



# Language Teaching Methods and Their Effect on Student Success

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## Introduction

All across the United States students are entering school without previous knowledge of the English language. This makes it difficult for students to learn the curriculum teachers are trying to teach. This is why so much emphasis has been placed on TESOL methods in the education realm. While a lot of attention is placed on whether or not these students are learning, often how they are learning is overlooked. Using the right method for students will help them excel and actually learn what they need to in order to succeed in school. Understanding how students learn best is the first step in creating an environment where students actually learn.

Teaching English in the United States has existed since the founding of our country, but only recently has teaching English as a profession emerged as significant. As more people from different countries begin to arrive in the United the need for well-trained teachers and successful programs is ever increasing. According to Phebe Xu Gray, "the number of immigrants to the United States had grown from 1,035,000 in the 1940s to 7,338,000 in the 1980s and the number of foreign students enrolled in U.S. institutions doubled from 34,232 in 1954/55 to 82,045 in the 1965/65 academic year." (Xu Gray, 1997). Understanding that the country's influx of foreign students is increasing, allows legislation to be formed in order to give these students the same access to education as other students.

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## Research Question

Educating English language learners is becoming increasingly more prevalent in the United States as more and more people are entering our country without previous knowledge of the English language. As educators and administrators begin to acquire more of these students the need for educating them in the language properly is becoming more important. Educating them properly will allow educators, administrators, and students to spend less time trying to teach a new language to these students and more time teaching the content the students need to succeed. After understanding the importance of a successful method, one must ask what variables make up a successful method?

