

THE PRESERVATION OF EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES  
IN AN ERA OF EDUCATION REFORM:  
THE EXPERIENCES OF EXEMPLARY TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

Leanne M. Evans

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ABSTRACT  
THE PRESERVATION OF EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES  
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Under the Supervision of Professor Thandeka Chapman

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the experiences of four teachers nominated for their reputations as highly effective educators of English language learners. The intent is to explore how the teachers respond and react to changes and expectations of education policy and investigate how daily decision-making processes are affected. Three themes emerged from the data that suggest the participants have a cognizance of their own expertise, recognize and react to discriminatory action, and make decisions to take active roles to work toward change. Based on their expertise and ability to recognize inequities, the teachers made decisions to take action. The four action behaviors include (a) educating colleagues, (b) engaging in compromise, (c) isolating from group practice, and (d) accepting compliance. A model of change and preservation is offered as a basis for critical conversations regarding sustainability of programming, needs for informed leadership, and power relationships that affect English language learners.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Literacy education at the classroom level has been deeply impacted by the national reform momentum that has occurred over the last decade. At the forefront of the conversation is the educational and political interplay regarding student academic achievement and those students who are struggling learners. A driving force of this national dialogue appears to be the reported gap that exists between low-and high-achieving students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). More specifically, this gap implies a dramatic discrepancy in performance outcomes between learners of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their dominant culture peers (Goldenberg, 2008). Improving low achievement and closing gaping differences between student subgroups have become central national priorities, resulting in the development of propositions, blueprints, and initiatives that have legitimized mandated policies in public schools (Cummins, 2010; Menken, 2008).

The intention of improving academic achievement for all students reveals a mismatch, and often-contentious unrest, between policy and pedagogy. A concern has developed for those learners who are targeted for progress by means that seem far removed from instructional practices that have been repeatedly proven for decades (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Crawford, 2004; Ladsen-Billings, 1994; Moll, 1998; Pressley, 2002). The literacy education of English language learners, in particular, has been significantly affected by the prevalence of achievement initiatives. Embedded in these circumstances are the challenges, and perhaps

opportunities, that teachers face in preserving the most effective practices for students who are simultaneously negotiating language, culture, and the paradigms of present-day schooling. An examination of effective teachers can establish an understanding of how high-quality instruction can be maintained in this current era of education reform

### **Purpose of Study**

Past research surrounding effective reading instruction has primarily focused on exemplary practices implemented with a general population of students (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Gambrell, Morrow, & Pressley, 2007; Morrow & Tracey, 2007; Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001) and those students identified as low-achieving readers (Allington, 2006; Clay, 2005). More recently, an increase in the information regarding effective literacy practices for English language learners has emerged, offering an abundance of resources defining the essential elements of effective instructional practices (Genessee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Goldenberg, Rueda, & August, 2008; Slavin & Cheung, 2005).

Each of these areas of research on effective instructional practices contributes to the understanding of the decisions that excellent teachers make on a daily basis. This current study has included this literature as a resource, and has more narrowly called upon the growing compilation of research on the English language learner with reading intervention needs (Lesaux, 2006; Linan-Thompson, Cirino, & Vaughn, 2007). It is this population that is often overlooked in the

research and repeatedly under-considered in issues surrounding mandated initiatives (Escamilla, 2008).

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of four teachers nominated for their reputations as highly effective, as they engage in the reading intervention process with their students who are acquiring English in an educational setting. The intent is to explore how the teachers respond and react to changes and expectations of education policy and investigate how daily decision-making processes are affected.

### **Context**

An understanding of how policy and accountability measures affect classroom instructional practices requires a brief synopsis of the broader educational reform context. The purpose of doing this is to provide insight into the essence of national political initiatives that are most often the driving force behind the processes that immensely affect decision-making and learning experiences at the classroom level (Mora, 2002). Through this contextual lens, the discernment of how to optimize the academic outcomes of English language learners with literacy needs can be sufficiently framed.

It is essential to the theoretical perspective of this study to state that the discussion on educational policy can easily go back as far as the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which recognized that education was a right for all. To access legal cases more specifically related to bilingual learners, it is imperative to regress even further to explore the events of *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) and *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) which were significant in

bringing desegregation and equality to the forefront. In addition, the momentum of legislation with regard to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 continues to provide a point of reference for policy orientations that are fair-minded (Hornberger, 2006). All of these historical events are critical to this inquiry, which recognizes the importance of their influences and contributions in optimizing schooling for certain subgroups of students.

With this in mind, and with the investigation of instructional practices in an era of education reform as this study's research objective, two of the most prominent federal current reform initiatives need to be summarized. The first initiative is the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) with its foundation in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), and the second legislative initiative is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), with its origins in the Education of Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). The intent in this introduction chapter is to offer a succinct foundational version of each policy, aspects of which are more thoroughly explored in the subsequent literature review chapter. This abridged approach offers the reader the contextual backdrop from which the study problem, research questions, and overall significance of this inquiry have emerged.

#### **No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.**

The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) has its foundation in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The principle intent of ESEA was to offer equitable educational opportunities to the nation's disadvantaged, and financial resources were allocated to schools to improve the learning opportunities of

underprivileged children (McGill-Franzen, 1987). In 2002, President George W. Bush reauthorized and renamed ESEA the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. This powerful and expansive bipartisan education policy claimed to continue the ESEA focus of keeping the needs of the disadvantaged students at the forefront (Abedi & Dietel, 2004; Darling Hammond, 2007; Thomas & Brady, 2005).

The reauthorized NCLB differs from ESEA with its stipulation that subgroups are now expected to reach adequate progress levels. All students, including language minority students, racial/ethnic minority students, and students with disabilities are measured for progress. In efforts to ensure this progress, a mandate was added that each state must develop a highly qualified teaching force, and all schools receiving federal funding must only employ teachers who have a bachelor's degree and state certification (Thomas & Brady, 2005).

Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (2001), standards and assessment-based reform has been at the cornerstone of the education agenda of the United States. Through a formula-funding grant, the NCLB law is written to provide states with significant federal dollars, which are then filtered to local school systems in a process that links funding to student performance (Echevarria & Short, 2006). As a precondition to receiving funds, schools must demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on state achievement assessments (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

The passage of NCLB has raised the stakes for educators, school districts, and states. In addition, it has placed a mixed perspective of increased attention on the education and achievement of English language learners (Collier & Thomas, 2009;

Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010). This study recognizes these attributes and will critically examine the influence that NCLB has had on the preservation of instructional practices implemented with English language learners.

### **The Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act.**

Essential to the discourse regarding literacy intervention needs for low-achieving bilingual learners is a knowledge of the reform efforts surrounding students with special education needs and the legislation integral to the process of meeting these needs.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) has its roots in the federal Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142), which developed in response to a growing awareness of the need to provide equitable educational services for children with disabilities. The IDEA law assures free appropriate public education to all children with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21 and states that children with exceptional needs cannot be excluded from education because of those needs.

This legislation has weathered several amendments, with P. L. 1008-466 in 2004 (Appling & Jones, 2008) being the most recent. The new IDEA 2004 initially focused on highly qualified teachers, and the final regulations incorporated new requirements regarding identifying children with specific learning disabilities (SLD) and early intervening systems (EIS).

The main principles of IDEA 2004 include (a) the foundation that school districts and states provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities ages 3 to 21, regardless of severity of their disability; (b)

the notion that each child receiving services is entitled to an individual education program (IEP) that outlines the specifics of the child's needs and services and includes parents as an integral component of the plan; and (c) the understanding that students must be appropriately educated with children who are not disabled, and schools must provide procedural safeguards for due process and access to an attorney.

Special monies were not allocated for this new legislation; however, as part of the provision of IDEA, the local education agencies are permitted up to 15% of their IDEA funds to implement early intervening services (Allington & Walmsley, 2007), including supportive instruction in the general education environment that is preclusive of any special education identification (Committee on Education and the Workforce, 2005).

The reauthorized IDEA has the intention of providing instruction and intervention that focuses on the "response to scientific, research-based intervention" (U. S. Department of Education, 2006, Section 300.307[a][2]). This study takes a step back to examine if the tenets of bilingual education research are preserved, as reputable educators work to respond to students who have both language and literacy intervention needs. The reauthorized IDEA is a driving force in the decision-making process for *all* students with reading intervention needs, and programming for English language learners is certain to be influenced by its directives.

The intent of including both the NCLB and IDEA legislation is based on the belief that it is essential to have a contextual understanding of this legislation that

most likely will have an impact on the choices effective teachers make to preserve quality instruction for English language learners as they respond and react to expectations of education policy.

### **Statement of Problem**

A conundrum exists with regard to the education of bilingual learners who are not yet proficient in English. A linear vision of remediating low achievement has developed into a roundabout of adverse thinking. Depressed achievement scores based on standardized assessments in English have provoked a perception of a performance gap between language majority and language minority students. From this, reactions have developed into intensified accountability measures for all students through high stakes testing and policies emphasizing English. In turn, this has perpetuated low achievement scores and a continued contribution to the discrepant outcomes between different subgroups of students oriented on home language (Abedi & Dietel, 2004).

This illustrated circumlocution of events reflects a grand misunderstanding between decades of research on how to best educate bilingual learners and the policy initiatives that have gained momentum in public schools. The divide between what has been repeatedly proven and what is being mandated in classrooms has increasingly widened. As a result, educators have been placed in a situation of negotiating mandates, associated with high stakes consequences and de facto language policies (Menken, 2008), with pedagogically proven classroom practices (Menken & García, 2010). García and Kleifgen (2010), in their work on the policies,

programs, and practices for English language learners, state that as a result of the discord between research and policy,

educators' teaching practices sometimes suffer as they strive to find alternative ways of acting on top-down national and local educational policies that are plainly misguided for the education of these children.

This frequent incompatibility between research, policy, and teaching practice is responsible for much of the miseducation of emergent bilinguals in the United States and their failure in school. (p. 5)

This state of affairs is problematic on many levels. Foremost, this misconstruction of the achievement paradigm tampers with learning and life opportunities of already marginalized groups of students. Furthermore, the intent to create a nation of students who succeed presents circumstances that place unreasonable demands on teachers and students through large-scale assessments. Those in opposition refer to this type of testing as a "gate-keeping device" (García & Kleifgen, 2010, p. 124) that can inhibit access to further education and eventual improved quality of life.

This study seeks to document the phenomenon that exists with regard to teachers who are working to improve student achievement in an era of educational reform. The focus on nominated highly effective teachers provides insight into how teachers negotiate policy initiatives while preserving the practices that best benefit English learners with literacy intervention needs.

## Research Questions

Cummins (2010) suggests that “individual educators are never powerless; they always exercise agency, understood as the power to act. While they rarely have complete freedom, educators do have choices in the way they structure the interactions in their classrooms” (p. ix). It is this supposition that guides this inquiry into the degrees of freedom effective teachers have in maintaining classroom environments that are based on what is known to be the most effective pedagogy for the academic achievement of bilingual learners. This research study seeks to understand what it is that nominated effective teachers do on a daily basis that upholds their commitment to high quality instruction for English language learners who have been identified as having reading intervention needs. An exploration has been designed that specifically delves into the experiences of these reputable teachers to inquire about the influences and impact that accountability measures and policy initiatives have on practices they engage in based on expertise and experience. This study is inspired and guided by the following primary question: In the case of English language learners (ELLs) with reading intervention needs, how do effective teachers preserve high-quality instructional practices in an era emphasizing high stakes accountability measures and mandated policies?

The sub-questions guiding this inquiry attend to the specifics regarding the preservation of daily quality of instruction that has a cumulative effect over a substantial period of time. They include:

1. During the reading intervention process, how are teacher’s instructional decisions affected by policy initiatives?

2. In what ways are teachers consciously adapting their pedagogy to uphold their commitment to high quality instruction for English language learners?
3. What resources and support systems contribute to the successful preservation of high quality instruction for teachers of ELLs with reading intervention needs?

With these research questions at the forefront, the goal of this dissertation study is create a pedagogical model that describes what specific reputable teachers do to preserve highly effective practices for English language learners. The intent is to contribute an understanding of how nominated effective teachers maintain quality instructional practices in an era of education reform.

### **Significance of Study**

This inquiry is essential because all students deserve a high-quality education that considers their individual strengths and needs. According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (2010), over 5 million English learners are enrolled in grades pre-K through 12 in the United States. Students whose first language is one other than English are the fastest-growing demographic group in public schools across all regions of the U.S. (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2010; Slavin & Cheung, 2005). It is repeatedly broadcast to the public that the academic achievement of these same students is significantly lower than that of native English speakers (Baker, 2006; Christian, 2006; Collier & Thomas, 2009; Gay, 2000). These sanctioned reports most often depict English language learners through a deficit lens (Bartolomé &

Balderrama, 2001; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Nieto, 1999; 2002), totally disregarding the political, historical, and psychometric forces that assessment reports and educational programming are based on (Gay, 2000).

The need for documenting experiences of the teacher under the conditions of high stakes accountability and mandated policies is essential in light of the prominent role that initiatives continue to play in the schooling of students, and in this case English language learners. The development and preservation of highly effective teachers is dependent upon a clear understanding of the pedagogical consequences that policies have on achievement and the approaches necessary to maintain ideologically sound practices.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research study has been conducted through a postmodern perspective with a push toward critical theory. Kincheloe (1998) defines a combination of postmodern thinking with critical theory as critical postmodernism with a vision of social change. Tierney (2000) suggests that “a concrete definition of postmodernism does not exist; indeed, such a definition would be ironic given postmodernism’s basic tenets pertaining to indeterminacy and constant deconstruction/reconstruction” (p. 538). It follows, then, that the postmodern framework for this research will be presented through the interpretations of different postmodern researchers.

The postmodern perspective offers an opportunity to challenge the platform from which modernism frames knowledge. Through the postmodern perspective, hegemonic practices of schooling can be interrogated, and a critique of the “grand

narratives” (Giroux, 1988, p. 355) of modernism can ensue. For educators, postmodernism provides a tool to question the view that intellectualism exists from a Eurocentric model of culture (Bennett, 2001; Giroux, 1988). Modernism, according to Giroux, “has been largely drawn from a cultural script written by white males whose work is often privileged as a model of high culture informed by an elite sensibility” (1988, p. 352). In addition to this deconstruction of modernism, postmodernism allows for an inquiry into how authority is defined and how boundaries can be resituated.

In this study, the research includes an interrogation of the perspectives and narratives that frame the certainty of whose knowledge is valued and the resulting interpretation of how students of two languages should experience school. Atkinson (2004) provides a postmodern framework for challenging certainties. Through her work she conducts an inquisition regarding government certainties about “what works” and “best practices” with the notion that “what influences practice is not necessarily evidence-based on certainty, but the radical re-thinking of education brought about by new ideas” (p. 32). She believes that the postmodern researcher has a vital role in questioning the authority of power and knowledge learning structures.

Postmodernism is a theoretical match for this study, which questions how effective practices can be preserved to meet the needs of students who are under-represented and most often under-emphasized. It is an approach that provides theoretical tools to reevaluate different contexts in which authority is defined. Bernstein (1988) believes postmodernism allows for an examination of the ways in

which individuals are excluded and marginalized. The knowledge, perspectives, and validity of educational practices for second language learners can be challenged with a postmodern theoretical pedagogy that can re-envision the way schooling could be experienced (Atkinson, 2004; Giroux, 1988).

As liberating and empowering as the perspective of postmodernism is, it is recognized here that true emancipatory possibilities of this topic can only occur through a deliberate transformation that moves toward a more critical theory stance. Creswell (2007) presents a critical theory definition as having perspectives that “are concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender” (p. 27). A critical theory stance provides a philosophical and political framework for conducting change-oriented research, and as Kincheloe (1991) suggests, “the critical teacher exposes the assumptions of existing research orientations, critiques of the knowledge base, and through these critiques reveals ideological effects on teachers, schools, and the culture’s view of education” (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 27).

Critical postmodern research deconstructs what appears obvious and works to create a new vision. A critical stance with regard to students who are challenged with literacy expectations requires a politically clear educational philosophy and a belief that the interactions among students and teachers are the most central aspect of student success (Bartolomé, 1994; Cummins, 1996). With this as a foundation, a review of literature and qualitative case study has been conducted and presented.

## Chapter Two

### Review of Literature

The notion of preserving highly effective practices for English language learners in an era of education reform is one that commands a drawing together of the fields of literacy, language acquisition, and educational policy. The integration of these often stand-alone domains is necessary for an in-depth inquiry into the experiences of nominated teachers who skillfully manage the demands of high stakes accountability with instructional practices that have been repeatedly proven for decades. Pandya (2011) suggests

it is critical for the functioning of teachers, and the lives of children, that we intertwine our separate knowledge bases. Without looking at these three aspects together, we do not see all that is happening in children's classroom lives, and we will be unable to make comprehensive recommendations for change. (p. 96)

It is through the convergence of these scholarly fields that a comprehensive study can take place. The aim of this effort is to develop a pedagogical model that assists educators in understanding of how highly effective instructional practices for English language learners can be preserved.

This review of research literature is designed around two essential frameworks. The first part explores historical and current education policy as it pertains to the English language learner. The purpose of this section is to provide context for an understanding of the permeation of initiatives and mandates in the daily educational experiences of those students whose home language is one other

than English (Menken, 2008). The current elements of policy are critically presented to expose issues that are inherently problematic. The second part of this review delves into the tenets of literacy and second language acquisition research that are highly respected as the foundation of effective instructional practices that promote reasonable and optimal academic growth for English language learners. The objective of this literature review is to merge these frameworks as the springboard from which to launch this inquiry, analysis, and discussion.

To begin, definitions are offered for terms that are often used broadly and require an explanation for use in this specific study. A summary of the demographics of the student group of interest is also provided. From there, the contextual aspects of policy and the scholarly review of the literature are presented.

### **Definition of Terms**

When researching and writing within the field of language learning, it is not uncommon to encounter different terms used to describe students who are maneuvering between two languages. The term *bilingual*, when used in the context of schooling, refers to programs that incorporate students' first languages as well as the dominant culture language for instructional purposes. *Bilingual students* are those individuals who engage in educational programming that utilizes both the students' home language and the majority language in the educational process (August & Shanahan, 2008). The descriptor *English language learner* (ELL) is used to refer to students who speak a language other than English as their home language and who are in the process of acquiring English as a second language. These students have not yet attained enough English to fully benefit from all English

instruction (Orosco, Almanza de Schonewise, Onis, Klingner, & Hoover, 2008).

*Second language learner* is a designation synonymous with ELL and signifies any language as the one to be acquired (August & Shanahan, 2008). A growing trend is to refer to students acquiring proficiency in a second language as *emerging bilinguals*, as it projects a perspective of valuing both the first language and the second language being learned (Escamilla, 2011). According to August and Hakuta (1997), the term *language minority* refers to those learners who come from homes where a language other than the societal language is actively used. These students (a) may have a limited proficiency in their second language, (b) are bilingual, or (c) can even be monolingual in their second language. Collier and Thomas (2009) suggest the notion that the term *minority* can be offensive and carry negative connotations because of its association with a diminished social status. These scholars, instead, prefer to use the term *linguistically diverse* as a way to reference “all first- and second-generation immigrants as well as ethnolinguistic groups living within U.S. boundaries that have preserved the heritage of their ancestors across many generations” (p. 5). In addition, the phrase *limited English proficient* (LEP) is often used when referring to assessments, standards, or legal associations (August & Shanahan, 2008).

For the purposes of this study, the terms *bilingual*, *English language*, *second language*, and *linguistically diverse* will be used to define those learners whose first language is one other than the societal language. It should be assumed that these students are engaged in the acquisition of the societal language, in this case English. The reference to *language minority* will be used if the context requires an emphasis

on the subordinate status of the language and/or inequities revealed by such a description. *Limited English proficient* will be used only as a descriptor of policy or legal jargon.

It is also essential to define what is assumed by the terms *literacy skills*, *biliteracy*, and *reading intervention*. *Literacy skills*, according to August and Shanahan (2008), encompass the prereading skills, such as concepts of print and knowledge of alphabet, as well as the word and text level skills that include decoding, fluency, reading comprehension, and writing. *Biliteracy* is defined by Hornberger (2003) as “any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing” (xiii). *Reading Interventions* are those provisions that occur in the educational environment to meet the needs of low-achieving students (Allington, 2009).

### **Demographics**

The proportion of language minority youth speaking a language other than English has dramatically escalated. According to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2010), the number of school-age Hispanic children from ages 5 to 17 increased from 3.8 million to 10.9 million during the 1979-2008 time period. This is an increase from 9% to 21% of the population in the school-age range. The NCES also reports that an estimated 5.1 million students are identified by government statistics as having limited English proficiency status. Additionally, in 2008, the percentage of school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty was reported at 5%. The NCES (2008) also reports that of those who spoke a

language other than English at home, Spanish was the most frequent (71.5%), followed by Asian/Pacific Island languages (14.3%) and Indo European languages (14%).

The significance of this data is that those students whose first language is one other than English are the fastest-growing demographic group in public schools across all regions of the U.S. (Collier & Thomas, 2009; Slavin & Cheung, 2005), and demographers have estimated that the number of English language learners represented in U. S. classrooms will increase from one in nine students in 2005, to one in four students in 2025 (Hodgkinson, 2005). Furthermore, the number of non-White students living in poverty is a concern with regard to academic achievement and equitable educational outcomes. Sixty-five percent of all Hispanic school-age children are attending schools with over 50% student eligibility for free and reduced lunch (NCES, 2008).

The increase in the English language learner population in U.S. schools and the reported statistics of the achievement gap between monolingual English-speaking students and students who start school with little proficiency in English are quite significant (Collier & Thomas, 2009). Thomas and Collier (2002) report that by the end of high school, the achievement gap between these two groups of learners is equivalent to about 1.2 national standard deviations, as measured by English standardized achievement tests across the curriculum. The result is a differentiation of an average score in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile for monolingual English-speakers and an average score of a 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> percentile for students identified as English language learners. It becomes reported, then, that students who are

acquiring English as a second language are achieving far below their monolingual English peers, and there is little regard to the linguistic expectations placed on bilingual learners participating in English standardized assessment practices (Sleeter, 2005).

