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CURRICULUM FOR ADDRESSING POTENTIAL LINGUISTIC MISCONCEPTIONS

OF EARLY ELEMENTARY SOMALI- SPEAKING LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

by

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A final paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

I often tell my students that I love mistakes because we can always learn from them, but mistakes also tell teachers a lot of information. Analyzing student errors is one of the most informative parts of being an English Language (EL) teacher. Any errors students make while learning English contain a wealth of information about the students' understanding of the English language as it relates to their foundational language or languages. Errors are an essential part of learning and the analysis of these errors is how I get much of the information I use to inform my language instruction. It is from this examination of student errors that I arrived at my research question, "*How can I create a curriculum that explicitly addresses potential linguistic misconceptions of K-2 Somali learners of English?*".

Student first languages have been avoided in classrooms for many years. Howatt as cited in Cook (2001) notes that " the monolingual principle, the unique contribution of the twentieth century to the classroom language teaching, remains the bedrock notion from which the others' ultimately derive" (p.404). Teachers have been encouraged to focus solely on the L2, and set the first language aside. This was the experience of my great-grandfather Simon, who only spoke German until he began school. His one-room school in rural Minnesota provided him with no L1 support, nor was he entitled to extra language instruction. He became so frustrated that one day in 6th grade he handed in his books, and decided to drop out of school. His teachers expected him to acquire English by full immersion, without any specific supports to help him. In this project, I plan to

provide EL teachers with resources that can help them be more intentional in better understanding and harnessing student first language knowledge, in an effort to improve language instruction.

As an English language teacher who does not proficiently speak the first languages of my students, I can only react to student errors and make assumptions about where the underlying misconceptions might be coming from. The vast majority of my learners speak Somali at home, yet I do not possess the linguistic knowledge of the Somali language to know the major differences between Somali and English. My instruction is typically in reaction to the language errors I identify, in conjunction with the academic language demands and task essential language of the grade level content. While this system does address student language learning needs, it does not take into account the ways in which a students first language might be influencing the acquisition of the target language (TL).

Before this project, I was completely unable to understand areas where linguistic knowledge from my students first language (L1) is being transferred as they acquire the English language. There are certain mistakes that seemed to be more widespread and challenging my Somali speaking students to internalize and given the scope of these language errors, many seemed to have surfaced as a result of first language interference. However, I as a non-Somali speaking educator did not know enough about how the Somali language operates to be able to effectively diagnose and address instances of L1 transfer. In this project, I examine common linguistic differences between Somali and

English in order to create lessons that explicitly address these potential linguistic

misconceptions for K-2 native Somali speakers learning English.

Context

I have spent my entire teaching career teaching at schools that primarily serve

Somali speaking students. Over the past five years, I have fallen in love with my students,

their families, the Somali language and culture. As a white woman whose background

does not reflect that of my students', I am on a constant journey to learn more about my

students and use that knowledge to improve as a teacher. One of the ways I wish to grow

is in my linguistic understanding of the Somali language as it relates to English. As an EL

teacher, linguistic knowledge is essential to knowing how to best instruct my students.

While I was given a vast amount of preparation and resources to help me break apart the

grammar and syntax of English, I had not taken much time to look for resources that

contrast English with Somali. Consequently, I knew very little of the way in which

Somali operates even though the vast majority of my students have a language foundation

in Somali. My situation is not unique.

The school where I teach exists in a large Midwestern metropolitan area that has a

sizeable population of immigrants and refugees from Somalia. My school in particular

consists of 51% students learning English, with nearly 78% of those students indicating

Somali as their primary language. My school sits within a district where nearly 7,800

students are eligible for English Learner (EL) services in the 2017-2018 school year, with

40% of those students being native Somali speakers (Minnesota Department of

Education, 2017). These percentages are important in that there are approximately 3,100 Somali speakers learning English in my district alone, the vast majority of whom are being instructed by general education and language teachers who, like me, do not share their cultural or linguistic background.

There is a large need for more diverse teachers who better reflect our student bodies across all lines of intersectionality. Specifically looking toward linguistic diversity, we need more language teachers who can related to the specific experiences of coming from a particular linguistic background. Even in my school where the majority of students are Somali speaking, to my knowledge only one of our fifty licensed teachers speaks Somali. If we could recruit and maintain language teachers that possess this specific knowledge about their students' L1, they would likely be better at knowing potential aspects of English that could be more challenging to acquire given first language structure and knowledge. This is not to say that a teacher must possess the language background of their students to be successful, simply that it could be helpful in anticipating areas of the English language that students might struggle with the most.

In my own experience as a Spanish language learner, my teachers and professors intricately understood the major linguistic differences between Spanish and English because they themselves were primarily native English speakers. Most had gone through the process of learning Spanish in the exact same way that I did. They knew what was most difficult for them in acquiring the language, and thus could construct their lessons and instruction of new materials in ways that effectively predicted where we might struggle. My teachers had been in the exact place I and my fellow native English

speaking learners of Spanish were in, and were able to anticipate what concepts would

present us with the most difficulty given our first language. They were able to efficiently

meet our needs because of this understanding.

In my high school Spanish classes, where my teachers were entirely native

English speakers, we spent extra time on concepts in Spanish that do not exist in English.

For example, the gendering of nouns is often a challenge for beginning English speakers

learning Spanish, as English does not have feminine and masculine articles that

correspond with gendered objects. Our teachers labeled things around the room

correspondingly and had us do extra activities to help us remember the gendered article

and endings for particular nouns. As I progressed as a Spanish learner, new concepts like

the difference between ser and estar presented another challenge as the "copular be" in

English is only one thing that is not separated to indicate permanence. My teachers knew

that we did not have a point of reference to connect it to in our foundational language, so

they gave us extra support and acronyms like "DOCTOR" to remember that "Ser" is used

for more permanent things like Description, Occupation, Characteristic, Time, Origin,

and Relationship and PLACE to correspond with the less permanent "estar", which goes

with describing Position, Location, Action, Condition, and Emotion. These mnemonic

devices helped our class of Spanish learners better understand and remember the

differences between the two versions of "copular be" in Spanish, especially when those

learners come from a language that does not hold this distinction. Our teachers

recognized that these ideas would be new to us, stretch our brains, and expand our ideas

of how languages operate. Consequently, they spent more time on these concepts and

gave us specific strategies to help us make connections to the new linguistic information. Unfortunately, I am not able to provide this type of strategic instruction for my students.

While an ideal situation would be language teachers who come from a similar linguistic background as their students, the reality is that this cannot always be the case. Teachers who do not share the linguistic backgrounds of their students must inherently do more work to better understand student errors as they relate to their first language or languages. This becomes very challenging to do if you are an EL teacher whose classroom is linguistically diverse. In those situations, it would be very challenging to gather information about each individual students' primary language.While difficult to acquire, knowing characteristics of your students' primary languages as they relate to the language being instruction is invaluable information.

