

**SERVICE LEARNING IN A FIFTH-GRADE
SHELTERED ENGLISH IMMERSION (SEI) CLASSROOM**

Honors Thesis

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Education**

In the School of Education
at Salem State University

By
Emily M. Hanson

Michelle Pierce, Ed.D.
Faculty Advisor
Secondary and Higher Education Department
School of Education

Commonwealth Honors Program
Salem State University
2015

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	v
Introduction to the Service Learning Project.....	1
Review of the Literature.....	2
Results.....	6
Reflection/Discussion.....	16
Limitations.....	17
Broader Implications.....	18
Appendix A: Observation/Assistance Time Log.....	20
References.....	21

Acknowledgements:

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Michelle Pierce of the School of Education. As my thesis advisor, she has served as my biggest supporter, mentor, and guide for the development of my project and the implementation of my project. Being both my thesis advisor and my academic advisor, she has been a constant source of insight during my endeavors at Salem State University. Without her positive attitude and efficient work ethic, this project would not have been able to come to fruition. I cannot express how grateful I am for her assistance and partnership.

I would also like to express my thanks to Dr. Joanna Gonsalves and the entire Honors Program. Four years ago, I could not imagine I would be where I am today. The course load alone has taught me to be organized, structured, and patient. In order to complete all the necessary work, the ability to manage one's time is a huge aspect of the Honors Program. The Honors Program has undoubtedly prepared me for all of my future endeavors, both academically and professionally.

I would like to extend a very big thank you to Tracey Kline for being a welcoming and wonderful fifth-grade SEI teacher who encouraged my participation in her diverse classroom. She was willing to allow me into her classroom, and she valued my opinions, thoughts, and questions. She has also given me a lot to think about in regards to graduate school and the future. Her wonderful demeanor and attitude created a positive environment in her classroom – a classroom that was welcoming and embracing.

Lastly, without the continual support, love, and faith from my family and friends, I would not be where I am today. Not only have you been by my side through the hardships and the successes, but you have been my sounding board and shoulder to lean

on for as long as I can remember. I cannot fully express the love and gratitude that I have for you all.

To Matthew and my mother, Ellen – thank you for always believing in me. When I doubted myself and my abilities you were the first ones to tell me that I was capable. Without hearing your constant, “You’re almost there,” I’m not sure I would have kept going. You both are my biggest fans, my toughest critics, and my safe places. Thank you for all that you have done and all that you continue to do!

Abstract:

In the public school systems of the United States, there are thousands of English language learners (ELLs) who are struggling to develop literacy skills in the English language. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, “Sheltered English Immersion” (SEI) has been introduced to try to improve academic achievement for ELLs. SEI is a methodology in which English language learners (ELLs) learn English via the mainstream curriculum, which is delivered by a teacher skilled in making content comprehensible for English language learners.

My service learning project looked at how SEI programs have been developed to try to improve literacy rates and academic achievement among ELLs and allowed me to gain first-hand knowledge of daily life in an SEI classroom. Through observations within a fifth-grade SEI setting and by assisting the classroom teacher, I sought to learn more about effective teaching strategies for ELLs, differentiating instruction, and the challenges of trying to implement best practices in SEI. This experience led me to value the importance of implementing SEI programs throughout the United States and helped me to discover effective teaching techniques to better instruct students with limited English proficiency.

Introduction to the Service Learning Project:

The project, **Service Learning in a Fifth-Grade Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Classroom** was developed because of my interest in and my passion for education and the Spanish language. Having grown up going through the Salem Public Schools, I have been surrounded by Spanish speakers and often immersed in the Spanish language. From the age of five (kindergarten) I have been learning Spanish in a classroom setting because Salem Public Schools used to implement a program known as the **Dual-Language Program**, in which students would have all core classes in English one week, and the following week they would have the same core classes in Spanish. Learning Spanish from such an early age, I have been speaking the language fluently for many years now. Not only have I become fluent in the language, my love and passion for the Spanish language has been growing more and more throughout the past 17 years.