The current demographic realities significantly support the need to interrogate the experiences of highly effective teachers who are responsible for the success of students identified as low achievers at risk, and more specifically for this study, the subgroup of learners who experience school with two languages.

### **Part One Education Policy and the English Language Learner**

Part One of this literature review focuses on education reform as it affects, and is affected by, the schooling of a growing number of English language learners in the U.S. (NCES, 2010). The foundation of this inquiry is an understanding of the historical-political context explicates certain events that have contributed to the evolution of the current state of educational affairs. With this groundwork, an examination of issues that are problematic to the English language learner can ensue.

#### **Historical framework.**

Del Valle (2003) suggests that bilingual education had a “promising beginning in this nation” (p. 224). There are documented periods of time when bilingual education was publicly supported. These periods were relatively brief, and there is little evidence that there was any type of national policy of minority language promoted. The educational circumstances of Latino students were wrought with ridicule, suppression, and punishment for speaking one’s home

language. Second language learners have sustained many of the same inequities as other minority groups in education. The issues of underprepared teachers, inadequate curriculum, and unsatisfactory facilities are all part of the history of education for linguistically diverse learners. It was not until the brink of the Civil Rights Era that the “nation’s attention became riveted by the educational issues of poor minority students and of language-minority children, that bilingual education became a focus” (Del Valle, 2003, p. 225).

### ***Language and segregation.***

The issue of segregation is often where the civil rights focus for second language students begins. Gándara and Contreras (2009) see the case of *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) as the impetus for the Latino entrance into the civil rights movement. The U.S. District Court case of *Mendez v. Westminster* found that the segregation of Mexican children into schools separated by national orientation was arbitrary and discriminatory, and rulings were issued to outlaw this practice. This same decision was repeated in Texas two years later in *Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District* (1948).

Discriminatory laws, known as de jure segregation, that required or permitted racial separation in schools existed in nearly half of the states in the U.S. during this time (Kopetz, Lease, & Warren-King, 2006). Schools were engaging in practices based on a separate but equal ideology founded in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling of 1896. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that it was constitutional to separate people by race as long as the separate facilities were equal (Kopetz et al.,

2006). The ideology that “having access to the same privilege equates to freedom” has been challenged by hooks (2003). She believes that

embedded in this notion of freedom is the assumption that access is all that is needed to create the conditions for equality...Such thinking denies the role that devaluation and degradation, or all strategies of shaming, play in maintaining racial subordination, especially in the arena of education. (pp. 93-94)

Sixty-four years later, the separate but equal doctrine was overturned by *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954). This profound legislation, ruled by Chief Justice Earl Warren, concluded

In the field of public education, the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. (347 U.S. 483, 1954)

The *Brown* case is monumental in setting the stage for “how minority students’ claims for educational justice were to be shaped and analyzed” (Del Valle, 2003, p. 231). Even so, some assert that as we celebrate the victory of the *Brown* decision even a half of a century later, many schools in America remain segregated by race and poverty (Kopetz et al., 2006). Orfield and Eaton (1996) believe that the common wisdom passed down by teachers through the generations is that *Brown v. Board of Education* corrected an ugly flaw in American

education and American law...Millions of African American and Latino students learn the lessons of *Brown* while they sit in segregated schools in collapsing cities, while almost no students successfully prepare for college. (p. 23)

During the decades following the *Brown* ruling, it appears that the prominent underlying civil rights issue for language minority students was that of language. Inarguably, language is a primary reason for segregation mechanisms at work. According to Gándara and Contreras (2009), the inability to speak English proficiently was, and remains, the most obvious barrier to equitable schooling for Latinos. They also suggest that “language is inextricably bound up with identity, and Latinos have sought to reinforce their common identity by asserting their language within an American culture that often rejected them” (p. 122). In addition, Gándara and Contreras (2009) elicit the notion that because of its tangible attribute, students’ language is politically easier to focus on than issues of racial isolation. Furthermore, Del Valle (2003) contends “given the array of factors involved, it is clear that bilingual education is not so much an education issue in the U.S. as a political one” (p. 219).

***Two prominent legislative rights acts.***

During the civil rights era of the 1960s and 1970s, two prominent forms of legislation figured into the policy and decision making of bilingual programming: the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Bilingual Education Act of 1968.

*The Civil Rights Act.*

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination on the basis of color, race, or national origin (Baker, 2006). According to Title VI of this Act,

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. (Civil Rights Act, sec. 601, 1964)

Title VI of the Civil rights Act has played a critical role in protecting the educational rights of students whose first language is not English, as it has been highly respected as precedence for other subsequent legislative cases in the decision-making process (Crawford, 2004; García & Kleifgen, 2010). Most notably, the legislation had a special application for language minority students because of its prohibition of linguistic discrimination as decided in the well-known *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) case (Del Valle, 2003).

*Bilingual Education Act.*

The second very significant form of legislation is Title VII of the monumental 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This enactment, known as the Bilingual Education Act (BEA), was passed by Congress in 1968. According to García (2005), the initial Title VII legislation was created on the tenets of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It originated as part of the War on Poverty legislation, and it was intended as a crisis intervention (García & Gonzalez, 1995) that would meet the

needs of low-income *limited English proficient* (García, 2005) students. The Bilingual Education Act (1968) stated

in recognition of the special educational needs of the large numbers of children of limited English-speaking ability in the United States, Congress hereby declares it to be the policy of the United States to provide financial assistance to local education agencies to develop and carry out new and imaginative elementary and secondary school programs designed to meet these special educational needs. (section 702)

This legislation was designed to increase educational support for children with limited English proficiency through federal aid for education programs, teacher training, instructional materials, and parent involvement. Many believed that, “the law left unresolved whether its central goal was to speed students’ transition to English or promote bilingualism” (ELLs and the Law, 2009, p.8). The attempt to protect the rights of bilingual learners was believed to be “relatively weak and vague” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 123), and through Title VII, the notion of systematically measuring students’ acquisition of English was conceived. The performance outcome of interest with this policy was the progress of students’ acquisition of English, rather than their development as bilingual learners. This perspective implicitly promoted a deficit view of bilingual education, where language was not viewed as a resource, but as a burden to overcome (Cummins, 1991; García, 2005). Del Valle (2003) suggests that the inception of ESEA and Title VII was “infused with a sense of helping poor students overcome their deprivations” (p. 226). Although financial assistance was authorized to “develop and carry out

new and imaginative elementary and secondary programs (BEA, Section 702),” Congress did not appropriate any of the 15 million earmarked for the BEA goals (Del Valle, 2003). In addition, the Act was wrought with ambiguity, and no specific program or proven instructional practices were recommended. Furthermore, even though bilingual education was included as an authorized approach, the legislation of the initial BEA was not mandated, and it did not particularize the role of native language instruction (Del Valle, 2003; García, 2005).

The BEA Reauthorization of 1974 included a significant change in the way equal opportunity in education for language minority students was viewed. For the first time, instruction for bilingual learners was defined as “instruction given in, and study of, English, and, to the extent necessary to allow a child to progress effectively through the educational system, the native language” [Sec. 703(a)(4)(A)(i)]. Other changes in the 1974 reauthorization included eliminating poverty as a benchmark, including the specific mention of Native American children as an eligible population, and a provision for students from English-speaking homes to enter bilingual education programs as a way to expand their understanding of the cultural heritage of English language learners (García, 2005). Four subsequent reauthorizations of the BEA occurred between 1978 and 1994. The 1994 reauthorization had evolved in many ways, but still had the objective of ensuring “equal educational opportunities for all children and youth and to promote educational excellence for children and youth of limited English proficiency” [BEA, 1994, Section 7102(c)].

***Lau v. Nichols.***

The landmark case of *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) continues to symbolize the establishment of language rights in the U.S.. This court case was brought on behalf of a group of Chinese students against the San Francisco School District. The complaint centered on whether or not non-English-speaking students received equal academic opportunities when their instruction occurred in English—a language not understood by the students. The case was rejected in a federal court and a court of appeals, but it was accepted in 1974 by the Supreme Court (Baker, 2006). The Court ruled, “There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education” (483 F. 2d 791, 1974). This decision emphasized that education for English language learners has discriminatory effects even if they are not overtly discriminatory (Menken, 2008). The *Lau v. Nichols* opinion of the court also reflects the notion that language is basic to learning. The opinion reads:

Basic skills are at the very core of what these public schools teach.

Imposition of a requirement that, before a child can effectively participate in the educational program, he must already have acquired those basic skills is to make a mockery of public education. (483 F. 2d 791, 1974)

Baker (2006) suggests that *Lau v. Nichols* ruling promoted a broadening of goals in the field of bilingual education, with a possible expansion of language maintenance programs; however, in reality, true heritage language, maintenance, and enrichment programs rarely result. In this case, as others reported here, the

court offered no specific method of instruction as an approach to instructing English language learners. The court referred to the Office of Civil Rights to develop guidelines for schools and districts. These guidelines became known as the Lau Remedies (1975) (García & Kleifgen, 2010). The Lau Remedies were applied to all schools and not just those receiving federal funding through Title VII. Many in the field of bilingual education believe the Lau rulings were able to assist schools in meeting the needs of bilingual students, while the Bilingual Education Act did not (Menken, 2008).

In 1981, the key Fifth Circuit Court decision of *Castañeda v. Pickard* substantiated and extended the *Lau v. Nichols* ruling. This extension challenged the “appropriateness” of bilingual education, and three standards were devised:

The program providing special language services to eligible language minority students is based on sound educational theory.  
The program is being implemented in an effective manner.  
The program, after a period of “reasonable implementation,” produces results that substantiate language barriers are being overcome so as to eliminate achievement gaps between bilingual and English-speaking students. (García, 2005, p. 80)

*Lau v. Nichols* and *Castañeda v. Pickard* continue to be referenced in the creation, implementation, and preservation of programs designed to efficaciously meet the needs of learners who are simultaneously acquiring English as a second language while developing and maintaining skills in their first language (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; García, 2005; Menken, 2008).

***English-only paradigm.***

From the days of *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), and through the eras of The Civil Rights Movement (1964) and the Bilingual Education Act (1968), it seemed that the U.S. had reached an enlightenment stage with the unfolding of the Lau Remedies (1975). This, however, was not the case. The momentum for strong versions of bilingual education appeared to be increasingly weakened by the English Only movement in the 1980s and 1990s across the country. This phenomenon was evident at both the federal and state levels. In the early 1980s, it was evident that the federal government had substantial (Baker, 2006, p. 194) English-only sentiments.

According to Baker (2006), Reagan administration was “generally hostile” (p. 194) toward bilingual education. President Reagan called bilingual education “wrong and against the American concept” (Baker, 2006, p. 194). Bilingual programming was seen as a way to neglect English development, and mainstreaming, submersion, and transitional programs were promoted. It was during this time that the incoming secretary of education under the Reagan administration called the Lau Remedies “harsh, inflexible, burdensome, unworkable, and incredibly costly” (Crawford, 2004, p. 120). The Lau remedies were withdrawn, and there was no longer legal support to enforce them. The federal government shifted the decision making to the local political systems. In 1985, the Secretary of Education claimed that there was no significant evidence that the Bilingual Education Act had benefited the academic achievement of English language learners. Consequently, weaker forms of bilingual education, such as Structured English,

Sheltered English, and transitional bilingual programming took precedence over stronger forms such as maintenance and dual language (Baker, 2006). The perspective of “language as a problem” (Ruiz, 1984) dominated in the federal government throughout the 1980s, perpetuating the notion that bilingualism is connected to the poor, disadvantaged, and uneducated, whereas speaking English is often associated with “liberty, freedom, justice, and wealth” (Baker, 2006, p. 385).

In the 1990s, a dichotomy was occurring around the country. On one hand, the Clinton administration was pursuing education reform in the form of Goals 2000 Educate America Act (1994) and Improving America’s Schools Act (1994). This expansive reform recognized that second language learners were in need of programming that represented achievement through high academic standards. The Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 reauthorized Title VII to increase the power of the state to provide more enriching programming, improve instructional strategies, and focus on developing more challenging curriculum for bilingual learners. This was a period when the focus of bilingual education moved from a narrowed conversation of language instruction to a perspective in which questions were being asked about quality and standards of those students from language minority backgrounds (Baker, 2006).

Yet, it was also during this time that “native language instruction in schools came under political siege” (García and Kleifgen, 2010, p. 31). An “early stab at bilingual education” (Del Valle, 2003) came in 1977 with the release of the American Institutes for Research (AIR) report. This report was a comprehensive, full-scale evaluation of bilingual education in the United States. The data from this study were

gathered from numerous sites that represented a variety of bilingual education programming with differing levels of implementation and a variety of language abilities of the students. The objective of this research was to reach a conclusion regarding the effectiveness of bilingual education (La Belle, Moll, & Weisner, 1979). The summary of the AIR report indicated that there was no significant evidence in favor of the overall effectiveness of bilingual education programs as compared to programs providing no additional assistance to second language learners. In addition, it was claimed that bilingual programming was undermining the Congressional initiatives for transitional English development objectives (Del Valle, 2003). Critics of bilingual education took quick notice of the AIR report, and bilingual education was perceived as “institutionalizing a private function—the inculcation of ethnic pride and maintenance of home languages” (Del Valle, 2003, p. 230). Many in the field of bilingual education criticized the report for its narrow focus, claiming that the report did not contribute to an increase in the understanding of how bilingual education affects children, and that it was void of any demonstration of which educational interventions would optimize desired achievement outcomes (La Belle et al, 1979).

The divisive issues of bilingual education plagued the 1980s and 1990s. Fueling the vehement attacks on bilingual education and immigration were the media biases that filled the newspapers and airwaves (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). McQuillan & Tse (1996) examined research and media accounts of bilingual education during the time period of 1984-1994. A content analysis was conducted on bilingual education articles published in educational scholarly journals versus

newspaper articles such as editorials, signed opinion pieces, and letters to the editor. The results indicated significant disparity between the two information sources. The researchers found that 82% of research articles reported favorable outcomes for bilingual education, yet only 45% of the persuasive newspaper articles took a favorable position. Notably, fewer than half of all persuasive newspaper articles made any recognition of the research articles, and about one-third of them relied solely on anecdotal sources. This difference could be accounted for by accessibility to research (Savage, 1989) or the effectiveness of persuasive media devices; however, it is suggested that the press, and the general population, may be strongly influenced by the larger political forces than by the empirically based findings. Negative positions associated with bilingual education may be a reflection of attitudes prevalent in the greater societal and political context (Padilla, 1992). During the time period of the McQuillan and Tse study (1996), the U.S. had a prevalent anti-immigration aura that began igniting deleterious English-only developments.

The state of California began to take action as a response to the immigration movement. The liberal initiative and proposition system of the state set the tone for the development of critical legislation. In 1994 voters passed Proposition 187, which was called the Save Our State initiative. This initiative “would deny undocumented immigrants access to public schools, hospitals, and social services” (Del Valle, 2003, p. 247). Although this particular proposition weakened, it set the groundwork for the design of Proposition 227 entitled English for the Children. The

intent of this initiative was to promote English in California public schools through the elimination of bilingual education.

Proposition 227 blossomed as a result of a boycott that took place in 1996 at a Los Angeles elementary school. Latino parents at the Ninth Street Elementary School challenged the educational system with beliefs that their children's best interests were not being served in the bilingual programming of this particular district (Baker, 2006; Del Valle, 2003). In February of 1996 about 100 parents kept their children home from school for four days. Of those parents, only four had actually completed the opt-out waiver. Alice Callaghan, an Episcopal priest who was an activist in the neighborhood community center, took it upon herself to organize this cause against bilingual education in the schools. Misguided by the notion that bilingual education was the root of the academic problems of the Latino students, parents and community members formed together to change the system. The movement snowballed as the mayor, the press, and influential community members began to jump on the "English Only" bandwagon.

A Silicon Valley software businessman, Ron Unz, was "inspired" (Del Valle, 2003, p. 250) by the events of the Ninth Street School, which led him to create the eventual legislation of Proposition 227. Unz, an entrepreneur with aspirations for political office, had no experience or education regarding English language learners. He "seized on the controversial topic of bilingual education as a vehicle to carry him to statewide visibility" (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). The press' acceptance of Unz's antibilingual assertions was a classic example of the research findings of McQuillan

and Tse (1996) that describe the tendency of the press to gravitate towards persuasive mechanisms of the negative opinions of bilingual education.

In June of 1998, the voters of California passed the legislation of Proposition 227. The main tenet of Proposition 227 as outlined by Baker (2006) states, “It is resolved that all children in California public schools shall be taught English as rapidly and effectively as possible and such children shall be taught English by being taught in English” (p. 196). The supporters of the Proposition maintained that bilingual education was a barrier to language minorities’ capacity to learn English and that the best way to acquire English is to be immersed in English-only classrooms (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Sleeter, 1999).

Proposition 227 opened the door to other states passing similar legislation. Both Arizona and Massachusetts successfully put through similar initiatives; however, Colorado rejected a similar proposition in 2002 (Garcia, 2005). Propositions at the state level and bills in Congress continued to be introduced, illustrating that fear and bigotry continue to permeate the nation’s school systems with English-only, anti-immigration, and antibilingual education legislation.

### **Current political framework.**

#### ***No Child Left Behind Act.***

The political climate in the late 1990s was primed for the development of national education policy that was contrary to decades of scholarly research on bilingual education. It was at this time that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was earmarked for reform. The reauthorization of ESEA, known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was signed into law in January of 2002.

As stated in the introduction chapter of this paper, NCLB had the intent of offering equitable educational opportunities to the nation's disadvantaged and providing resources that would improve the learning opportunities of underprivileged children (McGill-Franzen, 1987).

The main tenets of this legislation included the expectation that all students were expected to reach predetermined progress levels and that each student, regardless of language or academic need, would be monitored through a standards and assessment measurement protocol. States accepting receipt of funds would demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The term AYP represents specific state-developed annual targets, which, according to García and Kleifgen (2010), "drives the construction of categories of proficiency that have little to do with students' real learning and development" (p. 111).

Most notably for students who are learners of English, the broad goal of this education reform is to raise the performance levels of *all* [emphasis added] students according to predetermined standards and, in doing so, close the achievement gap that mirrors race and class distinction (Darling-Hammond, 2007). For English language learners, this often means a rigorous negotiation between two languages while working towards proficiency in challenging tasks outlined by the benchmarks of the dominant culture.

Researchers have challenged that federal educational policy, such as NCLB, is quite significantly a de facto (Menken, 2008, p. 35; Shohamy, 2006, p. 57) national language policy. Menken (2008) states,

*No Child Left Behind* is actually a language policy, even though this is not stated in the law and nor is the law presented to the general public as such. Yet the results are the same as official language policy would be, in that this federal legislation is changing language use and language learning in schools, which will have a lasting impact on minority languages and their speakers in this country. (p. 13)

According to Menken, NCLB accountability in the form of high stakes testing has created a de facto language policy in American education. The requirement of proficiency in English testing promotes rigidity for the education of English language learners (García & Kleifgen, 2010) and results in a situation where “ELLs are overwhelmingly failing the tests, labeled as deficient and low-performing, and barred from advancement” (Menken, 2008, p. 35).

### ***The Individuals with Disabilities Act.***

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is included in this study because of its recent influence on the educational placement decisions made for those English language learners with literacy intervention needs. As stated in this paper’s introduction chapter, IDEA is an extension of the Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142). The main principles include the notion of free and appropriate public education for all children from ages 3 to 21, the stipulation that each child receiving services is entitled to an individual education program, the understanding that students must be educated with children who are not disabled, and the mandate that all schools must provide safeguards for due process and access to an attorney (Appling & Jones, 2008).

Notably, no specifics on interventions for particular needs, such as second language learning, are addressed in this legislation; however, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 does recommend evidenced-based interventions and the law specifically states that if a child's primary reason for low achievement is language proficiency, a determination for special education eligibility cannot be made (IDEA, 2004, pp. 2705-2706). In addition, the IDEA legislation acknowledges that "limited English proficient" students are the fastest growing population in the United States, followed by the proclamation that

studies have documented apparent discrepancies in the levels of referral and placement of limited English proficient children in special education. Such discrepancies pose a special challenge for special education in the referral of, assessment of, and provisions of service for, our Nation's students from non-English language backgrounds. (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, p. 1)

In addition, the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences states, Providing equal educational opportunities to students who may not be proficient in English presents a growing challenge to schools. Students who are English language learners must be evaluated by school officials to determine if they are eligible for special services. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. This law requires school districts to help limited-English-proficient LEP) students overcome language barriers and to ensure that they can participate meaningfully in the district's educational programs. (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010)

Although the plight of educating English language learners is recognized, it is stated with a deficit point of view rather than one that would appear to value the language difference, as evidenced by words such as “challenge” and “overcome.” There is no mention of students’ home language or bilingual education in any of the policy summaries found throughout this research review. The assumption, then, is that intervention systems and special education processes of second language learners are principled by the same foundation as the mainstream monolingual English population, unless state or local efforts intervene.

The historical and current policy frameworks presented here are abridged versions, because the intent is to offer, within a limited space, a synopsis of political events in history that are significant to the most recent education reform circumstances. Education reform decisions are being shaped and implemented through a hierarchy of decision makers that are far removed from (a) the research conducted in the authentic educational setting of students whose native language is one other than English and (b) the communities in which these students have linguistic, cultural, political, and social roots. With this in mind, this literature review examines the elements of current education reform that are creating challenges and barriers to progress and achievement.

### **Problematic tenets of education policy for English language learners.**

Specific education policy is often represented to the public as goals where all children will succeed (NCLB, 2001). At first glance, and often through the eyes of persuasive media, this expectation appears worthy. A closer look, however, reveals a reality quite different than what has been idealized. According to the Institute of

Language and Education Policy (2007),

As Congress prepares to reauthorize NCLB, the verdict is in. Where ELLS are concerned, the law's impact has been precisely the opposite of what was promised. Research studies and reports from the classroom indicate that these students are not only being "left behind"; they are being further marginalized. (p. 1)

This section offers a summary of what has been deemed in the scholarly literature as elements of education policy that are problematic—posing challenges or barriers—to the effective instruction of English language learners. The five identified areas of concern include (1) education policy as language policy, (2) perceptions of an achievement gap, (3) deficit perspectives, (4) intensified accountability measures, and (5) literacy report influences on education reform.