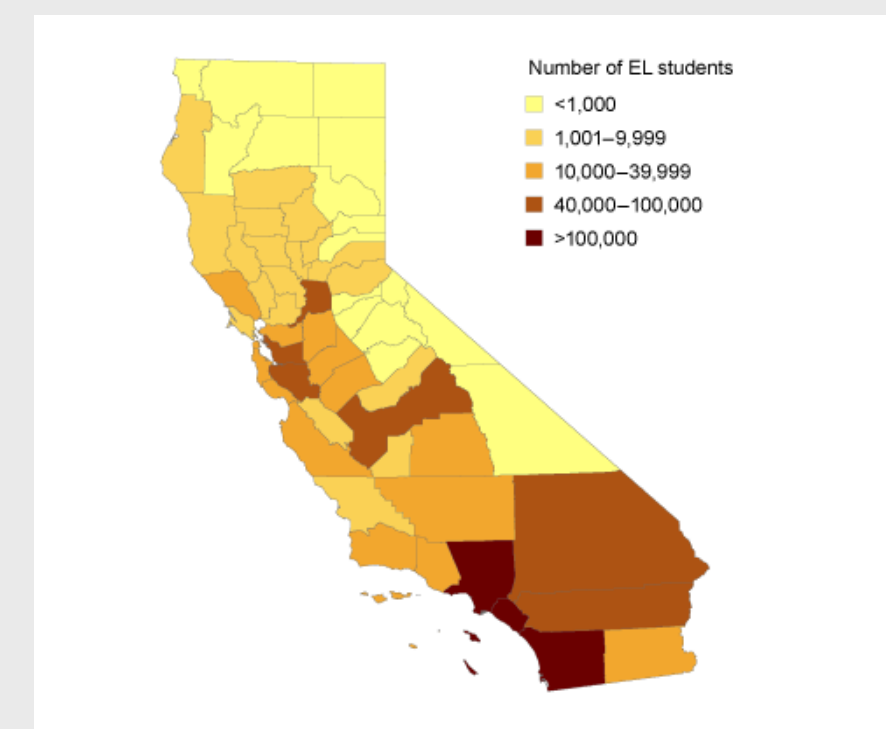


Figure 1. Number of EL Students in California

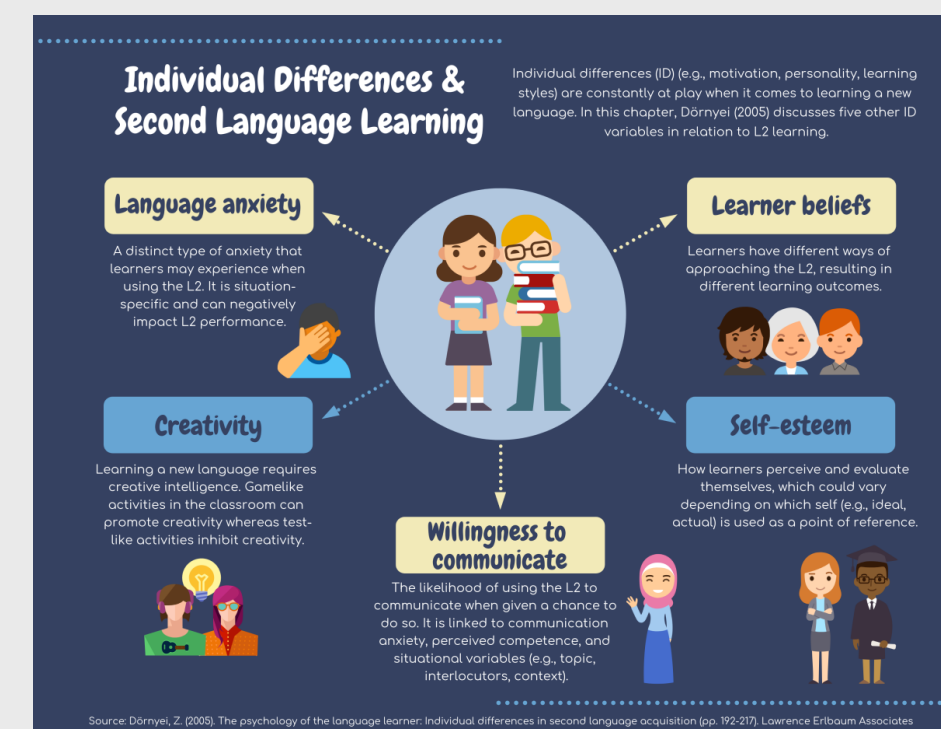


Figure 2. Examples of Learning Variables

## Background and Literature Review

To be considered proficient in a language, students need to be taught the four basic language skills, which are reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Arulselvi, 2016). Another important aspect is the development of the vocabulary, which may be the most important language component for new learners (2013). Another important aspect of teaching a new language is that state standards are apart of the language teaching.

One of the first methods developed was the grammar-translation method which focuses students' energy on reading and writing in the language (Natsir & Sanjaya, 2014). This approach, while extremely valuable for students to develop their reading and writing skills, lacks the fundamental skills of speaking and listening and the building of their lexicon.

Another method is the communicative language teaching method. In this method, the main purpose is to learn to communicate. This method does incorporate each of the four language skills into classroom instruction and helps build a student's lexicon (Natsir & Sanjaya, 2014). However, students are often pulled from mainstream classrooms in order to use this method.

A third method used in teaching a new language is the content-based instruction method. In this method, the purpose is to teach students the language through the content of the classroom. A study conducted on the effectiveness of this method found that students taught using this method had more enhanced academic performance (Arulselvi, 2016).

## Method

### Design

The research design that I chose to use will be qualitative in nature. I will conduct my research using other studies previously conducted in the field of language learning. The literature will be carefully chosen to stay within the parameters that I have established in the procedure. With this research I will work to identify the language learning variables and their effect on students success.

### Participants

The studies that I will be using for my research, primarily use high school and college-aged students when analyzing the effectiveness of certain teaching methods. The number of students who were being tested in the studies ranges from 30 to about 80 students.

### Materials

I will be using the ERIC (Education Resource Information Center) database to find academic journals. The main focus of the materials will be studies previously conducted about the effectiveness of certain language teaching methods. Later I hope to incorporate a few TedTalks and websites that discuss the effectiveness of these methods.

### Procedure

All of the studies used in my research will be related to a language teaching method. They will also be restricted to high school and college aged students and focused on only a few teaching methods. The studies will discuss the effectiveness of the teaching methods and how this is reflected in student success. My research should take a few months to conduct depending on the research available.