Knowing that my knowledge of both English and Spanish could benefit ELLs who spoke Spanish in an SEI setting, I was excited and honored to be able to observe and assist in Ms. Tracey Kline's fifth-grade SEI classroom, in which all the students spoke Spanish as their native language. Being equipped with the ability to speak to students in their native language is so helpful and beneficial for teaching, and I was so glad that my Spanish skills could help students' comprehension of academic material. Having a teacher figure who could communicate in their native language really encouraged the students; since Ms. Kline does not speak any Spanish, the students were amazed and excited to find out that I speak the language. I mainly used English in the classroom; but when students would really need assistance with directions or help with an assignment, I would speak in Spanish and then state in English what I had just said.

During the course of the project, I spent a total of 50 hours in Ms. Kline's classroom – 10 days for five hours a day each day, during the months of March and April. I logged my hours in a fieldwork journal that I completed at the end of each day of observation (see Appendix A).

In the sections that follow, I present a brief review of the literature on ELLs in U.S. classrooms, followed by key findings from my observation journal, and my reflections on what I learned about best practices in SEI instruction.

Review of the Literature:

One of the most pressing issues pertaining to the development and success of the education system in the United States is the increase of non-native English speakers in our nation's classrooms. These non-native English speakers are appropriately termed English language learners or limited English proficient due to the fact that they are "active learners of the English language who may benefit from various types of language support programs, and who lack sufficient mastery of English to meet state standards and excel in an English-language classroom" (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008). The struggles for English language learners, including issues related to communication skills (or lack thereof), and difficulties in becoming proficient in the English language in order to succeed academically and socially, are becoming more well-known throughout the education system in the United States. However, in order for ELLs to achieve as highly as their native English speaking counterparts, educators, policymakers, and the federal legislature need to make the success of ELLs throughout school systems a top-priority. The need for understanding these diverse learners and the necessity of implementing more effective practices, strategies, and laws, is evidenced by the astounding fact that "the number of students from non-English speaking backgrounds

continues to rise,” and that this diverse population “represents the fastest growing segment of the student population by a wide margin” (Genesee et al., 2005, p. 364). According to the National Council of Teachers of English (2008), in a published Policy Research Brief related to English language learners, “the foreign-born population of the U.S. has tripled, more than 14 million immigrants moved to the U.S. during the 1990s” and this number has undoubtedly continued to rise throughout the subsequent decades. As the population of non-native English speakers grows in the United States, the more the education system will see an influx of English language learners enrolled in the various school systems throughout the nation. Educators, administrators, and other school-based personnel must not only become aware and knowledgeable about this “heterogeneous” and “complex” population of students “with diverse gifts, educational needs, backgrounds, languages, and goals”, but they must be prepared and able to implement effective and supportive teaching techniques and strategies (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008).

It is simply not possible to determine who is an English language learner and who is not based on appearances alone; looking at a student, one would not be able to classify him or her as a potential ELL. In accordance with the federal policy to ensure a student’s civil right to quality education, many states nationwide have utilized a Home Language Survey to help identify potential ELLs in the school system (Zacarian, 2012, p. 7). The Home Language Survey, though not federally mandated or the sole predictor for characterizing ELLs, seeks to screen students based on their native language and language background, and attempts to determine how this initial experience with language acquisition could potentially impact their ability to succeed in a mainstreamed

English language classroom (Zacarian, 2012, p. 8). Action is taken after the assessment using the Home Language Survey, including: interviews and further English language proficiency assessments in order to determine who should be receiving language supports with specialized modifications and strategies. Though students who are identified as ELLs frequently represent a minority population that lags in academic success and achievement, it is imperative that educators do not stereotype or overgeneralize this unique population. It is easy to simply state that ELLs are all the same and that each and every ELL requires the same attention and achieves at the same rate and level; however, these incorrect and outdated beliefs negatively influence student achievement. It is the responsibility and duty of educators, schools, and policymakers to ensure that ELLs are receiving supports to aid in developing proficient English language skills. A few suggestions for teachers from the National Council of Teachers of English include: “present ELLs with challenging curricular content, set high expectations for ELLs, use technology effectively, and teach ELLs basic academic literacy.” All of these teaching suggestions can be achieved through the implementation of specialized classrooms and programs for ELLs.

