

Encouraging Motivation: Teaching Strategies for Multilingual Learners

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ABSTRACT

Multilingual learners are an ever growing segment of the student population. This article recognizes the need for teaching strategies that address this reality. Lesson plans containing motivational elements will help multilingual learners achieve academic success. This study touches on three motivational factors – self efficacy, relevance, and collaboration. It examines ways these factors are incorporated into lesson planning and measures effectiveness through data collection in Action Research. The framework incorporates Stephen Krashen’s theory of lowering the affective filter (1985) and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943) to tap into students’ prior knowledge and promote academic achievement.

1. Introduction

Children who are not supported emotionally have difficulty learning academically. When looking at the many factors influencing student’s lives today, educators would be remiss not to realize that every student has their own story and cannot always take in learning.

Never in the history of education have we as educators been more blessed with resources and assistance than in this time. Back in the 1800s only men could be educators. These men received little to no training and operated within a 19th century pedagogical framework. Much has changed. Notably, a big pedagogical shift occurred in 2020 when our world was shaken by the pandemic. Although everything was turned upside down, highly skilled educators rose to the challenge. We showed up for our students by pivoting to a virtual learning platform. Despite tremendous uncertainty, we found ways to help our students learn. “Pedagogy is still a science. Teaching is a science, but it is also a craft practiced by master craftsmen and women and learned by apprentices” (Paterson, 2021, para. 27).

Schools offer programs that provide academic support through curriculum and data monitoring. Literature and math coaches are equipped to answer questions or troubleshoot. Our schools have beautiful programs that help us learn how to be trauma-informed schools, how to implement restorative justice and how to maintain a positive culture within our classrooms. In 2015, trauma-informed schools were brought to the forefront through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act (ESEA). Trauma-informed schools use an evidence-based, trauma-informed approach. Section 4108 established Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grants providing funding for “comprehensive school- based mental health

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services and supports and staff development for school and community personnel working in the school that are based on trauma informed practices that are evidence-based [as well as] high quality support for . . . effective and trauma informed practices in classroom management” (Frankland, 2021). This has resulted in trauma awareness and proactivity for educators.

Yet, when it comes to our newest ones – our newcomers – we falter. The reason we falter is because despite the resources we have, a gap exists between these students’ basic needs and their education. When students face uncertainty and haven’t been given the foundation of physiological and safety/security in Maslow’s hierarchy, doesn’t it make sense that they are not quite ready to begin academic learning?

All multilingual learners need the foundation of having their sociological needs met first in order to succeed in school. How can educators effectively impact newcomers while being aware of their past experiences and needs? What strategies can help a multilingual learner confidently navigate a new environment? The strategies that empower educators are found in these answers. An empowered educator is one who knows he or she is making a difference and positively motivating students.

When students face uncertainty and haven’t been given the foundation of physiological and safety and security in Maslow’s hierarchy, they are not quite ready to begin academic learning yet. Educational resources fail to encompass this fact, thus leaving a gap. Only when the hierarchical foundation is established, only when students feel that in the classroom they have love and belonging - only then - learning blooms. Educators would be remiss not to take into account students’ backgrounds. This article shows specific strategies to accomplish this goal

1.1 Framing the Study

The framework for this emerged when the researcher read about a study that examined literacy and motivation in adult newcomers in Western Canada (Severinsen et al., 2018).

Minimal research has been conducted specifically on teaching strategies that motivate English language adult literacy learners, leaving literacy teachers with little research-based guidance on how best to motivate these learners to invest in their education. Our literature review found that, because these learners often lose motivation due to their lack of or limited education, building motivation and investment must be at the heart of lesson design. (Severinsen et al., 2018)

Research had been conducted among adult learners, but not among children. The intention was to conduct research in an elementary classroom to find research-based guidance on motivation. After all, if motivational strategies have proven to be successful in adult multilingual learners, wouldn’t it make sense that motivation is also key to a child’s academic success as well?

The researcher identified with Stephen Krashen’s theory of lowering the affective filter. Krashen (1982) explains by stating, “Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding” (Schutz, 2019, para.2).

Krashen’s theory (1982) has huge significance. When a student feels they belong and are genuinely cared about, they are more likely to succeed academically. The researcher witnessed this in all students including newcomers- that lowering the affective filter had a positive impact. When they entered the room they were relaxed and happy, thus making great strides in their learning. They felt they belonged. Krashen famously stated, “In the real world, conversations with sympathetic native speakers who are willing to help the acquirer understand are very helpful” (Schutz, 2019).

This validates that what we do for students really does matter. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1962) is another theoretical framework which meets the needs of the multilingual learner (Billings & Walqui, 2017).

In the case of English Language Learners (ELLs)/Multilingual Learners (MLLs), the immense potential that they bring to our classrooms is comprised of their intellectual, linguistic, and creative strengths that are waiting to be built upon. Our responsibility as educators is to provide students appropriate learning experiences and support to help them realize their potential development. The goal of instruction is to foster our ELLs'/MLLs' autonomy and their ability to engage in activities that enable them to apply and modify what they have learned to new situations. (para.4).

Teaching builds off students' backgrounds and proactively helps them see their potential through their next levels of development and skills. The simplicity of the circle diagram shows that when it comes to teaching ELLs - methods and strategies don't need to be complex. Students succeed when we value their abilities and help them learn to value themselves. From there educators are able to be the bridge to achieve the next ring. So often students only see the last ring of what they can't do. It is our responsibility to help them see what they come to us already knowing (Kurt, 2020).

1.1.1 Methods

The current expectation for reading assessments, for example, is putting all students at a disadvantage, thus not adequately performing to their full potential. Current assessments are formatted in such a way that, "Traditional reading comprehension assessment facilitates one method of student-item interaction: it pushes a student to read the entirety of a passage, hold the information in memory, and then answer comprehension questions" (Guerreiro, et. al, 2022).

All students are required to keep information in their short-term memory and apply recall when answering questions. Now factor in students who are multilingual learners, have a learning disability of any sort, or simply have test anxiety. The current methods put up barriers that hinder student performance. This means current reading assessments run counterproductive to Krashen's theory of lowering the affective filter. In turn, it becomes a challenge to achieve equitable outcomes.

One of the keys to counteracting this is through applying some methods of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL was initially proposed as a means for including students with disabilities in the general-education classroom, it is now better understood as a general-education initiative that improves outcomes for all learners.

By applying the following methods of scaffolding (instructional supports), segmenting the texts, using think aloud strategies, and teaching vocabulary in context to the lesson, students grow. As these strategies are applied, misrepresentations or wrong vocabulary associations or definitions are revealed, allowing opportunity for correction and better comprehension. The researcher found that sometimes simply pausing to ask the learner to explain what the sentence was about revealed his level of understanding. Often, a high reader can give the impression he comprehends but by segmenting the text for example, the educator sees where there is a disconnect.