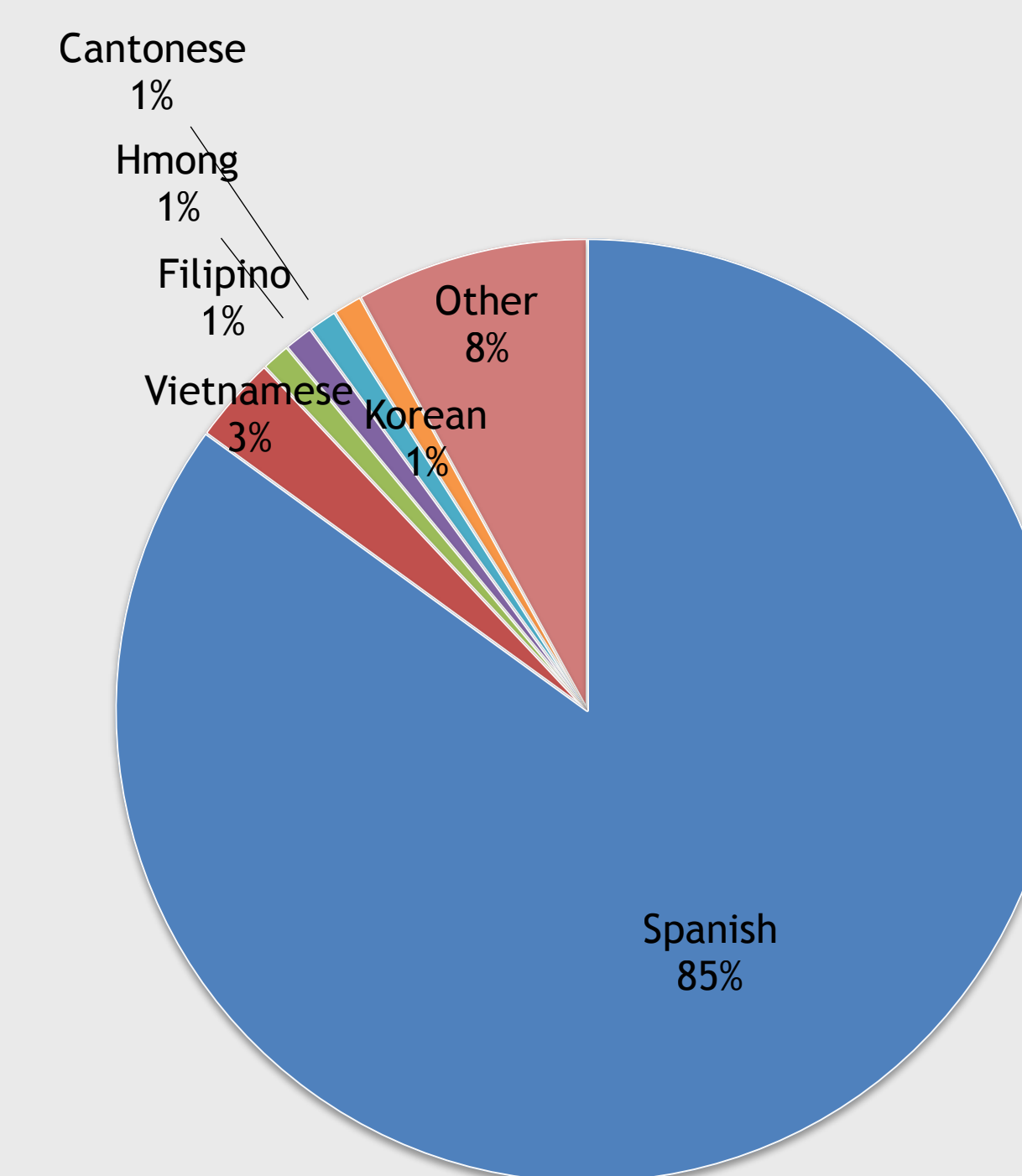


Chart 1. California English Learners Percentage of Languages Spoken

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all of those who helped compile the data that is presented here, especially my mentor Dr. Mirta Maldonado-Valentin, my capstone professor Suditi Gupta, and the research librarian Tim Held.

## Expected Results

The qualitative nature of this study is expected to identify the variables and skills that are needed for an effective teaching method. The grammar-translation method is expected to be the least effective because it focuses on only two of the four basic language skills. It is expected to find that the content-based instruction method is the most effective out of the methods being discussed. The communicative language teaching method also covers the four basic skills, like the content-based method. Due to this it should be noted that this method is also most likely very effective. However, content-based instruction is still expected to be the more effective due to the variables that effect the instruction, such as student's emotional involvement. Based on the effectiveness of each method, it is expected to identify the variables that compose a successful method.

