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TEACHERS BELIEVE SINGING WILL SCAFFOLD, MEDIATE,
AND FACILITATE ORAL LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: PLACE
ARTS BACK IN THE CURRICULUM

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education:
Bilingual/Cross-Cultural

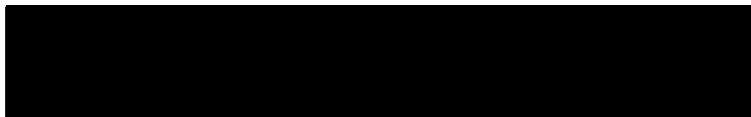
by
Alicia Rubio
December 2012

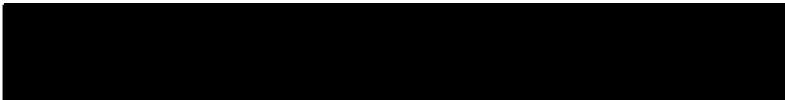
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11/27/12
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ABSTRACT

The objective of this qualitative study was to explore if elementary school teachers who teach English Language Learners (ELLs) believe that singing used as an instructional tool would facilitate the development of oral English language acquisition. This study used a multiple-choice survey. The responses to these survey questions were coded by determining common themes and patterns to produce descriptive data. The literature review revealed that singing engages the brain's multiple intelligences and helps lower the affective filter. The literature also proved singing would help students improve their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. The data collected from the survey exposed four important issues: 1) Only some teachers use singing in the classroom during English language development instruction; 2) the majority of the participants agreed that the current curriculum lacks opportunities for students to experience art; 3) they also agreed that the present curriculum lacks appropriate materials designed for art instruction; 4) and most importantly they agreed that time constraints impede them from utilizing singing in the classroom.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I started working on my Master's degree many years ago, but many things got in the way of my dream. I am grateful to God for giving me the opportunity to complete my master's degree in Bilingual/Cross Cultural Education.

I am thankful for all the great teachers I had throughout my academic career since I arrived in the United States. I would specially like to thank Dr. Donna Schnorr and Dr. Barbara Flores for their willingness to help me and guide me in the completion of this thesis.

Thanks to my children Norma, Nadya, Eddie, Adrianna, Naylene, and Evan for being my driving force to do what I do on a daily basis. Thanks to my sisters Leticia and Laura for the time we spent working together. Thanks to all my colleagues who have been part of my career as an educator and everyone who participated in this project.

I will forever be thankful.

DEDICATION

To my six babies

I love you

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

General Statement of the Problem

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) signed by President George W. Bush in 2002 requires that all students achieve proficiency in language arts and math by the end of the school year 2013-2014, including all English Language Learners (ELLs).

According to Title III of the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, No Child Left Behind, the states are required to establish English Language Proficiency Standards aligned to state academic content standards that are appropriate for English Language Learners.

In California, a large percentage of the student population is learning English as a second language. Almost 1.7 million EL students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade took the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) in the year 2003 (Jepsen, 2005, p. 7). In the Inland Empire alone there were 173,828 EL students in the fall 2003 (Jepsen, 2005, p. 8).

The state of California is responsible for educating about 1.6 million students. Most of these students are

speakers of Spanish as reported by the California Legislative Analysis Office (LAO) 2007-2008 Education Analysis of February 21, 2007.

Between 1979 and 2008, the number of school age children who spoke a language other than English at home increased from 3.8 to 10.9 million or from 9 percent to 21 percent, according to the United States Department of Education National Center of Education Statistics (2010), the Condition of Education 2010 (NCES2010-028). This increase in the English Language Learners (ELLs) population will demand teachers to become more efficient in teaching English as a second language.

According to the California Department of Education, in 2011, nearly 1.4 million students were English Language Learners. Of the 59 different language groups, Spanish represented 82.7 percent, compared to Vietnamese, the second language group, which represented only 2.7 percent of the total student population.

Furthermore, according to the National Center for Education Statistics of the United States Department of Education, the enrollment in public schools is expected to increase by nine percent between the years 2006 and 2018. Therefore, teachers everywhere must create a positive

classroom environment and utilize effective strategies to scaffold, mediate, and facilitate learning in order to help students meet the NCLB requirements.

On April 10, 2012, after decades of standards based reforms, 45 states adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS). This set of standards aims to prepare students not only to graduate from high school, to be ready for higher education, or to join the workforce, but also to be equipped to compete in the global economy. Although Common Core State Standards (CCSS) delineate what students are expected to learn to be successful in life, they are limited in many areas. One of these areas is how teachers will support English Language Learners as they acquire English; and how they will help them achieve Common Core State Standards (CCSS). CCSS do not address the needs of over 5.1 million students who are designated as English Language Learners all across the United States.

Significance of the Thesis

In every classroom across the United States, educators must focus on the needs of each student and on how to best meet those needs on a daily basis. Over one million students who attend schools in California are English Language Learners. Most students speak Spanish, but there

are more than 50 other languages spoken by ELLs. Every educator's goal is to ensure that all students develop their cognitive abilities to the fullest, achieve academic success, and eventually enter the work force. Education trends aim to improve the strategies teachers utilize to present conceptual knowledge. However, throughout the different trends in education, the goal remains the same: Provide every student with high quality education, so they can be successful in life and productive members of society.

CCSS will provide consistency in regards to which academic standards students are expected to accomplish at each grade level and throughout the United States. This set of expectations will help students acquire academic knowledge, develop the skills needed to graduate from high school, be ready to enroll in a college or university, and eventually to join the workforce. English Language Learners have always struggled to make sufficient gains on standardized testing, thus, second language acquisition is a very important issue.

Naturally, teachers want to improve their students' tests results. This study proposes that teachers believe that including art in the classroom curriculum,

specifically singing, would help English Language Learners increase their oral English language development and eventually their standardized test scores. According to CEMREL, Inc., an educational research firm, 67 specific studies conducted in California demonstrated that the inclusion of art expression in the curriculum improved student achievement in reading, writing, and math (as cited in Akin, 1987, p. 1).

Prior research suggests that students, especially, English Language Learners would benefit from instruction that includes artistic expressions in which they are actively involved such as dancing, music, storytelling, visual arts, and drama. However, the easiest and less demanding artistic expression for teachers and students is singing.

Songs scaffold, mediate, and facilitate oral language development, reading fluency, vocabulary development, spelling, and much more. Any instructional tool that helps develop foundational skills allows students to increase their participation and success in grade-level academic work.

Research Questions

Brain research indicates that humans learn by doing. Piaget stated that language involves memory of words and that "the conservation or recall of a word is something quite other than the word itself for there is nothing to compel a word to enter memory (this becomes clear whenever we learn a foreign language): a word lacks a self-regulatory mechanism demanding its conservation in the individual's memory" (Piaget, 1973, p. 14). One of the most enjoyable activities for a child is singing. Parents sing lullabies to their children even before they are born helping them develop language. Adults are capable of recalling songs learned during their childhood with ease even after many years have passed by. However, when children enter school, this practical strategy for teaching language seems to disappear.