1.2 Initial Research Question/ Hypothesis

With this information in mind, the researcher sought to find answers regarding which strategies empower multilingual learners. The researcher set out to answer the following questions and how they directly impact a student's motivation.

1. How can we as educators most effectively impact newcomers and be in tune with their past experiences and needs?
2. All multilingual learners need the foundation of having their sociological needs met first in order to succeed in school. What strategies prove successful and can give multilingual learners the confidence they need to navigate their new environment?

These answers contain the strategies which empower educators with the knowledge that they are making a difference and give students positive motivation to learn. Finding specific strategies to accomplish this goal is important.

1.3 Overview of Study

The goal of this study was to show that when students felt supported their motivation increased. Motivation is essential to academic success. Educators must proactively show students that they have great potential. There is a gap between current curricular offerings and a newcomer's need to belong. At the heart of this gap lies motivation. According to a recent study on newcomer adults, learners often lose motivation due to their lack of or limited education.

Building motivation and investment must be at the heart of lesson design (Severinsen, et al., 2019). If this is true in adult students, wouldn't it make sense that newcomer children feel the same? When one looks at their own life, can one see how motivation impacts the likelihood of success?

The basis of this study was to examine how integrating the following six strategies increased motivation in English language learner children. The strategies were: Relevance, settlement needs, life experiences, peer collaboration, autonomy and self-efficacy (Severson, et. al 2019). Thus far, these strategies have only been studied in adults, but motivation does not have an age limit. The goal was that the research conducted showed how these same strategies also pertain to children.

The conducted research topics fall under the above headings. Some may have the same categories but for different reasons, as the research will clearly demonstrate.

2. Literature Review

The literature review examined several subtopics that stemmed from the six motivating factors (See Table 1). This provided a starting point and is where the researcher found the answers related to the struggle educators face when teaching multilingual learners. In this literature review the researcher closely examined three subtopics (See Table 2) which fall under three of the motivating factors; relevance, collaborative learning, and self-efficacy. (Severinsen, et al., 2019.)

Table 1. Motivating Factors in Multilingual Learners

Relevance	Settlement Needs	Life Experiences	Collaborative Learning	Autonomy	Self-Efficacy
Personal connections	Socio economic status	Personal connections	Equity	Autonomy	Motivation
Literacy Framework Strategies for MLL	Trauma	Turning Stumbling Blocks into Building Blocks	Literacy Framework Strategies for MLL	Equity	Literacy Framework Strategies for MLL

Note. Verburg, 2023

Table 2. Incorporated Specific Motivators

Relevance	Self-Efficacy	Collaborative Learning
Check 1	Check 2	Check 3
Student Feelings daily check in	Wonders Curriculum	turn/talk
Informative Assessment	Iready Data	think/pair/share

Note. Verburg, 2023

2.1 The Role of SEL

One would be remiss not to factor in the importance of Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Afterall, it encompasses all the motivating factors. When a student feels emotionally supported, she is much more able to achieve academic success. “Emotions can advance or hinder children’s academic engagement, commitment, work ethic, and ultimate school success. Students lacking social-emotional competencies are at risk of becoming disconnected from school, and this lack of connection negatively affects their academic performance. Extensive research shows that mastery of social-emotional competencies is linked to greater well-being and higher school achievement, whereas the failure to develop these skills may lead to personal, social, and academic problems” (Wright, 2023).

Schools are correct to implement SEL training and strategies. According to the “Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) - research revealed that the implementation of evidence-based SEL programs led to an 11% gain in student achievement, fewer behavior issues, reduced dropout rates, and decreases in the areas of mental health issues” (Wright, 2023).

Frequently, in the classroom, the researcher would have students make comments such as, “with you, I feel safe” or “can I sit by you for a moment?” One student would often come in from afternoon recess upset about something that happened on the playground. He worked out a plan with the researcher to sit for two minutes gathering his thoughts and calming down before coming to his table spot to fully engage in the lesson. After, he’d decide if he needed to talk about it or if he had successfully processed his thoughts on his own. This touches on another important aspect of SEL - mindfulness.

2.1.1 Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the art of focusing on one’s present surroundings and emotions without self judgement; it is acknowledging the moment from an objective standpoint. It is like looking at a river while standing on the bank. One sees the swirls within the water, but does not get caught up in the swirls, rather sees it from the outer bank’s perspective. Our emotions are often the

swirls in our minds, and it is easy to get caught up in them, thus not seeing those emotions objectively.

Mindfulness brings the ability to process emotions in a healthy way. “Mindfulness is essentially seeing and experiencing things as they are, using all senses while also being aware of thoughts, emotional tones, and reactions as they arise without judging them as good, bad, right, or wrong. It also includes catching oneself on “automatic pilot” and when one reflexively reacts, and noticing how those reactions manifest in the body. “(Bauer, 2010).

One study conducted about using mindfulness meditation strategies in schools, states that, “non-clinical youth populations may also benefit from meditation where therapeutic intervention is not the focus. In non-clinical youth samples, school-based meditation would be beneficial if it assisted students to achieve the desired outcomes of schools such as academic–social–emotional learning” (Waters, et. al., 2014).

SEL can build off and grow self-efficacy in students. Collaboration builds a sense of belonging in the classroom, and relevancy occurs by validating student’s emotions, which in turn ties in the ability to process learning. These factors work by increasing motivation. Motivation is at the heart of learning.

2.2 Literacy Framework for MLL’s

As many educators know, word lists for memorization are not very effective in helping students obtain a new language. In fact, rote memorization is the least effective learning strategy because it requires baseless memorization without comprehension. Hence, there is no hinge to allow learning to truly take place. “Yet researchers have concluded that the necessary vocabulary size for effective language use is approximately 3000 words families and above. Thus, a lack of vocabulary knowledge will affect an individual’s listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills” (Hong & Stapa, 2023, para.5).

The relevant question is then - “What is the most effective strategy?” One strategy involves the use of several models for the teaching and learning of vocabulary such as mapping between conceptual domains, acquiring vocabulary on basis of similarity, learning internal relations between language and cognition, learning vocabulary based on embodied experiences, and developing vocabulary through etymology, and teamwork.

These strategies give links that students are able to grasp” (Hong & Stapa, 2023, para.7).

2.2.1 Blended Learning

Blended learning is also effective because it incorporates both traditional face to face learning with computer-based learning. Blended learning is defined as “any time a student learns at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home and at least in part through online delivery with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace” (Horn & Staker, 2011, para.3). It essentially takes the best of both worlds and combines them to benefit the student. Several different studies were conducted to measure the effectiveness of blended learning and each time showed significant improvement by examining the test scores of students. “Numerous researchers agreed that blended learning has vast advantages over the traditional mode of learning. Many studies have reported the effectiveness of blended learning in increasing pupils’ performance in comparison to traditional face-to-face learning” (Rasheed et. al., 2018).