***Education policy as language policy.***

Often language policy is discussed as an interconnection to language planning. It is the position of this research that language policy will be detached from the assumptions of language planning for the reason suggested by Menken (2008), that is, that policies created in U.S. schools "occur in an ad hoc way, without careful planning as traditionally depicted in the literature" (p. 5). Spolsky (2003) defines language policy as a nation encompassing "its language practices..., its language beliefs or ideology..., and any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning or management" (p. 5). Although movements have occurred historically, the U.S. has never had a language policy. Currently, there is no official language policy, and as a result, language policy

has become implicitly recognized through other political and societal devices (Christian, 1999; Menken, 2008; Shohamy, 2006). This is problematic for English language learners, because “the absence of a national consensus in this area means, among other things, that local decisions on how to educate English language learners are a continuing source of controversy” (Crawford, 2004, p. 55).

Showhamy (2006) believes that language policy is found in the struggles between ideology and practice. She describes the notion that language is used as a form of control by stating, “It is through a variety of overt and covert mechanisms, used mostly by those in authority, that languages are being manipulated and controlled so as to affect, create and perpetuate ‘de facto’ language policies, i.e., language practices” (p. xv).

Menken (2005) examined this issue by conducting a qualitative case study of 10 New York high schools. The focus of that research was to determine the influence and implications that high stakes assessment have on the learning experiences of English language learners. Data collection approaches included (a) interviews with students, teachers, administrators, and policymakers; (b) observations; (c) school, state, and district policy documents; (d) standardized test score data; and (e) graduation, promotion, and retention data. Menken discovered that the needs specific to English language learners must be recognized when education policy includes high stakes standardized tests. She found that a disproportionate number of language learners were unable to pass state tests that control the type of education that is in place for these students. The findings of Menken’s research have demonstrated significant implications for the ways in

which education policy affect, in essence, the language policy of school environments, specifically due to the mandates of high-stakes standardized tests.

In a subsequent published work, *English Language Learners Left Behind: Standardized Testing as Language Policy*, Menken (2008) extends the New York City research to focus on the notion that in the absence of an official national language policy, de facto policies based on other political and societal mechanisms (Showhamy, 2006) take control. Menken suggests that current education policy is in fact, language policy. Even though NCLB is not presented as such, Menken's research conclusion implies that

at every level of the educational system, the law's top-down testing policies are interpreted and negotiated, such that all of the individuals involved become language policymakers, with teachers acting as the final arbiters of policy. Tests are *de facto* language policy in schools, and essentially become policy for language education when curriculum and teaching are aligned to the tests (Menken, 2008, p. 160)

Ricento and Hornberger (1996) compare all individuals in the educational hierarchy to the layers of an onion being unpeeled, and each layer has the potential to have policy makers affecting changes in how educational policy is carried out. The results of top-down policy, like NCLB, are that it is "interpreted and negotiated by the individuals at every layer of the educational system—in often contradictory ways" (Menken, 2008, p. 119).

With this in mind, it appears that political motives and personal ideologies would have immense influence on how educational policy as language policy is

implemented. From a pedagogical perspective, the layers of policy decision making may significantly affect the type of knowledge indoctrinated in classrooms. Gass and Selinker (2001) suggest that many issues of language policy are dependent on knowledge of how a second language is learned. These researchers believe that decisions involving national language programs are dependent on the knowledge of the essence of second language learning, the types of instruction suitable, and the realities associated with expected outcomes. They state, “All too often, these issues are debated without a clear understanding of the object of debate that is, the nature of how second languages are learned” p. 4).

A clear example of education policy interpreted as language policy involves the reality that Title VII was eliminated as part of the 2002 reauthorization of ESEA measure, known as NCLB, and was replaced with Title III (Garcia, 2005). Under the provisions of Title III, bilingual students are referred to as English language learners, and the word *bilingual* is completely eliminated from the legislation. According to Goldenberg, Rueda, and August (2008), Title III of the NCLB legislation succeeds in avoiding any mention of the positive aspects of maintaining and endorsing multiple language skills.

The new federal office created to manage the provisions of Title III also reflects the circumvention of multilingualism, as it has been named the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited-English Proficient Students (OELA). According to Garcia (2005), Title III dramatically changed from the 1994 version of the Bilingual Education Act. It stated in its goal that “developing the English skills...and to the extent possible, the native-

language skills” (p. 98) was the expected programming for English language learners. There is an escalating concern in the fields of research and education that this type of policy reflecting the dissolution of anything bilingual has perpetuated a national climate of implicit, and often explicit, inequities in education reform implementation (Cummins, 2000; García, 2005; Nieto, 1999).

In order for meaningful and effective language instruction to take place in the midst of controversial education policy implementation, it must be recognized that certain mechanisms are in place that can often “lead to violations of democratic processes and personal/language rights” (Showhamy, 2006, p. xv). Education policy as de facto language policy has created circumstances in which linguistically diverse students and their teachers have unjust demands placed on them through high stakes accountability measures implemented with a one-size-fits-all mentality (Menken, 2005).

***Perceptions of an achievement gap.***

Of the 5.1 million English learners in the U.S., approximately 75% are of Spanish-speaking backgrounds (NCES, 2008). Based on achievement test scores, there is a tremendous gap between students who start school with limited English proficiency and native English-speaking students. Collier and Thomas (2009) report that by the end of high school, this achievement gap is comparable to 1.2 national standard deviations, as measured by standardized achievement criterion. “This represents the difference between average scores at the 50<sup>th</sup> national percentile for native English speakers and the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> percentile for students who were initially classified as English learners” (Collier & Thomas, 2009, p. 3).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)(2011), “Achievement gaps occur when one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant” (p.1). The NCES (2011) reports that scores for Hispanic, Black, and White students have increased in the last few decades; however, the achievement gap has not narrowed for public school fourth or eighth graders in the areas of math and reading since the 1990s.

Data compiled by NCES and others to measure academic performance originate from English-state standardized assessments. Perceptions of achievement gap in the U.S. are based on the assumption that achievement gap reports are the most competent approach to measuring the actual performance of all students. The problematic features of this process are that (a) the high stakes measurements are based on a test that cannot be extricated from its inherent language proficiency qualities and (b) the focus of underachievement remains on intensifying the test-taking process rather than improving the type of programming deemed most effective for English language learners. These two elements contribute to the misperception of the disparateness between English language learners and their native English-speaking peers.

*Language proficiency.*

The inquiry surrounding performance gaps between disaggregated groups of students begins with the notion that high stakes testing places unrealistic demands on English language learners and teachers to accelerate the English language acquisition process (Collier & Thomas, 2009; Heubert, 2002; Menken, 2008).

Menken (2008) argues that “requiring students to rush their process of English language acquisition is part of new language acquisition policy whereby standardized tests implicitly promote English” (p. 116). Collier and Thomas (2009) posit that realistically, a native English speaker must make 10 month’s progress to achieve one grade level, and in order to close the academic achievement gap, as reported by state tests, English language learners must progress more than a grade level for several years to eventually measure at the same level as their monolingual English peers.

Decades of research have examined the question of how long it takes to achieve academic gap closure. Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukoma (1976) advocated that there were two categories of language proficiency. According to these researchers *surface fluency* relates to the ability to hold a simple social conversation, and *academically-related language competence* is required to handle curriculum and takes 5 to 8 years to acquire (Baker, 2006).

Cummins (1981) conducted an analysis with over 1,200 immigrants who arrived in Canada. The subjects of this study were 6 years of age or younger, and they were at the age of first acquiring the English language. Cummins concluded that it took at least 5 to 7 years on average for students to reach expected grade level norms on assessments that measure cognitive-academic English language development.

In subsequent work (1984a, 1984b, 2000b), Cummins distinguishes between language for academic and higher order cognitive processes and day-to-day language that is used for interpersonal communication. These two constructs are

characterized by the need for contextual support and the cognitive demand required. The first has been labeled Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and refers to language that is more abstract or context-reduced (Baker, 2006). This type of language, according to Cummins, is required in order to participate in the classroom curriculum, and he proposed that it takes five to seven years to develop these skills in a second language. The second type of acquired language is referred to as basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) or context-embedded (Baker, 2006) language, and it is the language used to accomplish communication tasks in social situations.

The supposition that academic language proficiency in a second language takes from five to seven years has been supported by numerous other scholarly research. Hakuta, Gota Butler, and Witt (2000) had similar results. They found “in districts that are considered the most successful in teaching English to English learners, oral proficiency takes three to five years to develop and academic English proficiency can take four to seven years” (p. 13). Gándara (1999) concludes that by third grade, listening skills of English language learners may be at 80% English language proficient, but literacy skills of reading and writing are far behind this number. This study offers an explanation as to the misperception that students are proficient enough to participate in English assessments, when, in fact, the foundation required for academic tasks is underdeveloped. García and Kleifgen (2010) summarize the vocabulary research studies (Graves, 2006; Nagy & Anderson, 1984) that highlight high school vocabulary expectations. It is concluded that students need up to 50,000 vocabulary words and that the average student

learns 3,000 annually. The dire situation for English language high school students is that they are falling dramatically short of what is required for engagement in content and assessments at the high school level.

Perhaps one of the most prominent series of longitudinal studies that asks the *how long* question is the research conducted by Collier and Thomas (2009). The initial studies of these researchers were conducted with 1,548 (Collier, 1987) and 2,014 (1989) immigrant students. The students of this study were just emerging into their acquisition of English. Sixty-five percent of the participants were of Asian descent; 20% were of Hispanic descent; and the remaining were a representation of 75 other languages (Collier & Thomas, 2009). The researchers found that students between the ages of 8 and 11 with at least two years of primary language schooling took five to seven years to reach grade level English. Those students who arrived before age eight needed an average of seven to ten years to reach grade level in English. Some did not reach the expected level, because they ran out of school years. First language schooling prior to English acquisition has been proven to be a key variable in the *how long* question (Baker, 2006; Cummins, 2000; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Goldenberg, 2008; Slavin & Cheung, 2005). Since this initial research, Collier and Thomas have pursued additional databases and have conducted studies in U.S. public schools in 35 school districts and 16 states, analyzing 6.2 million school records from 1985 to 2009. These researchers have “continued to find the same general pattern when English learners are schooled all in English and tested in English” (Collier & Thomas, 2009).

*The effects of programming on achievement gap.*

Contributing to a misperception of an achievement gap is the notion that it is the students' minority language use that perpetuates low achievement rather than the reality that it is the type of programming implemented with English learners that most affects achievement levels. Freeman, Freeman, and Mercuri (2002) report that the English language learners who experience the lowest level of academic achievement are those who have lived in the U.S. all of their lives. These researchers attribute this low performance to the academic instruction available for bilingual learners, and they believe that the way to improve performance outcomes is through effective learning strategies and practices.

Calderón and Minaya-Rowe (2011) have written extensively on the plight of long-term English learners. They concur with Freeman et al. (2002), stating that 80%-90% of all English language secondary learners are U.S. born, and these students have not achieved high levels of academic English language proficiency or content knowledge proficiency to succeed in mainstream language programming due to the lack of programming constructed on research-based practices. There is a particular concern for older English learners, as the linguistic demands of course content and assessments increases dramatically (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2011; Menken, 2008). The achievement gap widens as the students get older, dropout rates increase and graduation potential plummets.

As part of the *how long* question that Collier & Thomas asked (1987; 1989), they examined whether bilingual programming could accelerate the acquisition of academic English. Using student participants that were in highly effective bilingual

classes taught by experienced teachers, the researchers found that students who were on grade level in their first language, reached on-grade-level performance in English, in all subject areas, in four to seven years. Although this compares to the all-English instruction results, the remarkable subfinding is that when these students were followed into secondary school, “the bilingually schooled students were able to sustain the gains in English” (Collier & Thomas, 2009, p. 25). In contrast, the English language students who were educated in only English did not maintain the gains throughout their schooling. Cummins’ (2000) concept of linguistic interdependence may support the work of Collier and Thomas regarding the sustained gains. Linguistic interdependence as explained by Cummins is “to the extent that instruction in  $L_x$  ( $L$  signifying language) is effective in promoting proficiency in  $L_x$ , transfer of this proficiency to  $L_y$  will occur provided there is adequate exposure to  $L_y$ ” (Cummins, 2000, p. 38). In bilingual education, this construct is often described through the related concept of *common underlying proficiency* (Cummins, 1981). This idea states that knowledge and abilities acquired in one language are potentially available for the use in a second language. In other words, “Both languages operate through the same central processing system” (Baker, 2006, p. 169).

It is important to note here that language proficiency is dependent on a variety of factors. August and Hakuta (1997) state, “The most striking fact about second language learning, especially as compared with first language learning, is the variability in outcomes” (p. 37). The variability is founded in student backgrounds,

previous schooling, efficacy of literacy programming, and opportunities to develop both native and target languages (Klingner, Hoover, & Baca, 2008).

As was presented here, misinterpretations of achievement gap find their origins in the disregard for the tenets of how long language proficiency takes and what kind of programming facilitates proficiency. Going back to the NCLB requirements, it is noted that both Title I and Title III mandate two types of assessments for English language learners. These assessments include language proficiency and academic content measures, and the challenge for English language learners is the mandate that for all students, “inclusion in state assessment systems must begin immediately, even if an ELL has been in the United States less than three years-no exemptions are permitted based on time in English instruction” (Menken, 2008, p. 30). With the language proficiency evidence presented here, it is clear that expecting English language learners to engage in high stakes English assessments is highly problematic.

### ***Deficit Perspectives.***

Valencia (1997) defines deficit theory as a belief “that the student who fails in school does so because of internal deficits or deficiencies manifested in limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn and immoral behavior” (p. 2). Quite often students are seen through this deficiency orientation (Sleeter & Grant, 1987). This perspective views students’ potential through their weaknesses and not through the strengths they bring to the school environment.

*Language as a problem orientation.*

Menken (2008) argues that the attention given to English language learners with regard to education reform perpetuates a deficit view. She states,

Within the climate of high-stakes testing fueled by NCLB, the accountability framework highlights the 'problems' and 'deficits' of ELLs. While states and school districts have focused attention on holding students accountable for their educational progress by denying high school graduation or grade promotion when they fail to achieve a certain test score, insufficient attention has been paid to ensuring that ELLs actually have the opportunity to attain the standards have been set...The provision of opportunities to learn is simply not the current national focus. (p. 158)

With regard to English language learners, education reform exudes deficit perspectives that make little reference to the linguistic needs of these students. The elimination of anything bilingual in the language of Title III and NCLB as a whole, the emphasis on English testing, and the disregard for proven language proficiency research are all substantial pieces of evidence for this claim. Bilingual learners in U.S. schools are solely referred to in national education policy documents as *limited English proficient*, presuming inherent and certain failure. Many refer to this as the silencing of the word *bilingual* (Crawford, 2004; Hornberger, 2006; Wiley & Wright, 2004), and regard it as a crucial element in the perpetuation of a deficit view with regard to bilingual programming.

Language becomes wrongly attributed to the origins of underachievement, and other conditions, such as economic, are overlooked (Escamilla, Chavez, & Vigil,

2005). The minority language is often associated with the challenges of poverty, underachievement in school, and the inability to integrate into the majority culture. A language as a problem orientation (Ruiz, 1984) is often encompassed, and the attitude that learning English is the panacea for all is endorsed. Education policy begins a top-down *language-as-a-liability* paradigm that ripples down into all layers of decision making in programming for English language learners. Bilingualism is seen as a problem to eradicate through programs emphasizing English language acquisition (García, 1997). Ruiz (1984) states, “Whether the orientation is represented by malicious attitudes resolving to eradicate, invalidate, quarantine or inoculate, or comparatively benign ones concerned with remediation and improvement, the central activity remains that of problem-solving” (p. 21).

MacSwan and Rolstad (2003) argue that language proficiency ratings, such as those offered by Cummins’ (2000) BICS/CALPS distinction, could lead to a deficit perspective of students. These researchers surmise that English as the academic target language is given a more privileged status and that the student’s home language is seen as inferior. They state, “If we say that schooling has a special effect on language proficiency which makes it better (higher, expanded), then we imply that the language proficiency of the unschooled or working class is inferior (lower, basic) in comparison to that of the educated classes” (p. 333). MacSwan and Rolstad (2003) offer an alternative to the Cummins’ construct. They believe that once children have learned English sufficiently to participate in all-English instruction, they have developed “second language instructional competence (SLIC)” (p. 338), a concept that emphasizes achievement rather than deficiencies.

*Rethinking errors.*

With high stakes attached to low achievement as deemed by “errors” made on standardized tests, it is imperative here to examine the role that errors play in the perpetuation of a deficit view with regard to the achievement of English language learners. To do this, research from the fields of second language acquisition theory and linguistics has been perused with the intent of speaking of language acquisition from a view unencumbered by education policy.

Certain nuances occur when second language learners engage in the expression and reception of a language being learned. Second language researchers explain this process as learners internalizing a mental system that enables them to produce and understand the target language (Corder, 1981; Nemser, 1971; Selinker, 1972). This language process is referred to as interlanguage (IL), and it has been observed in the literature that IL is favorably thought of as a language in its own right (Adjemian, 1976; Corder, 1967; Nemser, 1971; White, 2003). Students using an interlanguage are demonstrating ways in which they are drawing on their native language to learn a second language. Errors relative to target language are accepted in an interlanguage space as a sign of progress and an indication that a learner is taking language risks (Selinker, Swain, & Dumas, 1975). Interlanguage can be independent of the native language and target language. This notion has strong implications for teachers as students are guided through language development.

In an educational setting, second language utterances are often perceived as errors, and they are systematically detected through an error analysis process (assessments). These analyses usually serve to identify deficits in academic

achievement. Corder's (1967) perspective on errors provides a paradigm shift toward a positive acceptance of errors in second language learning. Corder posits that errors are significant, because of the way they provide information as to how the learner is progressing within the second language. He adds that mistakes are different than errors, as they are not significant, and they are easily self-corrected by the learner. In essence, this suggests that learner errors are not arbitrary deviations from the target language; they are evidence of rule-governed events (Corder, 1967; Nemser, 1971). Corder (1974) believes that "the making of errors is an inevitable and indeed necessary part of the learning process" (p. 25). Corder's view of errors deviates from the typical viewpoint of teachers who see errors as something to eradicate through instruction. From his scholarly perspective, he observes that the learner believes errors belong within the interlanguage. A controversy persists with regard to whether or not errors even exist in the interlanguage system. These notions have powerful implications for teachers of language learners and decision makers in the education policy hierarchy. The implications surround programming and assessments that identify students as being at risk based on target language parameters that do not recognize interlanguage as a rightful process.

#### *Subtractive Schooling.*

This review of literature would be lacking if it did not include the significant work of Valenzuela (1999) regarding subtractive schooling and the erosive effects it has on the schooling of Mexican American high school students. This work is essential to the discussion on deficit orientations, because of Valenzuela's immense contribution to understanding the deleterious effects of undervaluing children in

educational systems. Valenzuela conducted a three-year ethnographic study of academic achievement and school orientations of immigrant and U.S. born Mexican American students. She states

The subtractive nature of schooling virtually assures that students who begin the year with only small reserves of skills, as do most regular-track, U.S.-born youth, will not succeed; and conversely, those who come with more positive orientations or greater skills, as do Mexico-born students, are better equipped to offset the more debilitating aspects of schooling. Thus, what is commonly described as a problem of 'generational decline in academic achievement' is much more accurately understood as a problem of subtractive schooling. (p. 6)

Valenzuela demonstrates how schools subtract resources from students by dismissing their definition of schooling. In addition, subtractive schooling practices are perpetuated in assimilationist policies and practices that devalue the language and culture that students come to school with. In addition to the powerful documentation of the experiences of the students of Juan Seguí High School, Valenzuela offers the concept of *caring* as a political and social justice tool. She believes that authentic caring can exist and work within subtractive context but argues that it is most productive in an additive environment. Valenzuela concludes, "The concepts of additive schooling and authentic caring may ultimately be synonymous. Because both concepts convey a profound respect and love of community as well as an enhanced awareness of Mexican Americans' historic

struggle for equal educational opportunity, each unfolds naturally into the other” (271).

***Intensified accountability.***

It has been highlighted in this literature review that education policy as language policy, misperceptions of an achievement gap, and deficit orientations towards linguistic diversity are issues that have been repeatedly identified in the research as problematic for the schooling of English language learners. Each one of these areas of quandary is perpetuated by the existence of testing and accountability initiatives that have intensified dramatically in the era of No Child Left Behind (Ravitch, 2010).

***High-stakes accountability.***

Intensified accountability appears to be one of the primary tenets of NCLB, as the legislation requires every state to test students annually in grades three through eight in reading and mathematics, to publicly report the results at the school and district levels, and to monitor progress in school and district performance (Hong & Youngs, 2008). Criticisms surrounding the mandates of assessment are not based on the notion of accountability (Institute for Language and Education Policy, 2007; Ravitch, 2010) but rather the high stakes principles attached to the accountability initiative. The term *high stakes* in this context refers to the significant consequences that are imparted to students, teachers, administrators, schools or school systems based on performance results usually directed by education reform directives in the form of assessments (Pandya, 2011).

Proponents of high stakes testing and the accountability mandates of NCLB claim that these policies will meliorate the education of lower socioeconomic and minority students resulting in a narrowed achievement gap (United States Department of Education, 2010). Opponents, on the other hand, argue that the effects of reform initiatives are punitive for these students and in reality reduce the quality of education that learners receive (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Menken, 2008; Pandya, 2011; Ravitch, 2010). Most confounding is the NCLB specification set by Congress of 100% proficiency by 2014. This impractical and unworkable aspiration has never been met by any state or nation (Ravitch, 2010), and furthermore, it signifies that the framework of NCLB is far removed from the proven tenets of effective instructional decision making that is especially essential in a nation of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Menken, 2008; Pandya, 2011).

Amrein and Berliner (2002) conducted a study of the unintended consequences of high stakes testing with regard to student academic achievement. Based on the data gathered in 28 states, these researchers found high stakes testing to be linked with

(a) increased dropout rates, decreased graduation rates, and higher rates of younger individuals taking the Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) exams; (b) higher numbers of low performing students being retained in grade before pivotal testing years to ensure their preparedness; and (c) high numbers of suspensions and expulsions of low performing students before testing days. (pp. 2-3)

McNeil and Valenzuela (2000) and Valenzuela (2005) examined the impact of high-stakes accountability in the state of Texas. Their findings reflected outcomes similar to those of Amrein and Berliner (2002) suggesting that the quality of education is reduced through high-stakes testing, and more specifically, poor and minority youth seem to have the most detrimental results.