Therefore, for this thesis, the following questions were addressed through a simple multiple-choice survey: 1) How often do teachers use singing in the classroom during English Language Development instruction? 2) How often do teachers utilize other types of artistic expression to deliver instruction? 3) How do teachers rate the rigor of the current curriculum? 4) Most importantly, did they think

singing would increase English language development? 5) Would they use singing as an instructional practice on a daily basis? Finally, they were asked, 6) Were there any obstacles that prevented them from using singing in the classroom as an instructional strategy?

Limitations

Every classroom across the United States is filled with students from different ethnic and family backgrounds, different language proficiencies, different levels of motivation, and different goals in life, but every single student must meet grade level standards. Tapping into their abilities and their learning styles is an important task that all teachers must strive for on a daily basis.

English Language Learners face more challenges than English speaking students. For this study, teachers answered a simple multiple-choice survey to determine if they believed utilizing singing as a strategy to scaffold, mediate, and facilitate oral language development would help students increase their acquisition of the English language. The survey did not address the grade level the respondent is currently teaching, so it was difficult to assess if the respondent was a primary or an upper grade elementary teacher. Furthermore, when teachers were asked

to elaborate on their multiple-choice answer, many chose not to explain or describe their experiences in the classroom. Other teachers were very vague in their responses. Furthermore, this study relies on the teachers' opinions and honesty in their responses.

Delimitations

Originally the purpose of the study was to show singing as a feasible strategy that would scaffold, mediate, and facilitate English language development. The premise was that singing improves oral language development. However, that premise rests on the assumption that teachers are utilizing singing in the classroom as an instructional strategy.

Therefore, the thesis moved in the direction of what are the teachers' beliefs in regards to the inclusion of arts in the curriculum. This study addressed the use of singing as an instructional tool during English Language Development (ELD) instruction. However, it did not address what type of songs would be utilized during instruction, nor did it measure the impact of the inclusion of arts in the curriculum.

Assumptions

The following assumptions apply to this thesis:

- Teachers focus on students' needs and how to meet those needs.
- Students possess intelligence to acquire new knowledge.
- Students must be interested and excited about learning.
- According to Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, intellect and prior knowledge help human beings make sense of the world (As cited in www.ncsu.edu/chass/, 2012).
- Piaget's theory requires teachers to provide a stimulating and interactive classroom environment (As cited in www.ncsu.edu/chass/, 2012).
- Students are motivated by what others expect of them, so they seek social approval.
- Teachers need to be aware of Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory in order to tap into their students' different learning.
- Teachers must differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students.

- According to Vygotsky, cognitive development and language are shaped by interacting with others (As cited in www.ncsu.edu/chass/, 2012).
- Social interaction helps students increase their level of thinking, knowledge, values, and attitudes (as cited in www.ncsu.edu/chass/, 2012).
- Teachers should model proper usage of the English language and encourage their students to communicate using higher level language.
- Teacher should utilize scaffolding strategies to help all students develop their cognitive abilities.
- According to Dewey, teachers must make connections between prior knowledge and new knowledge (as cited in www.ncsu.edu/chass/, 2012).
- Teachers should make sure the new knowledge is experienced.
- According to Krashen (1987), lowering the affective filter would help students develop higher self-esteem, confidence, and fulfillment, and help them to learn new information (p. 31).

- Singing predictable songs helps students memorize words, phrases, and ideas while developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Definitions of Terms

For this thesis, the following definitions apply and are explained as such:

Alternative Program (Alt) is a classroom setting where students can receive academic instruction in their native language.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is a set of expectations produced on behalf of 48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia, which delineate knowledge and skills America's students need to be ready for college, to obtain a career, and to compete in the global economy. They include content and application knowledge through higher-order skills.

English language acquisition is the process of acquiring English language proficiency for second language learners.

English Language Development is a specialized program of education for students who are learning English as a second language.

English language learners (ELLs) are students who are not proficient in English and who speak a language other than English at home.

English Language Mainstream (ELM) is a setting for students who have certain level of fluency but need English Language Development instruction.

Facilitate is to make learning easier through effective use of instructional strategies.

Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory describes the set of relative autonomous intelligences of all human beings which include linguistic, logical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Gardner, 1985, p. xii).

Mediate is a teaching strategy that engages the students in the learning process through a series of steps such as activating prior knowledge, reciprocal teaching, and echo and choral reading with the teacher to increase language development.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is the key law governing K-12 education in the United States signed by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. It reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Redesignated Fluent-English Proficient (RFEP) is a classification assigned to students who are using oral and written language effectively.

Scaffolding is to the use of instructional strategies to assist and support learning.

Songs are usually defined as short musical compositions with words. Songs are related to the entertainment industry rather than school curriculum and learning. However, students find learning vocabulary through songs amusing, interesting, relaxing, and fun rather than tedious.

Structured English Immersion (SEI) is a classroom setting for ELLs who are not fluent in English.

Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act is a federal program that allocates federal money to provide support mainly to school districts to provide additional resources to disadvantaged students in order to accomplish the NCLB requirements (Jepsen, 2005 p. 12).

Title III is a federal program that helps institutions become self-sufficient by providing extra funds to provide high quality education to low-income students.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Common Core State Standards and Curriculum

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) aim to provide consistent and clear expectations for student learning all across the United States. As of April 2012, 45 states have adopted the CCSS according to the CCSS website. This set of standards is designed to help parents, teachers, and students know what is expected at different stages from Kindergarten to 12th grade. The main sections covered by CCSS are: K-5 cross-disciplinary, 6-12 English Language Arts, 6-12 Literacy in History, Social Studies, Science, and Technical subject. The four strands include reading, writing, speaking, and listening with literacy integrated and media requirements embedded throughout the curriculum (As cited in www.corestandards.org, 2012).

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers believes that all students should meet the same high expectations including English Language Learners (As cited in www.nga.org/, 2012). Teachers, parents, administrators, professors, and students all agree that CCSS will help

students to be prepared for the future and to be successful in the global economy. However, they also agree that CCSS do not address the specific needs of over 5.1 million English Language Learners enrolled in schools across the United States. The limitations of the CCSS include: How teachers should teach, what should be taught, the nature of advance work, interventions, and support for English language learners (As cited in www.corestandards.org/, 2012).

According to the California Department of Education (CDE), English Language Learners accounted for 23.2 percent of the total enrollment in 2011. Over 2,325,748 students speak English as a second language. About 71 percent of English Language Learners are in kindergarten through sixth grade, and 29 percent in seventh through twelfth grade. This heterogeneous group is composed of students from different ethnic backgrounds, native languages, socioeconomic status, and prior schooling. Students enter school possessing diverse levels of English proficiency ranging from no English to almost fluent in English. However, developing English and using it efficiently like a native speaker takes many years. Many ELL students will achieve academic standards in reading, writing, and other

subjects but still struggle to achieve native-like control of the language.

Although, English Language Learners will benefit from CCSS, to achieve these high academic standards, ELLs must have access to literature rich environments that will allow them to fully immerse in language experiences.

