situations like these provide purposeful opportunities for strengthening connections between language and content learning. He argues that content-based instruction alone or with “incidental reference to language” does not help students to understand the grammatical structures of a new language. ESL and content teachers need to have a better understanding of language acquisition; it is more than just vocabulary comprehension. Explicit instruction is needed in order for students to develop language learning strategies, language functions, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics and the four language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking (Lyster, 2007).

Lightbown & Spada (2013) claim that “comprehension-based approaches are most successful when they include guided attention to language features as a component of instruction” (p. 195). According to Brown (2007), it is almost universally accepted that it is
important for some direct language instruction to be present within a communicative language classroom. Therefore, though content-based language acquisition is ideal, it is necessary that language instruction also includes some direct instruction directed towards the forms and features of the selected language.

**Assisting Language Acquisition Through Mainstreaming**

Mainstreaming is the practice of placing students with special needs into the regular classroom. Brown (2007) states that in some programs, students first receive ESL instruction before being placed in a regular classroom. He argues that if students are placed into the mainstream classroom, they must first be “proficient enough” in the target language to be successful and the instruction prior to mainstreaming should be content-based so that students will not be behind when they enter the regular classroom (Brown, 2007, p. 141). English learners in the U.S. are often placed in a mainstream English-medium classroom with native speaking peers (Harklau, 1994). Though international schools today have a majority of non-native English speakers, much of the teaching is still carried out as if all students were native speakers (Carder, 2008).

In many international school classrooms, a large portion of native and/or proficient English speaking students are present. In a classroom such as this, a beginning level language learner would be entering into what could be called a natural acquisition context. Natural acquisition contexts, defined by Lightbown and Spada (2013), are those where the learner is exposed to the language through work or social interaction. An example could be “in a school situation where most of the other children are native speakers of the target language and where the instruction is directed toward native speakers rather than toward learners of the language” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 123). By definition therefore, the regular classroom could be
considered a natural acquisition context. However, students do not always receive the support necessary for them to be successful in a mainstream, regular classroom.

In a study regarding ESL models in English speaking countries, Carder (2008) wrote that the purpose of mainstreaming ESL students in England was to naturally provide opportunities to use and develop language through purposeful interaction. Many hope that when students are placed in environments with native-speaking peers, interaction between the students provides opportunities for authentic language use; however, often students are placed in these environments with little to no additional support. Carder (2008) suggests that many school systems in English-speaking countries are limited in their ability to provide adequate resources to ESL students. He suggests, therefore, that international schools can set the example for providing the appropriate resources and support.

Carder (2008) claims that mainstreaming students can be effective by utilizing a “three-program” model which first provides appropriate instruction at the level of the English learners and then build towards inclusion in the mainstream classroom. This model is composed of: an English program that is taught parallel to the content of the mainstream classroom, a training program for mainstream teachers about the integration of language acquisition and content knowledge, and a strong mother tongue program to support additive bilingualism (Carder, 2007). Unfortunately, in many cases, a program of this sort is not available for second language learners due to many factors including budgetary restrictions, staffing required, and contexts where many first languages are present. In the following section, two types of mainstreaming will be discussed: immersion and submersion, in addition to a review of the strengths and weaknesses of mainstreaming.
Models of mainstreaming. Many schools mainstream English language learners, though the mainstreaming models can look different for each school and context. Though much research has been done on the benefits of bilingual educational models (Carder, 2007, Collier, 1987, Genesee & Christian, 2007, Slavin & Cheung, 2003, Thomas & Collier, 1999), for the purpose of this study, we will focus mainly on instructional models that are monolingual. In the context of an international school, students come from a variety of language backgrounds and teachers are faced with the task of teaching students that have a varying array of mother tongues. Therefore, though it is possible to find a qualified teacher who is bilingual or even trilingual, to expect a teacher to be aware of the multitude of first languages spoken in her classroom is nearly impossible.

Due to limited first-language resources, many schools focus solely on the acquisition of English. In a report on second language learning in K-12 schools in America, Genesee and Christian (2007) write:

A common approach to educating English-language learners, indeed probably the most prevalent, is English-as-a-second-language instruction (ESL) by specially-trained ESL teachers while students receive core academic instruction in mainstream classes conducted in English. Programs with ESL instruction for students who are otherwise mainstreamed or immersed in English focus only on monolingual proficiency in English. ESL instruction is often organized around groups of students who are "pulled out" of mainstream classes, according to their English-proficiency level, typically for 30 minutes to an hour per day. "Pull-out" ESL instruction of this sort provides direct language instruction that is intended to promote the students' English-language development. (p. 2-3)

This description is accurate for many models that some international schools also use when working with language learners with the addition of staff working within the classroom to support the content-learning when possible.
**Immersion.** According to Brown (2007), an immersion program is typically found in a context where English is a foreign language, rather than the second language. In a mainstream immersion setting, students are taught the target language in specially-designed content-area classes taught in the target language. Typically, the teacher is trained in the content area and is knowledgeable about the students’ native language and culture (Brown, 2007). Hashim (2006) states, “The hallmark of the immersion approach is the integration of language instruction with content instruction” (p. 182). In a typical immersion setting, the students speak the same native language and have similar levels of proficiency (Brown, 2007). However, in many international school immersion classrooms, students have varying levels of second language ability ranging from native speakers to beginning English learners, and their native languages are quite diverse. Thomas and Collier (1999) found that schools that implement ESL immersion often have ESL resource teachers who come to the regular classroom to help make the content of mainstream classrooms comprehensible.

**Submersion.** Lyster (2007) defines a context where minority-language students find themselves with little first language support in an environment with majority language speakers as “submersion.” Submersion is a form of mainstreaming with little to no support for language learners in regular classrooms. Brown (2007) suggests that when students are placed in a model of submersion, teachers expect that students will “absorb” the English through interaction with English speakers and with the subject matter. In a study by Netten (referenced in Lyster, 2007), many teachers expected that students would learn the target language through the content of the curriculum and there was no specially designed instruction to aid in the acquisition of language. Often, a pull-out program is provided in which a student will leave the mainstream class for a short period of time throughout the day for language-specific instruction. Even with occasional
pull-out sessions, Brown (2007) states that submersion is a “lack of treatment” (p. 141). In comparison to immersion, the submersion model does not provide the necessary assistance to language learners. Rather, the students are expected to pick up the language used in the course, often times at a much higher level than what they are capable of.