According to Genesee et al. (2005) “18.7% of students classified as limited English proficient met state norms for reading in English; and students from language minority backgrounds also have higher dropout rates and are more frequently placed in lower ability groups” causing this already vulnerable population to become even more unstable and susceptible to academic failure. In order for ELLs to begin to reduce and diminish the glaring achievement gap present between ELLs and native English speakers, education must be improved and specialized for English language learners. To improve

education for ELLs, there must be an emphasis on oral language development and proficiency in both the native language (referred to as L1) and the desired second (or subsequent) language (referred to as L2) (366). It is crucial to foster the development of literacy skills such as reading and writing in both the native language and the desired second language. The emergence of these literacy skills is intricately correlated to the ability of the ELL to exhibit metacognitive strategies for understanding his or her own literacy development, along with general literacy strategies (comprehension, making inferences, synthesizing, monitoring, and activating background knowledge and schema).

Along with student ability in relation to literacy, teachers must actively involve students in their learning and discovery of the English language. To foster literacy development amongst ELLs, educators must monitor their own instructional practices and intricately blend interactive, discovery-based learning and instruction with direct instruction (369-372). Lastly, to ensure the improvement of ELL success, there must be a focus on achieving highly in the academic environment – where all students are considered equal in their ability to succeed regardless of their language background (375-376).

Assuredly, these components of language development researched by Genesee et al. (2005) are the cornerstones of developing a new language; they are the foundation for emerging English language advancement. In order for these vital aspects of language development to be appropriately and sufficiently nurtured within ELLs, a new protocol has been developed to try to improve the academic achievement of ELLs. This new program is aptly titled, “Sheltered English Immersion” (SEI). SEI is a methodology in which English language learners (ELLs) learn English via the mainstream curriculum,

which is delivered by a teacher skilled in making content comprehensible for English language learners. SEI programs prepare ELLs to enter grade level mainstream or bilingual programs after they have been assessed and are capable of reaching the goals of speaking, listening, and writing in English. Due to the implementation of such programs, I was particularly interested in understanding how SEI teachers differentiate instruction for students of different English proficiency levels, what instructional strategies should be implemented, and what challenges SEI teachers face in attempting to implement and utilize best practices for ELLs.

Results:

The following are the most telling and worthwhile findings pertaining to the different teaching strategies that Ms. Kline utilized in her fifth-grade SEI classroom. Please note that the underlined and numbered portions are the results that came directly from my observation, evaluation, and assistance in Ms. Kline's SEI classroom. The paragraphs that follow the underlined sections are my own reflections and thoughts.

1) The Nathaniel Bowditch School, one of the many schools within the Salem Public School District, offers a unique and specialized program, known as Sheltered English Immersion (SEI), for students whose native language is one other than English. Being the only elementary school in the district that offers this type of program and support, the Nathaniel Bowditch School is home to a multitude of different cultures, ethnicities, personalities, and languages. There are a significant number of Hispanic/Spanish students enrolled at the Nathaniel Bowditch School, considering that the school offers the SEI program and traditional English language learner services (pull-out/additional help). Upon entering the Nathaniel Bowditch School, one is immediately exposed to and

surrounded by the Spanish language. At the Nathaniel Bowditch School, it is evident that the Spanish language is appreciated and valued; the Pledge of Allegiance is spoken every morning in both English and Spanish. The main lobby greets people with a wide banner reading “WELCOME – BIENVENIDOS.” Posters and displays are also made visual, in both English and Spanish (“Responsibility – Responsibilidad” or “Respect – Respeto”) about the school environment and what is expected of the students and staff. All of the notices, information, report cards, and letters are sent to the parent(s) in both English and Spanish, allowing for parents to become more involved in their children’s schooling. This immediate immersion in both the English language and the Spanish language creates a welcoming and comforting environment for everybody who walks through the front door.