The concept of blended learning grew when home schooling skyrocketed “from roughly 800,000 students in 1999 to roughly 2 million” in 2011. (Horn & Staker, 2011). Homeschool parents relied on curriculum based computer programs to fill in teaching gaps. In 2020, when our world was hit with a global pandemic, blended learning was suddenly our only option. Despite disadvantages, such as poor internet connectivity and complex learning platforms, it did offer students “autonomous learning, and (was) easy to use...Students perceived that the implementations of blended learning are flexible, motivated, interactive, and improved ICT skills” (Aji, et. al., 2020, para 67).

There are six models that utilize blended learning strategies and have resulted in academic growth. Those include face-to-face driver, rotation, flex online lab, self-blend and online driver strategies. (Horn & Staker, 2011)

More blended learning strategies are continuing to be developed as they progress. One positive strategy that incorporates blended learning is Google Classroom.

Without a doubt, pupils will have more desire to learn in a comfortable, caring environment as compared to a tense and unsupportive classroom environment. The collaboration between the teacher and pupils in a learning community meets the social needs of the pupils and in exchange, the feeling of closeness and reverence towards the teacher is increased (Horn & Staker, 2011).

Through platforms such as Google Classroom, students are able to collaborate with each other through interaction and discussion. Teachers are able to promote a harmonious classroom tone which will allow classmates to feel connected to one another despite being in different locations.

Success enhances student confidence and confidence enhances motivation. Teaching vocabulary via thinking maps and blended learning increases student motivation. “(Researchers) assert that motivation is one of the key elements in the process of second language learning as it brings an enormous effect on the learner’s learning outcomes.” (Hong & Stapa, 2023, para.13).

2.2.2 Dynamic Bilingualism

Dynamic bilingualism is another important concept when it comes to the literacy framework of multilingual learners. Education has evolved from originally using the methods of sink or swim philosophy, to separating languages and keeping them separate in instruction, to our current philosophy of constructivism (active participation). Today students are given freedom to share ideas and concepts in informal ways. Dynamic bilingualism involves encouraging multilingual learners to use their native language as an anchor for new language development. It is tying in what they know to an association of the vocabulary in their new language. It is a beautiful, organic process.

Garcia and Sylvan (2011) argue that within a dynamic conceptualization of bilingualism, bilingual learners L1 and L2 are not seen as two separate languages having a linear relationship. Instead, dynamic bilingualism suggests “both languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate mental processes in understanding, speaking, literacy and not least, learning” (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 641). Growth occurs when students are encouraged to assimilate their thinking to their new language.

Dynamic bilingualism ties into this subtopic by allowing learners to feel motivated through intrinsic (Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET)) and extrinsic motivation (Organismic Integration Theory (OIT)). However, intrinsic motivation is the key. (Hong & Stapa, 2023)

(Programs such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) have been widely implemented and promoted within many schools.)

2.2.3 Social Emotional Learning Data

In 2023, the Kentwood Public School District assembled a Student Perception Data Review to gauge social emotional learning (SEL). 71% of female students and 58% of male students felt connected to the adults at school. This is encouraging, although there is always room for improvement. Due to these feelings of connectedness, 95% of students felt very encouraged by their teachers to do their best (May, 2023 Student Perception Data Review Discovery Elementary). This directly ties into how a student's intrinsic motivation factors into his/her academic success.

One way to increase SEL is to ensure multilingual learners can relate to the lessons being taught. For example, the researcher was teaching a 1st grader how to form the small letter "e." She asked him if he understood baseball to which he emphatically said, "Yes! I play it!" She drew the letter x four times on the whiteboard and connected them while saying "Hit the ball. Run around the bases." His eyes lit up with recognition and he suddenly understood how to form a letter e. This personal connection laid the foundation for his academic growth.

Using the chosen quality books by the district was a great choice for the researcher as well. What is important for educators is finding a variety of stories and topics students can read about. Students have many options to choose from and can gravitate towards topics they enjoy.

Tying personal experiences into a student's learning is a major factor. "(It) situates "ordinary" people and their life stories at the nexus of history and biography, which, as Corbett (2015a) suggests, is an important strategy for shifting our understanding of the potentials and pitfalls of educational processes towards a participant perspective."

(Grady et. al., 2018, p. 6).

2.2.4 Total Physical Response

TPR stands for total physical response. The researcher found that incorporating TPR in collaborative lessons made the lessons more effective. "We *acquire* our mother tongue, rather than learn it as we do additional languages. There is a neural link between speech and action"

(Walton, 2023).

TPR was established in 1966 by Dr James Asher. Asher discovered "that he was quickly able to internalize Japanese by physically responding to commands in the language such as *stand up*, *sit down*, and *walk*....Children respond to these commands physically, activating the right hemisphere of the brain, which is associated with motor movement. The right brain is thus able to internalize the new linguistic elements immediately, without a time-consuming analysis by the left brain, which is normally associated with language use" (1977, p. 2-4). According to Asher, "most of the grammatical structure of the target language and hundreds of vocabulary items can be learned through the skillful use of the imperative by the instructor" (1977, p. 2-4). Asher emphasizes that because TPR taps into natural language learning processes, the stress associated with mental analysis of the target language is reduced, and learning becomes a more enjoyable experience.

2.2.5 Collaborative Learning

Another successful strategy for teaching multilingual learners is through collaborative learning opportunities. Through collaboration, students are both challenged and encouraged to succeed. Students also feel connected to each other over commonalities in learning. It is vital students see common ground with their peers because this promotes inclusion. Teachers have the ability to foster this cohesiveness through planning collaborative opportunities. “Therefore, vulnerable (rural) students may be expected to have access to the supportive adults and positive relationships necessary for them overcome the negative outcomes associated adverse childhood experience.” (Frankland, 2021, p.59)

The concept of peer group embeddedness is a sociological concept pertaining to a developmental perspective. It’s defined as how humans interact with one another and gravitate to those with whom they share commonalities. Peer group embeddedness involves self selection and is based on friendships. In middle school and high school, it can refer to cliques. Although cliques often have a negative connotation, they do have value. Through a clique, or friend group, students can find encouragement and motivation that lead to positive intrinsic growth. The peer group represents an important reference group for comparing and validating values and in turn increasing security of identity. If peer group-specific norms and values do not fit with those of the students, separation from the group—a decision from the person or/and the group—and seeking a new one might be more likely” (Reindl, 2021 p.2).

For educators, this can be a driving force behind student learning. In their classrooms, teachers can guide peer group embeddedness in a way that establishes friendships and feelings of belonging. This in turn promotes unity and validates every member of the group as they collaborate through learning opportunities.

Equity is at the heart of education. Collaboration among students helps to promote this. A teacher’s pedagogy has the ability to foster learning in equitable ways. “We view places and their politics as articulations of spatial relations that reflect place differentials of power through differences concerning access, equity, representation and regulation” (Beach, et al., 2018, p.5). In peer group embeddedness, one learns social and interpersonal skills while developing higher level thinking skills through collaboration. For a teacher, modeling equity through student collaboration is a winning strategy. “Only through the personal involvement of each citizen and the collaboration of other organizational structures can we work to provide safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all, and thus achieve effective equity in education” (Santos et al., 2020).