*Adequate yearly progress.*

Efforts have been made in recent education policy to include English language learners in the same testing process as monolingual English-speaking students. The NCLB legislation mandates that accountability requirements apply to all students, “requiring a 95% participation rate in state assessments, and emphasizes the inclusion of ELL students as a ‘subgroup’ that must make measurable academic progress for schools to continue to receive federal funds without sanctions” (Menken, 2006). Progress is measured by the standards of adequate yearly progress (AYP). As a precondition for receiving funds, schools districts must set annual goals for improvement, and goals must be met. Those schools that meet state goals are considered to be making AYP (Kopetz et al, 2006). Those schools not making AYP are labeled as failing schools or *schools* in need of improvement (SINI). Sanctions are placed on schools that repeatedly miss the annual progress mark. These sanctions can lead to restructuring requirements of charter school conversion, replacing staff, relinquishing control to private management or turning over control of the school to a state governance (Ravitch, 2010). Many believe that the consequential qualities of NCLB are a precursor to larger school privatization motives (Ayers, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Ravitch,

2010) because of the plethora of failed schools that are being created by unrealistic demands. Furthermore, Darling-Hammond (2007) posits that

the law will lead to reductions in federal funding to already under-resourced schools and it will sidetrack funds needed for improvement to underwrite transfers for students to other schools. If left unchanged, the Act will deflect needed resources for teaching and learning to ever more intensive testing of students, ranking of schools, bussing of students and lawyers' fees for litigating the many unintended consequences of the legislation. (p. 247)

Ravitch (2010) reported that 25,000 schools did not make AYP in the 2006-2007 school year. In the year following, the number of schools missing the mark rose to 30,000, or 35.6 % of all public schools. The Center on Education Policy (CEP) in Washington, DC made the claim that mandating restructuring of schools was ineffective. The conclusion of this study, as reported by Ravitch, is that with over 1,000 California schools, federal restructuring approaches rarely improved the status of failing schools (Scott, 2008).

As part of the monitoring of progress required by NCLB student subgroup scores are disaggregated by race, ethnicity, low-income status, disability status, and limited English proficiency. Title III of the NCLB act requires states to define annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAO) to ensure that English language learners are making adequate yearly progress in their development of English language proficiency, as well as meeting rigorous content area standards that mirror those of their monolingual English peers (Menken, 2008). In addition, local education agencies are accountable for meeting increasing AMAO targets for English

language proficiency over time (NCLB 2002, Public Law 107-110, 115 Statute, 1425).

A major problem with this model of accountability is that there is constant movement among English language learners as a group. When ELL students have been deemed English proficient by a state, they are exited from the ELL subgroup. This means they are no longer classified as language learners in performance data. Consequently, English language learners who make language proficiency progress along with academic progress will no longer get counted with the ELL subgroup. While exited students are leaving the subgroup, newly arrived English language learners are joining the subgroup. This circumstance of reclassification creates perpetually depressed achievement scores in the ELL data subgroup (Abedi & Dietel, 2004; Menken, 2008). Subsequently, ELLs as a group are consistently defined and perceived as low-achieving students.

Abedi and Dietel (2004) examined the phenomenon of this redesignation dilemma with 14,000 students in California. They found that when students were removed from the ELL subgroup through the redesignation process, the performance scores of the English language learners decreased significantly. According to these researchers, the U.S. Department of Education began allowing states to include redesignated students in the ELL subgroup for up to two years; however, they state, "This will only temporarily avoid the redesignation problem, as after two years the redesignated students exit the subgroup, bringing the states back to the same adequate yearly progress challenge as before" (2004, p. 784). Escamilla, Mahon, Riley-Bernal, and Rutledge (2003) conducted an analysis of the

state report cards in Colorado schools. They found that under the NCLB accountability, the schools reporting lower scores were those schools with larger numbers of English language learners. These schools were also required to make some of the greatest AYP gains (Abedi & Dietel, 2004).

*Value-added assessments.*

In addition, to AYP and mandated sanctions, educators have other looming high stakes concerns. Although the NCLB education policy did not include value added assessments and pay linked to performance within the document, these two issues have been clearly debated over the past decade. The value-added assessment model was first introduced by a statistician (Sanders & Horn, 1994) from the University of Tennessee. This method aimed to “calculate the extent to which teachers contributed to the gains made by their students, as compared to other factors” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 179). To conduct a value-added assessment, students’ past performances are used to predict their future scores. The difference between the statistical projection and the actual performance scores after a year represents the value that a teacher either added or subtracted to the schooling of the student (Pandya, 2011). Bill Gates recently invested \$335 million dollars in a large-scale experiment connected to student achievement as measured by value-added assessments (Measures of Effective Teaching Project, 2010). Although the analysis is currently in progress, this national inclination towards data has placed high stakes on both teachers and students to perform through accountability measures that seem far removed from research-based effective instructional practices.

In another highly publicized case, the former chancellor of Washington, D. C. schools, Michelle Rhee, used negotiations with the teachers' union to agree to a contract that included a value-added measurement that accounted for 50% of the weight of teacher effectiveness evaluations (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2010). Value-added approaches are problematic for many reasons. First, student performance on a standardized test is influenced by a variety of both static and dynamic factors. In addition, policy makers at all levels have implemented teacher pay based on value-added performance assessments, causing a plethora of challenges regarding misuse and abuse of testing practices. Finally, the data driven emphasis creates an environment where test frequency and intensity increases and persists (Pandya, 2011).

*Validity and the appropriateness of testing.*

Education policy that places an emphasis on high-stakes accountability and growth models such as value-added assessments assumes that this modus operandi is valid. Validity is defined as an evaluative judgment based upon a collection of evidence, and the evaluation of validity concerns the interpretation and use of scores, not of the test itself (Mahon, 2006). As reported in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (American Educational Research Association [AERA], American Psychological Association [APA], & National Council on Measurement in Education [NCME], 1999),

The process of validation involves accumulating evidence to provide a sound scientific basis for the proposed test score interpretations of test scores required by proposed uses that are evaluated, not the test itself. (p. 9)

Many education scholars have expressed concern over the use of standardized-based assessments with language minority students (Darling-Hammond, 2000; 2007; Kerper Mora, 2002; Tsang, Katz, & Stack, 2008). Along with historical misuses of these assessments, there are many present apprehensions about the validity and accuracy of testing outcomes. An ongoing debate ensues regarding the validity of standardized tests with regard to language proficiency (Mahon, 2006; Sireci, Han, & Wells, 2008). Researchers use the concept of construct irrelevant variance (Mahon, 2006) to describe the degree in which outside factors affect test scores, and language proficiency could certainly be a factor for those concerned with this variance. According to Sireci et al (2008), all tests measure language proficiency whether or not it was part of the focus construct or not. These authors believe that proficiency in the language of assessment can interfere with the accuracy and validity of assessment. In addition, these scores may not be comparable to the scores of monolingual English-speaking students. Research at the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) concluded that the language demands of tests negatively influence accurate measurement of the scores of language minority students because of the language proficiency factors (Abedi & Dietel, 2004). In the *Standards for Excellence and Psychological Testing* (AERA et al, 1999) handbook it was stated,

Any test that employs language is, in part, a measure of their language skills...This is of particular concern for test takers whose first language is not the language of the test...In such instances, test results may not reflect accurately the qualities and competencies intended to be measured. (p. 91)

Other research studies demonstrate the demands placed on students whose language is one other than English. Bailey (2006) presents evidence of language demands on students at the lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels when taking standardized tests. Through test item analysis she identifies many levels of difficulty for the learner. There are uncommon word meanings, complex sentence constructions, and demands on connecting new information to previous knowledge. In a related study, Abedi, Leon, and Mirochi (2000) concluded that as language demands of a test occurred, the achievement gap between English language learners and English speakers increased.

Researchers interested in analyzing the correspondence between language proficiency assessments and achievement measures with seventh grade language minority students revealed a significant disconnect (Stevens, Butler, & Castellon-Wellington, 2000). They found that the “competence performance” on a commonly used proficiency test did not provide sufficient evidence for determining whether or not a student can handle the language level in the content of the achievement tests.

Tsang et al. (2008) examined the question of when it would be appropriate to administer standardized content area tests in English to language minority students. The researchers used the mandated state test, SAT/9, in a San Francisco school district that included 18, 624 language minority students. The students in second through eleventh grade were monitored. The results indicate that it took five to six years of instruction for the students to overcome the language demands of the mathematics word problems. This conclusion is significant when it is mandated that standardized tests be linked to high stakes consequences. In addition, the

mismatch between the expectation and the reality for language minority students is critical when proficient test scores are a requirement for advancement or graduation (Tsang et al 2008).

*Accommodations.*

Accommodations are often given to language minority students as a way to provide a more accurate and equitable measurement. This test administration practice presents researchers with additional questions about test validity. When accommodations are administered, it is hypothesized that changes are made to the intended construct to be measured (Sireci et al 2008). In addition, it is posited that perhaps English language learners receive an unfair advantage and their scores can no longer be compared to the scores of the standard version. The discussion turns to whether or not the original or the accommodated scores are the more accurate. Kopriva, Emick, Hipolito-Delgado, & Cameron (2007) looked at whether or not students are appropriately assigned to test accommodations. The researchers looked at a sample of 272 third and fourth grade students in a South Carolina school district. The authors concluded that the accommodations specifically targeted to the particular needs of the students receiving them were significantly more efficacious for English language learners. Little difference was reported for students receiving incomplete or no accommodations. Studies such as this emphasize the need for a systematic approach to providing accommodations to learners developing proficiency in the English language.

In a related study, Sireci et al (2008) investigated experimental designs to measure the impact of test accommodations on ELL and non-ELL students. The

researchers believe that when the results of these types of studies show that non-ELL students do not benefit from the accommodations, but ELLs do. They are confident that the accommodation does not provide an unfair advantage to language minority students. Menken (2008), however, believes that accommodations on tests that are originally attended for monolingual students are not “leveling the playing field” (p. 84). She believes that instead, accommodations have only developed a new set of “policy and psychometric challenges, and have failed to make scores attained by an English language learner truly comparable to a score attained by a native English speaker” (p. 84). The reasons for this unattainable aim are the disparity and inconsistencies regarding different state accommodations and the variance in how accommodations are carried out. Abedi and Lord (2001) conducted a study with 1,174 eighth graders participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math exam. They found that linguistic modifications on the test made significant differences in exam scores. Other studies have shown that common accommodations such as providing additional time, using dictionary resources, and decreasing language complexity increases the scores for all students, so it is not necessarily a remedy for closing the achievement gap and equalizing the testing circumstances (Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord, 2004).

*Scientifically based research.*

In addition to the focus on adequate progress and subgroup performance monitoring, Title III contains the provision that any education program must be based on scientifically based research. According to Johnson (2009) the phrase *scientifically based research* appears in the NCLB document 119 times. With regard

to English language learners, Title III as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) states,

The purposes of [Part A of title III] are to...provide State agencies and local agencies with the flexibility to implement language instructional educational programs, based on scientifically-based research on teaching limited English proficient children, that the agencies believe to be the most effective for teaching English. (Title III, Part A, Sec. 3102,9)

NCLB policy leaves it up to the states to determine specific educational programming for English language learners, and as long as the programs are research-based, they will receive Title III funds. The U. S. Department of Education provides minimal guidance for districts as to what counts as scientifically based research and what programs support this research. Johnson (2009) states, “Not only does federal policy discourse offer no clear answers, but also federal policy texts, like Title III, can be confusing since they necessarily contain multiple voices and are an intertextual mixture of new and old policy language. Of the multiple authors of Title III, whose intentions carry the most power?” (p. 79).

A contentious debate ensues over what constitutes practices based on scientifically founded research. The field of literacy instruction has experienced a profound lean towards scientifically based ideology in the circumstances surrounding the National Reading Panel (NRP) report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000) and the influences this report has had on data-driven policies included in education reform over the last decade (Pandya, 2011). Before moving to Part Two of this literature review, it is essential

to this study to review and examine the effect that a U.S. Congress-sanctioned reading panel has had on the decision-making process regarding literacy in our nation's public schools. Although the NRP report is not a specific component of the NCLB legislation, the two have somehow merged in the data-driven implementation and fund-granting stipulations that surround mandated top-down education reform.

***Literacy report influences on education reform.***

In December of 2000, the National Reading Panel (NRP) report was released to the public (NICHHD, 2000). It has continued for over a decade to have a significant impact on literacy practices in U.S. schools.

*The historical background of the National Reading Panel report.*

Over 25 years ago, the National Academy of Education, the National Institute of Education, and the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois published a highly influential book titled *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading* (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). The intent of this publication was to offer a synthesis of scientific information regarding the reading process and effective literacy practices (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2007). In order to accomplish this, the authors integrated studies on human cognition in the psychology of language, linguistics, child development, and behavioral sciences to offer an interpretation of children's experiences with written language (Anderson et al. 1985). The conclusion of this report centers on four key elements of highly effective reading instruction that suggest

- (a)improving reading instruction in the United States is not possible without good teachers; b) teacher education programs and professional

development need improvement; c) schools should make special provision to ease the induction of newcomers into the program; and d) the ethos of the school should promote literacy. (p. 121)

Notably, the *Becoming a Nation of Readers* report came on the heels of the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*, which focused national attention on the challenges and problems connected to the process and outcomes of public education (Knight & Stallings, 1995). *A Nation at Risk* was a result of the decision of then Secretary of State T. H. Bell to create the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) as a way to investigate the quality of education in the U.S. The commission's task was to develop a report regarding American education within 18 months of their first meeting. Research was sought and public hearings were held to gather information. The NCEE concluded that "declines in educational performance are in large part the result of disturbing inadequacies in the way the educational process itself is often conducted" (1983, p. 11). The overarching thesis of *A Nation at Risk* report was that the downward trajectory of student performance in the U.S. had resulted in an education system that was threatening the nation's technological, military, and economic position in the world. Furthermore, it was asserted that "only by elevating educational achievement could the United States avoid subordinating itself to its educational superiors and economic competitors" (Guthrie & Springer, 2004, p. 8). Thus began an accelerated conversation on student outcomes and an intense examination of testing, with specific attention on those students with low performance. Guthrie and Springer (2004) believe that it was the *A Nation at Risk* report that led to a more fervent investigation of those students at

the bottom of the achievement distribution. These authors also suggest that it is this prominent report that has led to the federalization of education policy, standardized testing, and the belief that all of society's problems can/should be solved through schools.

The influential quality of both the *Becoming a Nation of Readers* and *A Nation at Risk* publications set the stage for decades to come. Thus began a highly charged era filled with research and debate in response to the real and perceived inadequacies of public education and how literacy education should be reformed (Blair et al. 2007).

Perhaps the most instrumental occurrence to literacy practices in recent times is the findings of the National Reading Panel Report (NRP) of December 2000 (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). This significant effort began in 1997, when the U. S. Congress sanctioned the creation of a National Reading Panel. The purpose of this panel was to “assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read” (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000, p. 1). The panel was also given the task of proposing a plan for future research regarding early reading development and instruction. The panel consisted of 14 individuals that represented leading reading research scientists, college of education representatives, reading teachers, educational administrators, and parents.

The delegates used the work of the National Reading Council (NRC) Committee (Snow, Burns, & Griffiths, 1998) as a point from which to begin their

investigation. The NRC work is a compilation of research surrounding the topics of reading acquisition, social foundations of reading, the essence of reading difficulties, and the efficacy of various instructional practices and methods (Pearson, 1999). According to the National Reading Panel report (NICHD, 2000), the NRC did not specifically undertake the “how” in meeting the needs of students with differing abilities. With that in mind, it became the objective of the NRP to address “comprehensive, formal, evidence-based analysis of the experimental and quasi-experimental research literature relevant to a set of selected topics judged to be of central importance of teaching children to read” (p. 1).

The panel established a set of five key components that were suggested for implementation in reading instruction across the nation. These components included the literacy elements of phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (August & Shanahan, 2006; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). The findings of the NRP have been summarized in a document titled *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read* (Ambruster & Osborn, 2001). The purpose of this publication was to outline how to teach each of the five literacy elements identified by the NRP report. Federal funding was disbursed to many schools that implemented *Reading First*. These grant monies were allocated for specific programming that incorporated the findings of the Report of the National Reading Panel (Freeman & Freeman, 2006).

*The National Reading Panel report: A critical look.*

Even though the NRP report has carried significant weight regarding how the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (2004) has been implemented in classrooms, some researchers (Camilli, Vargas, & Yurecko, 2003; Freeman & Freeman, 2006; Garan, 2004; Goodman, 2006) have critiqued the design and implementation of the report for several reasons. Some of the primary reasons include (a) the narrowing of the body of research used by limiting their review to research in peer-reviewed journals that only reported experimental or quasi-experimental analyses, (b) the exclusion of elementary reading teachers on the panel of members, (c) the conclusions and recommendations of the NRP report do not accurately reflect literacy research, and (d) the decision of the NRP to not include scientific research related to the development of literacy for those students who are second language learners.

*The use of experimental research.*

The decision to only use experimental research is questioned by many scholars (Allington, 2006; Garan, 2004; Gee, 2001; Goodman, 2006). Klingner, Sorrels, and Barrera (2007) concede that quasi-experimental and experimental designs offer data that aid in understanding effective instructional approaches in general; however, qualitative methods are more appropriate for answering the “how” to design and implement practices effectively. In addition, reading is a highly social activity that is strongly dependent on the teacher-student relationship; quantitative approaches do not capture this influential aspect of reading development as qualitative studies have the propensity of doing. “Looking at these

five components separately obscures the interactions among them and ignores the psychological and social factors that influence readers” (Freeman & Freeman, 2006, p. 35). Gee (2001) asks for a broadening of perspectives on what is considered empirical evidence, and he seeks evidence that is “relevant to complex issues that integrally involve culture, social interaction, institutions, and cognition” (p. 126).

A word about experimental research is essential here. An experimental study requires that students are randomly assigned to experimental and control groups, and a quasi-experimental study uses preexisting groups in conditions for which statistical controls are utilized to account for differing group characteristics (August & Shanahan, 2008). By restricting the NRP studies to experimental only, it appears that this approach has narrowed the scope of effective literacy research. The primary reason resides in the notion that withholding treatments that have a strong possibility of enhancing student outcomes have profound ethical issues (Garan, 2004). For example, Allington (in Garan, 2004) points out that researchers would be hard-pressed to find effective educational professionals that would allow the withholding of reading opportunities as a way to conclude whether increased reading opportunities are good for students.

*Exclusion of elementary reading teachers.*

Originally, it was requested from Congress that “leading scientists in reading research, representatives of colleges of education, reading teachers, educational administrators, and parents be included in the 14-member committee of the NRP” (NICHD, 2000). According to Freeman and Freeman (2006), the NRP did not include any elementary reading teachers, and many of the panel members were

from a field outside of reading, or education for that matter. Garan (2004) reports that of the 14 members, there was a certified public accountant, a physicist, and several behavioral psychologists yet the panel was deficient of any representatives from the elementary classroom teacher realm.

*The NRP report and the reading research community.*

Goodman (2006) refers to the NRP report as prominent “architecture” (p. vii) for NCLB mandates, and he believes that the “big five” (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), as a result of the NRP report, have influenced all school curricula in monumental ways. The concern is that schools are excluding important curricular elements such as opportunity to learn, oral language development on reading, the impact of writing on reading, and text discussions (Goodman, 2006). Klingner et al. (2007) reflect on the importance of some of the explicit instruction promoted in the five elements of instruction by commenting that “the point here is not to diminish the importance of explicit instruction in phonics but to say that this instruction should not be overemphasized at the expense of other aspects of instruction that also are important” (p. 230). Nonetheless, the five NRP components continue to greatly influence all aspects of curricular and political decision making.

Several publications have critiqued the findings of the NRP, stating that it is not a comprehensive and accurate representation of what has been established in reading research (Camilli et al. 2003; Coles, 2000; Garan, 2002; Gee, 1999; Strauss, 2005). There is a strong belief by many researchers that there is insufficient credit given to the sociocultural, historical, and political elements that provide the basis for

the development of individual reading achievement (Escamilla, 2008; Freeman & Freeman, 2006; Haager, Klingner, & Vaughn, 2007).

Camilli et al (2003) conducted an independent reanalysis of the NRP report on phonics. The same studies were used in this meta-analysis. The group of researchers concluded that the statistical measures used in the NRP report overestimated the effects of phonics. They also felt that the panel paid too little attention to the analytical issues of the studies, and as a result an incorrect formula was used (Garan, 2004). When Camilli and his team of researchers reanalyzed the information, they found that the NRP studies actually showed that combining language activities with phonics tripled the effect size of just using phonics alone. A strong critique that Camilli's team had was that the NRP defined reading as "performance on isolated skills, not as the reading of text with comprehension as a necessary outcome" (Garan, 2004, p. 95). Researchers often try to reduce complex processes down into smaller parts as a way to analyze each component. According to Freeman & Freeman (2006) this is counterintuitive to reading, as "complex processes such as reading are often more than the simple sum of their parts" (p. 35).

Garan (2002) also reanalyzed the NRP studies, concluding that many of the findings did not reflect reading research. For example, Garan found a strong support for sustained silent reading that was not reported in the NRP findings. Coles (2000) also found inaccuracies in the NRP report with regard to phonemic awareness. The report claims that phonemic awareness is the primary causal factor in early reading achievement and a significant deficit in reading challenges. In Coles' reanalysis, he reveals that rather than being a causal factor to reading

ability/difficulty, phonemic awareness is an indicator, showing correlation, not causation.

Researcher and linguist Strauss (2005) was interested in challenging the claims of the NRP report on the alphabetic principle. Strauss believes that there has not been significant evidence that supports the alphabetic principle for English and that phonics rules are inconsistent and often inapplicable. Strauss believes there are too many exceptions to the phonetic rules to be able to rely on those rules to acquire reading skills (Freeman & Freeman, 2006).