The Nathaniel Bowditch School in Salem, Massachusetts is unique in its own way because it is home to the SEI program. This means that all of the elementary level ELLs who require SEI instruction are enrolled at the Nathaniel Bowditch School. Due to this, the school tries to differentiate and accommodate all types of families and learners. As is evidenced from the above excerpt, Bowditch does a wonderful job of utilizing both the English language and the Spanish language in order to ensure that the language barrier does not cause extreme difficulties. Since Bowditch enrolls mainly Spanish speaking ELLs, Spanish is the predominant language (aside from English) that is utilized throughout the day. I think that including both languages makes Bowditch very inclusive and comforting for all students, and having the SEI program at this elementary school is an advantage for every student. Students who are native English speakers are able to learn Spanish and students who are native Spanish speakers are able to learn English.

Many other schools simply display the English language; however, Bowditch, because of the diverse population that it serves, makes sure to equally display both the English language and the Spanish language – which is something I think is wonderful for all.

2) While the students were working on writing, Ms. Kline visited the students with the most limited English language and skills and helped them form their sentences. Some students are unable to make the connection between what they are thinking or saying to writing down that same thought in English. Due to this, Ms. Kline sometimes acts as a scribe; the students will share their idea(s) with Ms. Kline in English and Ms. Kline will write down what they are saying. Ms. Kline then requires the students to copy the sentence again, using repetition and context to bridge the gap between thoughts and writing.

I absolutely love the idea of helping students bridge the gap between thoughts and writing by having them explain what they are thinking while the teacher writes for them. Having the students rewrite the sentence really helps the students visualize and understand how thoughts and spoken words can be expressed in written language. In mainstream classrooms, unless the student needed special needs services such as occupational therapy or physical therapy, you would not see the teacher acting as a scribe. This was a unique technique that Ms. Kline used strictly for her English language learners.

3) During English Language Arts time students rotate between different areas and activities. These activities include: reader's workshop (where students are reading

independently and employing different reading strategies for comprehension), Lexia (working on language, literacy, and phonics skills by using technology and computer programs and applications), and small group work (with students at similar levels) or independent work with Ms. Kline.

Utilizing a rotating schedule in order to ensure that all students experience the different facets of English language development seemed to work very well for Ms. Kline and her class. The students know what is expected of them at each station and they are held accountable for completing their tasks and reaching their objectives.

The use of computer programs and software is a crucial technique that students respond well to. Not only are the students learning English language and literacy skills through the use of the Lexia application, but they are also learning the conventions of typing and computer use – both of which are essential skills to have in the 21st century.

Ms. Kline's use of homogenous groupings in order to guide and help students who are at similar achievement and academic levels also seems to work well. Though heterogeneous groupings work well in mainstream classrooms in order for students to work together and learn from each other, homogeneous groups are effective for ELLs in SEI classrooms because, generally, all of the students are at the same basic level.

4) English Language Arts is a time when students practice their individualized and modified lists of high-frequency words or sight words. Some students use computer programs or games to practice their words, while others, who require more guidance and assistance, meet with Ms. Kline to review their individual lists. The students' words are displayed on index cards and held together with a metal ring, allowing the students to flip

their cards as they practice their words. On the back of each index card, there is a sentence containing the word displayed on the index card. This provides students with context, allowing them to comprehend the vocabulary word. When Ms. Kline meets with a student, she has that student read through his or her list of words. During this time, Ms. Kline listens closely and guides her students, often asking “what is the beginning letter and what sound is associated with that letter.” As the students read their words, Ms. Kline will place a checkmark (as a sort of informal assessment) on the index card if the word was read correctly. After the students have read their words, Ms. Kline will show them a sound card alphabet. This sound card alphabet contains the entire alphabet. Starting with the letter “A”, this supplemental material requires the students to recognize the letter, say the word that is represented by a picture that begins with that letter, and produce the sound (phoneme) associated with that letter.

When I was listening to the students read through the alphabet, I noticed something very interesting. Many students were having trouble distinguishing between the letter “B” and the letter “V.” In the Spanish language, these letters are very similar (most of the time, words that begin with “V” are said with the “B” sound.). I also noticed that the students were having trouble with the sound the letter “Y” makes (in Spanish, the letters “J” and “Y” are vocalized differently). Being a native English speaker, it is easy to take for granted the fact that we are able to distinguish between English letters and their phonemes – this is not the case for students who speak a different language and are learning English. I also thought Ms. Kline did a wonderful job encouraging her students. She would say, “I know we haven’t spent a lot time with these words, so we just have to

practice really hard.” Instead of losing her patience or becoming frustrated, Ms. Kline continued to motivate and encourage her students.