My caseload is not very linguistically diverse. Of the 61 students I teach in first and second grade, I have one Khmer speaker, two children who speak Spanish, four who speak Oromo, and two Amharic speakers, meaning that 52 students, or 81% of my English learners, are native Somali speakers. While I am focusing on Somali in this paper, this is not to say that it is any more important than my other student's language or that I should not also work to figure out the differences of their languages to English. However, given that the vast majority of my students speak Somali, it is most pertinent to my immediate situation to focus on contrasting Somali and English to try and anticipate possible difficulties for the majority of my students.

In order to be able to contrast Somali and English, I attempted to acquire knowledge of Somali syntax and grammar in multiple ways including: asking Somali-speaking friends to translate sentences, attempting to check out books from the library, and taking a Somali class at a community college. When asking my friends to translate sentences, I have found that there is often disagreement among them. There seem to be varied opinions depending on how recently they or their families came to the United States, and whether they came from the Northern or Southern parts of Somalia. The library has several bilingual Somali and English books, but did not have much for materials to teach people in English how to dissect Somali grammar and syntax. Finding this search very frustrating, I took a class at a community college, where the professor mostly had us memorize phrases. He was a kind and helpful teacher, but did not break down the linguistic rules of the language as they related to English. In each instance, I often found myself wishing I could have a language teacher with a strong command of the linguistics of both Somali and English explain how the two languages compare. These endeavors have been helpful in helping me acquire basic vocabulary in Somali, but not in breaking down the structures and rules of the language.

History of the Somali Language

The Somali language is rooted in a rich history of oral tradition, with speakers passing knowledge down in great detail through spoken language. There was no written form of Somali until 1972, when the government chose to begin documenting the language in Roman script. This creation of the written characters was coupled with a national literacy campaign that sought to teach reading and writing skills to Somali

people (Farid & McMahan, 2004). It is important to remember this vibrant past of a strong Somali oral tradition, as this history might have implications on the fluidity of language rules, the ways in which Somali is spoken, and the amount of research that exists on Somali grammar and syntax. It is also possible that language rules shifted, changed, or needed to be generated as the language was written down. This history needs to remain an important consideration throughout this research and project.

Project Rationale

I have noticed areas that seemed to be consistently challenging for my Somali speakers. I wanted to see if these errors could be traced to a grammar or syntax rule from their knowledge of Somali. One area I saw many students have difficulty with was adverbial placement, which often shows up with students saying something like "I went to yesterday the park". We as EL teachers teach that in English you can place the adverbial in the front like "Yesterday, I went to the park", or at the end as in "I went to the park yesterday", but I wanted to find out where it would typically reside in Somali and if I could more strategically address this in instruction of adverbials. Knowing the ways students will naturally want to place the adverbial or add in words could help EL educators to more strategically and explicitly provide non-examples to address this inclination from their first language knowledge.

Due to the fact that I did not possess a deep understanding of the Somali language, I could only be reactionary to the errors my students make. I could not anticipate what new grammatical concepts would be the most difficult for them. There are supports like the WIDA Can-do descriptors and Susana Dutro's grammar matrix that

help EL teachers better understand where students are at, what they can do, and what to instruct them on next, but none of these are specific to my the ways my students' L1 knowledge influences their acquisition of English. In this paper, my goal is to first to compile a document that gives an overview of major differences between Somali and English and then explicitly address these differences in a curriculum that helps educators provide Somali learners of English with more strategic language input.

Chapter Overview

In chapter one, I have discussed the context for my project, the history of the Somali language and the reasons I believe it is important to create a k-2 curriculum that is explicitly designed to address the potential linguistic misconceptions of Somali speakers learning English. In Chapter two, I will be conducting a literature review in order to examine the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories that describe the ways in which foundational languages influence the acquisition of a target language, as well as EL instructional practices that best serve to address these instances of L1 transfer. Chapter three, will give a more detailed description of my project. Finally, chapter four will contain a reflection on the creation of my project.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

My research is driven by the question "*How can I create a curriculum that explicitly addresses potential linguistic misconceptions of K-2 Somali learners of English?*". In my experience, the large majority of English language (EL) teachers who are teaching Somali students do not have an understanding of Somali grammar and syntax, and consequently I want to give educators a tool to more strategically instruct this specific group of English learners.

In order to do this, I first discuss the history of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, theories and methods. SLA is the scientific discipline that studies the ways in which people acquire additional languages. This research is important due to the fact that it directly informs how language teachers can best meet their students' language learning needs in the classroom. Thus, the first section will focus on the evolving research around the learning of additional languages.

After discussing various SLA research, I will then examine English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction as it relates to SLA in order to address how the field of ESL has been impacted by changing research in SLA.The pendulum of what constitutes ESL best practice has naturally swung overtime. In this section, I will address several common assumptions of ESL education that are promoted either explicitly or implicitly in educational settings, and how these assumptions can impact the language instruction English Learners receive. These assumptions include the fact that many teachers believe

that students should only use the target language (TL) in the classroom, teachers should explicitly avoid grammar instruction, and that the goal of language teaching is to make students like native speakers. Through research I will challenge these assumptions and suggest that teachers can help harness student knowledge of their first language (L1) to strategically improve language instruction to aid in student learning of the target language.

The final sections of chapter two will expand on this idea of using student L1 expertise in the classroom. I will first examine the ways in which students often transfer linguistic knowledge from their L1 when learning an additional language, and then suggest ways in which EL teachers can improve their own cross-linguistic awareness to better include this knowledge in the classroom. This is especially an asset for language teachers who teach students from primarily homogenous linguistic backgrounds. I will argue that it is important for these teachers to get to know the characteristics of their students primary language as it relates to the target language. In doing this, teachers can leverage that knowledge to be more strategic in addressing potential linguistic misconceptions.

Second Language Acquisition

The field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is relatively new, and the dominating theories and focus have shifted over time. These theories have impacted the ways in which teachers and other stakeholders understand language learning. This section

will briefly examine important theories in the field of SLA in order to look at how they have been interpreted and utilized to impact language instruction today.

The 1950s were the early days of SLA and behaviorists like B.F. Skinner promoted the idea that language was a result of repetition and learned behaviors (Razfar, 2014). During this time researchers focused on contrastive analysis, or predicting where students would have difficulty by looking at the differences between the first and second languages (Cook, 2008). In this theory, errors were assumed to be resulting from negative transfer from a learner's first language (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013). This theory was broken into a strong and weak version, with the strong version being contested due to the fact that contrasting the two languages could not predict all of the difficulties a learner experienced when learning an additional language (Celcia-Murcia, 2010). Theorists, like Wardhaugh (1970), argued for a weak version of contrastive analysis, where they recognized that far from all language errors could be explained through this view, but many of them could (Celcia-Murcia, 2010).

In response to the contrastive analysis hypothesis, Noam Chomsky developed the cognitive approach and started looking to the similarities among languages. He did this by looking specifically at language universals and highlighting generalizations of how languages operate (Razfar, 2014). Under this view, the commonalities are examined as the most important factors, with their differences seen as more superficial and less important than the factors present in all languages. Language universals were an attempt

to identify a model for Universal Grammar complete with principles and parameters for languages (Celia-Murcia, 2010). This theory was also met with opposition.