In addition, there is a strong belief by many researchers that there is insufficient credit (in the NRP report) given to the sociocultural, historical, and political elements that provide the basis for the development of individual reading achievement (Escamilla, 2008; Freeman & Freeman, 2006; Klingner, Sorrels, & Barrera, 2007).

*The decision to exclude second language research.*

The NRP committee members fully disclosed the fact that the research findings were based on results using monolingual English children, and they deferred any transfer of the findings to English language learner instruction to other research efforts. August and Shanahan (2008) commented, "The NRP, given the enormity of the task before it, made a conscious decision not to include the scientific literature available in the development of language and literacy for those students learning to read in English and for whom English was not their first or native language" (p. x).

As a result of the widespread implementation of the findings of the NRP, numerous books and articles have been written on how to adapt the conclusions of the NRP to improve reading instruction for bilingual learners. Moreover, many publishers have worked to revise materials as a response to the demand for resources that meet the characteristics reflected in the influential NRP report. These materials and programs have been implemented, despite the fact that research related to English language learners and NRP results is inconclusive, insufficient, and lacking (Escamilla, 2008).

Shortly after the release of the NRP report, the Institute for Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education formed the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth. The responsibility of this panel was to “identify, assess, and synthesize research on the education of language-minority children and youth with respect to their attainment of literacy, and to produce a comprehensive report evaluating and synthesizing this literature” (August & Shanahan, 2008, p. 1). In 2006, the *Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth* was released. According to Escamilla (2008), the most significant element of this report was the lack of available scientifically based research on literacy with English language learners (ELLs). There was a dramatic difference between the available research in the NRP report and the studies on literacy practices for ELLs. The NRP report had an inventory of 450 studies, whereas the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth was able to only include 107 research studies.

The panel members included literacy, language learning, research methodology experts, and language-minority researchers. They identified five domains to investigate, and subcommittees were formed as a way to organize the inquiry. The Panel included controlled experiments and quasi-experimental designs, as well as descriptive, ethnographic, and correlation studies where it was deemed appropriate (August & Shanahan, 2008).

One of the findings of the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth stated that the key elements of the NRP report have substantial benefits for language minority students. More significant is the finding that even though there are benefits of the NRP initiative, the literacy findings of the initiatives for language minority students are not sufficient for teaching language learners to read and write proficiently in English. One of the components unique to the language minority panel is the inclusion of the critical element of oral language proficiency—a component often overlooked in English language learner instruction. The report also concludes that (a) oral proficiency and literacy in the first language can be used to facilitate literacy development in English, (b) individual differences contribute significantly to English literacy development (c) most assessments do a poor job of gauging individual strengths and weaknesses, and (d) sociocultural variables and home language experiences can have a positive impact on literacy achievement.

Freeman and Freeman (2006) outline several concerns they have regarding English language learners and the recommendations of the NRP. The first concern is with regard to the phonemic awareness component. Phonemic awareness is

defined by many as “the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds, or phonemes that make up words” (Freeman & Freeman, 2006, p. 33). This can be problematic for students who have a first language other than English. For example, English has approximately 40 phonemes, and Spanish has about 22. Spanish and English phonemes differ in some cases, such as the /*th*/ that exists in English, but not in all dialects of Spanish. Students developing English phonology may not yet have the phonology bank that schools expect they should have. Moreover, instructional practices divide English into onset and rime, whereas Spanish instruction focuses on the rime of syllables. This structural difference is critical as students are developing literacy skills in a second language. Critics also point out that phonemic awareness tests often include English nonsense words that present a problem for students who do not understand if a word is meaningful or not. Freeman and Freeman (2006) point out that the time spent on nonsense word exercises could be better utilized with language acquisition practices.

A second concern of Freeman and Freeman is the status that phonics instruction is given in literacy instruction. They suggest that English language learners may have difficulty with phonics rules because of the mismatch between the conventional pronunciation and the articulation of the student. The different phonological systems between languages can cause students confusion. For example, Spanish-speaking students may be challenged when trying to discriminate between the English long and short vowel sounds, because of the differences between the languages and the unfamiliarity of the English vowel sounds to the Spanish language.

The final concern that Freeman and Freeman (2006) report is regarding to the emphasis on fluency in literacy instruction. Fluency assessment concerns are not unique to English language learners, as many researchers are concerned with fluency measures representing the speed and accuracy at which a student can read (Goodman, 2006). The concern is based on a focus on speed rather than meaning acquisition. The concern that Freeman and Freeman have is that language learners may have challenges with pronunciation, which affect fluency scores that in turn, result in a perception of low reading abilities.

Uribe and Nathenson-Mejia (2008), in their work on literacy essentials for English language learners, accept the identification of the five components of literacy instruction as recommended by the NRP; however, they offer that emphasis and order of importance of each of these elements needs to be perceived differently for English language learners. One of the primary points that Uribe and Nathenson-Mejia contest is their belief that comprehension should be at “the core of the pedagogy of literacy instruction for ELLs” (p. x) and should be a consideration throughout the reading process. The authors also present the notion of oral language development as the sixth component of literacy instruction for ELLs. They believe that learning to speak English needs to be concurrent with learning to read and write English. In addition, research on bilingual learners has established the importance of home language instruction and working from a strength-based approach (Collier & Thomas, 1992; Crawford & Krashen, 2007; Escamilla, 1987; Kerper Mora, 2002; Uribe & Nathenson-Mejia, 2008).

The critiques of the narrow findings of the National Reading Panel have been repeatedly substantiated in the English language learner research over the past decade. The exclusion of research-based studies on bilingual learners in practice and policy, or perhaps the dearth of research in literacy practices for English language learners is support for the necessity of increased inquiry and analysis in the areas of literacy instruction that will best meet the needs of bilingual learners with reading intervention needs.

## **Part Two**

### **Effective Instructional Practices and the English Language Learner**

In preparation for this study, which asks how effective teachers preserve high-quality instructional practices in an era of education reform, it was essential, in Part One, to first gain an understanding of the historical framework that has shaped and continues to influence policy in our current educational systems, and then to critically examine the problematic tenets of educational policy as it affects the schooling of English language learners. To develop a perspective from which to discuss highly effective teachers, Part Two completes a review of the literature with an examination of what has been deemed by the scholarly research as the most effective instructional practices.

Part Two comprises three sections. The first section summarizes what is known from the research as exemplary literacy practices in general. Following that is a compilation of highly regarded literature on effective reading intervention instruction. Finally, Part Two presents a culminating look at the most effective instructional practices for English language learners.

### **Research on exemplary literacy instruction.**

Over the past several decades, the research world has unveiled a dramatic increase in the knowledge and understanding of literacy education. Stanovich (2000), in his review of the progress in reading over 25 years, suggests that everything we have learned about reading is based on scientific evidence over time. Researchers Denton, Vaughn, and Fletcher (2003) concur and add that “what is remarkable about this body of knowledge is that the accumulation is not only vertical, representing an incremental growth in knowledge, but also horizontal, representing the integration of knowledge across domains of inquiry” (p. 201). Current reading research understandings are a compilation of what is known across a variety of disciplines. This foundation of knowledge is critical as we engage in scholarly inquiry about teacher effectiveness in the literacy development process when both language and academics are considered.

With this in mind, it seems appropriate to examine the tenets of the general education environment that set the foundation for all students. Although the goal of this literature review is to uncover scholarly work that will inform this current research on preserving effective instructional practices for English language learners, it is valuable to explore the factors of excellent literacy instruction for all students as a basis for this type of study.

The rationale for presenting factors of general reading instruction in this review of research on English language learners is two-fold. The first reason is that it has been repeatedly found that, in part, effective instruction for teaching monolingual English students has also been found effective for students who are

English language learners (August & Shanahan, 2008; Fitzgerald, 1995 Goldenberg, 2008). The second reason is that an understanding of the mainstream reading instructional practices is essential as most research on the effective practices is based on research conducted with monolingual English students and is very often applied to English language learners (Escamilla, 2008). It stands, then, that these are tenets from which curricular decision making arises and which are implemented in American classrooms. It is the position of this author that a broad understanding is instrumental to the aim of conceptualizing a pedagogical model that will assist teachers in preserving effective practices while negotiating education policy. This section will begin with general statements by the International Reading Association (2000) regarding students' rights for exemplary reading instruction and excellent teachers of reading. From there an exploration of the impact of the teacher with regard to successful literacy outcomes will be discussed.

***International Reading Association statement.***

The International Reading Association (IRA) (2000) developed a position statement honoring students' rights with regard to excellent reading instruction (Table 1). The IRA position statements are created by the association as part of its mission to advocate for excellence in teaching and to influence and participate in the shaping of policies that are critical to the teaching of reading (IRA, 2000).

Table 1: International Reading Association: Honoring Children's Rights (2000)

<p>International Reading Association: Honoring Children's Rights</p> <p>We believe that all children have a right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early reading instruction that meets individual needs</li> <li>• Reading instruction that builds skill and the desire to read increasingly complex materials</li> <li>• Well-prepared teachers who keep their skills up to date</li> <li>• A variety of books and other reading material in their classrooms, and in school and community libraries</li> <li>• Assessment that identifies strengths as well as needs and involves students in making decisions about their own learning</li> <li>• Supplemental instruction from professionals specifically prepared to teach reading</li> <li>• Instruction that involves parents and communities in students' academic lives</li> <li>• Instruction that makes meaningful use of first-language skills</li> <li>• Equal access to instructional technology</li> <li>• Classrooms that optimize learning opportunities</li> </ul> <p>Meeting our obligation to provide excellent reading instruction to every child means that classrooms need to be rethought, sufficient financial investments must be made, and communities must wholeheartedly support school and instructional reform efforts.</p>
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Additionally, the IRA created a statement entitled *Excellent Reading Teachers* (2000). Table 2 illustrates the research-based qualities of excellent teachers that the statement included.

Table 2: International Reading Association: *Excellent Reading Teachers* (2000)

International Reading Association: Excellent Reading Teachers
1. They understand reading and writing development, and believe all children can learn to read and write.
2. They continually assess children's individual progress and relate reading instruction to children's previous experiences.
3. They know a variety of ways to teach reading, when to use each method, and how to combine the methods into an effective instructional program.
4. They offer a variety of materials and texts for children to read.
5. They use flexible grouping strategies to tailor instruction to individual students.
6. They are good reading "coaches" (that is, they provide help strategically).

***Teacher impact on literacy acquisition.***

The profound influence that teachers have on schools began to be noticed in reading research in the 1970s (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Wright, Horn, and Sanders (1997), after analyzing over 100,000 student achievement scores from several hundred schools, concluded the prominent factor affecting student achievement outcomes is the teacher. In addition, they found a wide variety in the effectiveness among teachers. The researchers believe that educational improvement can occur more by improving the effectiveness of teachers than any other single factor. They state,

Effective teachers appear to be effective with students of all achievement levels, regardless of the level of heterogeneity in their classrooms. If the

teacher is ineffective, students under the teacher's tutelage will show inadequate progress academically regardless of how similar or different they are regarding their academic achievement. (p. 63)

It was clear that high quality instruction was paramount to effective general and interventional reading practices in the literature reviewed for this study (Clay, 1985; 2005; Mertzman & Short, 2009; Taylor, Short, Shearer, & Frye, 1995).

Walsmsley and Allington (1995) define high-quality instruction as "that offered by teachers who have expertise in how literacy develops (and what impedes its progress), and in how to facilitate literacy development" (p. 33). The researchers add that expert teachers use their knowledge of literacy education to make decisions about when to intervene and in which direction to move next. In addition, expert teachers use their content knowledge to engage students while developing literacy skills.

Darling-Hammond (1999) demonstrated that the quality of a state's teaching force is a much stronger predictor of how well students will achieve than other factors. She found that teacher quality accounts for up to 60% of the variance in the National Assessment of Educational Progress report. Interestingly, Darling-Hammond found that of the highest achieving states, none had implemented extensive high stakes testing. In contrast, most of the lower achieving states had incorporated these assessments (Allington & Johnston, 2002).

There have been numerous studies of exemplary literacy teaching over the last few decades (Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999; Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, &

Rodriguez, 2003; Wharton-McDonald, 1996). The conclusions of this research highlight the importance of exemplary classroom literacy instruction as a critical foundation in meeting the needs of children who engaged in literacy development, especially those students who have reading challenges.

In their study on first grade exemplary teachers, Pressley et al. (2001) found that in the classrooms of highly effective teachers the number of struggling readers at the end of first grade was dramatically less than in classrooms not identified as exemplary. These researchers planned their multiple case study by first asking reading supervisors to nominate effective educators in their districts. The request yielded a total of 34 teacher participants who completed the study. Each of the teachers was asked to document 10 instructional practices that were essential to successful literacy instruction. Over 300 practices were reported, and this data was used for to develop subsequent questions on the specifics of instruction. For each case, a number of observations were made over an extended period of time. Pressley et al. (2001) concluded that teachers become excellent through experience. They believe that “the development of such expertise takes a great deal of time and actual immersion in the practice of the profession” (p. 220). It is this experience that develops knowledge regarding matching students to appropriate tasks and developing abilities to teach and monitor student skill development. In addition, the authors conclude that teachers become excellent by learning to (a) immerse students into fine literature, (b) create self-regulation skills in these students, (c) disseminate what students need to know, and (d) encompass a balanced view of beginning literacy instruction.

Allington and Johnston (2002) conducted a 2-year study of 30 fourth grade students in a qualitative case study that described exemplary fourth grade teaching. In a review of this research, Pressley (2002) succinctly summarizes the exemplary fourth grade teachers in the Allington and Johnston study (2002) as

caring, enthusiastic, and confident that they can teach children to read.

They create classrooms that are language-rich, with much discussion about reading and writing between teacher and children as well as between children. They use a variety of curriculum materials, with students reading many different genres. Although they plan their instruction well, they also take advantage of teachable moments by providing many apt mini-lessons in response to student needs throughout the day. Rather than worry about how their students will perform on standardized tests, they focus on their efforts and areas of improvement. They are keenly aware that their students all have unique developmental trajectories, and they are determined to foster the development of each and every student in their care. Successful fourth grade teachers are models of literacy who demonstrate by their actions that reading and writing are important. (p. xiii)

These large-scale studies have been replicated over the years (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Pressley et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 2003) and have repeatedly underscored the powerful impact exemplary teachers have on the reading development of children. Allington and Baker (2007) discuss concerns over the need for funding that supports the development of exemplary literacy instruction in classrooms. Their query surrounds the knowledge that funding that is supported by

the legislation of No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act does not always provide for classroom materials, leveled resources, and professional development opportunities for general education teachers. Extra personnel are often added to classrooms in the roles of school psychologists, speech therapists, learning disabilities teachers, reading teachers, and paraprofessionals. Although Allington & Baker acknowledge these specialized personnel as important to the reading and intervention process, their concerns lie in the observation that general education teachers are becoming more removed from the process. The researchers comment, "One unintended effect of federal education programs targeted as improving the education of struggling learners may be a reduced professional responsibility that many general education teachers have for the reading instruction and outcomes of struggling readers..." (p. 85). They believe that exemplary, expert reading needs to happen throughout the entire day. This means that students will have opportunities to read in all subjects as individual needs are being met.

In 1999, the International Reading Association (IRA) published a statement entitled *Using Multiple Methods of Beginning Reading Instruction*. In this publication the IRA reiterated what many researchers have concluded by stating there is no one single method or combination of methods that work for all children with regard to successful literacy development. It is because of this notion that the IRA statement suggests that teachers "must have a strong knowledge of multiple methods for teaching reading and a strong knowledge of the children in their care so they can create the appropriate balance of methods needed for the children they teach."

Morrow and Tracey (1997) describe this comprehensive balanced approach as one that requires teachers to have the knowledge to be able to offer skills-based explicit instruction for those students who need it and to provide more problem-solving strategies for others. A balanced perspective model is one in which the teacher uses strategies from various learning theories to provide a balance to classroom instruction. This model allows the teacher to effectively instruct students in both the mechanics and the meaning-making aspects of literacy learning (Morrow & Tracey, 2007).

Teacher professional development is also critical to student success. Many research studies reveal that teachers who engage in professional development activities tend to implement explicit instructional strategies more than those teachers who did not participate. A group of scholars, led by McCutchen (2002), concluded that kindergarten and first grade teachers who engaged in professional development workshops were more likely to implement specific instructional practices, which were connected to higher academic achievement.

In their work with tier-two interventions in urban schools through the Promoting Literacy in Urban Schools (PLUS) project, Haager and Mahdavi (2007) explored different supports needed for successful outcomes. In their study, they included 25 hours of initial professional development for the teachers. They found that professional development was most supportive if it had a focus specifically on the components of the intervention model. In addition, it was important that the professional development had adequate depth from which to build knowledge and skills and that teachers need time to practice the principles learned. The

researchers also emphasized the importance of administrators attending the sessions as a way to increase support at the schools.

Research in the area of teacher efficacy and effectiveness is plentiful. Scholars have repeatedly found that effective teachers link schooling to students' lived experiences, use higher level thinking approaches, differentiate instruction, diagnose difficulties, and provide a vast array of learning opportunities that match individual needs (Pressley, 2002; Allington, 2009). Ehri, Dreyer, Flugman, & Gross (2007) conducted an analysis on the difference between teacher implementation and paraprofessional implementation of a Reading Rescue program. The researchers found that the teachers were more effective than the paraprofessionals at connecting struggling readers to appropriate texts. The study also indicated that paraprofessionals required more sessions to achieve equivalent gains.

Another study conducted by Mendro, Jordan, Gomez, Anderson, and Bembry (1998) looked at the effects on reading development during three consecutive years of exemplary teaching. The researchers compared exemplary classrooms to those that were not considered such. Findings demonstrated that the students who began at similar achievement levels in the two groups had a difference of almost 40 percentile ranks at the end of 3 years.

Studies that were interested in the effects of culture on literacy development also inform the research base on effective teachers. Au (1998) conducted a study on beginning reading instruction that works effectively with Hawaiian children. In effective classrooms it was observed that there was an attention to letter- and word-level development, as well as higher-order literacy competencies. Au also observed

extensive guided reading, frequent writing experiences, and many opportunities for the discussion of literature pieces.

Other researchers have concluded that effective literacy instruction with minority students should be “highly meaningful, focusing more on comprehension, composition, and immersion in important cultural and world knowledge” (Pressley et al. 2001). Examples of this work are the studies conducted by Moll (1992; 1998) in the teaching of Hispanic students and the work of Ladson-Billings (1994) regarding teacher success with African American students. Both of these researchers conclude that effective teachers connect classroom learning to the cultures and communities of their students.

The notion of meaning-based instruction is connected with many other research studies on effective teaching (Ruddell, 1997; Knapp & Associates, 1995). Knapp and Associates (1995) conducted a study on 140 elementary classrooms over a 1-year period of time. They concluded that the meaning-centered teaching (i.e. emphasizing comprehension and writing composition) yielded higher achievement that moved beyond letter- and word-level skills.

The issues surrounding effective teachers involve evaluating preservice teacher education programs, professional development plans, individual teacher ideology, leadership support, and shared systemic visions for successful literacy outcomes. Allington (2009) summarizes expert reading teachers as those who are effective wherever they teach, seem to improve their performances every year, and see themselves as responsible for the reading improvement of every child in their charge.

### **Reading intervention research.**

Many students do well with the acquisition of reading (Clay, 2005), but the number of children failing to achieve proficiency is far too great. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)(2009) reports that with a nationally representative sample of 178,000 fourth graders participating in measures of literary and informational comprehension assessments, only one-third performed at or above proficient level. According to Greenwood, Kamps, Terry and Linebarger (2007), the prevalence of significant reading disability in children is 17% to 20%, or one in five children. In addition, these researchers report that more than 33% (one in three) have difficulties learning to read. These types of statistics are the impetus for educators, researchers, and policy makers to take a critical look at what is being offered to children who are of low achieving status and in need of reading intervention programming, as difficulty in reading not only places students at risk with regard to school success, but for “personal, social, and civic well being as well” (Chall & Curtis, 2003, p. 412).

Children who have difficulty learning to read most often live in central cities, attend urban schools, live in families of lower socioeconomic status, and are part of a minority ethnic/linguistic group (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Students with low performance on fourth grade reading assessments are represented by African American children over White or Asian students. They are also more likely to be eligible for free lunch and live in central urban areas rather than in the outer urban-fringe, suburban, or rural areas (NAEP, 2009). The NAEP studies consistently

demonstrate the large gap between the achievement of lower socioeconomic urban students and those of their more advantaged peers (Chall & Curtis, 2003).

In addition, struggling readers from minority ethnic and language groups, such as African Americans and Hispanics, are often misrepresented in special education (Linan-Thompson, Cirino, & Vaughn, 2007; Rueda & Windmueller, 2006) and gifted and talented programs (Ferguson, Kozleski, & Smith, 2003). Denton, Vaughn, and Fletcher (2003) report that the number of students identified with a learning disability represent over half of the 6.2 million learners in special education. The President's Commission On Excellence in Special Education (U.S. Department of Education & Diskey Associates, 2002) conjectured that two out of five students in special education classes were present because of reading challenges. Mathes and Denton (2002) surmise that many students representative in special education classes have not received adequate learning experiences. There is concern from some researchers that special education environments stabilize, rather than accelerate, the reading development of students with reading struggles (Torgeson, Rashotte, Alexander, Alexander, & MacPhee, 2003). Blachman, Schatschneider, and Fletcher (2003) documented a case in which one group of students received traditional special education instead of an intervention being considered. The scores of the traditional group of students declined over the 2 years of the study period, illustrating the near impossible conditions for which to close achievement gaps.

Researchers have demonstrated the overrepresentation in special education classes specifically related to learning disabilities and speech and language services

(Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2001; Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003). Gándara et al. (2003) found that English language learners with low proficiency in both their home and English languages were one and a half times more likely to have a learning disability or speech disability identification. Students at the secondary level were twice as likely to be identified. Many educators have difficulty distinguishing between English academic challenges due to language acquisition and those due to a learning disability (Ortiz, 2001; Yates & Ortiz, 1998).

The scholarly questions being asked surround the notion of intervention practices that move students outside of the realm of special education. Torgeson et al. (2003) conducted a study on students in grades 3-5 who were identified as having severe reading difficulties. The students received one-to-one instruction daily for a total of 67.5 hours of instruction per child. Forty percent of the students who were tutored with the intense interventions were able to return full-time to the general education classroom in the year following the intervention, and the students were no longer in need of the special education programming.

