

At the beginning of this journey, I saw myself simply acknowledging that there existed language differences between my students and that there were ways they could learn a second language and I needed tools as to what or how to better help that process. By the end of my course in Pedagogy of TESOL, I found myself often viewing students' language and cultures as being valued resources to be used in learning the new language but on the path to consistently doing so. At the beginning, I can say I was not reflecting on their need to use language to complete a task, nor was I using their current language performance to properly support instruction. I can say that by the end of this course, I have areas of improvement, such as the need to better assess language performance and language standards and use those tools to provide feedback, (according to their language level of proficiency) but my mindset shifted. As I mentioned above, my focus for taking these courses was focused on the student learning a second language. It was important to realize that the language the students already possess is the gateway to learning a second language (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Showing respect and awareness of that home language is a mindset that can help prepare teachers to use needed tools and build on their skillset.

The inclination to advocate for Emergent Bilinguals stems from the various conflicting policies that exist in our society, along with a curriculum that is geared towards a White middle-class society. Our school culture and behaviors do not necessarily align with the diverse population that enters our school doors daily. Even the programs geared to teach students are not sufficient, each having their own set of strengths and weaknesses. Take the Elementary scenario as an example, where families are placed in their respective program based on a questionable Language Use Survey. Even the programs themselves can be limited in their abilities (See Bilingual or Transitional programs versus Dual Language or Bilingual Immersion Programs).

Students and families are placed in the middle and essentially made to go along with the process, when in reality, the process has failed them, as is evident in national statistics. In *Foundations for Teaching English Language Learners*, Wright (2019) documents the research done by three separate entities and their findings in regards to language and literacy development among ELLs (p. 196). These findings are found in the NLP report (August & Shanahan, 2006a, 2006b; August et al., 2014), the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005, 2006), as well as the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2017). These studies show that Emerging Bilingual students are continuously being left behind. It is really up to socially conscious and responsive teachers to speak up and advocate, give the opportunities and access students deserve and bridge that gap.

References

Lucas, T., & Villegas, A. M. (2013). Preparing linguistically responsive teachers: Laying the foundation in preservice teacher education. *Theory into practice*, 52(2), 98-109.

Wright, W. E. (2019). *Foundations for teaching English language learners: Research, theory, policy, and practice*. Philadelphia, PA: Caslon.