2.2.6 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy means one’s confidence in themselves regarding the ability to complete a task. The center of self-efficacy is having compassion and understanding for oneself. This concept came out of psychologist Albert Bandura’s research and has been instrumental in understanding human behavior.

The theoretical underpinning of self-efficacy theory can be found in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). The social cognitive theory posits that individuals are able to choose and pursue particular courses of action; this is known as the human agency (Bandura, 1982). This agency works through a mechanism that Bandura called “triadic reciprocal causation”: an individual’s past and current behaviors, cognitive factors (such as motivation), and the environment exerting causal effects on each other (Bandura, 1997; Henson, 2001). Dr Chung from Hang

Seng University in Hong Kong cites, “the interrelationships between these three influences then affect how individuals perceive their ability to achieve a goal. This cognitive appraisal is at the core of self efficacy theory. (Chung, 2022 p.27).

In order for teachers to be effective in fostering a student’s positive self-view, they must have self-efficacy in their own pedagogy. Thus, they are able to begin fostering students' positive views of themselves. Teachers can bolster a student’s self-view by creating a welcoming classroom environment where students feel they are valued and belong. Teachers will organically learn a student’s strengths and weaknesses and can build off of their learning. By taking the time to get to know their students, teachers help students see how important they are and that they should be proud of their accomplishments. In turn, this fosters intrinsic motivation and a student's self-efficacy grows.

One of the ways this can occur is through read aloud strategies (Chung, 2022).

Read aloud is an instructional strategy where parents, caregivers and teachers read topics or text aloud to students or children, the reader exhibits and utilizes variations in tone, pitch, pauses, eye contact, pace, volume, and tach through articulate delivery....learners who are taught through read aloud develop their knowledge of the second language through storing and constructing vocabulary based language representations. (p. 565)

Self-efficacy is molded by a student’s experience. When the student understands a concept, the student’s mindset is affected in positive ways. This positivity is reinforced when the student practices his/her knowledge of the concept. Subsequently, if the student has a negative experience while learning a concept, his/her ability to learn it is affected and learning capacity is stunted.

The researcher witnessed this in action with a newcomer student from a war-torn country. The student had a daily routine of checking in with the researcher to lower his affective filter and start his day with a positive mindset. He commented that in his former school in this war-torn country, the teachers (refugee camp leaders) would hit his hands with sticks because he couldn’t learn math concepts like one plus one. Yet here he loved math and proudly shared his mental three digit addition skills and desired to learn more.

Self-efficacy is intermingled in all of the motivating factors. Teachers who apply certain strategies are giving their multilingual learner students an advantage. The following are six important strategies that help a teacher grow a student’s self-efficacy:

Table 3. Six practices for supporting student self-efficacy

SIX PRACTICES FOR SUPPORTING STUDENT SELF-EFFICACY	
TASK ENGAGEMENT	SOCIAL-COMMUNICATIVE ENGAGEMENT
SELF-REGULATED LEARNING	MULTI-SENSORY LEARNING ACTIVITIES
SUPPORTIVE FEEDBACK	STUDENT CENTERED LEARNING

Note: taken from Constantine et.al., 2019, p.5

These six practices are easy to implement and doing so places no extra burden on educators. Instead, they are a great way to remind educators to include these strategies in daily lesson plans. Most of all, they are evidence based strategies that improve student self-efficacy, in turn increasing student motivation. The researcher made sure that these practices were included as she planned her action research design.

3. Research Design and Methodology - Approach and Rationale for the Study

There is a gap between what meets the needs of students and where the academics begin. At the heart of this gap lies motivation. The researcher witnesses this gap every time a newcomer student walks through her door. They have overcome many obstacles just to be in school and are overwhelmed. So much information is coming at them. It is as if they are being poured a big glass of water and simply can't take it all in. In order for students to succeed, those factors on Maslow's hierarchy must be met first, before learning can take place.

Recently the researcher had a newcomer join who needed food provided at school and over the weekend too (Hand to Hand Ministries). She also needed winter clothes. The researcher advocated for this student and once the student knew those hierarchical needs were met, she could begin to learn English in bite sized chunks. We as educators are remiss to think that our students need to learn letters and sounds first and then get frustrated when the student flounders.

Motivation is the key factor to learner success. When a student flounders and feels stressed by not knowing what he/she should know, motivation can turn into internal frustration. "Learners often lose motivation due to their lack of or limited education, thus, building motivation and investment must be at the heart of lesson design" (Severinsen, Kennedy, and Mohamud, 2019, p.1).

Motivation hinges on six strategies among adult learners:

Relevance, Settlement Needs, Life Experiences, Collaborative Learning, Autonomy, and Self-Efficacy" (Severinsen, Kennedy, and Mohamud, 2019).

3.1 Formative Assessments

This research is not meant to be a copied and pasted approach. Each classroom is unique and there is not a "one size fits all" formula of formative assessment that the reader can take to their own classroom to obtain magical results. Rather, it is elements within the assessments. It is important to understand the concept of formative assessment and broaden the definition. Too often educators get locked onto the words "formative assessment" when it really encompasses many aspects. It is expanding our definition.

Also, importantly, all of our students are different. They come from diverse backgrounds, have various experiences, and many of the students have experienced some form of trauma in their lives. Therefore, we must use a flexible approach and adapt as needed when working with multilingual students.

“Formative assessment is a planned process in which assessment-elicited evidence of students’ status is used by teachers to adjust their ongoing instructional procedures or by students to adjust their current learning tactics. (Popham, 2025).

Popham goes on to explain further by saying that “formative assessment can double the speed of student learning. In fact, Black and William (1998) in Popham (2010) have indicated that the learning gains triggered by the formative assessment process were “amongst the largest ever reported for educational interventions” (p. 4). Popham (2025). The goal of this research is to encourage educators to use their natural understanding of how the formative assessment they are using aligns with each student.

The formative-assessment process starts off by having teachers identify the ends—that is, the curricular targets they want their students to accomplish. Then, during ongoing instruction, students are periodically assessed to see whether they are mastering the building blocks (subskills and knowledge) they’ll need in order to achieve the target curricular aims. If the results of such en route assessment indicate that progress is satisfactory, no adjustments are required by either the teacher or by the teacher’s students. If students are not progressing as well as had been hoped, however, then the teacher makes an adjustment in the instructional means and/or the students make adjustments in how they are trying to learn. That’s the essence of formative assessment—the incarnation of an ends means strategy in which assessment-elicited evidence allows teachers and/or students to decide whether what they are doing (the means) needs to be changed so that the curricular targets (the ends) can be better achieved. The essence of formative assessment is no more complicated than that! (Popham, 2017 p. 299)

The bottom line is that an educator must know their student well in order to be successful. By knowing the individual students well, the educator is in tune with where there is a challenge in learning and how best to meet the need. Just like we don’t all wear the same shoe size or have the same feet, using the same mold for every student without understanding their uniqueness is a setup for misinterpretation. As counterintuitive as it seems, in order to utilize formative assessments well, the key is knowing your students.