Researchers Nicholas Evans and Stephen C. Levinson (2010) argue that there are vanishingly few language universals and that languages differ greatly across nearly all areas of linguistic organization. They claim that Chomsky's Universal Grammar has been misused to generalize common linguistic factors when it is better used to describe how children first come to learn a language. Instead, Evans and Levinson(2010) point to structural differences as distinct aspects of language that should be examined as such.

Another initial research method that looked at differences in language was Corder's idea of error analysis, which looked at variances in the learner's language production in comparison to native speaker usage (Cook, 2008). Error analysis came from the idea that the second language learner develops their own systems of understanding language (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013). This differed from contrastive analysis in that instead of trying to predict errors solely based off of characteristics of language, it looked to errors in language production to gather information about the learner's processing of data (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013). This was an important theory for individuals who planned to use this information for language teaching, in that it highlights the importance of gathering feedback from students, analyzing it, and responding accordingly. However, errors that students make can be influenced by many factors and do not happen in the same way by each learner.

The difficult part of reacting to student errors as a teacher is the fact that an error could be a result of many factors. One proponent of error analysis (Richards as cited in Celce-Murcia, 1971), hypothesized three different types of errors were made as a learner acquires an additional language: interlingual, intralingual and developmental errors. Interlingual errors are those influenced by a learner's first language and negative transfer that occurs in production. Intralingual errors are those that arise from irregular structural differences in the TL. These errors are made by all learners who are acquiring the TL, regardless of their L1. Finally, developmental errors are those that occur in a similar fashion when as children acquire the TL as their L1(Celce-Murcia, 2010). This variety of errors is what makes error analysis so complex and challenging. It is absolutely essential that EL teachers gather information about errors students are making and work to address these errors, but nearly impossible to differentiate among these different kinds of errors when teachers know very little about a child's first language.

Critics of error analysis are skeptical of the focus on learners' problems and believe that it does not take into account the strategy of avoidance or circumlocution to adjust when encountering challenging words or phrases (Celce- Murcia, 2010). Another criticism is that looking toward solely language production does not honor a learner's own language system. This internal and individualized system utilizes a speaker's first language knowledge, in addition to their understanding of the TL, to create their own unique language, or as Larry Selinker refers to this, interlanguage (Cook, 2000).

Interlanguage is the learners' developing knowledge of the target language (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013). In this view, language production is a direct result of

learners' own unique and temporary language system that uses rules and is predictable. It has characteristics of languages the learner knows and also resembles aspects of the second language. Interlanguage has been found to be not only systematic, but highly flexible and ever changing as learners' understanding changes. When a learner gets new input, they are able to update their conscious or unconscious hypotheses about the L2. This shift in understanding leads to an evolution of both the learners' understanding of how languages operate, and their production of it (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013). This continually evolving system of language creation means that language teachers need to be able to provide strategic comprehensible input to assist students in adjusting their understanding. Lightbrown and Spada (2013) point out that when students do not receive instruction or specific feedback that addresses differences between their interlanguage and the TL, they might experience fossilization, or some features in their L2 acquisition remaining stagnant.

Vivian Cook expands on this idea saying that while interlanguage is how students utilize their L1 to make sense of the TL, it is incomplete to view L1 knowledge and a learner's interlanguage as separate entities. She highlights the importance of looking at both of these things together to best understand the overall linguistic knowledge at play while learning an additional language, and coined the phrase multi-competence. Multi-competence includes knowledge of the L1 combined with interlanguage, and refers to the ways in which the knowledge of two languages coexist in the mind (Cook, 2008). Navigating the production of an additional language is a complex process that requires a

learner to be able to utilize their own multi-competence, and a teacher of language to look deeper at the ways in which student L1 knowledge impacts meaning making in the TL.

These myriad theories of SLA demonstrate that there are many ways to view language learning. As Cook points out, "SLA research does not provide a magic solution that can be applied instantly to the contemporary classroom so much as a set of ideas that teachers can try out for themselves" (2012, p.11). These varied viewpoints have influenced second language teaching, but there is not a definite link between this SLA research and language teaching.

Aspects of the theories of contrastive analysis, error analysis and interlanguage/ multi-competence will be used throughout this capstone to highlight how teachers of native Somali speaking English learners can utilize knowledge of their students' first language and metalinguistic understanding to improve instruction.

ESL Instruction

SLA research has inevitably impacted the world of ESL teaching. Due to the fact that there is not one correct theory of language teaching, teachers must choose the theories and models that best fix their various contexts (Cook, 1992). However, given the political nature of teacher education and school systems, several dominate assumptions about ESL teaching and learning have gained strength over the past few decades. Cook (2002) identifies these primary assumptions as: 1) Teachers and students should use the target language instead of first language 2) Teachers should not explicitly teach grammar and finally 3) Native speaker proficiency is the goal for all students. As Cook points out,

these assumptions are largely unspoken, but persist as the dominant basis of language teaching. In this section, I am going to look at how these common assumptions are evident in language teaching policy decisions, the ways in which universities prepare ESL teachers, and choices teachers make about language use in the classroom.

The first common assumption around language teaching is that only the target language should be used in the language learning classroom. This sentiment comes out of the fact that English Language teaching in the United States has long been situated within English-Only policies (Otwinowska, 2017). Ellis as cited in Otwinoska (2017) argues that this policy "assumes that L2 classes should be based on materials designed by native speakers and should ideally be taught by a native speaker, or teacher behaving like a monolingual native" (p.305)..

Teachers might avoid the use of a student first language for reasons beyond the existence of an English- only policy. The fact that much of the teaching force in the United states is either monolingual, or not fluent in the diverse language backgrounds of their students, might mean they do not often think about the incorporation of various languages. Additionally, this imbalance of teacher language knowledge presents a practical problem to the use of student L1 in the classroom, and might result in teachers who do not feel they have the skill necessary to facilitate the use of student L1 in the classroom. While there are ways teachers can incorporate and validate student L1, in many cases it may not feasible for language teachers to learn all linguistic characteristics of all languages spoken by their students.

Another possible reason more teachers do not choose to incorporate student L1 in the classroom might be tied to teacher education programs focusing predominantly on monolingual instructional principles. As Otwinowska (2017) highlights, "many teachers are not prepared to utilize the linguistic and cognitive aspects of bilingualism and multilingualism, but are traditionally prepared to teach the language and culture of the English-speaking countries" (p.306). Not only does teacher training often focus solely on English, but frequently teacher candidates come from monolingual backgrounds. This is not inherently problematic, but it does make it more challenging to relate to the experiences English learners go through being taught in a language different from what students speak at home.