**Positive aspects of mainstreaming.** Lyster (2007) suggests that in order for students to learn English effectively, there should be many opportunities for student-teacher interaction, meaningful interaction among peers, and explicit correction for student errors. In ideal mainstream settings, there are ample opportunities for these types of interactions. Similarly, Tarone and Swain (1995) claim that student interaction with native speakers within an inclusion classroom provides opportunities for authentic language acquisition and provides opportunities for meaningful interaction with social language. Therefore, placing students in classrooms with native speakers through mainstreaming would be an appropriate setting for language learners.

Another strength of mainstream classrooms is the lack of separation between differently abled students. Simmons (2008) has noted that students don’t feel as stigmatized when supported by ESL teachers in the mainstream classroom, utilizing opportunities for interactions with native speakers as opposed to participation in a pull-out program. In a pull-out program, students felt stigmatized and students had little interaction with their native speaking peers. According to Lightbown & Spada (2013), students in content-based language acquisition classes develop comprehension skills, vocabulary, and general communication competence in the new language but these abilities to function in the classroom do not guarantee that students will continue to improve in other areas of the acquisition of the second language, especially in accuracy and language fluency and therefore, special attention should be given to these aspects of language acquisition.
**Drawbacks to mainstreaming.** Duke and Mabbott (2001) noted that many school professionals in the United States are not satisfied with the current models of ESL elementary education since the average 30 to 45-minute pull-out session is inadequate from the ESL teacher’s perspective and the students miss the time in their general class. The ESL teachers feel that their expertise is not being utilized in the general education class and that ESL students may need time away from proficient English-speaking peers to practice their language skills (Duke and Mabbott, 2001). In a study in international schools, Allen (2010) pointed out that a significant factor in providing appropriate instruction is teacher cooperation and “One problem that still shows up among teachers is when these “core” or general teachers do not view the ELL teacher as an equal within the educational setting” (p. 51). This lack of collaboration can lead to unsupportive learning environments.

Another potential drawback to student success in inclusion classrooms is learner anxiety. Gkonou (2013) found that many language learners experience a great deal of anxiety in inclusion classrooms due to the fact that they are often required to perform on a level much higher than that they’ve been instructed in. For example, though a student may be a beginning level language learner, they may be placed within a class of proficient English speakers, leading to high levels of anxiety. Allen (2010) reports that high achieving English learners have similar amounts of anxiety as do the lower level learners.

In a study comparing English language learners in a general education classroom and a specific ESL course, Harklau (1994) found that the general curriculum provided students with authentic experiences with content language and peer interactions; however, the interactions with native speakers were infrequent due to perceived social barriers, and students rarely received explicit feedback regarding language errors. In contrast, in the ESL specific classes, students
were given explicit feedback and were offered opportunities for authentic peer social interaction. Although Harklau (1994) found positive aspects of the ESL specific classes, these were highly stigmatized in the school community, and therefore Harklau concluded that there was no truly appropriate educational environment for the language learners in that school.

ESL students are required to learn the language in addition to the content of the curriculum. Some would consider this a “two for one” approach since students must learn the subject matter content and language at the same time and can unfortunately lead to a loss of proficiency in their mother tongue if not provided with adequate instruction in their native language at the same time (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Unfortunately, many international schools fail to provide the resources and staffing necessary for successful language acquisition (Carder, 2009).

**Teaching ESL to Students in the Upper Primary Grades**

When teaching children English, Brown (2007) recommends that instructors look at seven factors: intellectual development, attention span, sensory input, affective factors and the use of authentic language. Grammar terms and rules should not be stated in abstract forms, and teachers should rather bring attention to patterns and examples, using repetition to reinforce certain concepts. Instruction should capture the interest of the students and have variety between the lessons. Physical, hands-on activities and nonverbal language is powerful when working with children and the added sensory input helps with children’s language acquisition. Teachers must be aware of potential affective filters; “Children are in many ways much more fragile than adults. Their egos are still being shaped, and therefore the slightest nuances of communication can be negatively interpreted” (Brown, 2007, p. 103).
In addition to this, language should be presented through content based instruction so students can see language as a whole and use words in meaningful contexts. While most children are willing to use a new language, even with limited proficiency, adolescents find it stressful to communicate when they cannot express themselves clearly (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Though they are likely to find it stressful to communicate, Collier (1987) found that older students ranging in age from 8 to 12 have an advantage when learning a second language and they are more efficient acquirers of school language when compared to younger students aged 4 to 7. One reason this is so is due to an advanced acquisition in a native language, and they have the advantage in cognitive maturity, which provides them with more strategies in acquiring a second language (Collier, 1987).

In research studies with older children, Lyster (2007) found that students often have good feelings regarding English learning in early years, yet these tend to diminish as students get older. Tarone and Swain (1995) reported similar results that older students (upper elementary and beyond) were less likely to use the target language when conversing with their peers in non-academic settings. Because crossing different languages can change footing within a conversation and display desires to identify to a specific language identity, it can also help speakers to display multiple cultural memberships or distance themselves from other groups (Kramsch, 1998). It is necessary for educators to be aware of these characteristics of upper elementary learners in order to best meet their needs. So though there are some advantages of learning a language in the upper elementary years, there are also factors such as higher anxiety that teachers should be aware of in order to provide optimal learning environments.
Additional Factors in Language Acquisition

There are many factors affecting language acquisition, in addition to the age of the student. Schools must be aware of these factors when looking to provide the most appropriate environments and conditions for language learners. Where the student is concerned, some of these factors include language learning aptitude, learning styles, personality, attitudes, motivation in the classroom, identity and ethnic group affiliation, beliefs the learner holds, and differences in classroom instruction (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Alderfer and Alderfer (2011) provide evidence that student motivation is powerful for student learning and student learning will not take place effectively unless the affect is low. They go on to say, “...the most important learning condition for effective English language development was the child’s need for a safe nurturing environment…” (p. 67). In addition to student beliefs, “parent support of the ESL program also influences the student’s attitude and motivation towards learning English” (Alderfer & Alderfer, 2011, p. 67).

