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#### Abstract

The purpose of this research is to look at the ways in which English Language Learners interact within the classroom, focusing on the creation of an environment that is conducive to effective learning of the English language, while also working to determine what methods best support their growth. Of particular interest is parental involvement in facilitating language development within the home environment as well as educators working with families to bridge the gap between home and school. The literature research explores a mixture of published articles and research scenarios that focus on children's acquisition of language and the role that families and educators play in shaping children's language development. The research study included in this paper works to illustrate the ways children and families acquire language and how families can be better supported throughout this acquisition process by those working in the field of education.

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### Chapter 1: English Language Learners

The preschool years are a crucial time in a child's development as children learn to interact with one another socially and emotionally, while also learning key academic concepts. As children are learning to convey their thoughts and ideas, their ability to vocalize and express themselves also grows, evolving over time and influenced by experience. This growth is particularly crucial when considering the growing number of English Language Learners who are joining our school systems each year. According to the U.S. Census in the year 2000, the population five years old and over who speak another language other than English totals 46,951,595 people. This number does not include those children who are younger than age five. As educators, we must be aware of this growing number and expand our capabilities in order to better meet the needs of an ever-changing population. As a preschool teacher at the Child Development Center for the last four years, I became interested in the transition of English Language Learners/English as a Second Language Learners (ELL/ESL) early in my career. During the last several years, I have worked with a variety of English Language Learners, including children and families from China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Korea, Mexico, Russia, Taiwan, and Turkey. Each experience has provided me with additional knowledge and insight as to how children learn on an individual level, as well as ways to include families in the learning process.

The purpose of this study is to determine ways that children and families successfully learn and integrate the English language into their everyday lives with the assistance of early childhood educators, as well as some of the benefits of bilingualism. By not only focusing on the learning that occurs in the classroom, but also the home,

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educators can better understand how to meet the needs of children and their families while still respecting each family's culture and native language. I realized that in order to accomplish this task, I needed to think more critically about the ways that children develop and acquire language while also focusing on the important role that parents play in this transition. This lead to the research question: how do parents and teachers work together to assist children's acquisition of English language learning, including the difficulties and challenges that they face, as well as the successes? By learning the areas that parents and teachers feel are successful in comparison with the areas that they feel need more assistance to better accomplish fluency and competent English language skills, educators can better meet the needs of ELL/ESL families and provide the necessary support for continued growth and success.

Based on the research question, how do parents and teachers work together to assist children's acquisition of English language learning, including the difficulties and challenges that they face, as well as the successes, my hypothesis was that parents and children would find it difficult to initially begin to use the English language as they began to obtain language knowledge. It is my opinion that one main reason for this would be that they were embarrassed by their inabilities to use the new language correctly, compared to the way that it was spoken to them. By clearly understanding families' hesitation to use the new language, one can better understand how to help increase their comfort level with the language and further enhance the learning experience for the entire family. It is my assumption that families' hesitation to experiment with the new language may hinder teachers' work with students as they learn English.

I believe that this study is significant for many reasons. One considerable reason is that it is important to understand families' thoughts so that we can learn from their experiences in order to create better experiences for the new international families that we work with each year. Secondly, by clearly stating areas where individual parents feel limitations lie, they will better recognize where they need to focus their attention to further the learning process for themselves and their children. As such, educators will better understand where the gap lies in the instructional process, allowing a remedy for the situation to be investigated and found. Finally, by researching parents' thoughts and experiences, families will be given a voice to share their language learning experiences, allowing researchers and educators to determine the areas of instruction that families feel supported their learning experiences most appropriately. Overall, this research is of utmost importance because there has been a limited amount of research conducted concerning this topic. Continued research needs to be conducted in the field of English language learning and acquisition to create a guide or framework for educators working with the increasing number of ESL/ELL children.

When considering language learning and acquisition, there are many terms necessary to become familiar with. Horwitz (2008) defines the term English as a Second Language as a "term [that] refers to learning or teaching English within an area where English is spoken" and English Language Learners are "students from another language background who are learning English" (p. 242). Language learning is defined as "the learning of a language through conscious effort such as study and practice" (p. 245). Language acquisition is "the unconscious development of a language through exposure to the target language" (p.244). Owens (2005) defines bilingual as being "fluent in two

languages, uses two languages on a daily basis" (p. 467). The term lexicon is defined as the "individual dictionary of each person containing words and the underlying concepts of each. The lexicon is dynamic, changing with experience." (p. 470)

While this research study has been insightful in providing educators with the different ways in which families learn and use English within their homes, there are several limitations of the research. The sample size of participants is very small with only 9 out of 12 parents participating all within the small preschool classroom which does not allow for generalizations to be made outside the school setting. Of the nine participants, each international family within the classroom is represented with one or both parents participating. Another limitation of the work is the fact that although most of the participants are fluent speakers of the English language, they didn't elaborate on the specifics of their answers in the written responses included in the questionnaire. This further illustrates that although most of the classroom parents are working in a professional field, a language barrier of some degree is still present. Although all of the families chose to participate in the study, with either one or both parents participating, the male parent response was greater than those of the female parents which creates the question in this researcher's mind as to the reason why. One reason for this fact may be the fact that many foreign countries place emphasis on the role of the male as the head of the family, although it is often the females who are more involved in the educational processes of their children. Another reason could be that the female family members were constrained by time and their many obligations to the family household and work.

When initially designing the questionnaire and research study project, the main focus was the ESL/ELL families and their language learning experiences within my

preschool classroom. The study could have been opened to include other preschool classrooms at the school, as well as other public run preschools and elementary school programs. Further research in this area would be beneficial for all educational programs. Knowing the specifics of my particular school, it would have been interesting to compare between privately and publicly run programs. In addition to the comparison between international families whose children attend public versus private preschool, it would have been beneficial to have English native speaking families as a control group to compare and contrast similar and different experiences, opportunities, and challenges.

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

As our society continues to grow, international families are drawn to the United States as a place to live, learn, and work. Due to the increasing number of international families, including both parents and children, it is necessary for educators to understand the English language learning experiences of these families who may be planning to live in the United States permanently or will obtaining an education. By making an effort to study ESL families' language experiences, educators will be able to meet their educational needs and allow further progress to be made in their command of the English language. The need to discover this vital information led this researcher to the question: how do parents and teachers work together to assist children's acquisition of English language learning, including the difficulties and challenges that they face, as well as the successes? International parents and their learning experiences were then investigated through the use of questionnaires. The questionnaires allowed better understanding of the topic of language acquisition as addressed through this literature review.