Although the research literature on reading interventions is expansive and far beyond the capacity of this review of scholarly work, certain aspects of teacher practices have been repeatedly proven to improve outcomes for all students at-risk for reading difficulties. The research reviewed for this study revealed specific teacher understandings necessary for the effective implementation of reading intervention practices. These understandings include (a) preventive literacy instruction, (b) early identification, (c) early intervention, and (d) matching instruction to student need. These intervention understandings will be presented

here through the lens of the education of the English language learner, especially highlighting areas that are problematic.

***Prevention approach to literacy instruction.***

Engaging in the conversation regarding struggling readers and intervention processes requires a knowledge foundation focused on what has been deemed the essential elements of reading curriculum in a general education setting. Harn, Kame'enui, and Simmons (2007) present this first-line-of-defense as *primary prevention*. These researchers describe the focus of this strategy as “instructional practices that minimize the number of children requiring more intensive interventions by implementing scientifically based practices in the classroom that will decrease the likelihood of students developing reading difficulties” (p. 163). Clay (2005) believes that many literacy difficulties are born out of the ways that education is delivered to students with particular needs, and individual students will respond to formal instruction with varying degrees of ease or difficulty. She states, “A preventive intervention in literacy learning must consequently address the extremes of variability that could affect any child learning to read or write” (p. 4). Clay offers three steps to preventive literacy instruction that will nurture a “normal trajectory of progress in literacy learning” (p. 5). These steps include (a) having good preschool experiences available to all children, (b) providing a good curriculum for literacy learning in the early years of school taught by well-trained teachers, and (c) offering access to an early intervention for the lowest-achieving 20% -25% of a particular age group.

Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) dedicated an entire book to the issues of effective reading instruction. *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* emphasizes that primary prevention involves decreasing the number of “new cases (incidences) of an identified condition or problem in the population, such as ensuring that all children attend schools in which instruction is coherent and competent” (p. 16). They summarize their work by proposing elements of adequate initial reading instruction, as well as elements of adequate progress in learning to read once the initial level is acquired (Table 3).

Table 3: Requirements for Adequate Reading Progress (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 3-4)

<p>Adequate Initial Reading</p> <p>Adequate initial reading instruction requires that children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use reading to obtain meaning from print.</li> <li>• Have frequent and intensive opportunity to read.</li> <li>• Are exposed to frequent, regular spell-sound relationships.</li> <li>• Learn about the nature of the alphabetic writing system.</li> <li>• Understand the structure of spoken words.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Adequate Progress Beyond Initial Level</p> <p>Adequate progress in learning to read English (or any alphabetic language) beyond the initial level depends on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a working understanding of how sounds are represented alphabetically.</li> <li>• Sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different kinds of texts.</li> <li>• Sufficient background knowledge and vocabulary to render written texts meaningful and interesting.</li> <li>• Control over procedures for monitoring comprehension and repairing misunderstandings.</li> <li>• Continued interest and motivation to read for a variety of purposes.</li> </ul>
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The researchers emphasize that learning to read is multifaceted and that none of the recommended prerequisites can exist alone. This prominent work is in concurrence with others (Allington, 2006; Pearson, 2004) who promote the notion that there is not one method or program that works best for all.

Although many of the tenets of prevention with regard to low reading achievement apply to all learners (Goldenberg, 2008), it is important to make the distinction between preventing failure with regard to educational policy and standardized assessments and preventing failure with regard to appropriately educating students with diverse needs. The discussion on prevention becomes muddled as the focus narrows to English language learners. Preventive intervention measures in the context of this study, refers to those effective practices teachers employ that decrease the risk students have with learning and life outcomes. Preventive educational measures will be discussed in the final literature review section, as those specific practices are essential to the successful literacy education of English language learners.

***Early identification.***

Research overwhelmingly supports early identification as a critical component of successful reading intervention programs (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Clay, 2005; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). It has been demonstrated repeatedly that students who have reading challenges at the end of first grade are likely to have reading struggles by the time they finish their elementary school experience (Juel, 1988; Morris, Shaw, & Perney, 1990; Francis, Shaywitz, Steubing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996).

Juel (1988) conducted a commonly cited research study in which she examined the development of literacy skills in children from first to fourth grade. The inquiry began with 129 students from a diverse elementary school with a large percentage of students coming from families with a low socioeconomic status. The

student participants were 26% Anglo, 31% Black, and 43% Hispanic. By the end of fourth grade, there were 54 students remaining in the study, which can be explained by the transient nature of the population of the school. Juel found that at the end of first grade, there were 29 students in the bottom quartile of the assessed reading development. At the end of fourth grade, 24 of those students had remained in the study, and all but three were still considered poor readers by the end of fourth grade. The probability that a student would remain a struggling reader at the end of fourth grade if they were identified as a low reader in first grade was found to be .88. In contrast, the probability that a child that was reading at or above level in first grade would become a low reader at the end of fourth grade was .12.

Evidence of the importance of early identification also comes from special education research regarding identification. The office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (2001, in Vaughn, Wanzek, Woodruff, & Linan-Thompson, 2007) reported that 60% of students are identified too late to fully benefit from additional services. Vaughn et al (2007) suggest that the issue of reading difficulties “serves as an early warning signal for risk that if not heeded may lead to further problems and referral and placement in special education” (p. 12). In addition, early and periodic universal screening offers a method that can reduce the likelihood of false positive and false negative identification. In a process that screens all children regularly, those students who are achieving below expected levels become candidates for intervention services. From there, appropriate decisions can be made about students’ response to instruction and possible special education placement.

The challenge for English language learners is that often the early identification of at-risk reading needs are oriented from a deficit perspective (Valencia, 1997). It has been shown that English language learners are less likely than their dominant culture peers to enroll in early childhood programs, quite possibly as a result of a language-as-a-problem (Ruiz, 1984) perspective that many preschool programs inherently possess. García and González (2006) suggest that the best form of early childhood education for English language learners is the kind that builds on the linguistic and culturally strengths of the child. The challenge, however, is that these types of programs are quite rare. Instead, young students are entering programs that often assess academic potential based on evaluations of language proficiency (Menken, 2008). Preschoolers and kindergarteners that score low on tests are often identified as at-risk based on problematic tenets of testing, rather than given an opportunity to flourish in an effective educational setting based on the students' cultural and linguistic needs. Thus, a school career of remediation, low-level tracking, and possible special education programming begins.

***Early intervention.***

Scholarly research overwhelmingly supports early intervention as a primary tenet of successful reading development (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Clay, 2005; Neal & Kelly, 1999) The notion of using intervention methods to set the climate for students to catch up to their peers is a concept that was first widely introduced by Marie Clay. Clay, a clinical child psychologist, developed Reading Recovery in New Zealand in the mid-1970s, which was implemented in the United States in 1984. This program has a short-term reading intervention design with the intention of

reducing first grade reading failure (Lyons & Beaver, 1995). Clay (2005) comments that recovering a normal trajectory of progress in literacy is much like what speech therapist have done for years as they provide individual instruction to preschoolers. Notably these services begin as soon as there is evidence that the child is experiencing difficulty.

Reading Recovery has impressive standing in the attention to early reading development (What Works Clearinghouse, 2011). One of the primary tenets of Reading Recovery is the highly acclaimed teacher training that is embedded in the process. The intense year-long training provides teachers with the expertise needed to work with low-achieving readers. Teachers gain skills that move students to becoming confident readers and writers. They learn to create daily 30-minute individualized lessons that are based on the student's previous day's performance. Reading Recovery is an early intervention process that is intended to accelerate the reading acquisition for students falling into the lowest 20% of students who have already experienced a kindergarten year. This acceleration "depends upon how well the teacher selects the clearest, easiest, most memorable examples with which to establish a new response, skill, principle, or procedure" (Clay, 2005, p. 23). According to Clay (2005), two hypotheses guide the design. The first surrounds the practice of observing the student in a very detailed manner, so that lessons can center on the child's strengths, as well as areas of need. The second is the notion of reciprocity with regard to reading and writing. Other tenets such as (a) short lessons held often, (b) continuous text, (c) balance of familiar and new, and d)

developing a system of monitoring progress are all part of the well-known successes of Reading Recovery intervention efforts.

Researchers conducting longitudinal studies on the effects of Reading Recovery conclude that it reduces the number of retentions, avoids special education misidentification, and reduce the number of students in long-term remedial reading situations (Lyons & Beaver, 1995). Two major limitations have been noted. Many school districts believe that Reading Recovery is an expensive approach because of the one-to-one ratio during instruction and the cost of training teachers. Others believe that this is not the case if comparisons to other programs are looked at closely (Allington, 2009; Lyons & Beaver, 1995).

Many other intense early reading efforts were created with the foundations introduced by Clay (1985). Early Intervention in Reading (EIR) was also developed for the low-achieving first grade reader. This program shares many of the Reading Recovery elements such as early screening through observation, phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, daily writing, and repeated readings. The way this program differs is that the children with intervention needs are worked with in a small group within the classroom environment. In addition, teacher training involves a handful of half-day trainings that are held throughout a school year.

Study results regarding the effectiveness of EIR have not been as dramatic as those reported by Reading Recovery, because of the more modest intensity and the small group ethos. They have been favorable, however. Taylor et al. (1995) in a report of three school districts that implemented EIR, stated that this intervention is an effective supplement to a reading program. Over the three districts, 30% - 50%

more children who received the EIR practices were reading by the end of first grade compared to children who did not receive the supplemental services. The researchers concluded, “teachers can make an important difference in the reading ability of their lowest-achieving readers by providing daily small group, quality supplemental reading instruction” (p. 162).

Other successful early reading programs continue to confirm the positive outcomes of intervention implementation in grade one. Early Reading Empowerment (ERE) is a program developed by Mary Jett in the early 1990s (Mertzman & Short, 2009). The ERE program teaches a framework based on the development of and investment in expert reading teachers who have the capacity for decision making based on current reading research. Teachers are required to complete a two-semester, six credit course. The concepts of Reading Recovery are shared; however, student needs can be met through both small group and one-on-one instruction. Early Reading Empowerment appears suited to the current policy and educational issues affecting districts, as the program offers the option of “taking on different models from small group to one-on-one, from push-in to pull-out, as districts needed” (Mertzman & Short, 2009, p. 43). The most outstanding aspect, however, is the notion of capacity building of expert teachers. Researchers Mertzman and Short (2009) conducted a study that explored the factors necessary for a successful program based on the decision-making processes of expert teachers. The researchers concluded that program leadership and ongoing professional development at all levels provide strength in programming and consistency in instruction.

Another program that has repeatedly appeared in research reviewed here is the Success for All (SFA) intervention program. Success for All is a school-wide reform model that incorporates reading, writing, and oral language. Students are grouped by ability level and instruction is given through scripted methods. This approach shares the characteristic of early intervention; however the decision-making properties are quite different. Research results are mixed, as SFA has shown positive effects for alphabets, but mixed effects in the area of comprehension (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007). Allington (2006) reports that sets of studies demonstrate that SFA produces statistically significant achievement effects when compared to control schools. Others claim, however, that although it appears that higher achievement levels are documented, the margins of improvement are minimal (Venezky, 1998).

There have been limited attempts to disaggregate the impact of Reading Recovery on the performance outcomes for English language learners (Ashdown & Simic, 2000). Neal and Kelly (1999) conducted a study on the reading and writing outcomes of English language learners who participated in both Reading Recovery English programming and the Spanish version entitled Descubriendo La Lectura. The researchers concluded that both populations of students increased achievement and reached adequate levels of classroom literacy performance.

Ashdown and Simic (2000) in their work evaluating the effectiveness of Reading Recovery with English language learners asked the question whether or not this program narrowed the gap in reading achievement between monolingual English speakers and those students who are acquiring English as a second

language. The study was conducted over 6 years in the time period 1992-1998. The participants of the study included 55,875 students. The students were categorized by language proficiency tests as native English speakers (n=45,303), fluent non-native speakers (n=6,388), and non-native speakers with limited English proficiency (n=3,540). The researchers concluded that both native English speakers and English language learners are equally likely to be successful and to complete the program. Interestingly, the fluent non-English-speaking students were slightly more likely to be successful than the native English speakers. This coincides with the findings of other research (Collier, 1989) that suggests bilingual learners outperform monolingual English learners on certain academic tasks due to the cognitive development in two languages.

Ashdown and Simic, in this study, also concluded that the lowest performing English language learners were not always chosen to participate in Reading Recovery programming. They surmise that the reason for this pattern may be due to decision-making practices within schools and to beliefs about what students learning English are capable of accomplishing. The researchers state the reason for delaying the admission of English language learners into Reading Recovery is

driven by a belief that their English language skills first need to improve to a certain level, before they can be considered for literacy tutoring...There is sometimes pressure in schools to select students for Reading Recovery for whom progress appears to me more likely, and to exclude those for whom the prognosis appears poor. Anecdotal evidence suggests that both of these practices may reflect a perception among teachers and administrators, that

children with limited English proficiency are not suited for Reading Recovery instruction. (p. 39)

The research clearly establishes the influences that Reading Recovery has had on the literacy intervention field. The foundational tenets have repeatedly evidenced success in many different approaches. The caution, again, for learners of English is that early intervention if implemented within the parameters of effective teaching practices for bilingual learners can contribute greatly to successful achievement outcomes. If, however, the interventions treat a first language other than English as something to overcome or home language is not embedded in the instruction, early intervention can have detrimental effects on the short and long-term schooling of English language learners.

***Matching instruction to student needs.***

*Differentiation.*

In defining the term *differentiation*, Tomlinson (2000) states, Differentiation consists of the efforts of teachers to respond to variance among learners in the classroom. Whenever a teacher reaches out to an individual or small group to vary his or her teaching in order to create the best learning experience possible, that teacher is differentiating instruction. (p. 1)

In the discussion regarding effective reading instruction, it is evident that there are many different variables to consider. Allington (2006) suggests a “simple principle” (p. 34), and he defines it as the notion that students differ and these differences explain why there is not one best method or program that works for all.

In fact, many larger research studies have demonstrated that no one method works in all environments and situations (Pearson, 2004; Samuels, 1994). Several decades ago, Bond and Dykstra (1967) conducted a series of beginning reading studies titled the *First Grade Studies*. They concluded that “children learn to read by a variety of materials and methods...No one approach is so distinctly better in all situations and respects than the others that it should be considered the one best method” (p. 75). Klingner et al (2007) summarize this ideology by concluding, “The focus of literacy research should not be on finding one best method for all, but on better understanding of variation and the factors that influence treatment outcomes” (p. 230).

With regard to reading intervention, Clay (2005) believes that teachers must be aware of learner differences, and the idea that different learning sequences can lead to progress. Most importantly, she emphasizes that it is essential to recognize when progress is not occurring. Clay states, “We offer standard tasks which do not meet the diversity of the students...We need to think more about children taking different paths to similar outcomes” (p. 10). Hall, Prevette, and Cunningham (1996) concur in their explanation that the lowest achieving students each follow a unique path to progress. They believe that the interventions offered these children should be intensive and systematic to individual needs. The progress requires “an instructional approach tailored to the individual; each moment-to-moment interaction can be very powerful in helping these young children make sense of reading and writing” (p. 194). Many researchers agree that the most effective intervention instruction is that in which the teacher works with the student’s

strengths to overcome specific challenges with literacy (Clay, 2005; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Hall et al. 1996)

McEneaney, Lose, and Schwartz (2006) describe this as attending to the “natural variability of readers that is more important and productive than diagnostic categories that have more to do with funding policy and legislation than they do with learning to read” (p. 120). The authors refer to this view of teaching as *contingent* teaching. It is an approach founded in the social-constructivist perspective in which literacy tasks are based on strong teacher-student collaboration. The rationale for expounding on the work of McEneaney et al. is that it promotes an attention to student variability that focuses on individual instructional needs rather than identifying the disability of readers. Purcell-Gates, Jacobsen, and Degener (2004) argue that cognitive processing abilities are embedded in the socioculture aspects of literacy acquisition, and linking the two perspectives will enrich the experiences that students have as they learn to read. They further state that not attending to this link places limits on what children use as they acquire literacy skills.

Essential to English language learners regarding this discussion on differentiation is the reality that English language learners are not a homogenous group (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2011). Interlanguages used by second language learners are individual. Not only do English language learners with intervention needs have their own idiosyncratic paths of learning, but they differ in language proficiency levels, educational experiences in both languages, and ways in which they pull from home culture to experience schooling.

*A multi-level system of support.*

Many intervention programs are represented by a multi-level system of support. Research supports the intention of leveled systems as a way to most effectively meet the needs of individual students (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Vaughn & Klingner, 2007). These levels are often referred to as tiers that have gradient levels of intensity. One of the most common tiered visuals is the triangle as often depicted by the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. The base of the triangle represents instructional assistance in the general education classroom, and as students' intervention needs change, they conceptually move across to the tier that will best meet those needs. In the triangle version, the apex represents the highest intervention needs. Different RTI versions have two to four levels of intervention (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003), and there is nothing in federal law that mandates how many tiers an intervention needs to be (Allington, 2009). The most widely used model is the three tiered; however, regardless of the number, the last tier is usually at special education level. "Embedded in each tier is a set of support structures or activities that help teachers implement research-based curriculum and instructional practices" (Klingner, Barletta, & Hoover, 2008, p. 39). If students do not demonstrate sufficient progress as they work from one tier to the next, it may indicate a need for special education services.

Many states have left it up to individual districts to develop a model that represents the structure of the leveled system of intervention. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction created a visual that has the multi-tiered system represented by a ring which wraps around three equally distributed essential

elements: high quality instruction, collaboration, and balanced assessment. At the center of this circular configuration is a small circle representing culturally responsive practices, which represents the belief that culturally responsive practices are essential to an effective intervention process (WI Department of Public Instruction, 2010).

Multi-leveled systems of intervention are becoming widely used across the nation, and they appear to be replacing other prereferral and discrepancy model approaches that were accepted practices of the past.

There is a strong concern in the field of second language learning education that program implementation and instructional decisions should be based on evidence validated for students who are language learners. A great deal of evidence exists that demonstrates that RTI is successful with monolingual English-speaking students (Allington & Walmsley, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Gersten & Diminio, 2006); however, preliminary research for language minority students has just recently begun to emerge. Research has unveiled that many of the intervention strategies deemed effective for native English speakers are also proving effective for language minority students (Echevarria & Graves, 2007; Gersten, Baker, Haager, & Graves, 2005) yet many scholars agree that there are specific intervention nuances and issues associated with those students negotiating between two language worlds (Haager, 2007; Linan-Thompson, Vaughn, Prater, & Cirino, 2006).

As it has been mentioned in this review, one of the key elements of RTI is that students should receive highly effective research-based instructional services. In a recent position statement, the International Reading Association (2002) defines the

term evidence-based reading instruction as “a particular program or collection of instructional practices that has a record of success. That is, there is reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence to suggest that when the program is used with a particular group of children, the children can be expected to make adequate gains in reading achievement” (p. 232).

Many researchers reviewing the tenets of RTI for second language learners share the belief that the worthiness of RTI with diverse groups of students lies in the principle of validating practices with the very students for whom those practices will be applied. They propose that it is imperative to find out what works with whom, by whom, and in what context the information is derived (Klingner & Edwards, 2006; Linan-Thompson, Cirino, & Vaughn, 2007).

The issue with RTI and language minority students is that there is a paucity of evidence on effective interventions for English language learners with reading challenges (Vaughn, Mathes, Linan, Thompson, & Francis, 2005). Snow (2006) reviewed the literature from the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth, and he concluded that the research revealed “very little about the effectiveness of different aspects of instruction, and provided only limited guidance about how good instruction for second language speakers might differ from that of first language speakers” (p. 638).

The appropriate application of RTI requires that educators have an awareness that their school district’s intervention practices may be limited to those validated on language majority children (Linan-Thompson, Vaughn, Prater, & Cirino, 2006). The use of a universal screener to identify struggling readers is a common example of

decision-making based on practices that are perhaps not validated by some of the population it is meant to serve. These actions often lead to misidentification with regard to special education needs. Developing interventions based on a critical consciousness of evidenced-based practices will work towards a more equitable and appropriate intervention process for second language learners.

Fisher, Frey, and Rothenberg (2011) bring the intervention discussion back to the paradigm of equal opportunity to learn. They remind their audience that effective instruction for English learners encompasses much of what is known for all learners; however, there are nuances and attributes of quality instruction for these students that are not the same. An understanding of the foundation of the education of bilingual learners is critical to a study investigating the capacity of effective teachers to preserve effective instruction for English language learners. In the final section of this literature review the specific elements of practice understood by highly effective teachers of English language learners will be presented.

### **Instructional practices specific to the English language learner.**

In reviewing the literature specific to effective instruction for those students acquiring English, three reoccurring topics emerged. These topics include (a) an implementation of efficacious bilingual education programming, (b) programming based on the knowledge of second language acquisition, and (c) a shared ideology within the learning community that values students' home language and culture. It is apparent throughout the scholarly works that effective teachers have significant understandings of how these components of bilingual education optimize academic achievement for linguistically and culturally diverse students.

***Bilingual programming and academic achievement.***

The first essential principle is based on the efficacy of the type of bilingual programming. Research specifically focusing on the effectiveness of bilingual schooling for language minority students has increased in the past few decades (August & Hakuta, 1997; Baker, 2006; Cummins, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). In the United States, early research on the effectiveness of bilingual education began about a half-century ago. Peal and Lambert's (1962) notable study, which investigates claims of a negative correlation between intelligence and bilingualism, was one of the first to conclude that there were definite cognitive gains for bilingual learners (Reyes & Vallone, 2007). Since then, many other studies have also surmised that bilingual education in the U.S. was preferable to monolingual English programming (Dulay & Burt, 1978; 1979; Troike, 1978; Zappert & Cruz, 1977).

Today, there continues to be very little debate in the second language research realm regarding the benefits of a bilingual education versus monolingual schooling (Howard, Sugarman, Christian, Lindholm-Leary, & Rogers, 2007; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005); yet, conversation as to the type of bilingual program has been discussed at great lengths and depths. In many cases, it has been demonstrated that it is the type of bilingual program that can have very powerful effects on student achievement (Rolstad et al., 2005; Slavin & Cheung, 2005).