Conclusion

In conclusion, schools around the world are faced with students who are learning a language in an environment that may or may not be equipped to best meet the needs of their language students. Carder (2008) notes,

Classroom teachers… are alone confronted with the daily reality of students who are not able to speak or write at an appropriate level in English, or other language of instruction, and they need solutions and strategies. No amount of technology or spell checkers will alter the fact that learning a language is a complex long-term process that involves the whole person. All those involved in international schools have a responsibility to ensure that students without fluency in the school’s language of instruction are given a properly designed course in that language and that mainstream teachers are also trained to be able to give appropriate instruction to second-language learners in their subjects/classrooms (p. 223-224).

Just as teachers are confront in the difficulty of teaching language learners, more importantly, the students themselves are placed in classrooms where they may not be receiving
the best instruction possible. In this literature review, we first looked at the context of learning English in an international school and content-based language acquisition settings. Next, we discussed some of the current models of mainstreaming language learners, immersion and submersion in particular, and identified some strengths and weaknesses of these models of instruction. Next, the specific needs of language learning children were discussed, and finally, the factors of language acquisition were reviewed.
Methodology

The purpose of my study was to better understand the experiences of upper elementary ELLs and examine the relationship between ELL attitudes and perceptions of instruction and support in an international school that uses English as the primary language of instruction. The main research question was, “What are the perceptions and attitudes towards the type of instruction and level of support received when entering an English medium school in upper elementary?”

For my study, I utilized ethnographic design. Creswell (2008) defines ethnography as “writing about people” (p.461). The form of ethnographic design that I utilized for my research was a case study. In this case study, the focus was on the program in which beginning level ELLs are provided educational support. In the following section, I will discuss my process through identifying the participants, obtaining the appropriate permission, gathering data from interviews, and finally analyzing the collected data.

Participants

At Grace School in South Korea, English is the primary language of instruction. While just about half of the student body identifies as Korean nationals, the majority of the Korean students have lived outside of Korea at some point. The remaining students come from a variety of nations, including The United States, Japan, Indonesia, Russia and India. In the 2013-2014 school year, 22% of the student body (Pre- Kindergarten through 12th Grade) were identified as English language learners (ELLs). In the elementary school, 40% of the students required ELL support.
Participants of this study were students, teachers and parents at Grace School. In order to record what the typical experiences were for students who entered the school in upper elementary with limited proficiency, I utilized homogeneous sampling. Homogeneous sampling is used “to describe some subgroup in depth” (Creswell, 2008, pg. 207). For the purpose of this study, I wanted to study the group of ELLs who entered the school in fourth or fifth grade and scored as a beginner on the English language assessment, LAS Links. I then also looked to the parents and teachers of these students to paint a greater picture of their experiences. Though I wished to complete a total of 14 interviews, my request was only accepted by 11 participants; I completed five student interviews, three teacher interviews and three parent interviews.

In addition to the interviews, I also utilized LAS Links (Data Recognition Corporation/CTB, n.d.) test scores of students. LAS Links is an assessment tool that the school administers at the beginning of the school year for incoming ELL students, and again in the spring each successive year until they reach a level four (proficient) according to the testing results. Students are assessed in four categories: Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing. For each category, scores can range from 1 (beginner) to 5 (above proficient). Students exit the ELL program if they score a four or above on the majority of sections. I used the data to identify the progress of students in their English abilities from the time they entered the school to their current levels of performance.

Permission

Prior to beginning my research, I sought permission from Messiah College’s Institutional Review Board. Because my interviews involved students under the age of 18 and individuals with limited English proficiency, it was necessary to ensure that no harm would come to the participants. Through the review process, I also gained permission from the principal of the
elementary school to conduct my interviews. Once I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board and the elementary school principal, I then had to gain consent from my participants. Emails were sent to the participants, and these emails are found in the Appendices. Because all participants had prior contact with me, I was able to obtain their contact information through the school directory. After the consent forms were returned, I was able to begin the next step: interviews.

**Gathering Data through Interviews**

I obtained my data through interviews via the video messenger Skype. I created three different sets of questions; one for students, one for teachers, and one for parents. These questions can be found in the Appendices. I interviewed the individual participants between July 1, 2015 and July 15, 2015 with one additional interview occurring on August 10, 2015. Each interview was conducted through Skype, audio recorded, and later transcribed.

**Data Analysis**

Once the data from the interviews was transcribed, I read through the data multiple times, coding the text in segments based upon similar themes. Next, I re-read through the different codes and interviews again, looking for connections between the different groups of participants. Finally, I looked at my research question, “What are the perceptions and attitudes towards the type of instruction and level of support received when entering an English medium school in upper elementary?” and condensed my findings into succinct sections based upon similar themes from the interviews. The results of my analysis are discussed in the “Findings” chapter followed by the implications of these findings.
Conclusion

In the process of this study, this has been my goal to find out more about the perspectives and attitudes of the community members of ELLs in order to improve the practice of education in the specific setting of an international English-medium school.

Findings

In this chapter, I will share my findings from interviews with ELLs, teachers and parents at an international school. First, I will share the perspectives of ELLs and their thoughts, perceptions and attitudes regarding their participation at Grace School, the importance of regularly using English, their shifting language identity, and the importance of friendships. Next, I will discuss the perspectives of the teachers working with ELLs. This section will focus on the resources available to help ELLs and the time dedicated to these students. The third section focuses on the perspectives of the parents of ELLs and their view of the welcoming Grace School environment, in addition to sharing the parents’ unmet expectations regarding the amount of time dedicated to their child through individualized ESL instruction, and the challenges in communication between parents and teachers. These findings have been obtained from five student interviews, three teacher interviews and three interviews with parents of ELLs.