The following literature review is organized by first introducing the reader to the development of a second language as children progress through three stages of learning. Then the research will address methods of learning that educators have found to be successful in the acquisition of English for language learners, including emphasis on the classroom environment. Finally, the review will include ways that educators can bridge the gap between home and school in order to best meet the needs of individual children.

#### Language Development

According to Owens (2005) "simultaneous acquisition is the development of two languages prior to age three" (p. 418) and as such, children progress through three stages.

In the first stage, "the child has two separate lexical systems...[and] the child learns one word from either language for each referent" (p. 418). Then the child progresses to the second stage where "the child has two distinct lexicons but applies the same syntactic rules to both. This lexical generalizational process is difficult and occurs slowly" (p. 419). "Finally, in the third stage, the child correctly produces lexical and syntactic structures from each language" (p. 419). In comparison, successive acquisition occurs as "most bilingual children develop one language (L1) such as Spanish, at home and a second (L2), such as American English, with peers or in school, usually after age three" (p. 420). As such, this form of language acquisition also occurs in three stages. "In the first stage, the child establishes social relations with speakers of the second language....[then] in the second stage, communication becomes the goal" (p. 421). "Finally, in the third stage, the child concentrates on correct language forms...and can apply general knowledge of language to analysis of this particular language" (p. 421).

#### **Language Learning Research Findings**

As educators in a changing society, we must be aware of the dynamics of those who we are teaching. By educating ourselves on the needs of English language learners and learning strategies that have been found to assist with language learning and development, we are fulfilling our duties to ensure that no child will truly be left behind. In the article "Effective Teaching Strategies for English Language Learners," (Facella, Rampino, & Shea, 2005) the authors discuss how "academic and social success often hinges on a child's language abilities...[and how] the children who are struggling to acquire even basic skills in their second language begin to fall behind academically, creating an achievement gap that only widens over time" (p. 209). As discussed in this

article, the researchers questioned twenty early childhood educators about the strategies that they have found to be beneficial when working with ELL students. "Research indicates, 'Language diversity is a fact in US schools. Approximately twenty percent of students speak a language other than English in the home," (p. 210). It's time that we take a deeper look to determine what students' experiences are telling us, instead of only focusing on the test scores.

As shared by the teachers interviewed detailing their students' learning, "at the early level, their language skills are being acquired through mostly listening" (p. 211). The natural approach to language acquisition "divides the stages of second language" acquisition into preproduction, early production, speech emergence, and intermediate fluency" (p. 211). The strategies that the teachers utilized were divided "into three main categories: strategies for engaging learners emotionally, strategies for teaching language specifically, and strategies for teaching in general..." and as such, the "four strategies [that] were named by the majority of the teachers as being effective in general: [were] gestures and visual cues; repetition and opportunities for practicing skills; use of objects, real props, and hands-on materials, and multisensory approaches" (Facella, et al, 2005, p. 211). By utilizing these various approaches to second language acquisition, teachers will be able to communicate with their students on a personal level, helping them adjust as they reach each stage of the learning process.

As an educator, I have worked with students as they have progressed through each of these stages of learning. Having utilized each of these techniques first hand, I can see the benefits that they provide when working with ESL children, but one must also consider the advantages that they provide other classroom students as well. For instance,

one native English speaking student, Marie, has limited language and communication skills, often struggling to carry out continued conversations. Through the use of these techniques, she too is able to communicate with her teachers and peers in a successful way.

Yet another strategy utilized by the teachers includes the "total physical response (TRP), ...[which] involves active participation of students who learn new action words by watching and imitating as the teacher says and physically demonstrates each word; this facilitates more rapid comprehension and better retention of vocabulary" (Facella, et al, 2005, p. 213) This can also be compared and "paired with physical gestures with language through songs, poems, and chants to teach vocabulary, including body parts and positional concepts" (Facella, et al, 2005, p. 213). This technique is beneficial particularly for ESL children, but also others, including native speakers, who struggle with language and expression. In one such instance, Marie, a native English speaker, has often relayed to her parents the things that she has learned at school by attempting to repeat the songs and poems that we learn and use in the classroom. This is often a beginning point for their discussions about the school day. In much the same way, Sarah, a recent addition to the classroom who speaks Russian, has also been verbally expressing herself at home by sharing songs with her parents and younger sister, Anna. When her younger sister Anna joined a different preschool classroom at the same school, she eagerly became involved and expressive as she was met with the familiar songs that she had heard from her sister. By learning simple phrases and utilizing repetition, students are able to obtain command of the language as they experiment with words that are most familiar and comfortable to them.

### **Classroom Environment and Experiences**

As supported in the article "Facilitating Second Language Learning with Music," researcher Su-Young Bae, (2006) addresses the idea that "music is a practical tool in facilitating language learning in young children because even preverbal infants are shown to be interested and inclined toward music" (p. 48). Both Facella et al (2005) and Bae (2006) address the idea that repetition and use of real, practical objects are crucial to children's learning. Facella et al shares that "repetition of activities gave children the opportunities to practice skills so they can master them...[and] that hands-on experiences, such as the use of manipulatives, can help clarify meaning" (2005, p. 218). Bae (2006) illustrates how her daughter "was able to learn certain words more easily when they were associated with concrete objects..." (p. 50). Also described is how beneficial music can be as she recommends "songs with uncomplicated rhythms and slower tempos similar to a speaking pace for facilitating foreign language learning, and more straightforward, repetitive music for easier text recall" (Bae, 2006, p. 50). Although Bae's study was limited to her own child, research shared by Facella et al also supports this claim.

As stated by the Facella et al article, "since no two students learn the same way: 'The more diverse learning experiences we provide our students, the more robust their education will be, [and] the more ways they will learn each topic'" (2005, p. 219). Not only is it important to determine successful strategies to utilize when working with young language learners, but one must also consider the environment and the key role that it plays in shaping the students that we teach. Celia Genishi (2002) makes several interesting points in the article "Young English Language Learners Resourceful in the Classroom." Genishi states that "in typically developing children language is intertwined with cognition, emotion, and social connectedness...[and although] these children may be new to English, but [one must consider] not to expressing intentions or to knowledge of language that comes through daily experiences in the social and physical world" (2002, p. 67). Since children are continually looking to make a connection to the world around them, it's imperative that teachers provide a welcoming environment and open up themselves to emotional and social interactions with children through individual and large group experiences. Not only do teachers need to familiarize themselves with the cultures and languages of their classroom students, but they must also consider the idea that "those who are bilingual or multilingual have access to a wider range of social and cultural experiences" (Genishi, 2002, p. 67). The classroom's culture needs to be included so that children and families feel valued and respected. For instance, in my own classroom we try to incorporate families' celebrations and traditions into our classroom curriculum so that diversity is being included and celebrated. Recently we celebrated the Asian New Year by having families join the classroom and share traditional dishes, greetings, objects, music, and dancing. By opening ourselves to other cultures, we can learn from one another and help to dispel common misconceptions and prejudices.