One of the most commonly used bilingual education models in the United States is the transitional bilingual education approach (TBE). This is defined as a program in which subject matter is taught in students' home language until their English foundation is strong enough to participate in all-English instruction. Baker

(2006) and Ovando, Collier, and Combs (2003) critique this type of programming as weak, as bilingualism and biliteracy are not a primary aim.

Those who disfavor the TBE programs because of the subtractive ideology have moved towards the developmental bilingual education approach (DBE). The difference between this approach and TBE is that the developmental bilingual education objective is to promote proficiency in both languages by strategically incorporating them within the instructional day (Nieto, 2002).

The ideological foundation of developing both languages has shown positive academic achievement results. Similar to the DBE approach is the growing and flourishing dual language model. Dual language programs combine language minority and language majority students in the same classrooms. Content instruction is provided in both the majority and the minority languages (Potowski, 2004). These programs were the least common a decade ago; however, many have taken note of the powerful academic results across the nation (Collier & Thomas, 2009). There are variations of the instructional design of the dual language model based on the amount of time devoted to each language (Garcia, 2005) and the way in which each language is used in the classroom (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006).

The attraction of dual language programs is that they meet specific needs for students in both language groups. The goals are that all students become bilingual and biliterate and that they achieve academically at or above grade level norms. Research demonstrates that students are achieving these goals, as well as

developing positive cross-cultural attitudes (Christian, Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, & Howard, 2004; Howard, Sugarman, & Christian, 2003).

Thomas and Collier (1997) conducted extensive research on 42,000 language-minority students participating in various models of bilingual education throughout the United States. Using long-term performance on norm-referenced reading tests, they found that native language programs for English language learners were by far the most successful in promoting student achievement in all subject areas, including English development. In addition, it was determined that the dual language programs were the highest performing approaches (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Cummins, 2000; Dolson & Lindholm-Leary, 1995; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Collier and Thomas (2009) conclude that the strongest predictor of student achievement and students “moving toward true long-term parity with native English speakers” (p. 54) is the actual type of bilingual education programming the student consistently receives.

Another key study was conducted by Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass (2005). They examined program effectiveness with English language learners through a meta-analysis that included a corpus of 17 studies. This investigation concluded that there is clear evidence that bilingual education is more beneficial for English language learners than all-English programs. It was also determined that superior programs were those designed to develop academic use of both languages rather than those that aim to use home language to transition students to all-English instruction. The authors concluded that “bilingual programs are effective in promoting academic achievement and that sound educational policy should permit

and even encourage the development and implementation of bilingual education programs” (p. 572).

In a synthesis of research on language of reading instruction for English language learners, Slavin and Cheung (2005) compared the practice of teaching students to read in their home language with that of teaching reading through an English immersion strategy. They reviewed seventeen studies, and the evidence favored bilingual approaches, especially paired bilingual strategies that simultaneously used both English and Spanish instruction.

Through this review of literature it is evidenced that bilingual education programming is a critical element in the inquiry of academic achievement for English language learners. Many of the researchers, in addition, have highlighted the notion that regardless of program approach, it is necessary that all programming be carried out through highly effective practices and quality instruction (August & Hakuta, 1997; Klingner & Vaughn, 2004; Slavin & Cheung, 2005).

### ***Second language acquisition and academic achievement.***

The second essential principle that emerged from perusing the literature on the academic achievement of English learners is the necessity to develop learning communities based on the theory and knowledge of second language acquisition. Research suggests that educators and program developers must have a strong understanding of certain theoretical concepts in the second language field in order to optimize school success for language minority students (Brice, 2002; Nieto, 2002). The concepts revealed in the literature include (a) language proficiency, (b)

the relationship between first and second language, and (c) the interconnection of language, culture, and identity.

*Language proficiency.*

In an examination of English language learners and academic achievement, it is difficult not to focus on the ubiquitous conversation regarding achievement gap. Closing the achievement gap is not just a matter of language minority students working harder or becoming more test savvy. Closing the achievement gap involves the allowance of time for students to become proficient in the language of instruction and assessment (Collier & Thomas, 2009).

Early research studies (Cummins, 1984b; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1979) demonstrated that immigrant students can acquire basic communication skills in a second language (L2) quite rapidly when they have exposure in the environment and at school. Subsequent studies, however, demonstrated that the academic proficiency of the student's second language takes several years longer as measured by the performance of their English-speaking peers.

As was discussed in Part One of this literature review, prominent researchers (Collier, 1987; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1981) have conducted analyses on language proficiency with thousands of immigrant children. They found that it took the participating students five to seven years on average to approach grade level norms on cognitive-academic language measurement assessments. Collier and Thomas (1989) additionally discovered that students who immigrated between the ages of 8 and 11, with schooling in their home language, took 5 to 7 years to acquire academic English, while those under age 8 took 7 to 10 years to reach academic

English proficiency. Many other researchers have repeated this type of analysis with results quite analogous (Genesee et al., 2006; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; Klesmer, 1994). Schooling in a student's first language appears to be a key element in how long it takes for the development of L2 language proficiency, regardless of whether it is in the student's home country or in the U.S. (Baker, 2006; Cummins, 2000; Freeman & Freeman, 2001; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005).

*The relationship between first and second language.*

Research in the field of linguistics has informed education professionals as to the important relationship between a student's first and second languages. The linguistic concepts (Gass & Selinker, 2001) of language transfer and contrastive analysis are imperative to understanding the academic achievement of those students who are acquiring English as a second language. Understanding how language is learned is critical to effectively educating language minority students (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Nieto, 2002).

Lindholm-Leary and Borsato (2006) identified 11 studies that examined program factors related to effective schooling for English language learners. They found that one of the primary characteristics of these schools was that educators in high quality bilingual programs "understood theories about bilingualism and second-language development as well as the goals and rationale for the model in which they were teaching" (p. 187). The importance of specialized training in language education pedagogy and curriculum appears to be unarguably a necessary

component in the quest for maximizing academic achievement for language minority students (Cloud, Genesee, Hamayan, 2000; Cummins 2000).

*The interconnection of language, culture, and identity.*

How students benefit from their educational experiences is influenced by personal identity and the cultural context of the home and community environment. The work of Nieto (2002) suggests that family, values, and traditions in a student's life play a critical role in academic achievement. She explains that bringing the family culture into curricular and instructional processes can significantly benefit student progress and scholastic outcomes. In a study on English learners academic success, Thomas and Collier (1997) highlight sociocultural support as one of the eminent themes that emerged from teacher interviews. The researchers believe that socioculturally supportive schools are places where language minority students' home language "is affirmed, respected, valued, and used for cognitive and academic development" (p. 51). This is similar to what Cummins (2000) refers to as *identity affirmation*. Cummins points to studies on classroom effectiveness with English language learners to conclude that identity negotiation is a central determinant of academic student outcomes (Duff & Early, 1999; Freeman, 1998; Hornberger, 1989), and many researchers posit that it is the teacher's role in the process that is crucial for student success (Igoa, 1995; Nieto, 1999; Valenzuela, 1999). Crystal (2000) suggests that language lies at the heart of human education, culture, and identity, which brings this review to the important examination of practices and pedagogy that positively influence the academic success of language minority students.

***Ideology and practices promoting academic achievement.***

The third essential principle identified in this review of literature is the importance of a shared ideology within the learning community that values students' home language and culture. Certain aspects were consistently highlighted throughout the examined research. These aspects include the ideologies of additive schooling, multicultural education, and the belief that biliteracy is the key to achievement.

*Additive schooling.*

Angela Valenzuela (1999), in her ethnography *Subtractive Schooling*, explains that additive schooling ideology is about equalizing opportunities for students and working against assimilationist forces that devalue home language and culture. Additive approaches are based on a pluralistic model of schooling that builds on students' bicultural experiences.

According to Cummins (2000), there were nearly 150 empirical studies carried out during the past 30 years that have reported a positive link between additive bilingualism and students' linguistic, cognitive, and academic growth. He defines additive bilingualism as "the form of bilingualism that results when students add a second language to their intellectual tool-kit while continuing to develop conceptually and academically in their first language" (p. 37).

Additive schooling practices recognize that the standard curriculum can be narrowly presented and reflective of the dominant culture; therefore, changes must be made that value language and ethnic identity as assets and the foundation from which to build daily instructional practices.

*Multicultural education.*

Shared beliefs regarding a multicultural ideology are essential to a successful school community. Banks and Banks (2004) define multicultural education as a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates for this purpose, content, concepts, principles, theories, and paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences, and particularly from ethnic studies and women 's studies. (p. xii)

Sleeter (2005) proposes that multicultural education brings underachievement into the discussion of equity issues, contending that creating equitability for learning closes achievement gaps. Multicultural education takes a critical look at whose knowledge is valid, deficit perspectives, and measurement systems that promote inequities.

For English language learners, these are three extremely urgent issues. The fields of bilingual education and multicultural education are clearly connected both historically and functionally, and Nieto (2002) believes that if the languages students speak are negated to a secondary position in their schooling, then the possibility of school failure increases. She states, "Because language and culture are intimately connected, and because both bilingual and multicultural approaches seek to involve and empower the most vulnerable students in our schools, it is essential that their natural links be fostered" (p. 84). Researchers such as Garcia (2005), Gay (2000), Howard et al. (2007), Nieto (1999), and Sleeter (2005) see multicultural educators as those who collaborate with colleagues, challenge conventional practices, and develop creative ways to work towards the academic achievement of

students marginalized because of their culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

*Biliteracy: The key to achievement.*

Reyes and Halcón (2001) define biliteracy as the “mastery of the fundamentals of speaking, reading, and writing (knowing sound/symbol connections, conventions of print, accessing and conveying meaning through oral or print mode, etc) in two linguistic systems” (p. 98). Students who are biliterate construct understanding by making meaningful cultural and linguistic connections with a combination of the text and their own lived experiences. This meaning-making process relies on the interaction of the two linguistic systems (Reyes & Halcón, 2001).

Baker (2006) contends that there is a strong argument for biliteracy, given that “literacy empowers, emancipates, enculturates, educates, and can be an inherently enjoyable activity” (p. 329). There are individual and societal reasons why it is advantageous for language minority students to attain literacy in both the home language and dominant culture language. At an individual level, biliteracy promotes and strengthens both oral languages in terms of vocabulary, decoding, fluency, and positive attitudes toward literacy (Hickey, 2001). The benefits at a societal level include the promotion of cross-cultural access and an elevation of the status of the minority language and culture (Baker, 2006).

There are two eminent approaches to biliteracy (Beeman, 2010). Sequential biliteracy involves the process of learning to read in one language first and then receiving formal literacy in the second language at a later point. Critical to this

process is the concept of language transfer. Gass and Selinker (2001) define language transfer as “the use of the first language in a second language context” (p. 456). Research suggests that literacy achievement in a minority language will reveal a great deal about how a student will eventually read in the second language (Krashen, 2002). It is also suggested in some analyses that individual differences in language ability, learning strategies, and home environment will have an effect on the transferability of literacy skills (Cummins, 2000).

Simultaneous biliteracy, on the other hand, holds that students receive formal instruction in both languages from the beginning of their literacy experiences. Escamilla and Hopewell, (2010) report that the success of this model is represented by the idea that most language minority students born in the U.S. are simultaneous bilinguals, because they have been speaking two languages since birth, and they are not confused by it. These researchers posit that both languages contribute to a larger linguistic system, and that the concern should be to move from the mindset of second language acquisition to the concept of bilingual acquisition because of how languages contribute to one another.

The goal of both of these approaches however, is to foster biliteracy in students, so that they understand the interconnectedness of their two languages. It is apparent that effective biliteracy instruction, along with the ideologies of additive bilingualism and multicultural education are key elements in the aim for positive academic performance for English language learners.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

As the components of this literature review were planned, the intention was to create a base of information that would merge the influences of education reform with what is known to be effective practices that most optimize learning experiences for English language learners. In doing so, the aim was to be thorough and coherent in providing a foundation from which this study on the exploration of highly reputable teachers in an era of education reform would be conducted. Integrating the fields of language, literacy, and education policy was the approach used here to interrogate, deconstruct and critique practices to revision the way schooling could be experienced.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology

*It is not that we might elect to engage in work that is postmodern. Rather, it is that we have inherited a postmodern world, and there is no going back. We do not 'choose' to be postmodern. The historical moment has chosen us. (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000, p. 1060)*

This chapter describes the research design of this study that seeks to examine the ways in which highly effective teachers preserve instructional practices for English language learners in an era of education reform. The significance is that all students deserve equitably-minded learning experiences that promote success and are implemented with expert teachers who have an understanding of the nature of learners with linguistically and culturally diverse needs.

### Philosophical Framework

Strauss and Corbin (1998) define methodology as “a way of thinking about and studying social reality” (p. 3). With this in mind, it appears that the way to think about the issues of preserving instructional practices of highly effective educators is to take a qualitative approach that will deepen the understanding of this topic, which is integral to the educational programming and achievement for a great number of students. Although the literacy arena has been researched abundantly, it is most often investigated through quantitative paradigms that measure data and monitor growth statistics (Deno, 1985; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The inherent quantitative component of data-driven reform is acknowledged here; however, it is the qualitative perspective that provides a forum from which to comprehensively

explore the experiences of teachers of English language learners in an era of demanding education reform.

According to Merriam (1988) the qualitative approach is the most suitable approach, as “discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education” (p. 3). Beyond the generalizations of quantitative work, this rigorous qualitative research has been developed to conceive how all of the parts work together to form an in-depth picture. In addition, this research holds true to the notion that literacy learning is carried on by individuals in relationships with other individuals. The intent was to capture the literacy and linguistic transactions that occur in a naturalistic environment, with particular individuals, and in particular educational, social, and cultural contexts (Rosenblatt, 1988, in Kilbourn, 2006).

It was also the aim of this researcher to view the experiences of this study through a postmodern lens that focused a “skeptical eye on the grand narratives of the field” (Pennycook, 2006, p. 67), and question the dominant culture assumptions that are in place with regard to achievement, language, and expectations of those from diverse backgrounds. A postmodern perspective guided this scholarly work that seeks to politically engage, interrogate, and revision the role that education reform plays in the decision-making of teachers of linguistically diverse students.

## Research Questions

As stated in the introduction chapter, it is the intent of this study to heighten awareness and create dialogue that contributes to a better understanding of, and improvement in, the practices implemented for second language learners encountering challenges with literacy development. The primary question guiding this inquiry is the following: In the case of English language learners (ELLs) with reading intervention needs, how do effective teachers preserve high quality instructional practices in an era emphasizing high stakes accountability measures and mandated policies?

The sub-questions of this study attend to the specifics regarding the preservation of daily quality of instruction that has a cumulative effect over a substantial period of time. They include: (1) During the reading intervention process, how are teacher's instructional decisions affected by policy initiatives? (2) In what ways do teachers consciously adapt their pedagogy to uphold their commitment to high quality instruction for English language learners? (3) What resources and support systems contribute to the successful preservation of high quality instruction for teachers of ELLs with reading intervention needs?

These research questions are well suited to a qualitative, constructivist approach that a naturalistic inquiry offers. A naturalistic inquiry design was chosen here, because it allowed for the unfolding of authentically occurring experiences in their natural settings. It is through this methodology that novel understandings of the thoughts, feelings, and emotions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) of the educators immersed in the experience of teaching English language learners in an era of

education reform have been captured (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Hatch, 2002). The research design, sampling methods, data collection, analysis, and study rigor have been guided by the research questions presented. From there, the goal of this dissertation work was to create a pedagogical model that demonstrates how nominated teachers preserve highly effective instructional practices. The intent of the model is to promote greater understanding of the experiences that challenge teachers in this era of education reform.

### **Research Design**

#### **Naturalistic inquiry.**

The specific paradigm for this current research is a naturalistic inquiry design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that focuses on the authentic experiences of teachers and the decision-making that accompanies daily instructional practices with English language learners engaged in both language and content acquisition development. Evoking this study is the observed phenomenon of teachers working with English language learners to negotiate literacy development within an educational system that is dominated by research and practices evidenced on the language majority culture.

The naturalistic inquiry approach was chosen because of the belief in the ability of this method to provide genuine insight into the complexities that are embedded in the issues surrounding the education of second language learners in an English dominant paradigm. Hatch (2002) suggests that naturalistic inquiry is “the archetype for constructivist qualitative research” (p. 27). He asserts that although knowledge and realities are often shared across groups, it is the

constructivists who believe that multiple realities exist based on the inherently unique experiences and perspectives of individuals. Realities, from this perspective, are considered experiential constructions that are local derivations from specific vantage points (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hatch, 2002).

These beliefs are consistent with the claim of postmodernists that “knowledge is always produced in specific context, which are time and space dependent” (Foster, 1999, p. 104). The postmodern notion of an impossibility for universal and absolute truth concurs with the constructivist paradigm that “universal, absolute realities are unknowable, and the objects of inquiry are individual perspectives or constructions of reality” (Hatch, 2002, p. 15). It follows that a naturalistic qualitative research methodology is appropriate for this study, as the researcher engaged in extensive open-ended interviews along with observations in specific natural settings with the objective of interrogating and reconstructing the effects that political power has had on the experiences of the individual teachers.

Guba (1978) defined naturalistic inquiry as “a discovery-oriented approach that minimizes investigator manipulation of the study setting and places no prior constraints on what the outcomes of the research will be” (Patton, 2002, p. 39). This is agreeable to this research that has examined educational practices that are often dynamic and dependent on individual academic, cultural, and linguistic variables. With this in mind, naturalistic inquiry provided an opportunity to conduct research through representative units of study, in this case, teachers. The teachers in this research are each considered a specific case, and each of the cases is bound by an individual district and school context. The individual bounded systems have been

explored through detailed, in-depth data collection methods involving interviews, observations, and school documents (Creswell, 2007). These multiple cases were then analyzed according to the specific context of each, and inferences were drawn across the cases.

From a postmodernist perspective, these inferences should not be misperceived as generalizations, as generalizations contradict the essence of both postmodernism and natural inquiry that rejects the notion that knowledge is absolute and centralized. Inferences created from multiple cases, on the other hand, provide a reasoning process for teachers who engage in the work being documented and analyzed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). According to Yin (2006), the strength of this method is its capacity to examine, “in-depth, a case within its real-life context” (p. 111). This strategy of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2003) was used here as a way to create case-based themes (Creswell, 2007). These themes informed the development of a pedagogical model assist in the understanding of high quality instruction for English language learners with literacy intervention needs.

### **Units of study.**

The selection of the units of study for this research was conducted through a process that began with a reflection on what type of case unit would best meet the needs of the issues described. The research questions emphasize the preservation of effective practices implemented with second language learners, yet it is recognized that there are layers of policy decision-making within the educational system that influence implemented practices. Deciding whether to use one teacher, multiple teachers within a system, or multiple systems as the unit of study was a

dilemma. After careful deliberation, it was decided that studying the experiences of individual teachers from two school districts was the best approach for this inquiry. The rationale for this decision is that the experiences of each of these teachers are encapsulated in a bounded system from which instructional/behavior patterns can be described. A collective approach has been used here, so that multiple school situations could be studied simultaneously. This approach allowed for inferences to be made regarding the experiences of individual teachers across multiple school settings.

Once the unit of study was decided on, choosing the specific “cases” was the next step of this process. Selecting the cases is described by Stake (1995) as one of the most critical steps in conducting a multiple case study. Yin (2006) suggests two criteria: (a) choose cases that best illuminate the issue at hand, and (b) consider the access factors involved with the particular cases chosen. Using these criteria as a guide, it was decided that the literacy experiences of four nominated teachers within two school districts were the cases that would be explored. It is significant that the teachers were nominated, because teachers with a reputation for quality instructional practices and successful outcomes were a necessary unit of study for these research questions that seek to capture the experiences of effective teachers.

Finally, it was essential to reflect on the compatibility of the multiple case study approach and the theoretical framework of this research. Considering the aim of the case study to construct first-hand understandings of people and events (Yin, 2006), the critical postmodern framework was chosen. It was chosen because it encourages a revisioning of the ways in which the world is viewed, and it appeared

to be an appropriate fit for this multiple case-naturalistic inquiry design that strives to illuminate the issues related to teachers of English language learners and education reform.

**Sampling.**

***Research setting.***

The research settings for this study took place in two different urban school districts in the Midwest. School districts were sought out that have established bilingual programs and significant numbers of learners acquiring English. The settings were samples of convenience (Creswell, 2007), as the sites and the individuals within offered manageable access for data collection and research participation. It was essential that the settings of this natural inquiry design remained authentic and unchanging while data was gathered, as extended periods of time were spent in the natural settings with the intent of documenting how the participants understood their naturally occurring experiences (Hatch, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

***Research participants.***

The research participants were made up of reputable teachers nominated by school administrators within each of his/her districts (Pressley et al. 2001; Wharton-McDonald, 1996). The plan for participant selection was to study two teachers in each of the two school districts chosen. The rationale for this selection approach was to maintain a manageable, yet sufficient number of participants.

The method of choosing the samples was guided by the strategy of purposeful sampling. Creswell (2007) defines purposeful sampling as the

researcher selecting “individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 125). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) refer to this as *criterion-based sampling*. It requires that the criteria are established for the unit to be studied, and then samples are found that match the criteria. In this case, administrators nominated the teachers within their districts. The administrators were given the following criteria: (a) the teachers were working in an established bilingual program and have at least two years of experience in that program; (b) teachers were working with a sufficient number of English language learners with literacy intervention needs; (c) teachers were working in intermediate level (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade) elementary classrooms where education assessments and initiatives are most prevalent; and (d) teachers have reputations as being highly effective in their use of programming based on what is known in the fields of bilingual education and second language learning. The criteria were made available to the administrators in printed format, and the administrators recorded their nominations on the form given to them (Appendix A).

Once the two teachers from each of the two districts were nominated using the outlined criteria, an individual initial interview took place. The initial interview was used as a second check on the nomination criteria. A total of four teachers were the primary focus of this study.

#### **Data collection.**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that “the design of a naturalistic inquiry...cannot be given in advance; it must emerge, develop, unfold” (p. 225).

With this primary tenet of naturalistic inquiry in mind, and the dissertation methodology expectations at hand, data collection was conducted with an initial structure, yet encompassed a flexibility that allowed for the research experiences to unfold and proceed in directions that were not necessarily expected (Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002).