Current Elementary English Language Acquisition Program at Grace School

The current model for ESL instruction at Grace School requires new language learners to enter a general classroom with some language support. Due to the limited resources of ESL support staff, the school functions with limited time for push-in and pull-out instruction. During push-in instruction, the ESL teacher works inside the general classroom along with the classroom teacher, and pull-out instruction is when the ESL teacher takes the ELL out of the general classroom.
classroom to provide instruction. At Grace School, ESL teachers provide pull-out English instruction during a 40-minute block four times in an eight-day cycle per student. Students qualify for this small group instruction based on their score on a testing measurement known as LAS Links testing. This test scores students in four skill areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and also provides an overall score. If students perform at a beginning or early intermediate level, they are provided this English class in place of a Korean class. During this time, the ESL teacher works with a small group of students from a single classroom that have scored at a beginning or early intermediate level. Instruction typically will include vocabulary or grammar-focused language instruction connected to the content of the general classroom. For example, when a fifth-grade classroom was writing autobiographies, the ESL teacher worked on the use of present perfect tense and encouraged students to use this tense when appropriate in their writing.

The ESL teacher also provides push-in instruction within the regular classroom through centers, parallel teaching, and co-teaching to all identified ELLs. In each classroom, this may look different depending upon the classroom teacher. In some classrooms, teachers may create reading groups during the time the ESL teacher is in the classroom, and provide opportunities for small group reading instruction. In other classrooms, the whole class may be working on a writing prompt, and the ESL teacher can work with the ELLs on focused points such as the use of articles in their writing as they are writing. The ESL teacher shared that at times, if the classroom teacher is instructing, she will sit with the ELLs and use a digital translator to identify key words in the lesson for the ELLs.

This push-in provision is limited to three to four times a week for 40-minute blocks of time and relies mostly on the flexibility of the general classroom teacher. In order for
instructional time with ESL support staff to be effective, all involved staff have to be flexible, willing to make mistakes, and try new strategies (Simons, 2008). General classroom teachers and ESL teachers are given a 40-minute block each eight-day cycle to collaborate, modify and adapt assignments to meet the needs of the diverse learners. Research suggests that this type of collaboration between teachers is likely to have greater outcomes than traditional pull-out models (Seaman, 2000).

At Grace School, the entire elementary division is staffed by one full-time and one part-time ESL teacher. Though the ESL teachers currently have full schedules with times dedicated to helping students inside the general classroom, small group instruction and collaboration time with classroom teachers, they do not have a set curriculum or program in which to follow. Instead, they do their best to support what is happening in the classroom and give the students the tools necessary to be successful in the general classroom. For students entering this school environment with limited English proficiency in the fourth or fifth grade, they are at a disadvantage in comparison to the majority of students who speak fluent or proficient English.

At the elementary level, there are a variety of mother-tongue languages spoken, yet the only language offered other than English is Korean. According to the school’s Language Policy, the school is dedicated to the development of multilingualism and recognizes that this aids in intercultural awareness and being open-minded. However, within the current program, students who are at basic levels of English do not attend any additional foreign language class. Rather, they spend that time with the ESL support teacher. While students are encouraged to use their native language for research or clarifying a concept or idea, there is no opportunity for them to develop or improve upon their native language within the designated school day through specific language instruction unless their native language is Korean.
Student Perspectives

In the next section, I will discuss student views about learning English, about school, and the help they received. Next, I will identify and discuss some factors in the use of English, moving to the shifting language identities of some students and finally, I will end with a discussion on the importance of peer support in the classroom.

Long term positive views of learning English. All students had positive attitudes towards learning English after the first few months at school. There was little evidence that their attitudes were a driving factor in language acquisition at Grace School. When the students were asked if they thought the teachers did all they could to help English language learners in the regular classroom, all students responded positively, demonstrating a positive perception of the support offered to them in the classroom.

Fears of starting a new school and a new language. Just as all students reported positive feelings after the first few months, all students also reported being scared or afraid of entering an English-medium school with little English ability. One student said, “In Japan, I never went, I just stayed in Japan. I never saw what’s happening outside of Japan so I didn’t know what it was like outside of Japan and I didn’t know any English so I was scared. I didn’t even count one to, I don’t know. I didn’t count numbers.” Another student shared, “I was really worried because I couldn’t speak any English. I didn’t know how to spell cat!” Clearly, the students experienced anxiety in coming to a school where they would not understand the language, but their attitudes and emotions soon changed towards positive thinking.

Perceptions of ESL specific classes. One student said of her ESL class, “I felt more confident and safe [in the ESL classroom] because I knew that she [the ESL teacher] would take time to explain everything to me. I didn’t have to worry about how I spoke because if I made a
mistake, no one would make fun of me.” Another student shared about how the ESL specific classes helped her to make connections to her first language, even though they met for a short period of time. The ESL teacher provided flashcards with her first language on one side and the English vocabulary words on the other side. She also shared that during this time of pull-out, the ESL teachers would help her with understanding the structures of language. She said, “In the ESL class I learned a lot more about English and how to communicate and how it was different from Japanese.” These positive reports from students regarding the ESL specific courses support Harklau’s (1994) claim that English language learners can learn language-specific information such as grammar and the comparison of different language structures in an ESL course.

**Use of English.** Among the five students interviewed for this project, one student progressed from a beginning English level to a proficient level according to the LAS Links testing in one school year. Another student scored at a beginning level when she began the school in the middle of fourth grade, yet was easily interacting in English with her peers and teachers just four months later. Interestingly, when asked what advice they would give students who were also starting at an English-medium school, they both said that students should try to speak English as much as possible. One student said, “The more that you will surround yourself with English speaking people, the faster you will learn the language. Try to speak and use English as much as you can in your own abilities even if it is just a little bit.” This advice ties in with Brown’s (2007) discussion of academic risk-taking and Tarone and Swain’s (1995) claim that student interaction with native speakers within an inclusion classroom provides opportunities for authentic language acquisition and provides opportunities for meaningful interaction with social language.
Multiple students expressed the ease with which they can now use English. One student who has been at the school for three years expressed this shift by saying, “Before moving to Korea, I was much more fluent in Russian but now I’ve kind of forgotten some of it, so now I think it is kind of equal between Russian and English.” She went on to share that she speaks mostly English with her siblings and tries to speak mostly Russian with her parents but will speak English if she doesn’t remember the words in Russian. Another student expressed that before coming to the school three years ago, he could only speak Japanese. Now, he is more comfortable speaking English than Japanese and he even speaks in English with his parents sometimes. Unfortunately, these two examples show that rather than add to the student’s first language, the addition of learning English may have led to a diminished ability in their first language, also known as subtractive bilingualism.