Brain Research

Research indicates that the primary purpose of the human brain is to learn. Hodges (2010) found that learning activates reward centers in the brain because learning is multisensory and it requires memory (p. 5). Humans learn by doing. Brain-imaging shows two types of neuronal connections that have implications for music and active learning. Audiomotor networks make people move to the music whether they are playing music or just listening. Perceptual and motor areas of the brain help and reinforce each other (Hodges, 2010, p. 5). Furthermore, Hodges (2010) explained how pleasurable and successful learning activities help release hormones such as serotonin and dopamine which produce feelings of satisfaction (p. 5).

According to the article, "Music improves reasoning in preschool children" (1991), music training enhances reasoning in children and brings opportunities for

mastering learning. Green (1995) stated that "music must have a core place in a reformed, effective curriculum to be the key determinant of success in our quest to truly help prepare all young people to be on-going learners and successful adults" (As cited in Elster, 2001, p. 16).

Studies have established that certain regions of the brain specialize in language. As Kavanagh (2010) stated:

We know the brain is divided into left and right hemispheres - when we study language, we are using the left hemisphere, but music uses the right hemisphere. Language students usually use just one hemisphere, but songs involve both hemispheres in the learning process, greatly increasing students' potential. (As cited in www.tuneintoenglish.com)

Certain parts of the brain located in the right hemisphere are important for perception and production of music. "When students enjoy musical interactions, they develop associations that may persist for life" (Hodges, 2010, p. 5).

The brain is shaped by both genes and learning experiences. Genes prepare people to learn. It is the job of the teacher to notice what the student can do and build on that through enjoyable activities. The brain of the

child is changing constantly. Thus, a rich environment is important to the development of a healthy brain and long-life learning (Hodges, 2010, p. 7). Children who grow up in bilingual homes are able to learn both languages' grammatical, syntactic, and prosodic elements because the brain is able to detect patterns. Neurons in the brain form networks and fire in patterns. For this reason, children know certain songs because they use frequency distributions to learn that these patterns belong to their native culture (Hodges, 2010, p. 7). Listening and singing creates positive effects on the healthy development of the brain

Multiple Intelligences

It is a known fact that each student's learning style is different. English Language Learners face more difficulties to succeed academically because of their language barrier. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (MI) inspired new instructional approaches in education. Gardner's theory suggested that everyone possesses at least 7 intelligences. These intelligences include musical intelligence which is highly relevant to teaching language (Mora, 2000, p. 146).

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (MI) helps teachers understand why some students struggle to excel in

school. Teachers may be able to implement effective strategies to help students succeed academically if they consider the multiple intelligence theory. Gardner's original theory provides a theoretical basis to differentiate instruction and to make curriculum available to all students. Gardner believes that it is important for teachers to consider individual differences among students. Armstrong (2009) affirmed that each person possesses all eight intelligences: Linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist (p. 15). MI Theory is of cognitive functioning which means that everyone has capacities in all eight intelligences, but at different levels. He also argued that everyone is capable of developing adequate levels of competency given the right instruction, encouragement, and enrichment (Armstrong, 2009, p. 15).

Teachers who are aware of MI theory can design lessons that use several intelligences. Teachers, school administrators, and parents can help children reach their full potential. They can allow students to utilize their stronger intelligence and help them develop their weakest intelligence with enjoyable activities that stimulate more

learning. Mora (2000) stated, "Clearly, we learn in different ways, and as learners unconsciously establish our own preferred sensory system. While visual learners prefer charts, diagrams, and written material, auditory learners like listening activities, and kinaesthetic learners need to have movement, to be involved physically in much the same way as in drama or role playing" (p. 146).

Lower Affective Filter

"According to Stephen Krashen (1982, 1985, 1988, 1991), negative emotions are formed through the passive moods, including low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety" (Krashen, as cited in Lin, 2008, p. 115). English Language Learners in particular are greatly influenced by positive or negative feelings during their learning experience. Their accomplishment or lack of it depends on their affective filter. Oxford (1996) claimed, "the affective side of the learner is probably one of the biggest influences on language learning success or failure" (Oxford, as cited in Lin, 2008, p. 115).

The Affective Filter Hypothesis proposes that students' success in learning a new language depends on emotions, teachers' attitudes, and peer interactions (Krashen, 1985, as cited in Lin, 2008, p. 115). The

students' experience in language acquisition depends on the environment created by their teacher. A positive classroom setting helps increase students' self-esteem, motivation, and self-confidence, thus allowing students to successfully acquire language.

Singing and its Potential

Students' motivation and interest to learn will increase if teachers use songs during language instruction in the classroom. Lo and Li (1998) stated, "Songs develop students' language abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing and can be used to teach sentence patterns, vocabulary, pronunciation, rhythm, adjectives, adverbs, and so on. Learning through songs provides a non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom" (Lo & Li, as cited in Lin, 2008, p. 117).

A song's rhythm and lyrics can increase students' ability to memorize the words, thus, songs' predictable text and melody scaffold oral language development. Students' learning is mediated through choral singing. Songs allow students to progress at a comfortable rate and according to their literacy level. This strategy supports English Language Learners who are in the emergent stages of language acquisition (Laframboise, Wynn, 1996, pp. 3-9).

According to Wynn's and Labamboise's (1996) research article, "Shared Experiences to Scaffold Second Language Learners' Literacy Acquisition," the use of these strategies offers students a positive experience while they learn and develop second language acquisition (pp. 3-9).

Students learn in different ways, and without even knowing everyone develops a preferred method of learning. Students are either, auditory, visual, or kinesthetic learners. Singing is an easy way of memorizing something. Music and songs create a good atmosphere conducive of learning. It is less energy-demanding because music perception begins even before birth. Students can focus on the intonation and develop better articulation through singing exercises. Teachers can keep their attention for longer periods of time because singing is not a tedious exercise.

Songs can assist in learning vocabulary. Words become unforgettable because of the expressions in the lyrics. Song teaching provides students with sufficient words to memorize quickly. Students are able to refer to the meaning of a word in a song. Learning through beautiful and rhythmic songs makes students feel energetic, motivated,

comfortable, and involved, thus lowering the affective filter (Lin, 2008, p. 121).

There is evidence that songs have a positive effect on the pronunciation skills of English Language Learners. The repetitive lyrics improve their language acquisition. Songs provide lexical patterns that are stored in the students' minds. These patterns can be retrieved during oral interaction. Songs are models full of grammatical information. Allowing students to chorally repeat the new language reduces anxiety and strengthens memory, thus, helping them store the sounds in their long-term memory making it more accessible (Mora, 2000, p. 152). According to Mora (2000), "sounds are the roots of both music and speech" (p. 146). Students will still need logical-analytical activities to help them process meaning, usage, and form (Mora, 2000, p. 151).