One program working with "mainstream", bilingual and ESL teachers to encourage them to use student first language in the classroom is the Bilingual/ESL/Multicultural (BEM) Practitioner Program in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. This program works to develop the understanding of all teachers for what it takes to teach language minority students in a way that respects their linguistic and cultural heritage (Gebhard et al, 2002). To do this, BEM begins by recruiting people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and introduces all teachers to the issues of additive bilingualism, second language acquisition theory and critical multiculturalism. They start by not viewing the classroom as monolingual/monocultural places, include mainstream, bilingual and ESL teachers together in the same classes. One student said of the BEM university coursework, "No matter what language you brought to the classroom, you were constantly having to do

things outside of your language… I came home everyday with language exhaustion"
(Gehard, Austin, Nieto, & Willett, 2002, p.219). These experiences in teacher preparation
coursework serve to build teacher empathy for students in their classroom, and develop
their own competencies around language teaching practices from the perspective of the
language learner.

Programs like BEM work to address teacher mindsets about the use of student
multiple language knowledge in the classroom. As Otwinowka (2017) points out, many
teachers "rarely reflect on how the other languages of their learners' can be activated to
the benefit of acquiring the target language faster and more effectively" (p. 306). It is
important the all teachers, and especially EL teachers work to think beyond the TL and
incorporate student diverse languages in the classroom.

The second assumption sometimes made about language teaching as identified by
Cook, is that the explicit teaching of grammar should be avoided. On the spectrum of EL
teaching pedagogy, there is Krashen and the natural approach on one end, which focuses
on meaningful interactions. The opposite side consists of the traditional approach to
grammar teaching where students were encouraged to parts of speech and rules for
combining them into structures (Freeman et al, 2017). Recent second language teaching
lies somewhere in the middle between these two approaches, where grammar is taught,
but is highly contextualized. Long (2000) refers to this teaching of grammar in context as
"focus on form". Focus on form refers to teachers briefly highlighting linguistic elements

as they come up in context (Laufer & Girsai, 2008). This approach to EL instruction will be the central approach used in the creation of this curriculum.

The third assumption Cook discusses is the idea that English learners should be compared to their monolingual peers. English- only policies often reinforced this idea that native speaker proficiency is the goal for all students. However, Cook argues that the learning of additional languages inherently changes a learner's understanding of languages in the brain, and thus it is not fair to compare the two (Otwinowska, 2017). These assumptions are problematic in that they discount the unique expertise and value of a student's first language and the ways in which it can aid in making sense of an TL. The issue with this view is that it often goes hand in hand with judging the students by what they are not instead of where they are at the moment (Cook, 2001). Cook (2001) argues for teachers to adopt the 'independent language assumption' that asks teachers to look deeper into how students are making their own language systems in their minds and examining their own rules and structures.

Otwinowska (2017) points out that English Language teachers must possess three competencies: that of a language user, to serve as a model for students; a language analyst, to possess meta-knowledge of structures and patterns of language; and a language teacher, or the ability to notice and create opportunities for language learning in the classroom. One way to assist language teachers in becoming better language analysts and meta-linguists, is to help point out the primary differences between their students' L1 and the TL, Somali and English in this case.

It is also the goal of this project that targeted knowledge of student L1 will improve the ability of the language teacher to be able to notice and create opportunities for language learning in the classroom, using information from both Somali and English to also develop student meta-linguistic knowledge (Otwinowska, 2017).This contrastive view of the L1 and TL will help language teachers notice and address trends in student interlanguage and give teachers concrete tools to be able to more effectively identify interlingual errors, or errors that are resulting from first language interference.

Language Transfer

English as a Second Language teaching often is rooted solely in the target language due to many factors including policy decisions, the ways in which teachers have been educated, and their own knowledge gaps about student L1. There are many ways in which a student's foundational language impacts their acquisition of additional languages. As learners acquire a second language, their internalized linguistic knowledge can sometimes show up in what is referred to as language transfer. Language transfer occurs when a learner superimposes the patterns of the native language on the patterns of learning a second language (Gass, 1979). This section will further discuss the role language transfer as it relates to a learner's interlanguage, or a person's own independent language system used to make sense of the TL, and expand on how this mental processing connects to the various types of errors students make in an effort to make meaning with the TL.

The learning of a second or additional language is not the same as acquiring a first or foundational one. Learning a first language is a universal task that typically occurs alongside development. In early childhood, children are learning how to use language in order to communicate. When learning an additional language, the learner is learning a particular language for the purposes of communicating in a specific context (Kim & Plotka, 2016). In order to figure out how people best acquire additional languages, researchers looked to study how language operates in the brains of multilingual individuals.

There are varied opinions and theories about how multiple languages are stored and accessed in the brain and also the ways in which this information is referred to when learning languages. One idea is the Balance Theory, which describes multiple languages as coexisting and operating separately in the brain (Salmona, 2014). In contrast to the Balance theory, Cummins in Salmona (2014) suggested languages in multilingual people operate together with the same processing system. To better describe this idea, he developed the iceberg analogy, which said that the first and second languages might appear as two separate "icebergs" at the surface, but when you look deeper they are actually fused together. This view of multilingualism not only recognizes the influence of foundational languages on the L2, but also highlights the important meaning making that occurs in the mind of someone who is learning an additional language.

This view of languages working together in the mind closely relates to the idea of interlanguage discussed earlier in the SLA section. Interlanguage is a learner's independent language system that is ever changing and evolving as it responds to input

(Cook, 2008). This is a definition of language, that is entirely unique and dependent on the learner and their process of language acquisition. Often language is viewed solely as a prescribed set words, grammar, and syntax that is used to communicate. While language is that, it is also the unique construction that is created in the mind using a learner's prior knowledge influences their continued language development.

Language transfer is identified by Zobl as cited in Gass (1984) as showing up in two primary ways: a prolonged use of a rule transferred from L1 and the amount of rules transferred during acquisition. An example of their first kind would be a Spanish speaker who uses preverbal negation, as in "I no use television". According to Zobl in Gass (1984), a Spanish speaker will use this construction longer than speakers whose first language does not have preverbal negation. Laufer expands on this type of transfer, and refers to it as Indirect or Systemic transfer, where learners transfer knowledge of principles in the acquisition of the TL (James, 1994).

The second L1 effect has to do with the different routes learners take during the process of TL acquisition. For example, a learner whose language does not have articles, might go through extra stages during the acquisition of this new feature in comparison to a learner whose L1 has articles, who might be able to directly transfer meaning of article use in the TL to the use of articles in their L1 (Gass, 1984). Laufer refers to this type of transfer as Direct transfer, or the use of prior knowledge in acquiring a specific structure (James, 1994). Transfer can occur in both positive ways that help learners effectively

acquire aspects of the TL, or negatively when the transfer is not a grammatical feature of the TL.

While SLA theorists recognize that mistakes happen, many disagree in the actions teachers should take in correcting them. Hammerly in James (1994) suggests that since native speakers make mistakes, teachers should ignore them even though he recognizes these mistakes are decidedly different from those of monolingual speakers. While Johnson in James (1994) makes a distinction between mistakes and errors, saying that mistakes are more accidents that are correctable and errors are different in that they require "the teaching of requisite knowledge, not correction" (p.188).