**Importance of friendships.** Though it is not directly related to classroom support, a common theme found in the student interviews was the importance of friendships. All but one student interviewed mentioned the importance of friendships in their ability to feel comfortable in the foreign language context. One student felt that she didn’t belong in her first year because she thought that the students didn’t like her. She said,

> I felt lonely because like, everyone speaks English but not me. For the conversations, there was no problem with conversations because in my grade, most of the students spoke Korean, but still, I could not speak English so like, they were not like me. There was, like, other Japanese students but she also didn’t like me. For the first few months, I didn’t have friends.

She said that when she moved to the next grade, she was happier because there were different students in her class and she was able to make friends. Her first year showed very little English progress, but her second year showed significant progress in English, especially in the
area of listening. Similarly, another student shared that she was lonely her first year at the new school because she was left out of a lot of things. These examples support Harklau’s (1994) research regarding the amount of authentic peer interaction ELLs experience when in the regular classroom when second language learners are in classes with proficient or native speakers.

On the other hand, one student shared that being in a classroom with students from many different countries (other than Korea) forced her to try to speak English. She said, “I got foreign friends at Grace School. In the first four weeks, I couldn’t speak English well but I got the Japanese and American friends so I could speak English a little bit.” Because her friends could not speak her first language, she had to try to speak what little English she could to be understood, and for her this was motivation to speak English. From both cases, there is evidence that peer influences play a large role in the perception of student support. One student advised teachers to provide more opportunities for group work in the classroom so that the ELL students could meet and interact with different students. In the next section, we will look at the perspectives of the teachers.

**Teacher Perspectives**

When discussing resources for English language learners with the teachers (one ESL teacher and two mainstream classroom teachers), all established that the school was fully resourced when it came to the physical materials available, yet all expressed concern in relation to the educational staff and time designated to specific language learning. In the following section, I will share the reported resources available to aid in English language acquisition and the concerns teachers have regarding the time dedicated to specific language learning.
Resources available to support ELLs. All teachers responded positively concerning the availability of physical resources in the classroom. They all mentioned the availability of technology resources such as online translators, digital readers at specific student levels, and digital vocabulary learning tools such as Quizlet. Both the ESL teacher and one mainstream classroom teacher cited the use of a bilingual picture dictionary. When discussing the physical resources, all teachers mentioned the fact that though they were not lacking any physical resources, they felt that the staffing was not adequate to meet the needs of the students, regardless of the physical resources available to them. This supports Alderfer and Alderfer’s (2011) idea that even with a program or tools such as books or technology to teach English, unless these resources are effectively used, there is little effect on student learning.

Time for language support. Both the general classroom teachers and the ESL teacher discussed the need for more time and appropriate staff to be dedicated to specific language learning. Throughout the interviews with teachers, there was an overwhelming conclusion that there was a need at the school for more TESOL trained teachers in order to provide classroom assistance or individualized instruction for ELLs. When asked if the school is doing all it can to help ELLs in the regular classroom, one teacher tentatively said, “Services would be adequate but we need more ESL teachers. The teachers are spread too thin, and some of the teachers are not trained. The school has too many ELLs with too few ESL teachers.” With just one ESL specialist spread across the upper elementary, she is only able to provide in-class push-in support three to four times (for 40 minute sessions) per class in an eight-day cycle and she has specific ESL classes with the same frequency.

A surprising finding was the response to how time was necessary for successful language acquisition. In teacher, parent and student interviews, participants shared about how time was a
factor. One teacher responded, “You don’t need that much [in physical resources]. You just need time.” He went on to share how he wished that there were more opportunities for ESL support teachers to work in the general classroom with the language learners. Another teacher shared her regret at not being able to give very much one-on-one time to the ELLs. She stated,

I don’t have a lot of time for pulling them out in the back and working with them one on one; although a lot of times once kids get working on their projects, and then if everyone can be with a partner or ask a neighbor, then I can sit down and provide some one-on-one, especially for the really low ELLs.

All three teachers consistently mentioned the need for more time dedicated to ELLs, and regret not having more school personnel and time to help the ELLs who enter the school with low levels of proficiency.

**Parent Perspectives**

In the following section, the perspectives of the parents of students ELLs will be addressed. Though the parents shared that the Grace School community was warm and welcoming, they all shared that their expectations of the support that their child would receive in the class was not what their child experienced. Additionally, some parents had concerns regarding the communication between the teachers and parents regarding student progress.

**Welcoming environment.** All three parents interviewed stated that Grace School was a welcoming environment for their child despite, the language challenges that the students faced. One mother shared that though her son did not say he was stressed, she could tell due to loss of weight and his disrupted sleep. At the same time, her son really enjoyed going to school because it was a warm and fun environment for him. Another parent shared that her daughter quickly gained foreign friends in the classroom which required her to communicate in English and improve her English in the process.
Additionally, another parent mentioned that the school also provided opportunities for parents to learn English. One parent shared how her family decided that they were going to be “open-minded” and spend time with people outside of their Russian culture, and therefore, she herself would have to learn English along with her children. She shared that her participation in the Parent Teacher Association allowed opportunities for her to be a part of the community and also learn English along the way.

**Unmet expectations.** When responding to the question, “What kind of support did you expect the school to provide when you enrolled your child at the school?”, all parents responded that they anticipated a greater level of support for their child. The main concern was a lack of individualized instruction.

*Individualized instruction through ESL specific classes.* Parents also expressed the need for more classes, which translates as more staff, since the one ESL specialist already has a full schedule. One parent stated, “I had higher expectations regarding the ESL program. I was hoping it would be more individualized. Every student’s abilities were so different and my son would comment on how different students had different strengths.” All parents interviewed expressed that prior to their child entering the school, they had an expectation that the students would have more ESL specific classes, especially when they first arrived.

All three parent participants also shared that they had expected that the ESL specialist would spend more time with their children. They all expressed that the limited forty minutes a day was not enough time to prepare the students for all of the time they had to sit in the regular classroom where much of the information was not comprehensible. One parent shared, “They have to go to [the] class and they have to listen to the lesson… even though they
don’t understand very well.” Additionally, parents commented on the lack of after-school activities to help their child improve in a small-group setting.