Singing enhances and instills confidence in language acquisition. Krashen (1982) stated that students' success was influenced by their affective filter (Krashen, as cited in Lin, 2008, p. 115). He implied that "language teachers should create a comfortable, lower affective filter and motivation stimulating study environment, where learners can develop higher self-esteem and greater sense of

confidence and fulfillment" (Krashen, as cited in Lin, 2008, p. 115). This is specially the case with pop songs because they are part of their culture. Since students are familiar with the popular songs, knowing these songs improves the status of the student within the peer group. Students connect songs with entertainment. Therefore, they are motivated to learn. If students identify with the singers, they are motivated to learn the lyrics. Usually songs deal with issues that are of interest to students. Lowe (2002) stated, "Songs are also useful in teaching the rhythm of the language while informing the students about the culture" (p. 19). Singing creates a relaxed atmosphere that enhances learning. Children enjoy activities that involve singing and making music which allow them to learn in fun way (Barker, 1999, p. 133).

Teachers can use other art expressions to scaffold language instruction of English Language Learners providing them with concrete experiences. Students will remember art projects and hands-on activities for a long time. Visuals and auditory input help students develop language.

Akin (1987) reported that when teachers utilized music in their lessons, students retained more (p. 1). "An educational research firm, CEMREL, Inc., has issued a

report which concluded that in 67 specific studies made in California, student achievement in reading, writing and math improved when the arts were included in the curriculum" (As cited in Akin, 1987, p. 1). Furthermore, a study conducted by the Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities found a link between high self-esteem and academic grades (Akin, 1987, p. 2). In addition, it stated that students learn academic concepts through musical games. Teachers feel that music has a positive effect in students' high achievement in all academic subjects (Akin, 1987, p. 3).

All effective curriculum programs should include art education whether it is academic achievement or not. Furthermore, Elster (2001) explained that Gardner's work, "has reinforced the value of the arts as a tool for the teaching and learning of many skills and concepts" (p. 3). Arts education can help students to solve problems, make connections, develop curiosity, creativity, and other skills (Elster, 2001 p. 3). Overall, art empowers students to succeed academically almost painlessly, and singing is the easiest and most effective scaffold that a teacher can use.

There are many connections between art and English language development. Arts in the curriculum seem to engage students who have learning difficulties (Elster, 2001, p. 15). Through art education teachers help students improve their writing and thinking skills. Students increase their aesthetic knowledge and imagination. Green (1995) wrote:

We must make the arts central in school curricula because encounters with arts have a unique power to release imagination. Stories, poems, dance performances, concerts, painting, films, plays-all have the potential to provide remarkable pleasure for those willing to move out toward them and engage with them. (Green, as cited in Elster, 2001, p. 16)

Many English Language Learners 'struggle to acquire the grade level standards required in a main stream classroom because of their lack of English language skills. Teachers can scaffold, mediate, and facilitate the development of the skills necessary to meet those standards in all academic areas through art. Students enjoy hands-on activities that are connected with not just art itself but math, language arts, social studies, and science. These artistic tasks besides motivating students allow them to

enjoy school. They are able retain the concepts and to retrieve this knowledge after a long period of time.

According to Barker (1999), songs can provide good language models which are easy to follow. Singing requires mouth movement, articulation, and enhances phonological awareness (p. 133). Thus, art provides scaffolding for all students through the different forms of artistic expression such as music, storytelling, and more. Singing in particular is the easiest and more effective scaffold for English Language Learners. Teaching all subjects through a well-constructed curriculum may provide students with the best and most effective approach to enhance the academic achievement of all students in a fun, interesting, and painless way.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

Participants for this thesis were recruited at Myra Linn Elementary School in the Alvord Unified School District in Riverside, California. 21 out of 25 teachers completed the survey (84%). Teachers were between 28 and 55 years of age. Of the 21 teachers, 8 were Hispanic (38%), 11 were White (52%), and 2 were African American (10%). 19 teachers were females (90%) and 2 were male (10%).

The majority of the teachers surveyed had anywhere between 6 and 21 or more years of teaching experience. Only one teacher had less than 6 years experience. Teachers averaged 14 years of experience, and they are all fully credentialed. 18 teachers hold master's degrees, and the other 3 teachers hold bachelorette degrees. In 2010, the average class size was 24. In the 2011-2012 school year, each qualified teacher averaged over 30 students. Respondents are a representative sample of teachers across the United States who play an important role in the education of elementary school students.

In 2011, Alvord Unified School District reported that

43.5% of the student population was ELL and 77.2% was Hispanic. Myra Linn was a Title I school with an enrollment of 749. 91.6% of the student population was reported to be socio-economically disadvantageded. Its population ages 5-17 below the poverty level was 13.44% according to reports by the California Department of Education, Census, and ed-data reports (2011). Eligibility for the National School Lunch Program is based on family income levels, and in 2010, 86% of all the Myra Linn Elementary School students were eligible for free or reduced lunch compared to the entire state of California with only 52%. 34% of the students were English Only, 64.8% English language learners, and only 1% of the students were redesignated as Fluent English Proficient (FEP).

The school's Academic Performance Index (API) score since 2006 has increased from 789 to 807 in 2011. In English Language Arts, the school met the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) with 50.7% of the students at or above proficient, while in math 70.0% of the students were at or above proficiency levels. According to the California Department of Education, the total number of students performing at the Advanced level in the California English Development Test (CELDT) was 16%, at the Early Advanced

level, 38%, at the Intermediate level 33%, at the Early Intermediate level 11%, and only 3% were at the Beginning level. In 2011, 386 students, or 51%, took the California English Language Development Test (CELDT).

Instrumentation/Data Collection

I developed this survey because I wanted an instrument that was direct but nonthreatening (See Appendix B). The responses to these survey questions were coded by determining common themes and patterns, and where there was frequency data, I used simple average method to produce descriptive statistics. It was designed to evaluate teachers' beliefs about whether or not singing, as an artistic expression, would increase English language learners' oral development.

Participants were asked to answer six multiple-choice questions based on a Likert scale from 1 to 5. Earlier drafts did not ask teachers to elaborate on their answers. However, the final draft included three questions that asked teachers to elaborate on their response in a few sentences to get a better idea of how singing was utilized in the classroom, what artistic expressions they utilized in the classroom, if any, and if they felt the rigor of the curriculum was appropriate. I felt that a multiple choice

survey was not sufficient, and to get more information, I felt the need to allow teachers to elaborate on their responses. Therefore, three questions were multiple-choice and required a short response. Three questions were only multiple-choice and the last one was open-ended.

I personally asked all 25 Kindergarten to 5th grade teachers to complete a confidential descriptive survey. They were given the surveys in unmarked envelopes. They were asked to place the survey in the sealed envelope provided, seal it, and place it in my mailbox located in the school's main office to protect their confidentiality. The survey was distributed to 25 teachers at the end of the 2011-2012 school year. I believe that for this reason, only 21 teachers responded as they were busy closing the year. However, all 25 teachers had completed the informed consent (See Appendix A).

The methodology for this project answered the following questions: 1. How often do you use singing in the classroom during English Language Development instruction? If you use singing, please describe how? 2. How often do you utilize other types of artistic expression to deliver instruction? Describe other types of artistic expression, and how you utilize them to deliver instruction? 3. How do

you rate the rigor of today's curriculum? Is there anything missing from today's curriculum? 4. How many years of experience do you have teaching English Language Learners? 5. Do you think singing would increase English Language Learners' language development? 6. If you could use singing as an instructional practice, would you use it as a daily strategy? Question 7 was open-ended: What obstacles, if any, do you believe exist regarding the use of singing as an instructional strategy to help English Language Learners (ELLs) increase English language acquisition? (See Appendix C). The responses to these questions were coded by determining common themes and patterns to produce descriptive statistics.