#### **Language Interactions**

Genishi (2002) further shares implications for teachers based on limited classroom research, explaining that "teachers who work successfully with children who are English language learners appear to build on what children already know. They do this when they show flexibility with curriculum, have high expectations for all learners but allow for individual variation, [and] encourage and enjoy the human connections made through the processes of learning language" (p. 70).

Additionally, teachers must consider the classroom set-up as detailed in the article, "Early Childhood Classroom Setup." Eglas, Prendeville, Moomaw, and Kretschmer (2002) describe how "the nature of the classroom atmosphere contributes greatly to children's success in learning English as a second language...[saying that] this environment must cultivate motivation to learn the language and provide an ample exposure to English" (p. 17). Eglas et al (2002) further discusses how children first learn to build friendships. This is exemplified in the instance of Sarah, the Russian student who was introduced earlier. Just this fall, she was spending time with another female student, Violet, who also spoke Russian at home. Although Violet only spoke English at school, she and Sarah became friends, often choosing the same tasks and working together. Their friendship gradually progressed and at this point in their relationship, the two seek each other's companionship, switching between English and Russian as a way to interact and communicate with one another.

Eglas et al (2002) conducted a two year study with children in a multi-age, preschool classroom where "children are encouraged to interact directly with materials and one another and to observe and discuss the results of these interactions" (p. 17). In the same way, this approach aligns with the work that educators strive to achieve when working with all age groups at the school. Special attention is given to the selection and display of materials, allowing children to move throughout the classroom and interact in the areas based on their interests, first exploring and then creating. Included in this topic is the inclusion of songs and poems that are repetitive and predictable. Also shared are the benefits of curricular webbing. "The use of curricular webbing also encouraged children's acquisition of the language. Webbing, which links various areas of the

classroom, encourages children to use the English phrases they remember from familiar books or songs in other areas of the classroom" (Eglas, et al, 2002, p. 18). Although I don't believe that I or other classroom teachers at the preschool have necessarily planned for this exact web to occur, it has happened at times and on a smaller scale with much success.

Children need a regular schedule so that they can begin to anticipate what activity or requirement will occur next. Eglas et al (2002) explains that "Organizing the day around a predictable schedule allows children to quickly learn the classroom routines and anticipate what will come next" (p. 18). While it is beneficial for all children to have knowledge of a dependable schedule, it's particularly important for ESL students to understand so that they will feel comfortable with the transition process. Again referring to Sarah and Violet, when they first joined the classroom they were both hesitant to interact not only because of the language barrier, but because they were unsure of the expectations. Both students quickly learned the routines and began to use the vocabulary words that they were hearing as a way to describe what they were doing or wanted to do next. The repetition again supported this aspect of their language development.

Research shows that the look of the classroom needs to be "multicultural; one that celebrates diversity and includes valued objects and artifacts of many different cultures" (Eglas, et al, 2002, p. 19). Throughout the year, I have been trying to support this aspect of multiculturalism by including art, photos, maps, dolls, and toys that are familiar to all children and represent the value of diversity that our classroom possesses. This also lays the foundation for a close-knit sense of classroom community where children learn about one another in an effort to understand, recognize, and value their own differences.

Progressing from the preschool setting and focusing on the transition to elementary school, one must consider the formal assessments and screenings that students will undergo in order to ascertain their level of language development, as well as to determine any learning disabilities or exceptionalities. Although I have been working with international ESL/ELL preschool learners and their families for the past four years, I feel that we as educators may not be as informed of policies, procedures, and resources as we should be. When I have struggled to find ways to support students and their families, I have sought other teachers and administrators as a reference. Although many have been working in the field of education for years, oftentimes they are unfamiliar with the necessary channels to go through as well as the services that are available to families. Further thought needs to be given to the manner in which educators are familiarized with the system. Through the literature review, I found that the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has published their beliefs on the screening and assessment of young ESL students (Biggar, 2005). In this article, Biggar (2005) discusses the need for support of young children, birth through age eight, and stresses the need for educators to have "knowledge of a child's culture and language" as she discusses how there is "at least 460 languages [that] are represented in U.S. schools and programs," illustrating the fact that "each child regardless of the language spoken at home, has the right to effective and appropriate assessment" (p. 44). The recommendations Biggar and the NAEYC propose include using screening and assessment for appropriate purposes, choosing culturally and linguistically appropriate assessments, characteristics of assessments used to improve instruction, using

standardized formal assessments, characteristics of those conducting assessments,

focusing on the role of family in the assessment of young English language learners, and determining the needs in the field, including bilingual and bicultural professionals. By understanding the purposes and requirements for assessments to be accurate, educators can best support ELL/ESL students by determining their needs and tailoring lesson plans that will create productive learning experiences and language development.

Further attention needs to include the tracking of students' assessment so that teachers can determine students' growth from year to year. In the article "How smart data helps English learners" Bendadom (2005) explains how "language acquisition research shows this effort [to become proficient] takes five to seven years" (p. 26). As such, educators must incorporate a tracking process that will monitor students' growth effectively. The article explains that the Lennox School District in California is utilizing an online data storage program site called PowerSchool, which allows teachers access to password protected information in order to determine where immediate action needs to take place for each individual child. If other schools, both preschool and elementary institutions, were to implement this program throughout the states, valuable time and resources wouldn't be wasted as families relocate and children have to be re-evaluated. This program is beneficial to children and families as they move on to higher grade levels or to new school districts. In an effort to increase parental involvement, California has set standards where "parents of EL students participating in a language instruction program must be notified no later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year about their child's proficiency in English, planned methods of instruction, parental rights, and more" (Benadom, 2005, p. 27).