While EL teachers are examining negative transfer exhibited through student errors, they are frequently unable to distinguish between the ways in which transfer occurs. The SLA section of this chapter examined the difference between developmental, intralingual and interlingual errors that learners make while learning language. Developmental errors are those that occur in a similar fashion when as children acquire the TL as their L1(Celce-Murcia, 2010). This might occur in a child who is learning English as an L1 saying "Me want a cookie", where they make an error in something they have not yet internalized the rules about. In this case, the learner does not understand that the word "me" is a direct object pronoun in English that cannot be in the subject position. Intralingual errors are those that arise from irregular structural differences in the TL. These errors are made by all learners who are acquiring the TL, regardless of their L1. In a learner of English, this could be the transfer of the regular past tense -ed suffix to a verb that has an irregular form in an error like, "Yesterday, I writed the paper." Interlingual

errors are those influenced by a learner's first language and negative transfer that occurs in production. These are the errors that will be the primary focus of the project.

With students making these different kinds of errors, it is very difficult for teachers to differentiate between these factors if they do not first have an understanding of student L1. If a language teacher can develop an understanding of student L1, not only will they be able to better differentiate between the kinds of student language errors, but they will also be able to help students notice they linguistic differences between the two languages and explicitly make meta-linguistic connections.

As Salmona (2014) mentions "previous knowledge is a starting point for acquiring a new language in all learning situation and therefore language transfer will occur" (p.55). If students are constantly referring to their understanding of languages or their interlanguage, it is to the language teachers advantage to be able to anticipate the linguistic differences that might cause learners extra difficulty and thus result in more instances of negative transfer.

Gass (1984) highlights the importance of doing more than attempting to predict how students will make errors, but more deeply examining how the similarity/dissimilarity of linguistic elements in the native and target languages impacts the learner's decision-making processes. Kellerman in Gass (1984) more closely examines transfer as a cognitive process, looking at both language-specific elements, or aspects a learner views as particular to their language and also language neutral elements

or those which the learner thinks to be similar properties of at least the native and target languages (Gass, 1984).

The existence of language transfer demonstrates that student L1 impacts the acquisition of the TL. Salmona (2014) highlights that no matter the level of proficiency a person has, the second language will always activate associations with the first. Teaching based off of only information from the target language is insufficient and language teachers need to find ways to better incorporate student L1 knowledge into the classroom.

Cross-Linguistic Analysis

Cross-Linguistic Awareness is the metalinguistic knowledge that is developed when teachers refer to students' first language (L1) to assist students in the learning of their second language (L2) (Horst, 2010). Many teachers do not utilize this strategy of incorporating student L1 in the classroom due to a variety of factors, including varying ideologies and a lack of knowledge base in students' L1. This section will address the importance of language teachers learning characteristics of their students' first languages and the benefits of explicitly making cross-linguistic connections to increase students' meta-linguistic cognition and acquisition of the TL. Additionally, it will examine the results of several case studies that look at how cross-linguistic awareness can affect language instruction.

As was discussed in the previous section, it is a central principle of multilingual pedagogy that languages are interconnected in the learner's mind, thus it would be beneficial for all language knowledge to be used as a resource in the classroom

(Otwinowska, p.308). Salmona (2014) echoes this sentiment by pointing out that the use of a learner's first language not only serves to develop the target language, but also aid in cognitive development. The issue is that in the United States many language teachers are either monolingual or not proficient in the languages their learners native languages. It is one thing to know the benefits of harnessing student L1, it is completely another to have the resources to be able to. These teachers need more tools to be able to include this cross-linguistic knowledge into the classroom. Language teachers might still not possess the language proficiency to be able to address questions or make comparisons on the fly, but possessing knowledge of basic linguistic differences between student L1 and the TL can assist teachers in their ability use L1 to more strategically and explicitly provide language input to address potential linguistic misunderstandings.

Learners can greatly benefit from teacher knowledge of multiple languages and their ability to draw learners' attention of similarities between their L1 and the TL, or contrast grammatical features that vary between the languages (Otwinowska, 2017). Horst, White and Bell (2010), examined the effects of cross-linguistic teaching in action through the observations of two teachers, Marianne (a native speaker of French with hesitant English knowledge) and Faye (a native speaker of English who speaks French fluently). Marianne and Faye shared a group of students on a two week rotation. In this study of two teachers, researchers reviewed 37 hours of videotape to look at the amount of explicit references to L1 and the impact on student acquisition of a particular grammar feature. This study showed that learners of English whose L1 is French benefited from instruction that explicitly drew their attention to the differences between their L1 and

English for the third-person possessive determiner use, and also that 'Faye', the teacher with a more comprehensive knowledge of both languages, made 20 'on the fly' connections to student L1 to aid in their acquisition of this feature. Faye's cross-linguistic knowledge of both French and English allowed her to be able to make explicit connections to student L1, which aided in their acquisition of grammar structures (Horst, White, & Bell, 2010).

One of the most important reasons for developing both student and teacher cross-linguistic analysis is to aid in the 'noticing hypothesis', which says that learners need to be able to consciously learn both forms and their meanings within input to create meaningful learning (Laufer & Girsai, 2008). Schmidt in Kupferberg (1996) expands on the importance of noticing saying, this hypothesis "establishes a causal relation between linguistic input and subsequent L2 acquisition" (p.150). Learners need to be able to clearly notice the connection of the linguistic form with its meaning, all the while connecting it to their internal understanding of language or interlanguage. Teacher use of student L1 can strategically facilitate this noticing and develop students as meta-linguists, who can explicitly make connections between forms in their L1 and TL.

As Cook (1994) says, "language teaching means providing sufficient data for students to work out regularities, and opportunities for them to relate to each other" (p.44). While it is possible to help students do gain understanding of language without knowing the parameters of their first language, possessing knowledge to help students make connections to prior knowledge and knowing areas of difficulty can assist.

Summary of Literature

The problem with focusing solely on the TL is that it ignores the impact of the L1 on student L2 acquisition. EL teachers often do not possess sufficient understanding of student L1 to be able to utilize this knowledge and help students explicitly make connections back to their language. While beneficial, it would not be realistic to ask all language teachers to achieve proficiency in student L1. However, a document that examines the linguistic differences between student L1 and the TL could start developing teacher cross-linguistic awareness and improve the input they provide to students. While such a document is not similar to the vast linguistic knowledge that teachers who are bilingual in both languages bring, it could serve as a resource for teachers who are not fluent in their students' L1.

Second language instruction and teacher feedback is frequently not strategic in addressing the potential linguistic misunderstandings that occur as a result of L1 interference. Teachers must have an idea of linguistic parameters that are already present in their students minds to help understand how and why errors are occurring and be able to provide more targeted and relevant input. An important goal of language teaching is to provide the best set of evidence to aid students in the acquisition of new language, and thus it would be highly useful for teachers to better understand how linguistic parameters of student L1 compare to those of the TL.