5) One student cannot read in English, and as a result, he “reads” graphic novels. Though he cannot read the words in his book, he still practices the conventions of reading (holding the book properly, flipping the pages correctly, and “reading” from left to right). I find it so interesting that he cannot read, but he still attempts to try to read. This student usually “reads” a book after one of his peers has finished with it; therefore, they can help him understand the plot and storyline without him actually reading the book. Ms. Kline allows other students to read quietly to the student who cannot read by himself; this is a great strategy for both students involved.

One student in Ms. Kline’s class has virtually no English language or literacy skills, and he struggles academically with his Spanish as well. Due to this, Ms. Kline allows for this student to “read” with another student. Typically one student (a strong reader) will work with the student who struggles and will read out loud to him. As the student reads aloud to the boy who is unable to read, he will speak with him in Spanish in order to ensure that he understands the storyline and plot. I think this strategy is very inclusive and effective. Not only does the student who cannot read, get to enjoy being immersed in a book, but the student who is doing the reading is allowed to practice fluent reading skills and conventions of reading. This reading strategy is beneficial to both students.

6) During English Language Arts time Ms. Kline works one-on-one with students. During this time, the students are practicing their sight-word recognition and understanding. Each student has their own unique set of high-frequency words or sight words. I noticed that Ms. Kline used the Spanish word equivalent, when working with the student who has extremely limited English (we will call him Jordan). For example, if the word was January, Ms. Kline would say “enero.” At which point, Jordan would try to respond with the correct English word. Ms. Kline also provided context. She would say, “What’s the first month of the year?” and wait for the student to respond with January.

As is evidenced from the above excerpt, Ms. Kline does allow the use of Spanish in her classroom, especially for the students who are severely lacking in any English language skills. Allowing Jordan to utilize the Spanish equivalents of the assigned English words is a very effective strategy. Jordan has extremely limited English, and as such, Ms. Kline has encouraged the use of Spanish in order to create context and background knowledge in order to make it easier to learn English. By providing both the Spanish and English words, the student is able to apply what he knows in Spanish, to what he is learning in English.

7) I helped Ms. Kline with her individual students during English Language Arts time. Jordan (the student with perhaps the most limited English skills) and I worked together with his personalized index cards containing words. I utilized the Spanish equivalent for English words (these words included the days of the week and the months of the year). I also pointed out when words sound the same in Spanish as they do in English (cognates). Many of the months of the year sound the same when said in Spanish as they do when

said in English (febrero through diciembre). When I pointed this out, Jordan seemed to be able to make the jump from Spanish to English much easier. I also supplied Jordan with context by saying “Enero; that’s the first month of the year. Marzo; that’s the month we are in right now.” Jordan struggled with deciphering junio (June) from julio (July). To try to help him remember the difference between the two very similar words, I taught him a little trick. “When I say junio, can you hear the /n/ sound? Escucha para la letra n.” When he said he heard the /n/ sound, I then repeated the word in English. “Okay, now listen to June; can you hear the /n/ sound in June? Escucha para la letra n.” When he said that he could hear the /n/ sound, he realized that junio and June both have the /n/ sound in common. Likewise I repeated the process with julio, but instead of focusing on the /n/ sound, I focused on recognizing the /j/ sound. This seemed to really help Jordan determine which month means June and which means July. After Jordan and I went through his words twice, I asked him if he wanted to “quiz” me on his words. He seemed so excited to be quizzing a teacher. He reacted so positively to the idea. He would read the English word to me and I was required to supply the Spanish equivalent. While Jordan was “quizzing” me, I made sure that I mispronounced some of the words so that he could correct my mistakes. By the time he finished “quizzing” me, he was smiling ear-to-ear. This experience not only took the pressure off of Jordan, but it also provided a unique way for him to experience practicing his English words. Due to Jordan’s success with his words, Ms. Kline decided to add some additional words to his pile of index cards. After Ms. Kline wrote the new English words, Jordan was encouraged to write the equivalent Spanish word on the back (which he even asked me for help with!).