### **Family Involvement**

Moving on to the rights of families and the need for involvement, one must consider how educators and families can partner together to support language learning. Burningham and Dever (2005) provide valuable information on working with families in the article "An Interactive Model for Fostering Family Literacy." "Literacy skills in their home language support English-language learners as they gain literacy skills in English... [and children] whose parents read to them, and who have begun to understand the reading process have higher levels of reading skills and knowledge than children who do not have such rich literacy experiences before entering school" (p. 87). These authors explain how the research project works with "parents who may not know how to create a literacy rich environment at home" (p. 87). The parents involved in the learning process worked with educators for a portion of the evening sessions to learn how to integrate literacy skills into the home life with an introduction to the literacy bags which contained quality books and activity plans that utilize important literacy skills, with books written in English as well as the native language of the families. Then in the second portion of the time, parents and children worked together to familiarize themselves with the activities. The authors stress the importance of "encouraging parents to explore the family assets that they can contribute to their children's learning [which] will create an environment of trust...[with focus on] storytelling, songs, rhymes, table conversations, family legends, cultural traditions, and family history" (Burningham, 2005, p. 88). By teaching families the many ways that they can become involved in their child's learning, educators are not only creating beneficial home environments for children where learning can occur, but

also incorporating families in their children's learning and creating lasting relationships between the home and school environment.

Continuing with the incorporation of family ties and the importance of family involvement, Bang (2009) also addresses the need for families and schools working together. As Bang, quoting several researchers says, "research supports the benefits of family involvement for children's future academic achievement (Faires, Nichols, & Rickelman 2000; Jeynes 2003), attendance rate, self-esteem, and school behavior (Fantuzzo, McWayne, & Perry 2004)" (2009, p. 97). Bang discusses several main needs that educators must meet in order to be successful when working with families including: awareness that culturally and linguistically diverse families who are new to the country may not understand the U.S. school system, providing systematic means for communication, emphasizing the importance of both parents' roles in education, offering parents ESL programs, and presenting seminars that explain the school system. By adopting policies that incorporate these needs that families often face, we will be able to bridge the gap between the home and school environments, furthering the outreach of schools and increasing the ability of teachers to work successfully with ESL families. As such, Cho, Chen, and Shin (2010) also further supports this idea in the article "Supporting Transnational Families," by stating "a program can't educate or care for the child without taking the family into consideration" (p. 30).

The literature review that I conducted made me feel validated as an educator in the learning experiences that I am providing for children in the early childhood classroom setting. In my limited experience teaching preschool, I have found that educators with whom I am associated oftentimes experiment with different techniques and approaches in

an effort to find a method or technique that will be successful without considering the underlying idea of why it's important or how it supports children's learning. By studying research and learning from others, we will be able to better support children and families while working to produce bilingual learners.

In conclusion; we, as educators, have a monumental task ahead of us. Not only must we ensure that no child is left behind, but we must make sure that we are not severing families' ties to their native languages and cultures. It's our obligation to guarantee that we are carrying out our assignment to the fullest by effectively supporting English language learners and their families. As Genishi (2002) describes the resourcefulness of ELLs in the classroom, she includes Judith Wells Lindfors adept quote, "To use language at all—to speak or write or sign—in conscious awareness of another's presence is to engage in an act of connection" (p.66). Educators everywhere need to help make the connection between home and school; between family members, students and teachers, in an effort to forge a bond so that true learning and language acquisition can occur for all children. While the presented literary research review suggests effective ways to teach English language learners, it fails to address the ways families' and their experiences affect children's acquisition and adaptation to a new language and all that the learning process entails, resulting in the need for continued research in this vital area.

#### Chapter 3: Methods

As our society continues to grow, educators are faced with an overwhelming challenge of meeting the mounting needs of children, with an increasing number of English Language Learners (ELL/ESL). Due to this rising number of non-English students, teachers are working to meet their students' needs in the areas of academics while trying to also instill a command of the oral and written English language with an intent focus on speech and comprehension. Biggar (2005) discusses how there are "at least 460 languages [that] are represented in U.S. schools and programs," further illustrating the fact that our population and its needs are changing. As a result it's our job as educators to determine ways in which schools and classrooms can better support the needs of children and families.

Throughout the years research has shown that the best way to educate children is to work to include the family. By partnering together teachers and parents can make the largest impact on their students' development. Cho et al (2010) further supports this idea by stating that "a program can't educate or care for the child without taking the family into consideration'" (p. 30). This led to the research question: how do parents and teachers work together to assist children's acquisition of English language learning, including the difficulties and challenges that they face, as well as the successes? Throughout the course of this study, one will be better able to understand families' experiences learning English, their confidence levels, ways that their cultures have been included, successes, and challenges that they may face.

International families whose children are attending a preschool classroom located in Southeastern Ohio were asked to participate in this research study in an effort to share

their personal experiences with learning the English language, as well as the experiences of those within their family in an effort to answer the research question: how do parents and teachers work together to assist children's acquisition of English language learning. including the difficulties and challenges that they face, as well as the successes? Both mothers and fathers were asked to fill out the questionnaire separately in order to determine differences in opinions, experiences, and feelings of both males and females. The majority of the parents invited to participate have a college education and are working professionals. Each of the international families within the classroom were invited to participate in the study. Altogether twelve parents were presented with an informational letter explaining the purposes and processes of the study, the consent form with the formal explanation of the study, and the numbered questionnaire. Families were asked to decide whether they wanted to participate in the study and told to return the signed consent form and completed questionnaire if they were willing to become involved. Those families who chose to participate in the study were from the countries of China, Kazakhstan, Korea, Russia, and Taiwan.

The children of the research participants are students in a preschool classroom at the school, and each of the families has one or two children, with the children's ages ranging from fourteen months to five and half years old. Of the participants returning the questionnaires six are males and four are females, each a parent of a preschool child.

The data obtained through the use of the questionnaire was kept confidential as each research participant was assigned a specific number to conceal their identity. When names of parents or children are used in any way, pseudonyms are used to preserve the identities of each individual. The completed questionnaires and signed informed consent

forms were kept secure in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home and will be destroyed following the completion of the research study.

As family members returned the informed consent forms, they also submitted the completed questionnaire. Many of the questions included within the questionnaire allowed participants to explain in detail their language experiences and forms of support in order to gain a clear understanding of the English language learning opportunities and challenges that each family has undertaken. Included in Appendix C is a copy of the questionnaire to further illustrate in detail the number and type of questions that families were asked to respond to.

The responses to the beginning questions were analyzed with the use of a data table in order to show similarities and differences in language experiences and opportunities within the home. The written response questions were analyzed in a qualitative manner as similar answers were grouped together and responses were addressed individually when applicable as a way to illustrate each individual's response.

Once the data analysis was complete, several additional questions arose in this researcher's mind. First, how could question number twenty be rephrased so that parents better understood that the focus was on challenges that *they* would face as the parent of a child transitioning to elementary school? Second, parents should have been asked to share their experiences with ESL classrooms as they were learning English when they came to live in the United States. Also, to provide the opportunity for participants to explain how the university provides support to international students and to academic families and their children. And finally, an additional follow up interview would be beneficial to gain additional information and clarify parents' responses.

#### Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Families provide the basis of a child's learning experiences and can help to foster within the home the learning that is occurring through the classroom environment. Due to this important aspect of family-school connections and the increasing number of international students who are unable to fluently speak English that enter into the classrooms throughout our country each year, it's imperative that research be conducted in order to better support families and students. The overwhelming need to conduct research in this area of language acquisition and family support, led to the research question: how do parents and teachers work together to assist children's acquisition of English language learning, including the difficulties and challenges that they face, as well as the successes?

In order to create a clear picture of the language experiences that the students and families have been involved with, we will first address the individual family structure of each of the six families that are involved in the study and their native language. Pseudo names have been given to preserve the identity of each family. First is Anna's family. Anna lives in a home with both her mother and father and no other siblings. Their family speaks Chinese at home and both parents are working professionals. Anna has a friend that she often plays with who is fluent in English, which is where she learned the majority of her English. When Anna joined our classroom early in the fall, she quickly learned the classroom routines and began to form friendships with the other students. Although Anna is very observant and continually makes comments throughout the classroom experiences, she still struggles at times to clearly articulate her thoughts orally

in a way that can be easily understood by others. Anna will transition to kindergarten at the end of this school year.

Now I will discuss Emmy's family. Emmy is a Chinese girl who recently joined our classroom this fall. She is an only child living with both of her parents, her mother and father, speaking in Chinese the majority of the time at home. Emmy's father works in the educational field and her mother stays at home. As she became acclimated to the classroom, she began to experiment with using English more and more and is now able to communicate effectively using English. She still has difficulty with fluency and vocabulary use but continues to learn by listening and observing other fluent speakers. Although Emmy's father is a more English proficient speaker than her mother, Emmy often chooses to speak with her mother in English because her mother is the one who takes her to school and discusses school activities with her. At the end of this school year, Emmy will transition to another preschool classroom for one more year.

Next is Oscar, who lives with his father, mother, and younger sister. Oscar's family speaks Mandarin Chinese at home almost exclusively. Both of Oscar's parents work in the field of education. Oscar has attended the preschool for the past four years with this being his third year in this preschool classroom. When Oscar began attending school, he could not speak or comprehend English. Throughout the last several years, with Oscar's repeated experiences and exposure to English, he has become one of the most observant and proficient English speakers in the classroom, oftentimes articulating more clearly his thoughts than the native English speaking students. At this time, Oscar is able to read at approximately a first and sometimes second grade reading level with

very few errors or miscues. At the end of this school year, Oscar will transition to kindergarten.

Sarah's family is from Kazakhstan and speaks a combination of Russian and Kazakh at home with almost no English. Sara's father is a university student and her mother stays at home. Sarah has a younger sister who also attends preschool at the center. When Sarah joined our classroom, she spoke no English and was unable to comprehend when spoken to. Through repetition and hand motions, Sarah began to gain understanding and command of the language. She is very quiet and reserved but actively engages throughout the classroom. As her confidence and familiarity with the English language has increased throughout the last several months, she has increased her interactions with other students. Although she has a very close knit relationship with another student, Violet, who also speaks Russian, they did not converse in Russian at the beginning of their relationship when both were gaining skills in using the English language. Now that both are becoming confident within the classroom environment, they oftentimes switch between English and Russian fluently. Sarah often becomes more verbal and comfortable speaking English when working in a small group. At the end of this school year, Sarah will transition to kindergarten.

Stan is an only child whose family speaks Korean. Both Stan's mother and father work in a professional field. Stan has attended the center for the past four and a half years and has been a student in this preschool classroom for the last three years. When Stan was a toddler, his parents began speaking in mostly English at home in order for him to be able to make the transition to the English classroom. As a result, Stan is now learning to speak and write in Korean at his church but is not having much success at

fluent use in Korean at this time, often resorting to using English. Stan is able to speak clearly and fluently in English as he easily conveys his thoughts and ideas. He does often have incorrect pronoun use and over generalizes verb conjugations. Stan's parents are now trying to use more of the Korean language at home in an effort to help Stan become fluent in both languages. At the end of this school year Stan will transition to kindergarten.

The final family participating in the study is Violet's family. Violet, her mother, and father all speak Russian and English, with more Russian being spoken in the home than English. Violet also has a younger sister who is spoken to in Russian and is also slowly learning English through her interactions with her sister Violet. Violet's father works in the field of architecture and her mother stays at home although she does have a professional college degree. Violet has attended the center for almost a year and has grown in her understanding and ability to speak the English language. When Violet entered the classroom she only had a limited understanding of the English language in terms of both speech and comprehension. Since that time her skills have grown tremendously and she is able to clearly share her thoughts both orally and in the written form. Violet's mother recently shared that at home she will speak to Violet in Russian and she will respond in English. At times when they are conversing with other Russian family members via the internet, Violet will speak in Russian fluently in order to participate in the conversation but she doesn't choose to do so very frequently. At the end of the school year Violet will transition to another preschool classroom for the upcoming year.

In terms of participation, there was a total 100% response to the questionnaire by the fathers while there was a 66% response rate by the mothers in the classroom.

Throughout the data table one can differentiate between the mother and father responses with the use of a code system. The X's indicate a male response and the O's indicate a female response.

Question 6: How many times per week do you spend reading with your child?

1-2 times	3-4 times	5-6 times	6 or more times
X		ххо	X X X O O O

Question 7: Are the books that you read to your children written in English or your native language?

English	Other Language
x x x x x o o o	x x x o o o

#### Question 8: How much time do you spend speaking English with your child at home?

0-10%	10-30%	30-50%	Over 50%
x x x x o o	0	хо	

## Question 9: What language are you most comfortable speaking?

Native Language	English	Both languages
X X X X O O O O		хх

Question 10: How confident are you in your ability to speak English fluently?

Somewhat confident	Confident	Very confident
хоо	x x x o o	хх

# Question 11: How confident are you in your ability to read in English fluently?

Somewhat confident	Confident	Very confident
хоо	x x x o o	хх

# Question 12: How confident are you in your ability to write in English using correct grammar?

Somewhat confident	Confident	Very confident
ххоо	X X O O	хх

# Question 13: What language is your child/children most comfortable speaking?

Native Language	English	Both languages
X X X	хх	X

# Question 14: Do you specifically teach English or your native language to your children at home?

Teach English	Teach native language	Teach both languages
	ххо	x x x x o o o

#### Results

While analyzing the data, it was determined that often times those participants who are somewhat confident in one area, either speaking, reading, or writing, are more likely to be somewhat confident in one or both of the other areas. This was the case with two of the mother responses and two of the father responses. In the other responses, participants felt that they were confident or very confident in two or even all three of the categories. While at the same time, even those participants who are very confident in their abilities to, speak, read, and write in English still responded that they were more comfortable speaking their native language as 80% of participants said that they preferred to speak in their own language and 20% felt confident speaking both languages without a preference. This is an area of great concern particularly for educators because of the number of participants who don't feel comfortable either speaking, reading, or writing in English. This lack of confidence in one or more of these areas leads to several questions. How will educators meet the needs of children and families without the ability to effectively communicate? How will parents assist their children with learning activities and lessons if they are unable to understand the requirements? Who will help meet their needs to support the families' learning opportunities?