Chapter Overview

In this Chapter, I first discussed the history of Second Language Acquisition research, and the ways in which this research has impacted EL teaching practices. I then

examined common misconceptions of EL teaching to demonstrate how using learner L1 in the classroom can be highly beneficial for students as they acquire the target language. theories. Finally, I discussed the ways in which all educators, and specifically EL teachers, can use the concepts of language transfer and cross-linguistic analysis to improve their instruction to learners with diverse linguistic backgrounds. In the next chapter, I will give a description of my project and reflect on the process of creating my curriculum in the final chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

In this project I examine common linguistic differences between Somali and English in an effort to answer my research question "*How can I create a curriculum to addresses potential linguistic misconceptions of K-2 Somali learners of English?*" In order to do this, I am taking a lens out of the Second Language Acquisition theories of Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis. In chapter two, I used these theories to examine students' interlingual errors, or errors that occur as a result of their first language (L1) knowledge transferring to acquisition of the target language(TL). I also highlighted research on the importance of English Language (EL) teachers improving on their own cross-linguistic analysis and ways they can use this knowledge of their students' L1 to improve instruction.

Chapter Three gives a more detailed description of this project and will outline the intended audience for this curriculum. This chapter will also examine the framework that this curriculum is aligned with in its construction, and briefly discuss the data and research that supports its use. Additionally, I will highlight several sources that were vital sources of linguistic research and data, in order to demonstrate areas where Somali and English differ. A discussion of the format and contents of the framework, as well as a preview of chapter four will conclude this chapter.

Project Description

In order to create curriculum that addresses potential linguistic misconceptions of Somali speakers learning English, I started by finding Somali language resources. The first goal of this project was to create a tool for language educators that points out common differences between Somali and English. From these sources, I have compiled a Somali/English Comparative Tool for English Language Development (ELD) teachers that lays out common linguistic differences, as well as teaching suggestions to strategically provide non-examples when teaching these grammar features. The information from this document was then used to create a curriculum that is responsive to these areas where students could potentially have challenges acquiring the form in English. This document and the resulting curriculum will serve as a tool for English language teachers that should be used as a means to improve language instruction and provide more strategic input for Somali students. Although a contrastive analysis of these two languages will be highlighted, it will not be encompassing of all student errors, nor should it be used as a way to predict where student language errors will occur.

There is a general progression to acquiring grammatical forms. As Susana Dutro (2005) illustrates in her grammar matrix, there is a typical scope and sequence of grammatical forms to teach. However, language acquisition is fluid and does not occur in a precise linear fashion. Students will have experiences that move them to higher level grammatical forms (Dutro, 2005). Thus, the tools provided in this curriculum are not intended to be taken as grammar features students will definitely need, just as the suggested non-examples are not necessary for all students. Rather, these resources serve

to better educate EL teachers about areas that might be new or different for Somali learners of English and potentially cause learners difficulty.

Aspects of the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories of comparative and error analysis were used examine linguistic differences between Somali and English, as well as help frame this project. This was done in an effort to improve a teacher's ability to analyze grammatical aspects of English and Somali, in conjunction with student language errors that could be arising out of interference between a learner's L1 knowledge of Somali and L2 acquisition of English, also know as first language (L1) transfer. However, this by itself is insufficient. Once teachers are aware of the ways in which foundational L1 knowledge is impacting acquisition of the target language (TL), then shifts should be made to instruction in order to better address the linguistic needs of learners. Through this new knowledge of the ways Somali and English compare, the hope is that educators will able to provide more strategic input and intentional non-examples to address misconceptions that could arise as a result of L1 transfer.

This curriculum serves to make these linguistic differences explicitly known to both the learner and the language educator, so that EL teachers can more effectively diagnose language misconceptions for Somali learners of English. The goal of this curriculum is two fold. First, it serves to aid in the cross-linguistic awareness of non-Somali speaking EL teachers, so that they can better plan for areas where students might struggle and improve their instruction of English. While arming the teachers with knowledge is the first step, the ultimate goal is to design a curriculum that can be implemented to develop students as meta-linguists, who are able to analyze the linguistic

differences between Somali and English. In this first phase of the curriculum, only the first goal will be met.

Project Setting

The school where I teach is located in a large midwestern urban area, that has a sizeable population of Somali immigrants and refugees. My school in particular consists of roughly 51% students learning English, with nearly 78% of those students identifying Somali as their home language. My school sits within a district where nearly 7,800 students were eligible for English Learner (EL) services in the 2017-2018 school year, with 40% of those students being native Somali speakers (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017). There are approximately 3,100 Somali speakers learning English in my district alone, the vast majority of whom are being instructed by general education and language teachers who have little to no knowledge of the Somali language.

Project Audience

This curriculum is intended to be a resource for language teachers who instruct majority Somali-speaking students. It is meant to serve as a resource for non-Somali speaking English Language educators who wish to become more cross-linguistically conscious of common differences between English and Somali and make changes to their instruction of these grammatical differences. While this is directly relevant to my context, in that I teach first and second grade EL at a public elementary school that is comprised of 79% L1 Somali- speakers, I recognize that my context is unique.

This is not a curriculum for EL teachers who have students from diverse language backgrounds, as the differences between their myriad languages and English will inevitably be very different. This curriculum will not be as ideal for classrooms without majority Somali- speaking students, but this resource can be used by any language teacher who teaches Somali students as a way of developing their own cross-linguistic competencies in the ways Somali and English differ. While this curriculum was made to address a need in my particular context, the format could be replicated to contrast other languages in order to meet the linguistic needs of students in various contexts.

It is important that all teachers, especially language teachers, work to learn more about their students' L1. Once teachers are more aware of how any student's foundational language knowledge impacts TL acquisition, they can incorporate this information and strategically adjust their instruction to better meet the needs of their learners. The development of a language educator's cross-linguistic knowledge will help them be able to more effectively address areas of the TL that cause learners the most difficulty.

Project Framework

In the creation of this curriculum, I did not want to fall into the trap of creating isolated activities that do not fit into a larger learning context. In an effort to avoid this and to work to develop a more comprehensive and academically rigorous curriculum, Understanding by Design (UbD) by Wiggins and McTighe (2005) will serve as the primary framework for this curriculum design. UbD emphasizes the importance of starting with the end in mind so that both teachers and students have an understanding of

where they are heading. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) call this process "backward design" and it consists of three stages.

The first stage is identifying the desired results, or overarching goals that relates to the standards. In the case of this project, the overarching goals will relate to the complex areas where grammar is different between Somali and English, which will also be tied with State English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies Standards. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) state that this stage calls for clarity about priorities, which will be aligned to both the language features identified and content standards through which to teach this language.

The next stage is to determine what type of evidence is going to show that students have reached the goal. It is in this stage where teachers need to think about creating an assessment that will show students have acquired the understandings. This curriculum will be broken up into mini-units that strategically address grammatical differences. Each of these mini-units will have a corresponding assessment to gauge student achievement and acquisition of the grammatical feature (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

After the goals of the unit and assessment have been outlined, then stage three is the sequencing and creation of individual lessons and activities that are all driving students toward meeting the goal (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). We, as educators, need to think through how to scaffold the knowledge to help students to reach the desired outcome. This is achieved by thinking not only about what, but how the scaffolded

information needs to be taught. Teachers need to think specifically about the students in front of them and how to shift instruction to meet their many needs. For this curriculum, the specific language features and methods for teaching examples and non-examples will all come out of cross-linguistic analysis research and be responsive to common linguistic differences between Somali and English.