Ms. Kline does not speak any Spanish, and as such, it is harder for her to teach her Spanish speakers how to speak English. Noticing the value of speaking Spanish, Ms. Kline had me working with Jordan. Since I am a fluent Spanish speaker, I was able to help Jordan decipher the English word when given the Spanish word because I was able to use the Spanish language to explain what he was supposed to be listening for. Drawing attention to the /n/ sound in both June and junio and placing emphasis on the /l/ sound in both July and julio definitely helped Jordan comprehend the difference between the two. When I allowed Jordan to “quiz” me (him providing the English word while I answered with the Spanish word) he seemed to be thrilled. I thought that by allowing him to act as the teacher he would be able to experience practicing English in a different manner. Students want to be able to connect with teachers, and I feel that I really connected with Jordan by letting him have some control over his learning.

8) While the students are attending morning meeting they are encouraged to share stories and thoughts. During sharing time, Ms. Kline lets the students translate for each other if they need help with their English; though Ms. Kline allows some Spanish use, she constantly encourages students to use English words they are familiar with.

Morning meeting is a time when students are able to openly communicate without the constant pressure of speaking correctly (in either language). I think that Ms. Kline does the correct thing by allowing other students to act as translators for the students who struggle greatly with putting thoughts into English. Not only does this encourage peer interaction, but the students who are translating from Spanish to English are enhancing their learning of both languages. Not only are they using their native language, but they

are taking that language and translating it to English. Though sometimes the words may not all be correct, the students are still trying to bridge the gap between their native language and their foreign language. Acting as translators is a wonderful way for students to actively learn English.

9) Ms. Kline had the students use a sort of Round-Robin type of practice during English Language Arts and ESL time (English as a Second Language).

While I was observing Ms. Kline, I would notice her frequently using Round-Robin reading as a strategy for her students. Though the students enjoy the practice of Round-Robin reading, I would not necessarily use this strategy. If students cannot read fluently or read with correct inflection (recognizing punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure and orientation), having them read out loud to each other can be detrimental, or perhaps embarrassing. I would opt to review punctuation and syntax; students struggle with noticing punctuation and many students have trouble recognizing sentence syntax. I would model fluent reading by explaining how I read fluently (drawing attention to punctuation and grammar).

10) In groups, Ms. Kline had the students complete a KWL Chart (what the students **Know** and what the students **Want to know** – the “L” section is for the end of the unit when the students can write what they have **Learned**). Each student was required to share, through discussion, their background knowledge about space. Ms. Kline had the students share one KWL Chart, and she required that each student discuss and write down his or her own information (practicing writing skills).

Although KWL Charts are typically used in mainstream classrooms and SEI classrooms, the manner in which Ms. Kline utilized this teaching strategy is what made it so effective for her ELLs. Working in heterogeneous groups allows for the students to work with others at different levels, which promotes high achievement for all. Having each student share their thoughts and record their ideas through writing is a technique that aids in the literacy development for ELLs. Usually, in mainstream classrooms, one student is the writer while others voice their thoughts. This was not the case for Ms. Kline's fifth-grade class. During this time, as I was helping students, I explained the proper way to organize their lists – using bulleted form. I also helped the students formulate sentences from their thoughts (helping students with word choice and writing). I helped the students activate their schema by referencing shows they may have watched, movies they may have viewed, and books they may have previously read.

Reflection/Discussion:

The development of English language and literacy skills is the primary focus of SEI instruction. Without a strong basis in English, English language learners are incapable of becoming proficient in any other subject. My results support what the literature suggests – development of both L1 (language 1 or native language) and L2 (foreign or second language) are crucial in the early educational years. If Spanish speaking students are not proficient in their native language, their capacity to learn English is diminished; learning English without a solid Spanish base proves very difficult for ELLs. Ms. Kline does a wonderful job of allowing the native language to be spoken in her classroom. In this way, Ms. Kline is following what research suggests.