3.2 Description of the Sample, Site, Population

At Discovery Elementary, one third of the population is considered ML. (ML is an acronym that stands for Multilingual learners, other acronyms are often used interchangeably such as MLL, EL, or ESL.) Multilingual learners are students who are not yet fluently proficient in speaking English and come from non-English speaking backgrounds and are proficient in a different native language/languages. Multilingual learners often receive specialized instruction in both academic and English language instruction. Discovery currently has 241 ML students, the highest ML population for elementary schools in Michigan. The 2023 summer school population consisted of thirty ML students. The researcher worked specifically with eleven students in summer school, 1st grade to 5th grade.

3.3 Researcher’s Role

The researcher designed seventeen specific questions pertaining to the three motivating factors of relevancy, self-efficacy, and collaboration. The role performed action research and data collected was entered into Google Sheets. Through it, the six strategies that were proven effective among adult MLs were monitored. It also detailed how these strategies were implemented.

3.4 Procedures/Research Plan

The researcher created lesson plans incorporating these strategies, and specifically investigated three of the six areas. After the end of each summer school day, the data was evaluated, and the methods rated effectiveness on a Google document. (Severson, et. al 2019)

1. Relevance
Using and formulating lesson content helps students make personal connections: This personal component creates motivation.
2. Self-Efficacy
Using each learner's strengths to build the foundation of lesson content: This also will help the student gain ownership as his confidence grows.
3. Collaborative Learning
Providing ample lesson-based opportunities for collaborative work and problem solving: As students collaborate, they gain different perspectives and acquire language skills. For example, using Think/Pair/Share or Peanut butter/Jelly partner work to gain confidence among peers. These three areas were specifically examined by the researcher. However, other areas that contribute to student motivation include the following: (Severson, et. al 2019)
4. Settlement Needs
 - a.) Ensuring student food insecurity is addressed before learning begins: This means giving students time to eat the provided breakfast; providing snacks and a snack time in class, as well as bringing them to the cafeteria for lunch.
 - b.) Reaching out to Hand to Hand Ministries, an organization that ensures students have meals to eat over the weekend: Documents detailing family food assistance programs will also be sent home.
 - c.) Encouraging classroom community connections through classroom jobs: Participation in school community programs, such as the district's free after school day care program, should also be encouraged.
 - d.) Incorporating activities in lessons which promote and expose students to potential career paths.
5. Life Experiences
 - a.) Building interactive writing opportunities: These opportunities focus on shared learner experiences within the classroom, such as writing a class reader dictated by students.
 - b.) Adapting lesson plans to incorporate student's personal information: Doing this makes abstract concepts more concrete.
6. Autonomy
Creating a learner-centered environment through lessons involving explicit strategy instruction: For example, incorporating daily journaling to help students take ownership of their learning.

3.5 Other Important Factors:

3.5.1 Instrumentation

The researcher used Google Sheets to organize and determine the answers to the seventeen questions asked. This allowed the researcher to mark down the research questions in a timely accurate manner.

3.5.2 Statistical Techniques and Coding Methods

Google Sheet was color coded according to students, research dates, and questions. The seventeen questions were broken down into three categories and each category was listed on a new weekly tab according to the dates. The color-coded methods and organization allowed for detailed data examination.

3.5.3 Data Collection Methods

The collected data was recorded on a Google Sheet entitled “Day-to-Day Data.” Each student was listed in their own category for each date during summer school. The researcher had seventeen questions she asked herself when she met with the students. She would check off a box and note the student’s data for each question. As the days progressed and turned into weeks, specific data soon revealed itself.

3.5.4 Strategies for Data Management and Ethical Considerations

The data was gathered digitally and accessed through the researcher’s password protected laptop. The laptop always stayed with the researcher. Occasionally the researcher would print off some of the data in order to better organize the information, but all paper was subsequently shredded.

The researcher submitted a proposal to the IRB Board at Aquinas College prior to the data collection. This was done to ensure accuracy and the absence of bias. The Board’s approval also ensured the protection of student confidentiality.

3.5.5 Limitations

The limitations the researcher faced included the fact that the research was conducted during summer school and as a result, student attendance was less consistent than during the regular school year. However, the researcher got to know her eleven students very well, allowing her to understand how the data affected each student. The relaxed summer school atmosphere lowered their affective filter, allowing for consistent and honest data collection.

Some other limitations included students' personal struggles overriding the data’s factual aspects. For example, one day a student was unable to concentrate on a lesson because he was worried about an angry parent. He had to express himself and his worries to the researcher, as he was visibly shaken. The researcher would have been remiss to push her data agenda. In this case, the researcher collected applicable data but also added a specific note to her data explaining the student’s circumstances.

3.5.6 Validity

By asking the same questions regarding each student, the researcher ensured consistency. This ensures the data is authentic and contains no implicit bias, general bias, or the presence of outside influences. Posing the same questions, each time shows that the data collected demonstrates authenticity and honesty, therefore making validity possible.

3.5.7 Trustworthiness and Biases of Potential Data

Statistical techniques for Action Research was a mixture of empirical studies including qualitative and quantitative data. The strategies the researcher used for data management included keeping student names confidential and in a password protected drive. Empirical considerations are observations the researcher noticed that may cause a momentary change in circumstance before resuming. Because the researcher was the classroom teacher, she let her students know what she was doing.

Limitations may include time constraints. However, the researcher conducted the Action Research by forming lesson plans and classroom structure conducive to data collection. Any potential data bias was proactively monitored by using Google Forms and a variety of student ages and different cultural backgrounds. In this manner, the researcher hoped to eliminate any potential bias.

In terms of the internal and external validity and reliability of the data collection, the researcher's proactive plan was to apply the following: Using the literature review that found six strategies which successfully motivate adult multilingual learners. The action research would test these on elementary students to prove if they are as effective in children. By collecting data within the classroom, the researcher can gain an internal perspective.

4. Results, Analysis, and Data

This details the researcher's action research process. The overall goal is to answer, "How can we as educators be most effective for impacting newcomers and be in tune with their past experiences and needs?" All multilingual learners need the foundation of having their sociological needs met first in order to succeed in school. What strategies prove successful and can give multilingual learners the confidence they need to navigate their new environment? These answers are the strategies which empower educators with the knowledge that they are making a difference and give our students the positive motivation to learn. The researcher conducted her study based on what specific strategies proved successful with the intention to improve teaching. This study's objective was to prove that the six motivational strategies found to be successful in adult multilingual learners are also successful in child multilingual learners. It was conducted over the course of six weeks at Discovery Elementary, in Kentwood, Michigan, where the researcher taught EL summer school classes. The researcher's questions addressed topics pertaining to student motivation.