Data Treatment Procedures

The data collected was entered into Excel for each question with an ordinal measurement scale for the variable. The advantage of utilizing the Likert scale for this survey is that it is quick and easy to answer. The measurement scale for this data was ordinal from 1 to 5. There was no need to utilize complicated statistical treatments, since simple percentage computations accomplish the results for this thesis.

For each of the questions, I figured out how many teachers chose each of the answer choices and divided that number by the total number of surveys received to calculate the percentages.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The results of this survey suggested that teachers utilize or are likely to utilize singing in the classroom as an instructional strategy. On the other hand, the results also revealed that teachers are concerned about their own singing ability, time constraints, the appropriateness of the songs, and whether the songs are of high interest for students. In general, they believe that singing would scaffold, mediate, and facilitate English language development.

The following data summarizes the themes and highlights from the survey. For question one: How often do you use singing in the classroom during English Language Development instruction? Only 1 teacher (4%) responded "not at all." 7 (33%) responded "Barely," 4 (19%) "Sometimes," 3 (14%) "Often," and 6 (28%) "Very Often." 13 teachers (62%) of the participants used singing in the classroom during English Language Development instruction. Teachers utilized the chants included in the ELD program, Rigby: On Our Way to English, or teacher-created chants to assist students in memorizing vocabulary or other concepts. One teacher wrote

that singing is used to promote memorization of important information, teach articulation, breath control while reading, and cultural and social matters. Another teacher commented that songs often lead to class discussion, analysis of rhyming words, introduce poetry related to the lesson, and that figurative language songs help students remember definitions and provide them with examples. Figure 1: How Often is Singing Used reflects teachers' responses to question 1.

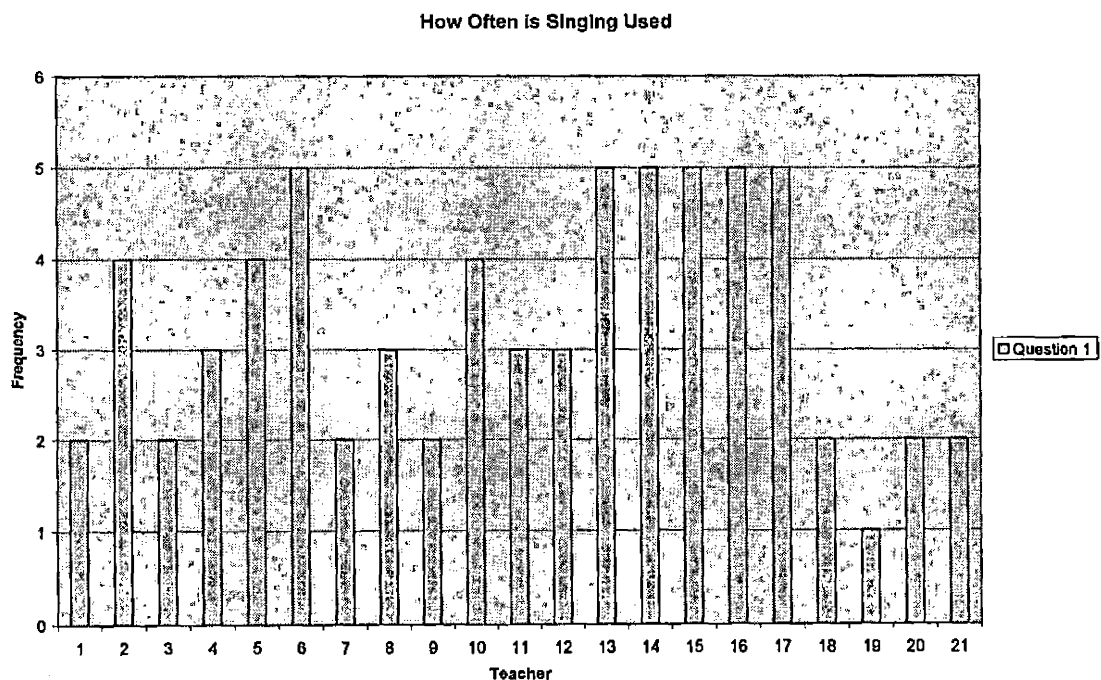


Figure 1. How Often is Singing Used

Question two asked: How often do you utilize other types of artistic expression to deliver instruction? 2 (9.5%) teachers responded "Not at all," 5 (23.8%) "Barely," 5 (23.8%) "Sometimes," 7 (33%) "Often," and 2 (9.5%) "Very Often." A total of 14 or about 67% of the teachers use other types of artistic expression. Some teachers assign visual art projects that involve coloring, cutting, and pasting to reinforce the learning objective. Others utilize poetry, musical instruments, dramatic performances, dance, directed drawing and painting as it relates to the themes and especially during the holidays. However, most teachers utilize other types of artistic expression during instruction to encourage students to do something new and to help them develop more understanding of the stories they are reading in class. Figure 2: Other Types of Artistic Expression shows teachers' responses to question 2.