## **Qualitative Analysis and Discussion**

The remainder of the data obtained from the questionnaire will be explained through qualitative analysis as we look at each family's responses individually in order to better determine how to meet their needs. When asked to describe how they learned to speak and write in English in question fifteen, nine of the ten participants responded that they began to receive formal instructions in English beginning in middle school and

continued through high school and university classes. Most (the same nine) began to learn the language while living in their native country and then continued instruction and language use once they came to the United States to further their educational experiences. Sarah's mother explained that her language learning occurred as a self-study, which is continuing as she adds additional words and phrases to her vocabulary. Violet's father added that he learned to speak and write in English additionally by "taking regular classes, writing papers, [and] speaking to classmates, teachers, friends, etc."

When asked how other family members learned to speak English, the participants explained that others also learned through school and formal instruction experiences, with the except of one mother who has learned solely through self study. Emmy's mother has also learned more English through self study after finishing school. Each of the participants explained that their children have gained most of their knowledge of the English language through their experiences at school in the preschool classroom.

When asked what they felt was the most beneficial activities and experiences that have helped their children to learn to speak English in question seventeen, seven of the parents responded that the most beneficial experience for their children was the interactions with those speaking English through the preschool environment. Additional responses were also given. Anna's family shared that their "landlord has a 6 year old daughter who is Anna's playmate. They often hang out together evening[s] and weekend[s]...[which allows her to] learn English and practice the new words she['s] learned from [a] book, TV, or school." Emmy's mother added that "dialog and reading books every day" has been very beneficial and her father added "interact[ion] with other

people" has been helpful. Stan's father also shared that "play with kids, TV, movies, and school" has helped with Stan's use of English.

These results show the impact that the school environment plays on children's development of the English language and their vocabulary knowledge. Nine out of ten parents learned to speak English in the school setting, which is how their children are also learning English. This further implies the crucial role that provided learning experiences play in advancing students' knowledge, vocabulary, and sentence structure. By providing learners with a strong foundation and taking the time to work individually with each student as well as in small groups, teachers can continue to promote students' learning. It's imperative that teachers share their work with students' families in order to make the connection between what is happening in the classroom and provide ways that parents can support students' learning in the home.

Next families were asked how their native language and culture is being included in their child's classroom and additional ways that they would like to see this inclusion occur. Anna, Emmy, and Oscar's parents were happy that the Chinese Spring Festival was celebrated through books, food, dancing, decorations, and drawing, as well as other special occasions. Violet's father would like to see their Russian culture included with the use of books while her mother "would like to see more emphasis on self-awareness, embracing [the fact] that every child is special in terms of their origins and cultures. The reason is that at this age, kids want to be like everybody else in the classroom, which means (in a child's mind) that speaking in English is ok but speaking in another language is not, [and] that transfers to home." Sarah's mother explained that their "native culture and language are not represented in the classroom [and] probably we could do some

native holidays in the class." Emmy and Sarah's fathers didn't feel that additional inclusion was needed because they have enough traditions at home. Stan's dad added that the school has a cultural show and tell where families can share information. holidays, and traditions. He would like to see the school "have an international day or week [and] participate [in] the university international week."

While most parents felt that their language and culture was included in adequate ways, others felt that they could do more to support the inclusion and offered valuable ideas. By determining strengths of inclusion and areas that need to be improved upon, educators can further support families and provide additional learning experiences that are valuable for all families. These ideas will be shared with the other classroom teachers in an effort to make positive changes within the school curriculum and environment.

As parents were asked question nineteen, how has your child's classroom environment helped them to continue to develop their skills in speaking, writing, and reading in English, all ten parents felt that the classroom was doing an exceptional job and meeting their expectations for a variety of reasons. Anna's mother shared that Anna has learned a lot of new words since starting school and has talked about a variety of new experiences and places. Anna's father would like to see the teachers "tell more stories and ask questions (about the stories)...and encourage children to repeat the stories in English." Stan's father placed additional value on "class reading time [which has] helped a lot [because] it gave [his] son good motivation to read more at home." Violet's mother made a very well supported claim as she placed value on the classroom experiences saying, "having her engaged in all activities [is] helping her to form opinions, stimulating imagination" and went on to say that "language is only a mean[s] of communication and

the end results. So if the child is engaged and interested in communicating with teachers and friends, she will learn the language by using it."

While all of the parents felt that the classroom has been very supportive, they brought up several valuable aspects of learning. Reading and speaking allow students to further their knowledge of the English language. By being exposed to the environment and using what they hear and see in applicable ways, students can continue to grow and increase their skills. As teachers and parents work together to expand on these learning experiences students will only grow in their skill level. By understanding what each family is looking for individually, teachers can be sure that they are meeting their needs and illustrating these specific learning experiences for families to see, learn with their children, and expand on in the home environment.

In question twenty, parents were asked what they felt would be their greatest challenge as their child transitions to elementary school. Two of the parents responded that they were not concerned since their child has an additional year in preschool. Stan's father said that "helping him with his homework" would be the most difficult part of the transition. Sarah's father felt that she is well prepared for the transition because of the similar experiences that she's been provided in preschool however her mother thought "get[ting] adapted to a new group of children" would be difficult. Oscar's father shared that "a different set of daily activities and new classmates" would provide a challenge. Violet's father thinks that "making sure she listens to what the teacher is saying" will be the greatest challenge. Her mother worries that the challenge will be "to develop her sense of self, [to] resist the trap of "being like everybody," but at the same time, kids learn from examples, by studying teachers' and peers' behaviors. Finding a balance is

challenging." Anna's mother is concerned with the fact that Anna "will have to deal with peer[s] most of the time by herself [and] she will not have four teachers in the classroom." However, Anna's father's concern is "still English. Her English needs to be improved. For example, [to] express herself or describe something in sentences."