**Communication challenges between parents and teachers.** Another challenge that two parents discussed was in regards to communication between parents and teachers. One parent who was learning English along with her children said, “I received many emails, but I only understood maybe 10% because I was learning English with my kids.” This is a common theme among the ELL population at the school. Many of the parents of ELLs do not speak English and therefore communicating student progress and teacher concerns is a challenge. Another parent expressed that though she communicated frequently with her son’s classroom teacher, she had little to no communication with the ESL teacher. She thought that the ESL teachers could be more involved in communicating with the parents. Parent communication is essential, and in order to keep this communication strong, educators should be innovative in their ability to communicate with parents regardless of language barriers or time constraints.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the interviews with students, teachers and parents provide a picture of the program Grace School provides for ELLs and how these practices are viewed by the same stakeholders. In the next section, I will identify the implications of these findings.
Implications

With the increase in student enrollment over the last few years at international schools around the world (Keeling, 2015), it is necessary that educators consider the perspectives of the students, teachers and parents that are enrolled in these systems. In the following section, I have taken the perspectives from the different members of the community and have made some suggestions of what could be done to better service the students and community in general. I will outline the strength of the school in their supportive community, and provide suggestions for improvements to meet the needs of ELLs who enter the school with low levels of proficiency in upper elementary.

A Strength to Retain: A Supportive Community

As evidenced from the research, students found that Grace School is a warm and encouraging learning environment where teachers work together to support ELLs. In the following section, the strengths of Grace School will be discussed: the positive school environment and a collaborative staff.

Positive school environment. As the literature suggests, “…the most important learning condition for effective English language development was the child’s need for a safe nurturing environment…” (Alderfer & Alderfer, 2011, p. 67). According to the reports from parents and students, Grace School was a welcoming environment for the students, and nearly all students responded that they felt the teachers did all they could to help them learn. One parent reported that though their child was stressed about the language barrier, the student was still willing and excited to come to school. This is evidence that the students found the school to be a place where they felt safe regardless of their language abilities. Grace School should continue to foster the inclusion of all students and continue to provide opportunities for students to feel welcome.
**Collaborative staff.** Grace School prioritizes time dedicated to collaboration as evidenced in the time set aside for teachers to work together throughout the school day and during the weekly professional development hour each Monday. This time is valuable for ESL staff and regular classroom teachers to work together during a common planning time. Teachers and ESL staff collaborate together to ensure that the assignments are appropriate for the ELLs, ESL pull-out classes align with the content of the regular classrooms, and the grammar focus for each unit is appropriate. Grace School should continue to encourage this type of collaboration among their staff to support the ELLs enrolled at the school.

**Considerations for Future Improvements in Programming for ELLs**

Though students were generally positive regarding their educational experiences, the teachers and parents were more willing to share what improvements could be made in the support offered to incoming upper elementary ELLs at Grace School. In the following section, I will outline a need for increased instructional time with the ESL teacher, individualized programs based upon the needs of students and their language levels, and improved parent communication. Additionally, more could be done to improve the education of ELLs through staff development and teacher training focusing on fostering student relationships, supporting bilingualism and recognizing all teachers as language teachers.

**Additional instructional time with the ESL teacher.** Currently, when a new student comes to Grace School, they will enter into the general classroom regardless of language ability. As seen in the literature, Gkonou (2013) and Allen (2010) found that many language learners have high levels of anxiety due to their limited understanding. One teacher suggested providing a type of orientation for new students, also known as a newcomer program. Marlar (2002) states, “Those who benefit from a well-designed elementary newcomer program are many. The students
benefit from instruction that is tailored to their needs. The staff are often able to use their resources more efficiently as a result of specially designed instruction for the newcomers” (p. 26). During this time, students could learn basic vocabulary and phrases necessary to be a participant in the regular classroom without the anxiety of wondering how to ask to perform basic classroom tasks such as sharpening a pencil. Students could also gain additional confidence in speaking with other beginning level students. Additionally, students who do not utilize a Romanized alphabet system could practice this prior to joining their fourth or fifth grade regular classroom.

Another suggestion presented by a teacher was for students to start with a higher percentage of dedicated time with the ESL teacher which could then gradually lower as the student gained more confidence and language understanding. This is similar to Brown’s (2007) definition of mainstreaming that in some submersion models, students first work with an ESL teacher, and then “Once teachers and tests conclude that students are proficient enough to be placed into ongoing content classes, they are mainstreamed into the regular classroom” (p. 141). This model would require restructuring the ESL teacher’s schedule and would more than likely require additional staff or limit the ESL assistance in the parent general classroom until later in the year.

**Individualized programs.** A common theme among the and teacher interviews was the desire to better meet the needs of the ELLs through more individualized instruction. Some factors that played into making this a reality are the range of abilities per student and the varying language levels.
Though all students interviewed came to the school with little to no English experience, their test scores on the LAS Links testing showed great variation in the different English skills (see Figure 2). Currently, students are grouped according to what general classroom they are in. For example, if Student 1 and Student 2 were in the same general classroom, they would attend ESL courses at the same time. One parent was concerned that there was a wide range of abilities in the ESL class and was worried that her child was not receiving the instruction that he needed in the mixed-ability classes. Looking at the data, it would be beneficial to group Student 2 and Student 3 together in order to be able to work on the same necessary skills: writing and listening skills. This change would benefit the students by providing individual instruction in their area of need, and help the ESL teacher when planning. Student instruction would be much more effective and focused. Grouping students in such a way will require creative scheduling for both

Figure 2. LAS Links Entrance Scores per Skill Category. This chart shows the differences in English skills when the students first entered the school as assessed by the LAS Links test. All students scored at a beginning level.
the general education classes and the schedule of the ESL teacher. Additional staffing may be required in order to focus on the individual student needs.

**Communication with parents.** From the findings, parents expressed a need for better communication between the teachers and parents. One reason for the breakdown of communication was due to language barriers. Because teachers already utilize tools such as digital translators to communicate with the students, they could use these same tools to aid in their communication with the parents as well.

One mother expressed that though her son never said that he was stressed or anxious, his physical response to starting at the new school showed signs of anxiety. He was losing weight and not sleeping well. With an improved communication system between home and school, these observations could have been shared with the teachers and support could have been given to the student through meetings with the counselor or modifications to the classroom such as more appropriate assignment accommodations or expectations. Panferov (2010) suggests that schools that successfully help ELL parents navigate school challenges provide opportunities for two-way communication and guidance for supporting students in their academics. Grace School could provide opportunities for appropriate communication through multimodal (written and spoken forms) communication and regular communication.