Other Types of Artistic Expression

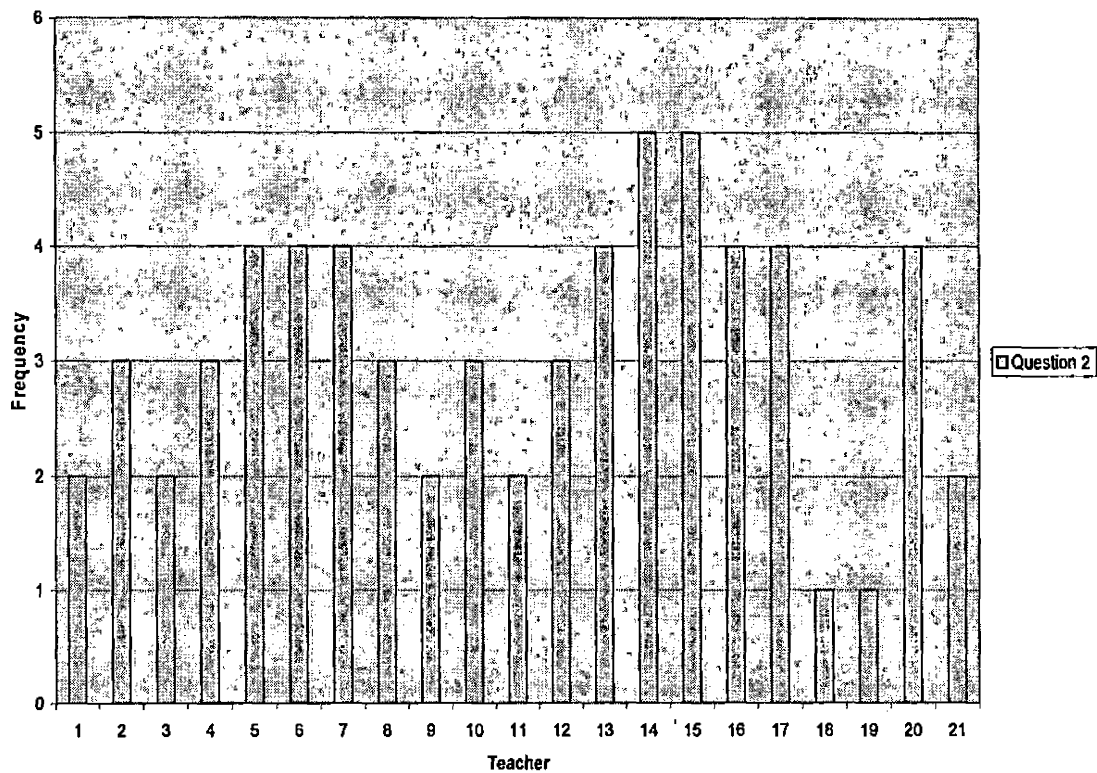


Figure 2. Other Types of Artistic Expression

In regards to question three: How do you rate the rigor of today's curriculum? 76% of the teachers rated the rigor of today's curriculum anywhere from rigorous to highly rigorous. Only 5 (23.8%) educators rated the curriculum as "Somewhat rigorous," and no one rated it as "Not rigorous at all." Teachers were asked to elaborate on this question by answering the following: Is there anything

missing from today's curriculum? Most teachers agreed that today's curriculum is missing the opportunity to do hands-on activities, extra-curricular activities such as music, visual and performing arts, science, social studies, and even physical and health education. 18 out of the 21 (85%) teachers surveyed commented on the lack of time available to provide students with opportunities to develop all their intelligences. The general comments were that there is not enough time in the day for creative activities. Participant 1 wrote, "Yes, I think we need more art and music to make sure we are developing all aspects of the brain"

(Participant 1, self-created survey, May 2012). Figure 3: Curriculum Rigor reveals the teachers' rating on the rigor of the current curriculum.

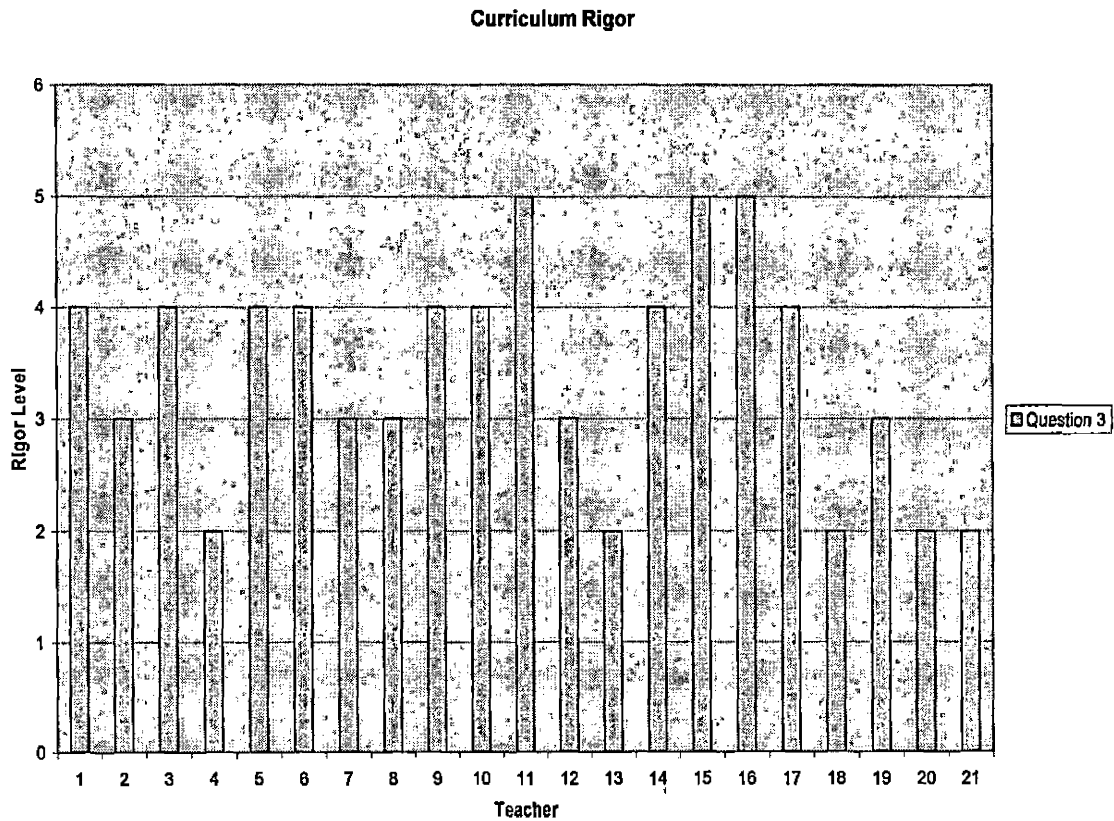


Figure 3. Curriculum Rigor

The most significant question in this survey was number five: Do you think singing would increase English Language Learners language development? Only one teacher said that he/she strongly disagrees. Two teachers said that they neither agree nor disagree. Eight teachers or 38% agree with the statement, and 47% strongly agreed that singing would increase language development in students who

are learning English as a second language. Consequently, 85% of the teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that singing is an important tool for language development.

Figure 4: Singing Increases Language Development represents the respondents' beliefs on the effect of singing in language development.