This process will be beneficial for both students and teachers. For teachers, this will allow them to notice grammar features that students are struggling with and address them by choosing a mini-unit from the curriculum. These units will all be focused around the teaching of grammar features, and aligned with an overarching project connected to content standards. The backwards design of these units will allow for both the educator and the learner to have both a destination and "road map" to show them where they are going with their teaching and learning.

In addition to the UbD framework, I utilized research from Moss and Brookhart's book Learning Targets (2012) to help provide a concrete "road map" so that students know both the overarching goal, as well as the daily learning that we will be engaging in. Moss and Brookhart (2012) break this learning up into learning targets that are more long range goals, often told to students by saying "We are learning to" + Blooms thinking skill word. This is done because as they have found, "The language of learning targets should enable students to see themselves as the agents of learning," and the use of first person helps foster this ownership with students (Moss & Brookhart, 2012, p.32). This is followed by the performance of understanding (POU) that is both the instructional task and assessment goal for a particular day's lesson. Moss and Brookhart (2012) suggest

having students say how they will achieve today's learning using a structure similar to "We will do this by". The learning targets for my curriculum will follow this general pattern in order to help students know not only the overarching content and performance task, but also the language focus inherent within each task for them to be successful.

Data and Research

As an English language teacher who is not bilingual in both Somali and English, many sources will be consulted in the creation of the cross-linguistic tool and methods for EL teaching best practices. The primary sources of Somali data will come from John Saeed's book on *Somali Language* (1999), and Martin Orwin's book *Colloquial Somali: A Complete Course for Beginners* (1995). These books will be used to help outline some ways in which Somali language operates. In addition to this book, Somali samples and linguistic information will also be taken from Lisa Peters and Chris Mayer's article "Somali and English: Some Differences and the Implications for Writing Tutors and Instructors" (2016). Their article outlines several important differences between Somali and English, and describes what these differences could mean for tutors teaching Somali-speaking learners. I will be using pieces of their data, expanding on it using the research of Saeed and Orwin, and connected it to what it means for EL teaching of students from differing WIDA levels.

Format and Content

This curriculum and its contents will all be determined based off of a comparative analysis of Somali and English, in order to identify the primary linguistic differences

between the two languages. The first part of the curriculum is a document entitled "Somali/ English Comparative Tool for ELD Teachers" that compiles and outlines these linguistic differences and will briefly discuss the teaching implications for non-Somali speaking EL teachers. This document can serve as a tool to educate language teachers in developing their own metalinguistic awareness of how Somali and English compare, assist educators in better analyzing and addressing student interlingual errors, and also be more strategic in their presentation of particular linguistic input to Somali learners of English.

Grammatical features that students need do not just depend on their L1, but also developmental factors of their grade- level content expectations, the tasks they are asked to complete, and WIDA level must also be taken into consideration. Following the creation of this document, I cross referenced this linguistic information with the grade level literacy curriculum materials that my students needed to access and created EL lessons accordingly. Consequently, these units are structured in a way that recommends where on the language acquisition continuum students should generally be before the instruction on a particular form should occur. This is not a definite rule, but rather a suggestion connected to the work of Susana Dutro in her grammar matrix (2005) and the WIDA key uses of language resource.

Chapter Overview

Chapter Three gave a more detailed description of the project, audience, framework and contents of my curriculum. This project will be broken into two primary

parts: the first being a "Somali/English Comparative Tool for ELD Educators" that provides cross-linguistic examination of common linguistic differences between Somali and English. The second being a curriculum that is responsive to these differences. This curriculum is intended primarily for non-Somali speaking educators of majority Somali students. It will be using UbD (2005) as the central framework, while also consulting the work of John Saeed (1999), Martin Orwin (1995), Lisa Peters and Chris Mayer (2016), WIDA, and Susana Dutro (2005).

Chapter four will contain a reflection on the process of creating this document and corresponding curriculum. It will detail the components of my project and how it contributes to the field of English as a Second Language. The next chapter will also discuss limitations of my project and connection to future plans to continue this work.

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction

Many English Language (EL) teachers have very little knowledge of their students' first language (L1) and the ways in which it compares to the Target Language (TL). Educators who possess cross-linguistic awareness of how student L1 compares to the TL are able to help students make explicit connections to these differences and more strategically provide linguistic input for students. To do this I ask, "*How can I create a curriculum that explicitly addresses potential linguistic misconceptions of K-2 Somali learners of English?*"

In this chapter, I will reflect on the process of creating my project, which consists of a document entitled "Somali/English Comparative Tool for ELD Teachers," and a curriculum that responds to these differences. I first discuss new learnings that I have acquired over the course of this project and the ways in which learning more about Somali grammar has impacted my instruction. Then, I will briefly review the literature from chapter two that supports my project. Following that, I will examine the benefits of a project like this to English Language (EL) instruction, as well as the limitations that accompany it. This chapter ends with future research that I hope to engage in as well as plans to expand this curriculum in the years to come.

New Learnings

This process started out of a desire to be able to be more strategic in utilizing my students' L1 in instruction and more intentional in how I teach language forms in English

as they relate to Somali. As someone who is not fluent in Somali, this task proved to be very difficult. I am grateful to the work of John Saeed (1999), Martin Orwin (1995), Lisa Peters and Chris Mayer (2016), who helped point out common linguistic differences in Somali that are important for EL teachers to know. Through this process I am eager to learn more and continue to add to this document as I increase my proficiency in Somali and awareness of the ways in which it compares to English.

Revisiting the Literature

This project started by utilizing aspects of the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories of contrastive analysis and error analysis. Both of these theories in their strongest form have been contested, and thus each were used with a grain of salt. Contrastive analysis was used to compare both languages and the linguistic differences, but with the caveat that errors occur for other reasons besides L1 transfer and these differences may not be used to predict where students will definitely make language errors (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013). The SLA theory of error analysis was also used in this project, but not to make assumptions about learner misconceptions, rather to think about how learners process languages and develop their own systems of understanding (Cook, 2000).

These theories eventually evolved into the idea of learner interlanguage or a learners temporary language system that is continually evolving to make meaning using their understanding of how languages operate (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013). This understanding of student language knowledge is essential for language teachers who need

to be able to provide strategic comprehensible input to assist students in adjusting their understanding.

This idea is expanded on by Vivian Cook (2008) who says that while interlanguage is how students utilize their L1 to make sense of the TL, it is incomplete to view L1 knowledge and a learner's interlanguage as separate entities. She proposes the idea of multi-competence, or the ways in which the knowledge of two languages coexist in the mind. It is because of this interaction of language knowledge in learners' brains that we begin to look at how foundational language knowledge impacts acquisition of the target language through language transfer.