Because Grace School is technologically advanced with abundant technology resources, it would be appropriate for them to use these forms to better communicate with parents. One suggestion for better home and school communication is to place some of the responsibility on the students. They could gain independence as autonomous learners and take responsibility for their learning by recording a minute report each day about what they learned and what they would like to practice at home. Teachers could work towards ensuring that this happened at a
particular time each day for consistency. These videos could be recorded in the student’s native language to assist with parent communication, or in English to show their progress. These short reflection videos could be emailed to parents each day.

Additionally, ESL teachers could have a set day each month dedicated to communication with parents. This could occur after school for an hour, when parents could sign up for a time to meet with the ESL teacher and discuss their child’s progress. During this time, teachers and parents could work together to look towards the academic goals of the students. The school could provide translators for the most common native languages represented. Through this type of setting, parents could have an opportunity to be better informed regarding their child’s progress at an individual level.

**Teacher development.** Grace School has a strong culture of teacher training, and it is important to note that teachers meet regularly to collaborate. However, more emphasis could be placed upon the needs of the ELL population during their collaboration time. In the following section, suggestions for future teacher training is centered around fostering student relationships, supporting bilingualism, and utilizing training to support the idea that all teachers are language teachers.

**Fostering student relationships.** The literature indicates that peers influence the behaviors and perceptions of ELLs. In this research, students affirmed that peers influenced their English learning. As educators, it is necessary that this is not overlooked. In order to create an environment that fosters language acquisition, teachers must be aware of the importance of peer influences and foster student relationships inside and outside of the classroom. Many of the instructional techniques that the teachers at Grace School utilize are cooperative in nature.
However, teachers can be assisted in this measure though additional training in cooperative learning strategies and techniques.

Within the classroom, teachers can be more aware of specific groupings and pairings. One student made the suggestion that teachers need to be willing to provide opportunities for different types of groups in the classroom. Teachers at Grace School should create groups that are homogeneous in native language and heterogeneous in native language to allow students multiple opportunities to learn from each other.

Grace School provides many after-school activities, yet they do not currently provide any related to language acquisition. Within many of the activities, students will interact with each other in a way that fosters language growth, but it would also be helpful to create a specific club to assist in fostering appropriate peer interactions in a small group setting. By encouraging native or proficient English speaking students to sign up along with their beginning level peers, this would allow time to participate in language activities that bring about positive peer interactions.

Supporting bilingualism. Due to the diversity of backgrounds represented by entering ELLs, it would not be physically or financially possible to have a teacher for each language to support the native languages. However, it would be possible to utilize other resources to aid in supporting bilingualism. Grace School could consider using distance learning opportunities or other digital resources to better aid in supporting bilingualism. As seen in the research, some ELLs commented that after attending Grace School for some time, they are less confident in their native language.

Teachers can be trained to work with students to build their native language fluency in projects in their native language. Additionally, teachers can encourage reading across both languages. For example, with digital resources readily available, teachers could encourage
students to read the same book in English and in their native language. Additionally, students can complete research in their native language and in English and synthesize what they understand in a project to share. One teacher mentioned that she was already doing this in her classroom. This type of activity will help them practice their reading in their native language in addition to reading, writing and speaking in English. These types of strategies and suggestions can be presented through teacher training sessions led by experienced teachers.

_all teachers as language teachers_. Brown (2007) states, “Language is a means of thinking, of representing the world to oneself” (p. 20). As such, all teachers at the school regardless of what subject they teach are language teachers. Students need to use language to express themselves, and therefore teachers must focus on language in the classroom, whether they teach Art or Science, P.E. or Math. In the research, the teachers stated that there was a need for more emphasis on TESOL training for all staff. Though many of the teachers have learned languages in the past, or are experienced in working with ELLs, there is no substitute for good ESL training. Specific training for all elementary staff will aid in their understanding that all teachers are language teachers and help them utilize best practice techniques.

**Conclusion**

After reviewing the findings in the research, it is evident that Grace School provides a safe and nurturing environment to ELLs, and the school prioritizes staff collaboration to ensure appropriate instruction for the students. However, with limited staff and limited time to work with each student individually, students may not be receiving the support they require. In order to better serve the ELLs entering upper elementary school, Grace School should consider the following improvements.
1. Provide a newcomer program for beginner level ELLs at the start of the school year for ELLs to learn basic phrases and vocabulary needed in the general classroom.

2. Allow students to have more dedicated time with ESL teachers and slowly increase time spent in the general classroom once they have shown basic levels of proficiency.

3. Create ESL small-groups based upon the language skill needs of the students to allow for skill-specific instruction at an individualized level.

4. Strengthen home-school communication through the use of video reports or monthly parent visit opportunities and provide translators when possible.

5. Recognize the value of peer relationships and provide multiple opportunities to strengthen the bond between peers through afterschool activities and continue to provide collaborative opportunities in the classroom.

6. Support bilingualism through the use of digital distance courses and continue to encourage research and reading from native language sources.

7. Providing additional ESL training to all elementary staff members.

Through these improvements, Grace School will be giving ELLs the additional support that they deserve. The strength of the program rests in the caring nature of the community, and with the addition of these supports, ELLs at Grace School will have a better chance of growth and success in the general classroom setting.
Conclusion

In order to best meet the needs of a diverse ELL population, it is essential to listen to the experiences of these students. Looking at the program offered to ELLs provides schools an opportunity to consider what is best practice by addressing their perceptions and attitudes. International schools must provide opportunities to strengthen the bond between home and school, and work towards ensuring that all members of the community are prepared and informed to best serve the ELLs that enter the school. This chapter will identify the limitations of the research, suggest potential areas for future research, and outline reflections on my personal growth as an educator through this process.

Limitations

All student, teacher and parent participants of this study had worked with me over the course of four years. Due to my past interactions with the participants, rapport was already established prior to conducting interviews. However, due to the timing of the study, interviews took place over video calls utilizing Skype. This timing also limited my scope in participants, because I was only able to include the participants who responded to my written requests for interviews. If the study took place during the school year, potential interviewees could have been approached in person and the interviews themselves could also have been conducted in person, which may have provided a more welcoming environment for participants to share in contrast to using video calls.