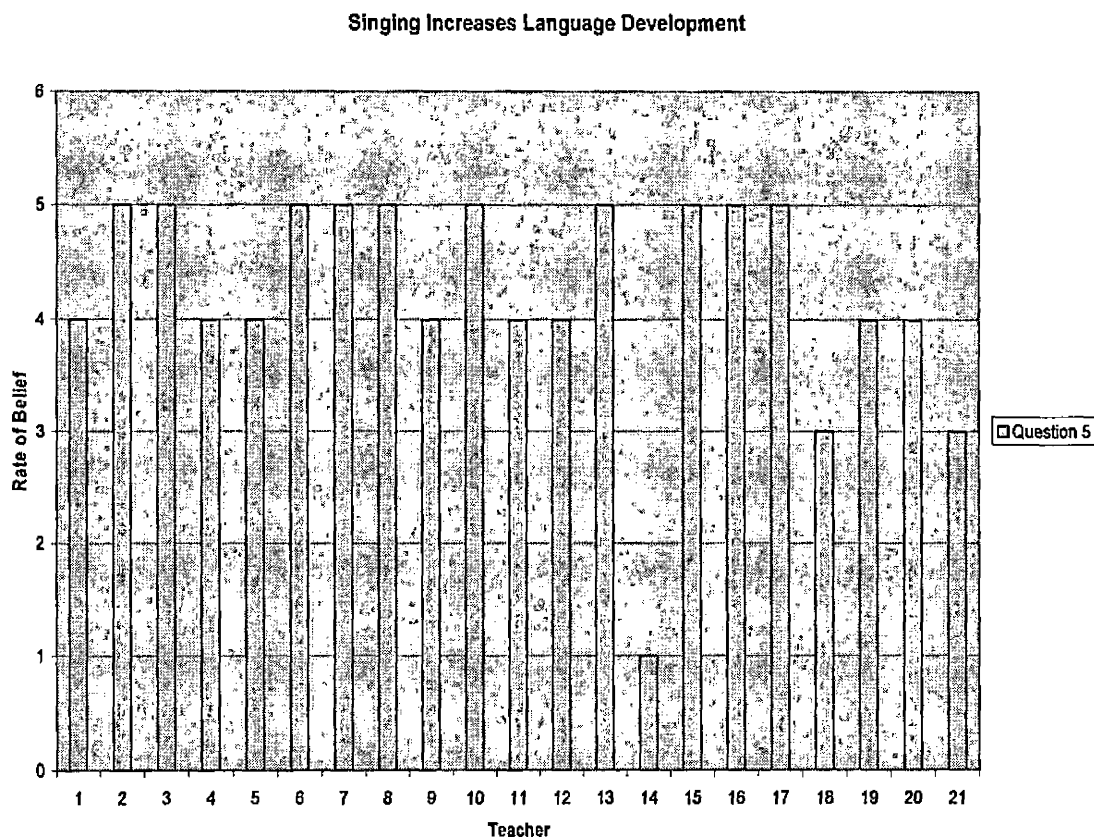


Figure 4. Singing Increases Language Development

When asked if they could use singing as an instructional practice, would they use it as a daily strategy, only three teachers chose to be neutral. The other 18 teachers or 85% chose "Likely" or "Very Likely." Thus, given the opportunity and the appropriate materials, teachers would most likely utilize singing in the classroom as a strategy to assist English Language Learners develop their oral, listening, reading, and writing skills. Figure 5: Using Singing as a Strategy shows the respondents' responses to question 6.

Using Singing as a Strategy

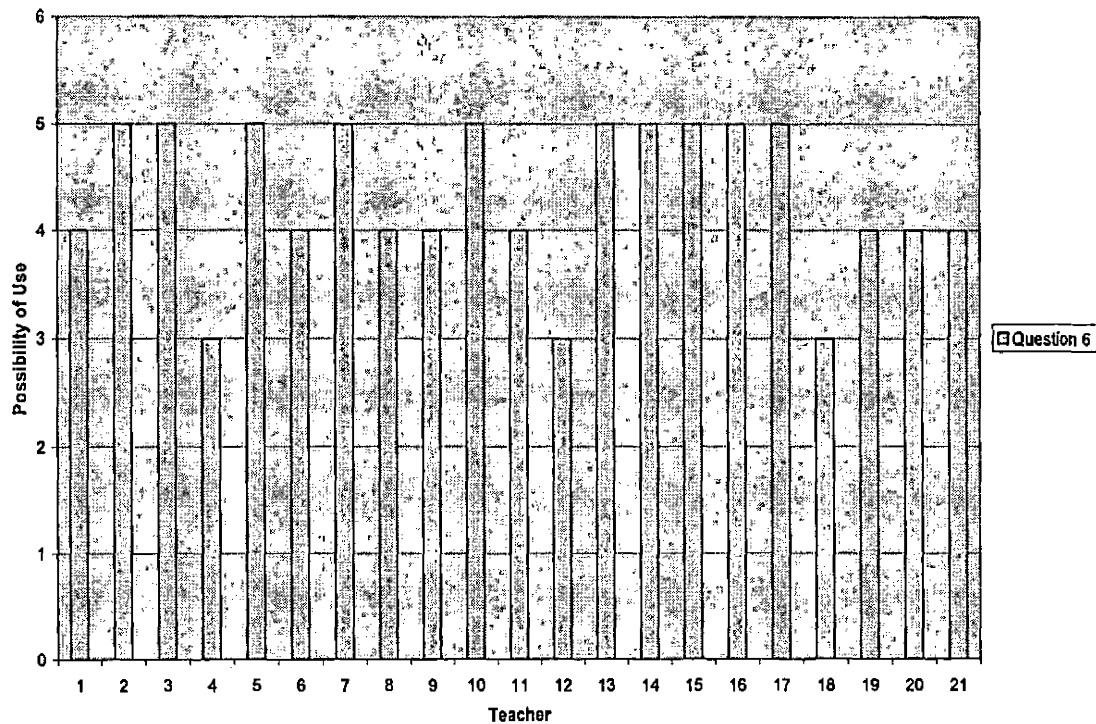


Figure 5. Using Singing as a Strategy

The open-ended question asked teachers if they believed there were obstacles for the use of singing as an instructional strategy to help English Language Learners increase English Language acquisition. Most teachers referred to time frames imposed by curriculum requirements and administration. Other obstacles were the appropriateness, adequacy, or lack of the materials

provided with the curriculum. Sometimes the music or chants provided are not aged appropriate or interesting to the students. One teacher commented that kids would enjoy music with a hip-hop or rock rhythm. Therefore, the type of music that is presented to the students must be engaging as well as concept related. Some teachers viewed their own personal abilities as an obstacle or their teaching style.

The survey comments tended to fall into the following categories: 1) Respondents are concerned with time restrictions to utilize singing is an important scaffolding strategy that would facilitate and mediate the oral language acquisition. 2) They embrace the idea that the curriculum should include some form of art to help develop all the areas of the brain. 3) They would utilize singing in the classroom as a tool to help students develop oral language acquisition provided they obtain age appropriate materials.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will help unify the curriculum standards from local districts to schools all across the United States. If students move, they will be reassured that they will be learning the same concepts and be held accountable for the same high standards no matter what state they live in. These standards are supposed raise the bar for all students including the low socio-economic and minority students. They propose to assist all students meet the high expectations of parents, teachers, and students. The premise is for all students to be well prepared to achieve success in a forever changing global economy where education is vital to their survival.

However, a good learning strategy for one student may not be for the student sitting on the next seat. Students learn in different ways, and teachers need to empower them by giving them the tools necessary to succeed academically and in the real world. Although, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) aim to guide all students to meet the same high standards across states, they do not adequately address the needs of the thousands, millions, of English

Language Learners that attend our schools daily hoping to achieve the American dream.

Furthermore, Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development confirmed that humans make sense of the world through a combination of intellect and prior knowledge (NCSU website, 2001). When students apply their knowledge of predictable songs to new knowledge, they will improve academically. Teachers must provide a stimulating and interactive classroom where they can integrate prior knowledge, and new experiences to help them develop problem solving skills as well as their cognitive abilities.

Brain research and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences reinforce the notion that songs can be utilized to stimulate students in the classroom. Students need to feel successful and singing is a pedagogical activity that makes sense and is meaningful to the learner. Students learn grammar, vocabulary, and spelling patterns as they develop fluency, pronunciation, and oral language through repetition. The brain is a pattern-seeker, so putting information in an organized framework such as a song makes it easier to remember

Students' level of interest, engagement, motivation, and attitude usually improve because the activity enhances

their confidence in learning the language. Teachers believe singing would be an effective strategy to scaffold, mediate, and facilitates oral language acquisition. "Songs help make the learning of new words and structures more natural and long lasting. By singing along, students are naturally acquiring correct pronunciation" (Kavanahg, 2010, as cited in www.tuneintoenglish.com).