As previously stated, six motivating strategies have been found to be effective in multilingual adults. The researcher closely examined three of those six strategies and how they prove to be effective in children as well. These three motivational factors were relevance, collaborative learning, and self-efficacy.

4.1 Description of the Instruments Used

The researcher incorporated all questions in a Google Sheet named "Day-to-Day Data" on which all the research questions could be answered by simply checking a box. This was an efficient strategy. The researcher had seventeen questions that she monitored each day for each student.

2. How did student feelings impact their learning?

Student was able to show learning stamina

Student learning was negatively by their feelings at that moment
--

Example

All of the motivational factors were patterned and built into the questions after gleaning strategies that increase students' motivation.

4.2 Explanations of the Specific Procedures Followed

The researcher began by having the student point to a feeling chart with facial images. The student would point to how he/she was feeling and why. The researcher would then ask the student to share news and the student would every time, whether it was positive or negative.

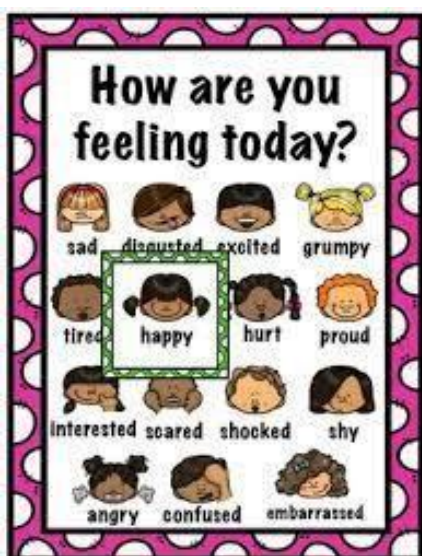


Figure 1. How are you feeling today?

The researcher broke it down into three categories. Monday through Wednesday she examined sections one and two. On Thursdays, the researcher also included collaborative methods and documented the strategies.

Table 4. Schedule

Mon/Tues/Wed			Collaboration	Thursdays
9:00-9:20	Student 1	Monday	9:00-9:30	Student 1,2,3
9:00-9:20	Student 2	Tuesday	9:30-10:00	Student 4,5,6,7
9:00-9:20	Student 3	Wednesday	10:00-10:30	Student 8 & 9
9:20-9:40	Student 4		10:30-10:45	Recess
9:40-10:00	Student 5		10:50-11:20	Student 9 & 11
10:00-10:20	Student 6		11:20-11:50	Student 10
10:30-10:45	Recess		11:50-12:00	Pack up
10:45-11:05	Student 8			
11:05--11:25	Student 9 & 11			
11:25-11:45	Student 10			
11:45:-12:00	Pack up			

Note. Verburg, 2023

The researcher took a moment in between student sessions or at the end of the day to reflect on student responses and document them. It allowed the researcher to watch the data progress on

a daily basis. It also allowed the researcher to actively see how the strategies were impacting and motivating students.

5. Data Collection and Analysis

5.1 Section 1: Self-Efficacy

Five questions were consistently asked and documented during the six week duration. These questions were specifically formatted to gauge each student's motivation using self-efficacy. The researcher would check off boxes for every applicable option.

1. How did the students express his/her feelings?

- Physical expression or a gesture
- By sharing good news
- No expression shown
- Through the use of images.

2. How did student feelings impact their learning?

- Student was able to show learning stamina
- Student learning was negatively by their feelings at that moment

3. What informative assessments did the researcher use?

- Scanning/observation
- Oral feedback- or brief check in
- Whole group feedback (white board assessment)
- In class questioning

4. Did student have to express (verbally or physically) their emotions to the researcher first in order to process learning?

- Yes
- No
- Sort of (explain)

Did the student relate to the curriculum in any way?

- Yes
- No
- Sort of

Out of these questions, the data showed that self-efficacy is indeed a motivating factor that leads to academic success. When it came to question one, 46.5% of students needed to express themselves through sharing good news and touching base with the researcher. They looked forward to sharing something positive in their lives. They also looked forward to entering the researcher's classroom to point to the feeling chart and discuss. This set the foundation for self-expression. Once the students shared, learning could begin.

Physical expression or gestures were positive ways students expressed their emotions. This was especially important for non-English speakers. The following chart displays the researcher's data when the students joined her class each day.

How Students Expressed Their Feelings Daily

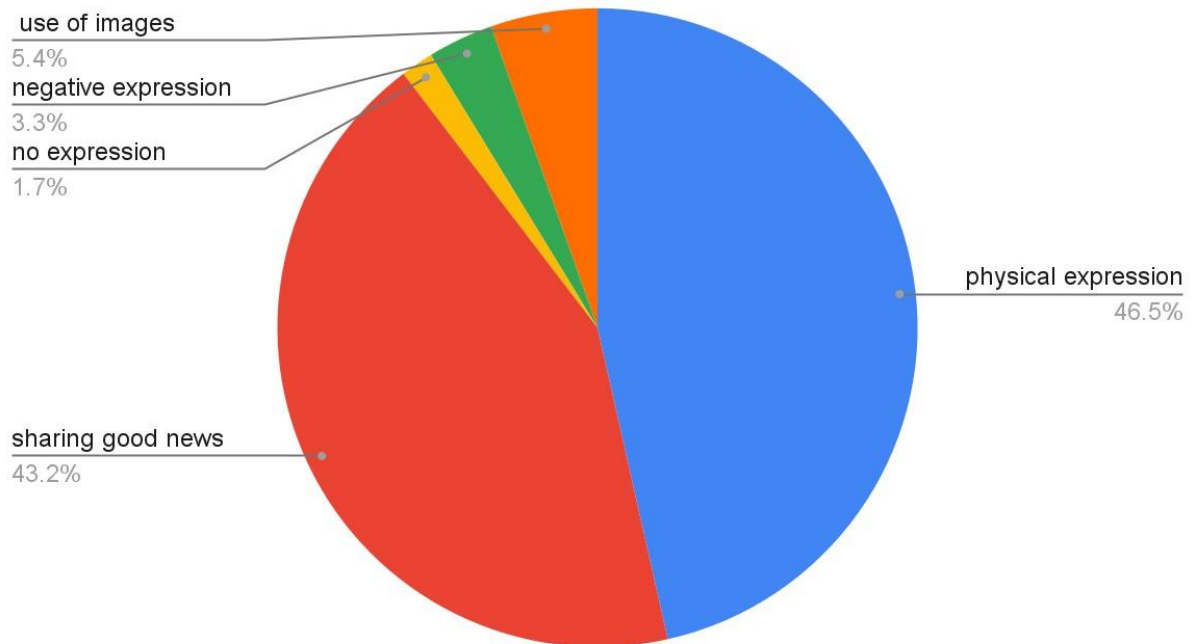


Figure 2. How Students Expressed their feelings daily

Question two was a direct result of the students' learning capacity. When the student entered the room with a negative mindset, he/she was unable to learn. After the student expressed why he/she felt negative that day, learning could begin. The learning impact was directly affected. Positive feelings increased student learning capacity by 87.5%. This showed that students must process their emotions before learning can occur. Most often this means that the educator must set the stage to cultivate the learning environment by helping the student connect with his/her emotions. However, these emotions do not always need to be addressed directly. Sometimes, an informal assessment and the educator's recognition of what the student is feeling is adequate. Question three demonstrated that observation and assessment go hand in hand.