Language transfer occurs in both positive and negative ways when learners transfer knowledge of principles from their L1 during the acquisition of the TL (James, 1994). This occurrence demonstrates that student L1 impacts the acquisition of the TL. Salmona (2014) highlights that no matter the level of proficiency a person has, the second language will always activate associations with the first. Gass (1984) mentions the importance of doing more than attempting to predict how students will make errors, but more deeply examine how the similarity/dissimilarity of linguistic elements in the native and target languages impacts the learner's decision-making processes. English teachers need ways to know what potential misunderstandings of the TL learners might have from their L1. This knowledge will help teachers be able to better incorporate student L1 knowledge as it relates to aspects of the TL to improve students meta-linguistic knowledge and acquisition of grammar forms.

One of the most important theories to my paper is the idea of cross-linguistic analysis and the ways in which learners can benefit from teacher knowledge of multiple languages and their ability to draw learners' attention of similarities between their L1 and the TL, or contrast grammatical features that vary between the languages (Otwinowska, 2017). This contrastive view of the L1 and TL will help language teachers notice and address trends in student interlanguage and give teachers concrete tools to be able to more effectively address potential linguistic misconceptions. Otwinowka (2017) highlights, many teachers "rarely reflect on how the other languages of their learners' can be activated to the benefit of acquiring the target language faster and more effectively" (p. 306). It is for these reasons that this project exists, so that language teachers who are not fluent in Somali can more intentionally provide linguistic input and draw learner attention the linguistic differences between both languages.

Possible Implications and Benefits

Many language teachers do not use student first language at all in the classroom and do not work to get to know any aspects of their students' languages. One main goal of this project is to encourage language teachers to think about the vast amount of linguistic knowledge their students possess and how that impacts their acquisition of English. I want EL teachers to see this knowledge as something beneficial that they can use to better harness student knowledge of how languages work and be more proactive in addressing new or different grammar features.

On a personal level, this information has already changed the way in which I teach. As an EL teacher who does not fluently speak the first language of my students

this information has helped me more deeply think about how to better break down grammar forms for Somali learners of English.

Through creating this project I realized that I had not been teaching singular and plural nouns in the most beneficial way for my students. In researching the Somali language, I learned that Somali does not have the indefinite article "a/an", and the definite article "the" is a suffixed morpheme (Orwin, 1995). In the past, I have had students sort singular and plural nouns like "chair" versus "chairs", but did not ever attach an article while doing so. After learning more about the Somali language I became more intentional in planning instruction that included both the definite and indefinite articles in English, as well as more aware of my students' inclination to omit the indefinite article "a".

The creation of the preposition unit came out of the fact that we needed to teach students about mapping, and knowing that our students generally had a difficult time using prepositions correctly. We also wanted to push them to using more challenging prepositions, given that there is such a large number used in English. Out of this, and the fact that only four prepositions are used in Somali, came this unit which builds knowledge of prepositions by continually referring back to the relation of a turtle to a box.

Finally, the syntax unit was the first unit I taught in first grade this year. Since the majority of our students come to us at a WIDA level 1-2, I typically start the year teaching basic sentence structure. Since learning that Somali uses Subject-Object-Verb

and has a more fluid sentence structure, I incorporated some strategic non-examples that mimic this structure, to show students that this does not exist in English. Additionally, I have included some games where students are asked to manipulate nouns and verbs to construct sentences. This unit primarily uses people as the subject, to ingrain "Who does what?" sentence formation in students brains, before moving on to more complex structures.

Limitations

This project initially started as a way to try and figure out student errors and create a curriculum that would be more proactive to these errors. What I found once I started researching was that student errors can occur for a variety of reasons and it is not possible to preventatively plan for all student errors. This process got me thinking more about my own acquisition of Spanish and the errors that I was more likely to make as a result of how my linguistic knowledge from my first language transferred as I acquired my second.

This is not the only or even the best way to go about figuring out what language to teach to students. More importantly EL teachers should look to exemplars in grade-level text and content to figure out the task- essential language that is required of students to complete a given task (Long, 2000). This should be done in conjunction with knowledge of the grammatical forms and functions learners have already acquired, as well as the WIDA key uses to find out appropriate ways to push students at each WIDA level.

This project is not intended to be used as a way to figure out what language forms to teach. That is better done using the research of Michael Long (2000) and analyzing the task-essential language that students need for grade level tasks and being intentional about useful grammar teaching that is highly relevant and contextualized. It is important to note that this project serves as a guide to inform teachers how Somali speaking students might be making sense of English as a result of language transfer and instructing to increase student metalinguistic awareness of these.

One of the major limitations I faced in this project was the fact that I am not bilingual in both Somali and English, which is precisely why I needed this project. It took a very long time to find resources, as I initially could not locate any research that was looking at both Somali and English together. In fact, very little research examines Somali grammar, let alone compares it to English. I consulted many of my friends who are bilingual and offered their support. However more research is needed, ideally by individuals bilingual in both Somali and English, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which Somali and English differ.

Future Research

In this project I have compiled a "Somali English Comparative Tool for ELD Educators" that contrasts common linguistic differences between Somali and English, as well as created three units that address differences in the areas of syntax, prepositions, and article usage. My goal is to continue to use this knowledge in my creation of curriculum, and further build units that address these differences.

This work has already begun in that my upcoming unit for second grade uses a text that is filled with qualifiers. The other second grade EL teacher and I have indicated that these qualifiers are tricky since they correspond to both count and non-count nouns. In Somali, most nouns are countable (Orwin, 1995). I have frequently heard students make errors with "How much" versus "How many" - Thus, I knew that this would be an important feature to teach. We are currently in the process of building this unit, and hope to further this process of utilizing the contrastive Somali/English document to solidify our instructional decisions and provide more intentional non-examples that address potential linguistic misconceptions.

As I gain more understanding of the Somali language, I hope to be able to add in aspects that explicitly draw student attention to these linguistic differences. The ultimate goal of this curriculum is to be able to is to develop students as meta-linguists who are able to analyze the linguistic differences between Somali and English. While students are sometimes able to make this connection on their own, as it exists currently, I am not confident enough to be able to tell students this information without careful and deliberate research or consulting bilingual individuals at my school. It is my hope that as I acquire stronger proficiency in Somali that I can also help students make more explicit cross-linguistic connections.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reflected on the process of creating my project, which consists of a document entitled "Somali/English Comparative Tool for ELD Teachers," and a curriculum that responds to these differences. I discussed new learnings that this process

has brought me, benefits and limitations of the project,as well as the ways in which learning more about Somali grammar has made me a better language teacher for my Somali speakers.

It is my hope that EL teachers are able to use the Somali/English Comparative Tool and the corresponding curriculum to improve their EL instruction, or be inspired to learn more of the first languages of their students. Through this learning and utilizing of multiple languages in classrooms, we can model that language learning is a fun and lifelong process that everyone can engage in. In my opinion, language teachers who are not bilingual in the languages of their students have an added responsibility to validate the languages of their students and working to better know aspects of these languages is an important start in doing that.

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