Additionally, one of my research questions was to find out if students’ perceptions and attitudes towards their experiences affected their language progress. In the interviews, all students shared positive feelings towards the school and the experiences they had. Because
parent and teacher responses did uncover some potential difficulties for students, it is difficult to know whether these positive responses accurately reflected student experiences, or whether earlier negative feelings may have been forgotten or repressed. Additionally, it is possible that students did not feel comfortable sharing negative feelings with me, a teacher in the school.

Potential for Future Research

This research for this study was conducted in a specific school, with a specific age group. With the increase of international schools around the world, further research could be conducted in different schools with similar populations or in the same school with a different age group. Additional research such as this would paint a broader picture of what ELLs experience when entering an international school, and therefore give more information on how to best meet their needs. A question for further research is, “How do the practices of international schools compare with best practices for ELLs?” This research would benefit international school communities and provide solutions to best meet the needs of ELLs.

Personal Growth

As an educator, I was eager to hear from the different members of the international school community throughout this process. Though I had perceptions of what I thought the students, parents and teachers had experienced, it was beneficial to hear from them and to have a better understanding of their ideas and experiences. From this research, I will seek to be an advocate for ELLs and seek for ways to include the whole community through training, increased communication, and through fostering relationships with students, parents and my colleagues. By listening to the voices in the international school community, positive changes can be addressed and ELLs can receive the services they deserve.
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Appendix A
Teacher Recruitment Email

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 7.3

Subject: Participation in ELL research project

Dear Teacher,

As many of you know, I am working on finishing my Masters in Education in TESOL. I would like to know more about instruction and support that language learners receive when they first begin at Grace School.

If you would like to be a volunteer, I would appreciate your feedback. You will be asked to be part of a 20-minute interview. You are a volunteer in this study, and you can quit at any time.

If you are interested in participating, please reply to this email, and I will provide you with further information. Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Sarah Mueller
5th Grade Teacher
Grace School
Messiah College
Appendix B
Parent recruitment email

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 7.2

Subject: Participation in ELL research project

Dear Parent,

I am writing to you to ask if you would help me with research about English language learners. I am almost finished with my Masters of Education in TESOL from Messiah College. I would like to research the strengths and areas of need at Grace School when teaching language learners. Interviews of parents, students and teachers will help me complete my research. The interviews of parents and students will only take about 20 minutes. I would also like to use the students’ LAS Links test scores. These results would not be connected to student names. The information collected will be helpful for the school to make decisions about future language learners at Grace School.

You and your children are not required to participate. If you choose not to participate, your child’s grades or relationship with the teachers will not be affected in any way. If you choose to participate, you would be a volunteer in this study, and you can quit at any point.

If you and your child would like to participate, please reply to this email, and I will provide you with further information. Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Sarah Mueller
5th Grade Teacher
Grace School
Messiah College
Appendix C
Student recruitment email

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 5.0

Subject: Help with research

Dear Student,

Would you help me with research about English language learners? I would like to know more about what it is like to be an elementary student at Grace School. Since you came to Grace School in fourth or fifth grade, you will be able to tell me about how you felt as a new student learning English.

First, I will ask your parents for permission. If you and your parents agree to be a volunteer, I will be using LAS Links test results to help me with my research. I will also ask you some questions through a 20-minute interview.

You are not required to participate. If you do not participate, it will not affect your grades or your relationship with me or any other teachers. If you decide to join, you are a volunteer in this study and you can quit at any time.

I hope that you will think about helping me in my research! Please reply to this email if you’d like to help.

Sincerely,

Ms. Mueller
5th Grade Teacher
Grace School
Messiah College
Appendix D
Interview Questions for Teachers

Rapport with these participants has been established due to the fact that I have worked with them for a range of two to four years.

A written copy of these questions were available for the participant to reference.

1. Tell me about the resources you use and the resources that are offered to students who enter your class with low levels of English development. Think about:
   a. Physical resources in the classroom
   b. Time provided for preparing
   c. Staffing resources

2. What services do you provide to these students? Possible responses include: differentiated instruction, adapted or modified assignments, peer tutoring, etc.

3. Do you think that the resources provided to new language learners are adequate? Please explain.

4. How could Grace School improve their services for beginning-level ELLs?
Appendix E
Interview Questions for Parents

All parents identified for this survey met with me prior due to their student being in the fifth grade, and therefore some rapport was previously established.

A written copy of these questions was available for the participant to reference.

1. Why did you enroll your child at Grace School? Possible responses could include: Christian ethos, location, financial assistance from employer, English medium school, other

2. What kind of support did you expect the school to provide when you enrolled your child at the school? What help did you think they would receive? Tell me:
   - What the teachers would do
   - What the ELL teacher would do

3. How did the school help your child when he/she first arrived? Tell me:
   - What the teachers did do
   - What the ELL teacher did do

4. What could Grace School do to better help language learners who are new to the school?

5. What was your child’s reaction when he/she first came to Grace School? Tell me:
   - Emotional reactions
   - Behavioral reactions
   - Any other significant observations or conversations
Appendix F
Interview Questions for Students

All participants have had me as a teacher at one point, so there was already rapport built.

A written copy of these questions was available for the participant to reference.

1. Please tell me about yourself.
   a. In what country were you born?
   b. Where have you lived before moving to Suwon?
   c. What languages do you speak?
   d. What language is most comfortable for you?
   e. What language(s) do you speak with your parents?

2. Tell me about coming to Grace School. Include:
   a. Emotions you felt before coming
   b. Events
   c. Conversations

3. What emotions did you feel after the first month of school? Possible responses could include: lonely, confused, scared, happy, confident, angry, determined, disappointed, sad, satisfied, withdrawn, etc.

4. What emotions did you feel after the first year of school? Possible responses could include: lonely, confused, scared, happy, confident, angry, determined, disappointed, sad, satisfied, withdrawn, etc.

5. Do you think the teachers did all that they could to help you understand what was happening in class? How could they improve?

6. What do you want teachers to know about coming to Grace School and learning English?

7. What do you want new students at Grace School to know about coming to Grace School and learning English?