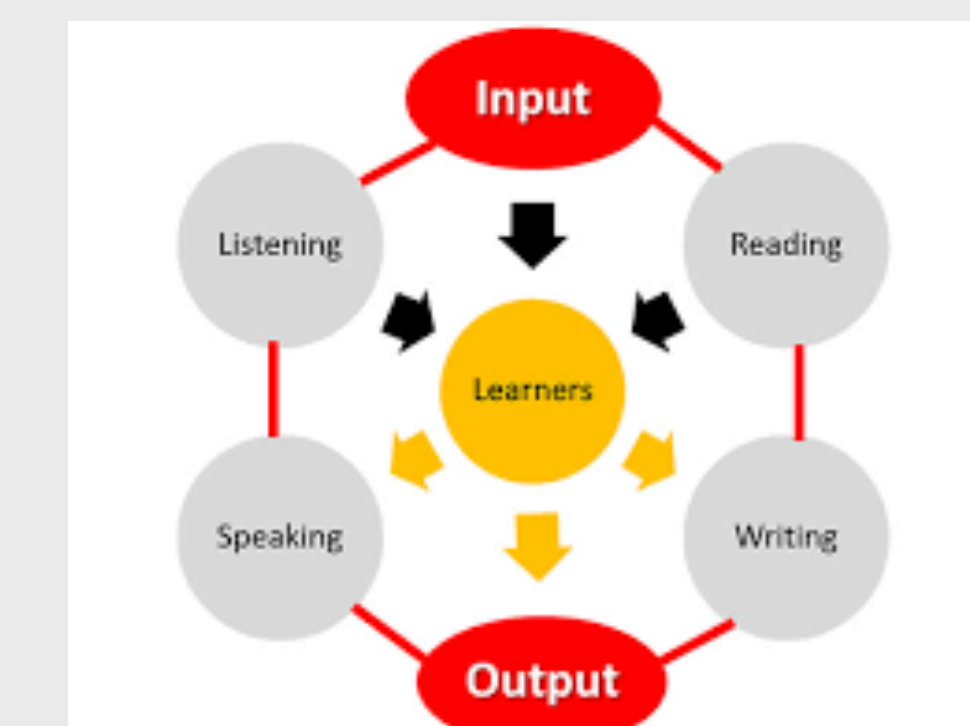


Figure 3. The Four Skills of Language Learning

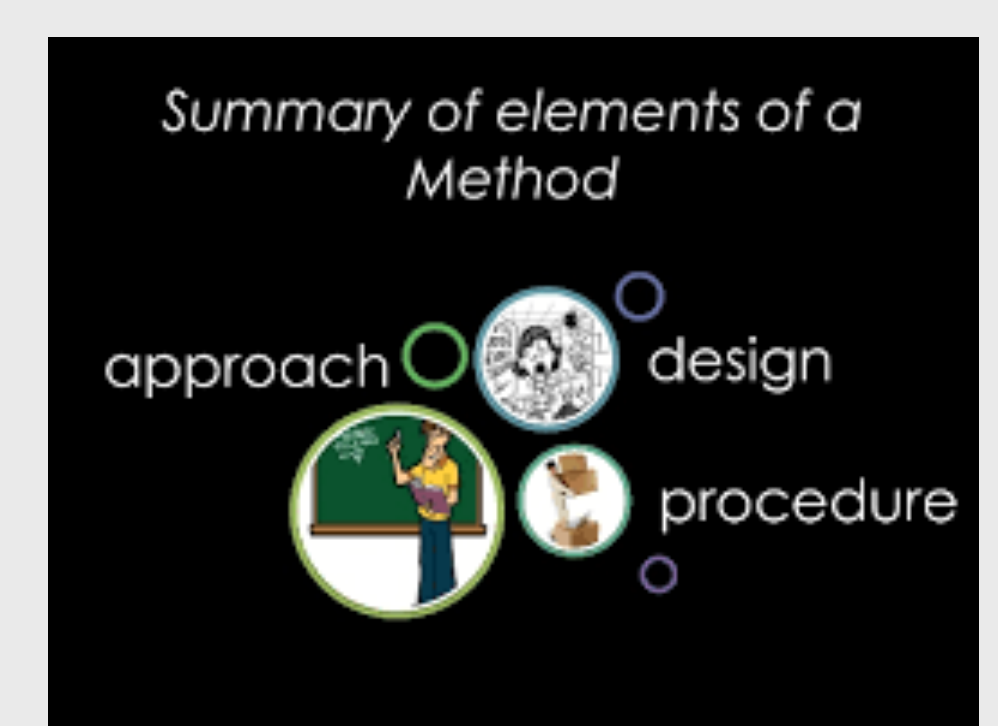


Figure 4: Elements of a Method

## Significance

Understanding the variables that compose a successful method will allow teachers to design methods that will provide for the most student success. It will also bring further light to the importance of a successful method as well as the importance of the teacher. This study will identify the variables of a method based on previous results found on the effectiveness of a particular teaching method. It should be understood that there are some limitations to this study. The variables identified are based off past studies and will not be tested in a classroom with current students.

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