While most parents focused on what will be the most difficult challenge for their children, they also took into account how these challenges may affect their child's behavior at home. If children are struggling to find their place in the classroom while adjusting to new teachers and classmates, as well as a new classroom environment, they may face additional challenges such as mood, motivation, etc. because of this transition. When teachers and other educators can fully understand the challenges that parents anticipate, are seeing demonstrated by their children, or are fearful about, they can make strides to better support each family individually. While it's important that all families feel valued and supported, it's even more crucial that international families feel that they are being valued, understood, and heard so that they will continue to support their children's learning experiences no matter how difficult the challenges are that they will face.

When asked in what ways parents felt that they have been supported by the school in learning to speak English, there were a variety of responses. Five parents, three fathers and two mothers, felt that the question was not applicable to them. Violet's father explained that he didn't feel that he needed any support in this area. Stan's father explained that "during the parents and teachers conferences they (the teachers) point out [his] son's learning progress." Oscar's father pointed out the fact that "all activities support learning to speak the English language." Anna's mother shared that Anna

sometimes corrects their pronunciations and uses a less formal manner of speaking, more natural, than what they learned in English books. Since Sarah's mother is continuing to learn English through self study, she shared that she has been supported through "communications, playing games, reading, drawing, and writing."

Throughout the responses, one could determine that the parents were more focused on how their children would handle the transition to the elementary classroom and the manner in which that transition may affect their home. Stan's father focused on the homework aspect of the public school system and Anna's father placed value on the necessity of being able to fluently speak and describe fluid thoughts in English. While it's important to emphasize the challenges of learning a new language and the need for support in these areas, it's important that educators not lose sight of the fact that these students will face other challenges in addition to the possible language barrier.

Finally, parents were asked in question twenty-two to share in what ways/areas do they feel that the school system can help international families feel supported and valued as part of the school community. Emmy's mother said to continue with more activities and her father said, "just treat [her] like others." Oscar's dad suggested "celebrating holidays in different cultures." Stan's father added to this idea as he suggested, "teaching all students about each others' different cultures." Sarah's mother wanted to see "more meetings and involvement of international families" while her father said that he doesn't "think many other countries are as much supportive and friendly as here." Anna's father said, "the school could help families to share information on some events for children or hold more events for family activities." Her mother said, "they would feel more comfortable and confident if diversity is appreciated by the school. International families and the kids all have the capacity to adapt and adjust very well, if only they don't feel marginalized or excluded from the environment." Violet's mother explained that "schools need to see beyond the language speaking...[for] child[ren] to be accepted for other talents, interests that [they] might have." Her father reminded that the "teacher should be aware that a child may not fully understand instructions or what the teacher is saying [and the] child will learn from examples."

The questionnaire provided many insightful thoughts about how international families perceive their cultures to be included in the classroom or school, as well as suggestions to further the home and school connection. The thoughts shared through this meaningful experience will be presented to the educators at the preschool in an effort to better understand and support all families, with a particular focus on the role of international families and the additional support and assistance that they may require.

In the space provided at the end of the questionnaire to share any additional thoughts that would be beneficial to the study, three participants chose to respond. Both Anna and Violet's mothers discussed the importance of learning through personal experiences and involvement. Violet's mother explained how her "English improved much better when [she] was placed in a regular class (to study business at the university), than when [she] studied English in the ESL class. When learning the language becomes a tool to do something else, the progress is better (in comparison to learning the language solely)." Anna's mother echoed this sentiment as she said, "learning from personal experience might be the fastest way to gain knowledge. I feel Anna's English greatly benefit[s] from the field trips, dancing movements, the garden work, the music experience, and other exploration activities arranged in school." Stan's father implored

that "teachers and administrators need to be mindful of how difficult it is for English Language Learners and [to] be patient."

# Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

Although each individual family had different views, as well as each parent within the family unit, it was interesting and informative to learn each person's perspective; areas where they feel supported by the school, areas for improvement, and to gain an overall view of the families' experiences as language learners. Based on this data, educators can make the necessary changes to the curriculum and school environment to meet each of the areas families feel need additional attention. By listening to the needs of the people, educators can connect with families individually and ensure the fact that no child is truly left behind.

While the detailed questionnaires provided much insight into the language experiences of English Language Learners and their families, it would be beneficial to continue the dialogue that was started through the use of the questionnaire by conducting a follow-up interview with each research participant. This would allow for greater clarification to be made between written responses and research interpretation. Through the interview setting, the research may find that participants may elaborate on their responses further through the verbal process, rather than relying on the written process which can be limiting when writing in another language. Additional research needs to be conducted in this area to support the needs of families as thoughts, opinions, and needs are continually changing and need to be evaluated on an individual basis.

The detailed questionnaire provided much insight into the use of language within international families' homes but it also left many questions unanswered. Such as, what experiences do the parents as learners have with ESL/ELL classrooms? How does the university support international students and families? How will the school support

ELL/ESL students and families? What services are they aware of to assist with language learning within the area?

With the use of this questionnaire and some additional questions to modify the original form, educators could provide families with the questionnaire at the beginning of each new school year. This would allow teachers to understand each individual family and the areas that they need support, as well as how to approach families' needs. By learning this information early on during the school year, teachers can strategize with families to bridge the gap between home and school. This will prevent the loss of crucial time in the beginning of the year when both teachers and parents are trying to learn about one another.

The families who participated in the study are from higher educational backgrounds and higher socioeconomic situations. Due to this fact, they fully understand the importance of working with their children at home and the benefits of reading together. As such, some families within the lower socioeconomic brackets may not recognize the importance of early literacy and learning experiences or have the means to provide such as readily as other families. Some international families may not be able to read and write in English and would require additional support and services. Educators need to be aware of these various situations in order to support each family individually. To further expand the generalization of the study to other populations, one should also consider seeking families who fit into the lower socioeconomic status to compare and contrast learning opportunities, situations, and challenges. Challenge yourself as an educator to find ways to truly learn about, understand, and accept each international

family so that the bridge to learning and language acquisition can be opened and well traveled.

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## **APPENDICES**

#### APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT TOOL

April 25, 2011

Dear Parent:

During the remainder of the school year, we will conduct a study on your experiences, opinions and thoughts about your family's interaction with the English language, as well as your native language spoken at home. The results of this study will be important to help teachers and administrators understand how to better help preschoolers and school age children's development of language skills by understanding the language experiences provided at home. We are seeking your permission to participate in the study and share your experiences as an English Language Learner.

If you agree to participate in the study, we ask that you answer the questionnaire attached to the study about your family's experiences learning English and your use of your native language. Your information will allow the classroom teachers and others to find ways to improve learning and family relationships with the school.

We don't believe that this study will involve any risks to you or your family. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us at any time using the contact information listed within this letter. Also, if you feel that you are unable to participate in the study, you are able to withdraw your consent at any time.