Teachers must involve students in activities that mean something special to them. Teachers struggle to help students achieve the requirements of today's curriculum. Most of the time is spent on core subjects, but students continue to receive low scores on standardized testing. According to Elster (2001), "many educators believed that the arts could make a difference in their schools" (p. 2). Singing is one of the most enjoyable activities for children of any age (Barker, 1999, p. 133). It is an essential method of reinforcing basic skills in literacy. Singing stimulates the auditory discrimination, develops imagination, and increases their ability to express ideas in words. Rather than rote learning, singing songs is a fun way to learn because students repeat the same text and this repetition is important for pre-reading children. Singing is beneficial because it provides a way to construct

phrases and sentences, good language models, and mouth movement and better articulation. Students can improve fluency, intonation, and prosody, and their phonemic awareness (Barker, 1999, p. 133).

The right pedagogy would predict the language learners' success of acquisition and learning. English language educators have a responsibility to minimize the affective filter or negative emotions that can cause students to feel anxiety and thus increase their confidence in speaking English as a second language.

However, there are many issues that prevent the full implementation of a curriculum that includes art. Teachers need a lot of support and materials to apply the strategy during instruction of English Language Development. Singing is utilized at different levels depending on the grade level, concept, time, ability, and availability of materials.

Recommendation for Further Research

The purpose of this thesis was to evaluate if elementary school teachers believe that the use of artistic expressions such as singing would facilitate the development of oral English language acquisition of English Language Learners (ELLs). This study was conducted at the

elementary level. Middle school and high school teachers may have a different perspective on the subject. It would be of benefit to survey teachers at all levels of the education system.

APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Academic Affairs

May 23, 2012

Office of Academic Research • Institutional Review Board

Ms. Alicia Rubio
c/o: Prof. Donna Schnorr and Prof. Barbara Flores
Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling
and Department of Language, Literacy and Culture
California State University
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

CSUSB
INSTITUTIONAL
REVIEW BOARD
Administrative Review
IRB# 11098
Status
APPROVED

Dear Ms. Rubio:

Your application to use human subjects, titled, "Place Art Back into the Classroom" has been reviewed and approved by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of California State University, San Bernardino and concurs that your application meets the requirements for exemption from IRB review Federal requirements under 45 CFR 46. As the researcher under the exempt category you do not have to follow the requirements under 45 CFR 46 which requires annual renewal and documentation of written informed consent which are not required for the exempt review category. However, exempt status still requires you to attain consent from participants before conducting your research.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

Although exempt from federal regulatory requirements under 45 CFR 46, the CSUSB Federal Wide Assurance does commit all research conducted by members of CSUSB to adhere to the Belmont Commission's ethical principles of respect, beneficence and justice. You must, therefore, still assure that a process of informed consent takes place, that the benefits of doing the research outweigh the risks, that risks are minimized, and that the burden, risks, and benefits of your research have been justly distributed.

You are required to do the following:

- 1) Protocol changes must be submitted to the IRB for approval (no matter how minor) before implementing in your prospectus/protocol. Protocol Change Form is on the IRB website.
- 2) If any adverse events/serious adverse/unanticipated events are experienced by subjects during your research, Form is on the IRB website.
- 3) And, when your project has ended.

Failure to notify the IRB of the above, emphasizing items 1 and 2, may result in administrative disciplinary action.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, IRB Compliance Coordinator. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillespie@csusb.edu. Please include your application identification number (above) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,
Sharon Ward, Ph.D.

Sharon Ward, Ph.D., Chair
Institutional Review Board

SW/mg

cc: Prof. Donna Schnorr, Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling
Prof. Barbara Flores, Department of Language, Literacy and Culture
909.537.7588 • fax: 909.537.7028 • <http://irb.csusb.edu/>

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APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT**INFORMATION ABOUT:**

Place Art Back in the Classroom Curriculum

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR:

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to evaluate if teachers believe that the use of artistic expressions such as singing would help increase English language development. This study is being conducted by Alicia Rubio under the supervision of Dr. Donna Schnorr and Dr. Barbara Flores in the College of Education at California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study is to evaluate if teachers believe that the use of artistic expressions such as singing would facilitate the oral acquisition of English for English Language Learners.

DESCRIPTION:

Participants will be asked to answer seven multiple-choice questions. They will circle their answer choice and elaborate on their answer in a few sentences.

PARTICIPATION:

Each participant will verbally agree to participate. Participation is voluntary. By accepting the envelope with the survey, the participants acknowledge that they understand the study and consent to participate. Participants hold the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

To protect the confidentiality of participants and safeguard identifiable records and data, teachers will not be asked to write their names. Surveys will be numerically coded. All of the surveys and the SPSS file will be kept in a locked cabinet in my classroom. The surveys and SPSS file will be destroyed upon completion of my thesis.

DURATION:

It will take approximately thirty minutes to an hour to complete the survey.

RISKS:

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS:

The knowledge gained from this study may benefit teachers, English Language Learners, and society.

VIDEO/AUDIO/PHOTOGRAPH:

This research will not include video, audio, or photographs.

CONTACT:

Advisor(s) names: Dr. Donna Schnorr, 951-907-4231, dschnorr@csusb.edu and Dr. Barbara Flores, 909-537-5622, bflores@csusb.edu.

RESULTS:

The results can be obtained after I have completed my study. I will disseminate the results for publishing in my thesis when it is approved by the department of Bilingual/Cross Cultural of the College of Education of California State University, San Bernardino.

APPENDIX C
SELF-CREATED SURVEY

May 25, 2012

Dear Fellow Teachers,

I am conducting a research study at California State University, San Bernardino. This survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. I would appreciate your cooperation as I embark in this endeavor.

Please circle your answer.

1. How often do you use singing in the classroom during English Language Development instruction?

1. Not at all
2. Barely
3. Sometimes
4. Often
5. Very Often

If you use singing, please describe how?

2. How often do you utilize other types of artistic expression to deliver instruction?

1. Not at all
2. Barely
3. Sometimes
4. Often
5. Very Often

Describe other types of artistic expression, and how you utilize them to deliver instruction.

3. How do you rate the rigor of today's curriculum?

1. Not rigorous at all
2. Somewhat rigorous
3. Rigorous
4. Very rigorous
5. Highly rigorous

Is there anything missing from today's curriculum?

4. How many years of experience do you have teaching English Language Learners?

1. 0-5
2. 6-10
3. 11-15
4. 16-20
5. 21 or more

5. Do you think singing would increase English Language Learners language development?

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

6. If you could use singing as an instructional practice,
would you use it as a daily strategy?

1. Very unlikely
2. Unlikely
3. Neutral
4. Likely
5. Very likely

7. What obstacles, if any, do you believe exist regarding
the use of singing as an instructional strategy to help
English Language Learners increase English language
acquisition?

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Alicia Rubio

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