Regarding question three, the overwhelming majority of the time the researcher was able to informally assess a student's ability to learn through scanning and observation. The brief check-in was a verbal way to confirm the researcher's observations. Questioning during the classroom lesson allowed the researcher to assess each student's comprehension which showed that the student's emotions were directly related to their learning capacity. This information shows how vital it is that an educator is constantly monitoring and informally assessing the student.

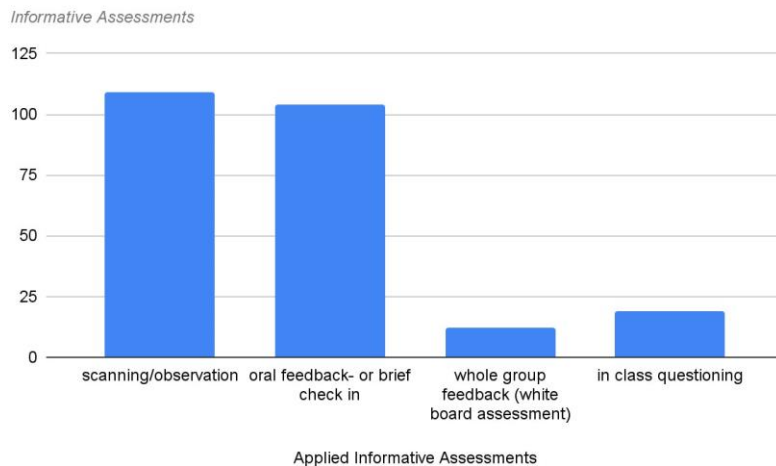


Figure 3. Informative Assessments

Question four related to the importance of validating each student's feelings. The answers to this question were based on the researcher's observations. "Did the student have to express (verbally or physically) their emotions to the researcher first in order to process learning?" 91% of the time, the answer to this question was "Yes!" When one stops to think about it, doesn't it make sense?

Another big strategy that affected a student's ability to learn was how they could make personal connections to the lesson. The more the student could identify with the lesson, the stronger their ability to learn. It was important the researcher did whatever she could to help the student make personal connections to the curriculum. Sometimes the researcher provided a personal example to trigger a memory from the student's life; sometimes the researcher looked up Google images related to the topic.

When it comes to adult multilingual learners, studies show "authentic tasks and materials (are) necessary when teaching ALL, who respond more strongly to the tangible and relatable. Similarly, using real-world material can positively affect language learners' experiences and increase their motivation" (Severson, et. al 2019). The researcher's data showed the same results. When it came to academic success, 43.2% of students were able to learn once they had a moment to talk about something positive in their lives. This also benefited the researcher by gaining a knowledge of the students and their interests.

5.2 Section 2: Relevance

In finding relevance for students, six questions emerged. The researcher asked the following questions to keep lessons balanced and effective, checking off boxes for every option that applied.

6. What data was used to form a baseline assessment?

Formal assessment

Informal assessment

Both formal and informal assessments were used.

Questions seven through ten required "yes/no" responses. These simple responses still revealed important information. These responses revealed that 95.6% of the time the researcher

performed informal assessments. This is revealing in its simplicity to all educators. Being an effective educator means understanding your students and constantly monitoring them through informal assessments. In fact, educators who only rely on formal assessments fail to recognize how a student's circumstances affect his/her ability to learn. However, it is always important to examine both and factor them into a student's performance. The researcher routinely investigated formative assessments as a way of checking in on a student's comprehension. Formal assessments were used 1% of the time, formal and informal together, 3.7%. Incorporating all forms of assessment is important to student success.

7. Was the student encouraged to ask questions?

Students were encouraged to ask questions each time they met with the researcher. Encouraging student questions created a comfortable, open learning environment. This in turn increased the students' motivation. Asking questions demonstrates vulnerability. Vulnerability only exists when students feel comfortable, safe and supported. This is yet another reason why teachers should maintain a positive and peaceful learning environment. In every lesson, the researcher encouraged students to ask questions and deepen their understanding of the concept. This was naturally built into the lessons. When students were encouraged to ask questions, they did so 100% of the time. Asking questions positively impacts student learning.

"We need to start with the personal goals and personal learning paths of the student, and that means starting with something that the student wants to learn, make, or do, and giving the student the chance to fail and reflect on that along the way. A 'teacher' should use all his or her knowledge to ask the right questions and help the student reflect, not simply explain to them.

This enables students to manage their own learning process" (Dias, 2023 para.2). What was interesting about this concept was watching student led learning come alive in a newcomer who spoke virtually no English. He reacted very positively to this method.

8. Was the student allowed to choose during learning?

Whenever a child was given learning choices, the learning outcome was positively affected. In 100% of the researcher's lessons, students were able to make choices at some point. This increased the students' motivation by giving them ownership and control of the learning process. The choices do not have to be complicated for the educator, it can be a matter of simply changing the order of things the student was going to be doing that day anyway. Allowing the student to make choices always positively affected the learning outcome.

9. Did the student see how his learning impacts his future goals?

Sometimes, but not always. Although 93.8% of the time students did see the impact on future goals, 6% of the time they did not. This observation was made during the researcher's action research and data collection. This is simply because the day-to-day lessons didn't always point to the big picture of future goals- it was often simply a daily goal. For example, while reviewing letter blends and sounds in a simple story read by first graders the student only seemed to notice how the letter blends fit into the word which helped him understand the story. This student didn't realize that knowing those letter blends would help comprehend everything he'd read in the future.

10. Did the researcher compliment the student's success during instruction?

For the last question of section two, it was important to go beyond the yes or no answers to gauge the student's reaction when the researcher was intentional in giving specific comments. Complimenting student success was incorporated into all lessons. The compliments were genuine and specific. This question prepared the transition into the next, to gauge positive or negative outcomes.

11. How did the student react to compliments?

The researcher was able to document in her action research the positive impact genuine compliments produced. Data showed that compliments absolutely make a difference!