Being in Ms. Kline's fifth-grade SEI classroom has taught me so much about effective teaching strategies for ELLs, differentiating for students at various levels, and the challenges that teachers face in trying to accommodate diverse populations. As I mentioned above, English language and literacy must be taught explicitly. Through literacy and language instruction (including phonics) students are able to grasp the English language more efficiently. With the use of homogeneous groupings, Ms. Kline is able to differentiate for her students. Students who are at a lower level are grouped together – working on more basic content that Ms. Kline adapted for them. Students who are at a higher level are grouped together – working on different content. The student who has the most English language skills even attends ELA in a mainstream classroom. Meeting the needs of every student is a very difficult job, especially with students who do not speak fluent English.

Though Ms. Kline did a wonderful job trying to accommodate all of her students, struggles were also evident. Having no Spanish language knowledge or skills, Ms. Kline had a hard time overcoming the language barrier. More often than not she would resort to looking up words in a Spanish-English Dictionary, hoping to connect with her students in their native language. Trying to bridge the gap between languages is extremely difficult for teachers who are not fluent in the students' native language. One of the reasons I feel that my time in the classroom was so successful is because I was able to utilize Spanish to communicate with the students when it was needed. Though the students did attempt to engage me only using Spanish, I continued to explain the importance of practicing English. When I would answer spoken Spanish questions or comments in English, the students would then switch to English as well. The students

rely heavily on their Spanish, which is understandable. Learning a new language is very hard, especially learning a new language starting at 11 years of age.

This experience was definitely insightful and worthwhile; however, there were limitations to the project. Spending 50 hours, over a ten day period, in an SEI classroom, though sufficient, was not nearly enough time to truly get a feel for the environment and learn of all of the different techniques that Ms. Kline uses. In hindsight, I would have started observing and assisting months in advance – I would spend 100 hours in the SEI classroom, during which I would spend time looking at the teacher’s curriculum and design. If students wish to complete a service learning project like this one in the future, I would suggest that they spend more than 10 days in the classroom. Since there were issues with scheduling at the beginning, I was encouraged to spend 10 days (5 hours a day) in Ms. Kline’s classroom. For students in the future, I would suggest that they speak with teachers early on in order to find a placement quickly. After that, it is crucial to create a schedule with the teacher – preferably one that allows for you to be there more than 10 days. Though my 10 days taught me an incredible amount, they were intensive and action-packed. A more leisurely way to enjoy the experience is to spend a month or so in the classroom, learning the environment, the students, and the adapted curriculum.

My experiences in Ms. Kline’s fifth-grade SEI classroom have shown me the importance of the implementation of SEI classrooms throughout our nation. English language learners comprise a huge portion of the students enrolled in the public school systems of the United States. As such, best practices should be put into place to meet the needs of all students. This project has shown me just the tip of the iceberg in regards to SEI instruction and its effectiveness for ELLs. My personal experiences in Ms. Kline’s

classroom are just the beginning of my exploration of the intricacies and nuances of SEI instruction.

Appendix A– Observation/Assistance Time Log:

Date	Observation	Time-In	Time-Out	Hours
March 12 th	1 st Observation	8:00 AM	1:00 PM	5 Hours
March 16 th	2 nd Observation	8:00 AM	1:00 PM	5 Hours
March 17 th	3 rd Observation	7:55 AM	1:00 PM	5 Hours 5 Minutes
March 18 th	4 th Observation	8:00 AM	12:00 PM	4 Hours
March 19 th	5 th Observation	8:00 AM	1:00 PM	5 Hours
March 23 rd	6 th Observation	7:45 AM	1:15 PM	5 Hours 30 Minutes
March 24 th	7 th Observation	7:55 AM	1:15 PM	5 Hours 20 Minutes
March 26 th	8 th Observation	7:55 AM	1:10 PM	5 Hours 15 Minutes
March 30 th	9 th Observation	7:50 AM	1:05 PM	5 Hours 15 Minutes
April 2 nd	10 th Observation	8:00 AM	1:05 PM	5 Hours 5 Minutes

TOTAL HOURS: 50.5 HOURS

References:

Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, K., Saunders, W., & Christian, D. (2005). English language learners in U.S. schools: An overview of research findings. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 10*(4), 363-385.

National Council of Teachers of English. (2008). *English Language Learners*. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.

Zacarian, D. (2012). *Serving English Learners: Laws, Policies, and Regulations*. Northampton, MA.