All of the information that you provide through the questionnaire is completely confidential. The information shared will be identified by number instead of name to maintain your privacy. Officials of Ohio University will review the information at the conclusion of the study to make sure that the research was conducted in an appropriate and ethical way. As your information is included in the results of this study, you and your family members will not be named or identified because fictitious names will be used as a way to identify the data results. By signing this consent form, you give us permission to use this information as it has just been described. As mentioned above, you are able to withdraw your participation at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study at this time or at a later date, please feel free to contact me at 740.593.1819 or <a href="watsone@ohio.edu">watsone@ohio.edu</a>. You may also contact my research advisor, Dr. Bill Smith at 740.597.3351 or <a href="smithw@ohio.edu">smithw@ohio.edu</a>.

We sincerely hope that you decide to participate in our research project, as we look forward to learning more about you and your family as language learners. If you decide that you would like to participate, please sign and return the attached consent form. Your consent form along with the completed questionnaire can be returned to the preschool classroom. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

## APPENDIX B: CONSENT DOCUMENTS

# **Ohio University Consent Form**

Title of Research: Supporting English Language Learners and their Families

Researcher: Emily J. Huck

You are being asked to participate in a research study. For you to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purposes, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Please consider the information and feel free to discuss the study with your friends and family before deciding whether you would like to participate.

# **Explanation of Study:**

## Purpose:

The purpose of this study IS to help educators better support English Language Learners and their families. This study will explore effective language learning experiences that parents of preschool children, their children, and families have undergone in an effort to become fluent speakers of the English language. By determining areas that families feel that they are well supported and don't find as challenging, and comparing them with additional areas where families feel that they could use increased support, teachers and families can work together to create a more effective relationship between home and school. By answering the questionnaire, your feedback will help to influence teachers' and families' future relationships.

#### **Procedure/Tasks:**

If you consent to participate in the study, we would ask that you answer the questionnaire regarding your family's language use and experiences, attached to this form. Once you return the completed form, your participation in the study is complete. The researcher will then use your completed information to further written research.

#### **Duration:**

Your participation in this study will end once you have returned your questionnaire. If you feel that you can provide additional information that would be helpful to the research study, you are invited to do so at any time following the return of the questionnaire.

## **Risks and Benefits:**

There are no known risks to participating in this research study. Your involvement in the study is limited to answering the questions included in the questionnaire and does not require any more participation on your part. Your child and other English Language learners may benefit from your involvement in this study by allowing educators to evaluate families' experiences with language, both their native language and English. By sharing your thoughts, opinions, and experiences, others can learn ways that can improve the relationship between home and school. As a result, the information provided in this study will allow classroom teachers, school administrators, and other educational personnel to improve family and school relationships currently and in the future.

# **Confidentiality and Records:**

As part of this study, your completed questionnaire will be kept in a locked cabinet to protect your confidentiality. An identification number will be used to determine which families return the questionnaire, which will also be kept in the locked cabinet to protect your privacy. When the results of the study are addressed in the research paper, your questionnaire information will be shared using a pseudonym to also preserve your confidentiality. Following the conclusion of the research study, your questionnaire will be destroyed. Identifiable information will not be shared with anyone outside of the research study.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies
- Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU or the Office of Research Compliance

## **Participant Rights:**

You or your family members may refuse to participate in this study without any penalty. If you are a student or employee at Ohio University, your participation decision will not affect your child's enrollment at the Child Development Center, grades, or employment status.

If you decide to participate in the study by filling out the questionnaire, you can change your decision at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing and returning this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights that you may have as a participant in this study.

# **Questions and Contact Information:**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact **Emily Huck** at this email address: <a href="mailto:watsone@ohio.edu">watsone@ohio.edu</a> or by phone at **740-593-1819** or **Dr. Bill Smith** at <a href="mailto:smithw@ohio.edu">smithw@ohio.edu</a> or by phone at **740-597-3351.** 

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

# Signing the participation consent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) the information regarding the English Language Learning study. I understand that I am being asked to provide permission for my questionnaire information to be shared in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study, and understand that I can choose to leave the study at any time. If I decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to me and I will not lose any benefits to which I am entitled.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form and I will be given a copy of the form for my own records.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction
- you understand that Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
- you are 18 years of age or older

Signature	Date

# APPENDIX C: INSTRUMENTS

# Supporting English Language Learners and their Families Survey Questionnaire

Today's Date:	Parent ID #:	
Dear Parent: These questions will help us to identify areas of concern and success regarding English Language learning experiences. All of this information will be kept confidential. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.		
1. Please list the number of family members in your house	Number of childrenNumber of adults	
2. Your child/children's birth date(s)://	etely.	
3. Your child's gender: □ Boy □ Girl		
4. How would you describe the ethnicity of your family? Please	e check all that apply:	
☐ Black/African American ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Asian/Asia	n-American	
□ Native American □ White/Caucasian □Other-Please desc	ribe:	
5. What language(s) does your family speak at home?		
6. How many times per week do you spend reading with your c	hild?	
$\Box$ 1-2 times $\Box$ 3-4 times $\Box$ 5-6 times $\Box$ more than 6 times per	week	
7. Are the books that you read to your children written in English language? ☐ English ☐ Other language	sh or your native	
8. How much time do you spend speaking English with your ch	aild at home?	
9. What language are you most comfortable speaking?		
10. How confident are you in your ability to speak English flue   □ somewhat confident □ confident □ very confident	ntly?	
11. How confident are you in your ability to read in English flusomewhat confident □ confident □ very confident	ently?	
12. How confident are you in your ability to write in English us   ☐ somewhat confident ☐ confident ☐ very confident	ing correct grammar?	

their skills in speaking, writing and reading in English?

## APPENDIX D: APPROVAL FROM SCHOOL



Child Development Center The Ridges Athens OH 45701-2979 T: 740.593.1819

April 4, 2011

To: Ohio University Research Committee:

I have reviewed the research proposal submitted by Emily Huck, "Supporting English Language Learners and their Families" as regards involving the children and families attending the Ohio University Child Development Center on the issue of how to better help preschoolers and school age children's development of language skills by better understanding the language experiences provided in their home setting. As the population of the Center is very diverse in families with English not being the first language, assisting English language learners is an area of our program that we would like to develop in a more comprehensive way, therefore the information collected will be very beneficial.

I am in total support of this proposal. Please feel free to contact me by telephone, 593-1820 or by email <a href="mailto:waller@ohio.edu">waller@ohio.edu</a> if you should require any further information from me.

Sincerely,

Cathy Waller Director