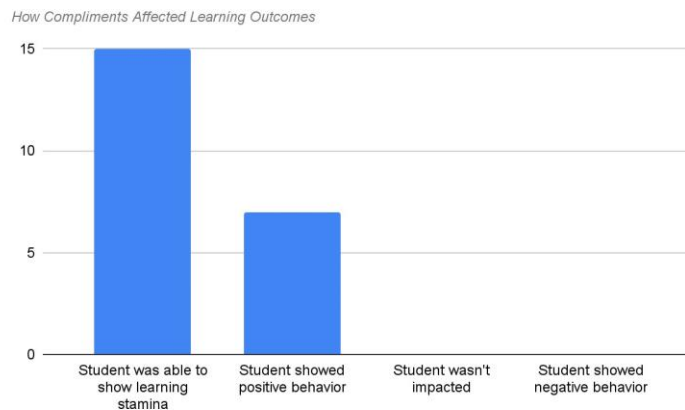


Figure 3. How Compliments affected learning outcomes

5.3 Section 3: Collaboration

On Thursdays, the researcher included section three because it answered research questions about collaboration. Thursdays were the day where whole group instruction was taught which specifically incorporated collaborative activities.

After, the researcher would reflect on the following questions and check off the boxes.

12. Was TPR incorporated into the lesson?

When teaching students with various language abilities, this method is vital in learning new language words. One of the students was a newcomer who relied heavily on kinesthetics to get his message across. Kinesthetics were his way of processing English as he learned. It was also his way of communicating. One day he kept pointing to calves saying "Ow." He wanted the researcher to know more but was unable to express it any other way. This student always used body language to communicate. He acted out his words correctly even if he didn't know how to say the word. For example, when he saw a picture of a person sleeping, he laid his head down and closed his eyes.

This was an example of Total Physical Response. TPR helps educators better understand when students are processing language via the neural link between speech and action. Although this student's English is still emerging, he is happy and motivated to learn while relying on processing information kinesthetically.

13. Were students given opportunities to collaborate?

Methods such as modeled instruction, peer teaching, turn and talk, and group discussions were incorporated into the researcher's lessons because they are highly effective collaboration strategies.

Modeled instruction is when an educator shows students how to perform a skill by displaying (usually on a document camera) and completing the task along with students. It gives a verbal and visual step-by-step representation of the task. This bolsters student confidence.

Peer teaching helps students to better grasp the concept by having them verbally explain their understanding as they discuss with a peer. This solidifies and deepens their comprehension.

Turn and talk is turning to a partner and talking about a detail in the lesson concept. It encourages critical thinking skills by having students discuss an assigned question with a partner and then contribute to class discussion.

Group discussion is when the educator leads the class in a discussion over a learning concept. Through group discussions, students deepen their understanding and contribute to the classroom culture of community and belonging.

The pie chart below is data shown regarding collaboration. The results were interesting to see and prove that collaboration is a powerful motivating factor in learning.

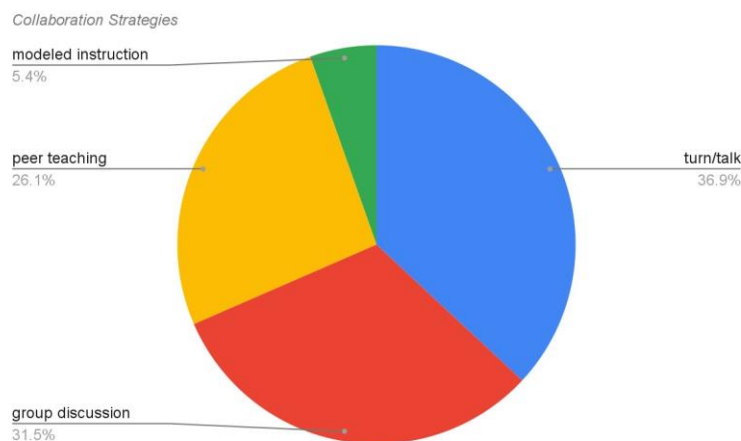


Figure 5. Collaboration Strategies

14. How were the students impacted by collaboration

The student exhibited positive behavior.

The student was indifferent to collaboration.

The student exhibited negative behavior.

Question fourteen simplified the direct result of collaboration and allowed the researcher to see how it impacted learning. The students exhibited positive behavior every single time. Never did the researcher notice student indifference or negative behavior. This reiterates why collaboration is an important contributor to student learning and classroom cohesiveness.

Questions fifteen, sixteen and seventeen went together. Although the questions were different from one another, they dovetailed each other and gave perception.

Although they were simply "yes or no" answers, they provided important insight.

15. Were there collaborative activities that seemed to work better than others?

The researcher wondered if certain collaborative activities work better than others. In lesson planning, she incorporated many different activities such as think, pair, and share, collaborative learning games (sight word bingo or blend sorts) or team building lessons. The data concluded that it didn't really matter what the collaborative activity was, the students achieved positive success regardless.

16. Did peer relationships improve through collaboration?

In line with the previous question, yes peer relationships improved very much during collaborative activities. The classroom tone exuded one of belonging and student relationships were strengthened every time.

17. Did individual student learning improve?

Not only did peer relationships improve during these collaborative activities, but individual student learning improved 100% of the time. This is due to the increased sense of belonging students gained as they developed self-confidence. Students felt safe enough to express themselves and contribute to the overall learning experience.

Collaboration among students has the ability to encourage positive growth and security and should be used in lesson planning as it benefits all students regardless of their ML status.

5.4 Quality of Data

Time was taken between student sessions or at the end of the day to reflect on and document student responses. This allowed the researcher to monitor the data progress daily. It also allowed her to actively see how the strategies were impacting each student's motivation to learn. Once assessed, the information collected daily was revealing. It helped the researcher see how vital motivation is to academic success.

The following questions were validated through action research assessment: How can we as educators most effectively impact newcomers and be in tune with their past experiences and needs? What strategies prove successful and can give multilingual learners the confidence they need to navigate their new environment?

This statement grew and was formed out of a restlessness the researcher faced every time she taught her MLL students. The data supported her initial inquiries and affirmed her belief that ML students do not need to suffer. There are indeed strategies that work and help grow academic success. It is great news that empowers all educators who struggle with the fear that they are not equipped to take on this challenge.

6. Conclusion and Implications

This research provided much needed information and answers regarding the ever-growing situations we face in our world today. The uncertainties we face globally mean that more and more people are facing refugee status as they leave unsafe situations to find peace. We can no longer expect to teach the way we always have. We can no longer assume that our multilingual learners will just adapt to the standard we've set for native English speakers. We can no longer expect them to eventually "catch on." If our pedagogy does not change, then we have made no

progress since the fifties when we merely expected students to sink or swim. We are so much wiser than that now.

Educators must be intentional in lesson planning, taking into account the situations newcomers have faced just to be here. In order to succeed, educators must think about where students are on Maslow's hierarchy and build up the areas they lack.

Although each student faces different circumstances, by taking the time to truly get to know them educators glean information about how best to teach. Reaching into students' hearts and drawing out the factors that intrinsically motivate is a crucial part of the learning process. This is done through utilizing the strategies that incorporate relevancy, self-efficacy, and collaboration. The great news is that these strategies can be implemented organically. Many educators already do this without even fully realizing how important it is.

"What strategies prove to be effective in reaching multilingual learners?" The answer can ultimately be summed up into one word –motivation. Providing contexts of relevancy, self-efficacy and collaboration in lessons are powerful strategies that achieve this.

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