Moving forward with data collection in this manner required a postmodern framework that encourages the abandonment of established and preconceived notions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). These notions may be a barrier to unexpected emergent concepts and information. A flexible design calls for an open, yet pragmatic approach to data gathering. In reference to naturalistic inquiry, Patton (2002) suggests that “being open and pragmatic requires a high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty as well as trust in the ultimate value of what inductive analysis will yield” (p. 44).

With this understanding, the data collection methods are presented here. These methods include the initial interview process, observations, follow-up interviews, and document reviews. (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2007).

### ***Initial interviews.***

The data collection process began with the selection of two teachers in each of the two school districts. These teachers were selected through a nomination process by which administrators of each of the two respective districts chose teachers based on the criteria previously described. After being nominated, the four teachers participated in an initial interview as a way to assess the nomination criteria. A series of open-ended questions were presented (Appendix B). The

purpose of this initial interview was to begin the first phase of data collection, as the interview data was used to inform subsequent observations and interviews.

### ***Observations.***

One of the primary tenets of the multiple case study approach is the use of in-depth descriptions to illustrate the intricacies of each case that will then inform the issues at hand. Patton (2002) states that, "To understand fully the complexities of many situations, direct participation in and observation of the phenomenon of interest may be the best research method" (p. 21). Observations furnish a first hand understanding of the insights received from individuals during other forms of data gathering. In addition, they provide an analytical tool that yields opportunities for the researcher to take the reader vicariously into the natural setting where the authentic action took place. "The observer's notes become the eyes, ears, and perceptual senses for the reader" (Patton, 2002, p. 23). Observation strategies were used during the in-depth interview sessions as a way to contribute meaning to the participants' words through body language, affect, tone of voice, and other paralinguistic messages (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The postmodern point of view supports the use of observations as a valuable data gathering method because of the belief that knowledge is always produced in specific contexts that are dependent on time and space (Foster, 1999). In addition, the postmodernist sees the nature of knowledge as a social and cultural construct, and observations provide a meaningful approach to analyzing and challenging the power structures within those constructs.

Observations in this study took place in the natural school environments of each participating teacher. The purpose of these observations was to take the reader into the real-life environments of the participants as a way to increase the understanding of the challenges and complexities surrounding the expectations of education reform—with specific regard to students negotiating two languages and cultures. It is through the rich detail and descriptions that the readers can gain insight into the educational programming of students who have been historically underserved (Menken, 2008). The observations provided an opportunity to experience the real-life occurrences created by the phenomenon of high stakes accountability in the classrooms of students acquiring English. The observations also served the purpose of making connections to topics and issues discussed in the initial and follow-up interview sessions. Observation data was used to inform and clarify interview field notes.

Teacher interactions with students, other staff, and materials and resources were documented using an observation protocol tool (Appendix C). Fieldnotes were recorded using this data collection method. In addition, observations of meetings and discussions surrounding daily instructional practices were included. It was the aim of this researcher to conduct a minimum of two-two hour observations of each of the four primary participants in their natural settings. The two observation sessions were scheduled so that they occurred between the three interview sessions. The interview/observation plan is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Data Collection Sequence

Initial Interview > Observation 1 > Follow-up Interview 1 > Observation 2 > Follow-up Interview 2
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As valuable as observations are to data gathering, limitations did occur. It is realized that data was gathered from one researcher, and represented the perceptions of that researcher. Patton (2002) recognizes that data gathered through one perspective can potentially narrow the view of the issues being explored. In addition, observation times were limited, so not all elements of the issues were experienced first hand. Consequently, deliberate efforts were made to ensure that the observations were described in rich detailed accounts, and it was a priority that they were connected to the interviews, as a way to optimally contribute to the analysis.

***Follow-up interviews.***

Another essential data collection tool was the use of semi-structured follow-up interviews using an open-ended question format. According to Patton (2002), interviews are the tools that complement the observations, as they are the instruments that reveal information that is not easily observed. The value of interviewing multiple participants in this study is that each case offered a different contextual perspective.

The showcasing of multiple realities reflects the postmodern lens used for this research. The focus on each case/teacher allowed for an examination of how specific power dynamics affect that individual participant. The postmodern perspective supports the notion that knowledge is situational, which Richardson (2000), in her work on research writing, claims is an advantageous approach to an inquiry. She states, "A postmodern position does allow us to know 'something' without claiming to know everything. Having a partial, local, historical knowledge is

still knowing. In some ways, 'knowing' is easier, because postmodernism recognizes the situational limitations of the knower" (p. 928). This point is necessary to emphasize as the sample size of this study is relatively small, and it has been clearly stated that generalizations will not be part of the conclusion of this postmodern inquiry.

In this study, an initial interview guide (Appendix D) was used as a way to provide an informal structure to the sessions. The interview guides were a data collection tool, and all interviews were face-to-face and audio-recorded for transcription at a later date. The data collection plan was to conduct two follow-up interviews. Interviews were recorded and transcribed following each session. The aim for all of the interviews was to create a relationship with the participants that welcomed dialogue and interaction, so as to create a climate that was minimally intrusive, yet maximized the quality of data (Patton, 2002). It is the belief of this researcher that establishing dialogue and a more interactive design "increased the validity of data and reduced reactivity by making evaluation more visible and open, making participants less resistant or suspicious" (Patton, 2002, p. 400).

In this study, the first follow-up interview was conducted as a way to clarify occurrences in the first observations. Questions were focused on specific decisions or actions that the teacher experienced. Teachers were asked to reflect on their decision-making as it pertained to their teaching practices or the expectation that policy initiatives have on the implementation of programming in their classrooms. Subsequent follow-up interviews were also guided by the observations preceding the interview.

The limitations of this data-gathering tool included the notion that the interviewer, by virtue of creating and asking the questions, had the potential to influence the responses of the interviewee (Stake, 1995). In addition, “interviews are interventions” (Patton, 2002. P. 405), and there is the possibility that the interviewees answered the questions based on expectations of school policy or other external factors

***Document review.***

Document review was used as a way to examine items that aided the understanding of how effective instruction was preserved by the teachers in this study. Standardized assessment scores, district policies, state and federal initiatives, and teacher/student artifacts, such as lesson plans, assignment sheets, meeting notes, and progress reports were analyzed as a way to inform the issues regarding this case study.

Documents were used because they provided the researcher with data that assisted in clarifying issues that arose in both the interview and observation sessions, and the use of documents supported claims made by the teacher that were unobservable. Document review is suitable to this postmodern paradigm, as it supports the belief that knowledge is acquired experientially and in specific contexts. Document review was used in this research when it was deemed appropriate and offered further understanding of the experiences of the teacher participants. It was implemented as a stimulus for further inquiry that could be pursued through interviews and observations. During the interview phases of this study, the participants were asked if there were any documents that represented

the challenges and experiences that accompany the preservation of their practices in a climate of education reform. In addition, document use captured in observation sessions were addressed during the scheduled interviews. A document review tool (Appendix E) was used to record any significance related to documents that became part of the study. Documents that were reviewed in this study were included in the analysis phase of the research and coded as appropriately warranted.

Merriam (1988) suggests that documents are a good source of data, but they should not be used in isolation. One of the concerns as outlined by Merriam, is “determining their authenticity and accuracy. Even public records that purport to be objective and accurate contain built-in biases that a researcher may not be aware of” (p. 106). A conscious effort was made by the researcher of this study to keep document use relevant and authentic to the natural setting.

### **Data analysis.**

According to Creswell (2007), one of the essential skills for a case study investigator to possess is the ability to collect and analyze data simultaneously. This characteristic of a case study is what differs from other approaches. As a case study researcher, it was necessary to “master the intricacies of the study’s substantive issues while also having the patience and dedication to collect data carefully and fairly” (Yin, 2006, p. 113). Hatch (2002) suggests that the more open-ended research questions are, the more important it is to have analysis built into the data collection process. For this current research study, data was analyzed as each phase was completed. For example, when the primary participants were chosen, the initial interviews were analyzed. When the first observation phase was completed,

analysis of that phase began. This pattern continued throughout the study as a way to keep data organized and clearly referenced.

Naturalistic inquiry is oriented towards exploration, discovery, and inductive logic (Patton, 2002). Because of this orientation, inductive analysis was the overall approach to the data analysis of this study. Inductive analysis is commonplace in qualitative research, and by definition this approach moves from the specific to the general (Hatch, 2002). It is important to acknowledge that generalizations are often the objective of an inductive analysis approach; however, the intent of this research was to immerse in the details and the specifics of the data “to discover patterns, themes, and interrelationships” (Patton, 2002, p. 41) that created inferences about the work that teachers of English language learners do in specific contexts.

Developing generalizations, however, is contradictory to the theoretical postmodern framework and the naturalistic inquiry design of this study that represents the situational characteristics of knowledge and rejects the ideology of universal truths. Inductive analysis was used to the extent of which it provided a template for the exploration of case-based themes and inferences that allowed for a creative synthesis of data to inform practice. The goal of this research, then, was to create a model that assisted in the understanding of the preservation of high quality instruction for English language learners. The use of inductive analysis was the strategy to accomplish this outcome.

Fieldnotes from observations, transcripts, interviews, and documents were processed promptly and referred to often throughout the data-gathering component of the study. Open coding was the organizational system used and concepts were

grouped as they pertained to the phenomenon of study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Information that was deemed significant was written on a Post-It note. Each participant represented a different color. Categories and themes were developed, and organized on large posters (Appendix F). This process remained a reflective work until a final set of established themes emerged for interpretation. The interpretation phase included the presentation of a pedagogical model that assists teachers in understanding the preservation of quality instructional practices for English language learners with literacy intervention needs.

### **Study credibility.**

It is essential to this researcher that strategies for enhancing the credibility of this work were embedded at all stages of the research process. To accomplish this objective, five study elements were identified and implemented. These elements included (a) coding as part of the analysis process; (b) the use of methods triangulation; (c) the expectation of intellectual rigor; (d) the development of an ongoing audit process throughout the research; and (e) a position statement from the researcher. It is through these components of research that the credibility of this qualitative research was attained.

### ***Coding as part of the analysis process.***

Quality and rigor in qualitative studies is often controlled through the coding systems used in the analysis of data. According to Patton (2002), the use of coding helps provide rigor and standardization to the analysis process. Coding allows for a systematic, yet creative approach that happens simultaneously to develop themes and inferences. In this study, the interplay between the data collection process and

the analysis of information was considered an integral element of the standard of quality, and organizational steps that were taken to ensure that coding was thoughtful and strongly supported by quality data control methods. Organizational steps included transcribing and analyzing that was timely; an organizational system that included binders for each participant with sections for each interview and observation session; and a coding system that was semi-structured, yet flexible to meet the needs of the open-ended nature of this naturalistic inquiry.

***Methods triangulation.***

Methods triangulation is defined as the process of “checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods” (Patton, 2002, p. 556). The multiple forms of data gathering were essential to the aim of reporting on the various experiences of the teachers who were participating. This triangulation of data is explained by Stake (2005) as “a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of and observation or interpretation” (p. 454). Triangulation also helped to identify the different perceptions of reality that were centered around the issues studied. This strategy adds credibility by strengthening the confidence in the conclusions that were developed (Patton, 2002).

***Intellectual rigor.***

The value of intellectual rigor is recognized here as an essential element of research credibility. It was the intention of this researcher to commit to a high-quality analysis based on integrity, creativity, and literary competence. The way that the research is transferred to the reader is an imperative component of

maintaining rigor in the report process. It is crucial that the composition of the evaluation and findings is clear, concise, and strongly representative of the truth of the issues (Stake, 2005). This was accomplished through writing practices that reflected skilled, detailed, and thorough methods.

### ***The development of an audit process***

Another way to attain credibility in the research process was to engage in the development of an ongoing audit process. This strategy has the aim of validating the accuracy of the reported accounts. Glesne (1999) suggests that

Obtaining the reactions of respondents to your working drafts is time-consuming, but respondents may (1) verify that you have reflected their perspectives; (2) inform you of sections that, if published, could be problematic for either personal or political reasons; and (3) help you to develop new ideas and interpretations.

(152)

In this research, the method of member checking was used on primary participants as a way to check the reactions listed by Glesne and to assess the trustworthiness of the data. Ongoing dialogue with the participants ensured “the truth value of the data” (Lopez, 1999, p. 199). These checks happened at the end of the data-gathering period. In addition, colleagues were solicited to act as peer auditors of the accounts being documented. These peers were educators in the bilingual education field, so they were considered expert auditors who were not directly related to the research study. Patton (2002) states, “An internal audit by a disinterested expert can render judgment about the quality of data collection and analysis” (p. 562). Feedback from

participants and colleagues was valuable to the accuracy and credibility of this research study.

***Position of researcher.***

Finally, it is essential to the quality of this work that I made a statement regarding my position as the researcher of this study. The endeavor to accomplish a completed dissertation has its roots in my upbringing, higher education experiences, and my personal beliefs about diversity, opportunity, and power.

As a child in a family of eleven, I never expected the world to be fair. Sharing a bedroom with five sisters was a way to develop a consciousness about democracy and making sure all were cared for. Moving aside for foster brothers and sisters was also a way to learn that everyone deserves a chance, regardless of how important I might think my issues were. At five years of age, I was intrigued by language, as I took it upon myself to teach my Spanish-speaking foster brother how English sounds were made—knowing in those earliest memories that language was accompanied by something way bigger than me. And although there were not a lot of “things” in my world as there are for my children today, and there was no adult attention available just for me, I found solace in stories. The gifts I received from my father were the Monday evening trips to the public library. I remember standing in one corner of the library as an eight-year-old, making a plan to start at one shelf and read every book until I circled the entire children’s section. Returning home with my pile of books, I looked forward to playing school with my four little sisters and a plethora of extra children from the neighborhood.

I am a child of the 1960s, and Civil Rights, feminism, and desegregation are a part of who I am. I experienced it as a little white girl, and it would be decades before I could even attempt to articulate the ugly truth about privilege and inequity. So, when I think about my position as a researcher, the sum of who I am seeps through. My belief in fairness and opportunity, intrigue with language, passion for the written word, and genuine love for working with children, has positioned me as someone who is extremely interested in the academic well being of the population of students that I am choosing to study.

With a background in elementary education, a specialization in reading, and a personal belief that learning should be embedded in the language and culture of students, I began, in the fall of the year 2001, to take notice of what was happening with literacy practices for learners with a home language other than English. It was at this time that I started a position as a literacy specialist in a dual language Spanish-English elementary school. For the ten years that followed, I immersed myself in the educational and second language acquisition fields to better understand how emerging bilinguals acquire literacy.

The deeper I engaged myself in my work, the stronger the realization of a need for change became. Inequities in resources for marginalized students and underdeveloped knowledge bases of educational professionals were revealed. The chasm between what I felt instinctively for my students, and the reality of the instructional practices in place was immense. In the beginning, I was not always able to put a theory, scholarly term, or critical argument to my need for change, but I felt strongly that it could not be ignored. My discontent toward the status quo,

prompted me to seek out a way that I could become a stronger agent of change. My work as a doctoral student in an urban education program has provided me with an avenue to pursue the knowledge and critical perspectives I need to best influence the literacy practices of second language learners. Since then, I have learned to put a name on the conditions of students in schools and the greater society. I have created a professional and personal platform from which I can identify and interrogate misrepresentations, gaps, barriers, and deep-seeded personal ideologies. This journey is a work in progress that allows me to continue to educate myself, and others, as a way to promote changes that will improve the conditions under which children are expected to achieve.

The task that I have set out to accomplish is complex, and it is one that I have not taken lightly. I feel strongly about the rights of children to have equitably-minded, expert instruction, and my passion for literacy and language has carved this path that has become my profession and an integral part of my personal life.

With this said, I recognize that my choice of a naturalistic inquiry with a postmodern framework is not one that I had to seek out. I am a postmodern thinker, who has difficulty accepting truth based on the status quo. I understand that knowledge is very intimately linked to power distribution, and it is the individual, group, and institutionalized power relationships that determine whose language and knowledge is valued. My challenge is to synthesize who I am and what I know to confront the educational systems that are fundamentally political and undeniably wrought with oppressive practices. My hope is to promote a new understanding of how decision-making powers tamper with learning and life

opportunities for already marginalized groups of students. As a qualitative, postmodern researcher, I know that there will be no final ending to this study, yet another set of questions will be expected.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of four teachers nominated for their reputations as highly effective, as they engaged in the reading intervention process with their students who are acquiring English in an educational setting. The intent was to expose the mechanisms of educational policy initiatives that affect the preservation of instructional practices that have been rigorously proven to be the most effective promotion of academic achievement for English language learners. Specific components of this inquiry surround issues of teacher decision-making, pedagogical implications, and resource and support systems that exist. The aim of the study, then, was to create a pedagogical model that represents how effective teachers protect the tenets of instruction that optimize success for students experiencing school with two languages.

The literature review of this current study is presented in two parts. The first part explores historical and current education policy as it pertains to the English language learner. The purpose of this section is to provide context for an understanding of the permeation of initiatives and mandates in the daily educational experiences of those students whose home language is one other than English (Menken, 2008). The current elements of policy are critically presented to expose issues that are inherently problematic. The second part of this review delves into the tenets of literacy and second language acquisition research that are highly

respected as the foundation of effective instructional practices that promote reasonable and optimal academic growth for English language learners. Each of these frameworks is presented from a perspective that interrogates the elements of authority and the forces of schooling that work to exclude and marginalize particular groups of students, in this case, English language learners.

A postmodern perspective offers a fitting approach to conducting this naturalistic inquiry that seeks to revision the way in which school can be experienced. In addition, it is the position of this researcher that this study centered on practices with English language learners is one that was conducted through a postmodern lens that recognized that knowledge acquisition is intimately related to the distribution of power in an environment (Foster, 1999).

Furthermore, it was critical to the gathering, analysis, and discussion phases of this research to acknowledge that power relates to language use. Foster (1999), in his work on administrative leadership, comments on language use from a postmodern perspective:

Language and thought here are reflections of cultural antics and a means of attempting to order the world. And this, of course, is what leadership does best. It is through the use of language that leaders search for followers, and it is through the use of language that leaders attempt to reorder the world. (p. 106)

Richardson (2000) writes about a specific type of postmodern thinking as she discusses how poststructuralism links language to power. She states

Language is how social organization and power are defined and contested and the place where our sense of selves, our subjectivity, is constructed.

Understanding language as competing discourses, competing ways of giving meaning and of organizing the world, makes language a site of exploration and struggle. (p. 929)

It is with this framework that this naturalistic inquiry with a multiple case strategy was conducted. The intent was to gather data and conduct analyses and discussions that were reflexive (Tierney, 2000) and transformative.

## Chapter Four

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of four teachers nominated for their reputations as highly effective. The intent is to expose the current mechanisms in school environments that affect the preservation of instructional practices that for decades have been rigorously proven to be exemplary. This examination seeks to promote a greater understanding of how teacher decision-making is impacted by social and political forces and the influences these decisions have on the educational experiences of those students who experience school in two languages. The goal of this dissertation study is create a pedagogical model that will assist in the understanding of how high quality instruction for English language learners (ELLs) is preserved in this era of education reform.

This chapter presents key findings of data that were gathered through a series of interviews and observations of teachers of English language learners in an elementary school setting. The approaches to obtaining the study information were inspired and guided by the following primary research question: In the case of English language learners (ELLs) with reading intervention needs, how do effective teachers preserve high quality instructional practices in an era emphasizing high stakes accountability measures and mandated policies?

The sub-questions guiding this inquiry focus on the specifics regarding the preservation of daily quality of instruction that has a cumulative effect over a

substantial period of time. They include: (1) During the reading intervention process, how are teacher's instructional decisions affected by policy initiatives? (2) In what ways are teachers consciously adapting their pedagogy to uphold their commitment to high quality instruction for English language learners? (3) What resources and support systems contribute to the successful preservation of high quality instruction for teachers of ELLs with reading intervention needs?

The information in this chapter is outlined in a way that first introduces the four participants of the study, and then presents a summary of three themes that unfolded as the daily experiences of the participants were examined closely.

### **Introducing the Participants**

#### **School settings.**

The research participants in this study were comprised of a group of reputable teachers nominated by administrators in their respective districts. At the time of data collection, all of the teachers were in positions in elementary bilingual programs. Two of the teachers (Luis and Ana) had assignments at Henry Elementary School in a district serving approximately 21,000 students. The other two teachers (Laura and Carlos) had placements at Goodall Elementary School in an adjacent school district serving just over 23,000 students. Both elementary schools are located in Midwestern urban settings with populations estimated between 78,000 and 100,00 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The demographics of both schools are outlined in Table 5. Because this study cannot be separated from the socio-cultural context surrounding the issues of bilingual education, it is essential to

provide a brief synopsis of the schools where the experiences of the participants transpired.

***Henry Elementary School.***

Henry Elementary School is situated in a modest setting of one-story homes in the heart of the Kawi Public School District. The school shares a ten-acre area with one of the three public high schools in the city. The sports fields and running track of the upper school offer Henry Elementary an open spacious surrounding. The mosaic-brick building resembles many elementary schools throughout the Midwest, and the towering oaks insinuate that generations have sent their children to this neighborhood school. On any given afternoon, the front lawn is satiated with an assortment of adults, some lone, others conversing in random chatter. Loose toddlers attempt to climb the low maple trees scattered along the border of the front walkway, and the fluorescent-vested crossing guard orchestrates the commotion. The stone entrance is weathered and unceremoniously welcoming.

Henry Elementary School was built in 1957. It is a P5 and Title I school with accolades for having an exemplary literacy agenda. Henry Elementary has just over 700 students, with approximately 84% identified as students in need of free or reduced lunch. The district's website reports that the school has a student population that is 31% Black, 44% Hispanic, and 20% White. The English language learner population is just over 30%. Henry Elementary School is one of seven of the district's bilingual programs. The program currently follows a transitional model and it is a strand within the larger school population.

***Goodall Elementary School.***

Goodall Elementary School is nestled in a working-class neighborhood in the central part of Clovis Public School District. The long driveway into the school separates an unused weeded parking lot on the right and an alleyway on the left. A mixture of one-story homes and modest industrial buildings surrounds the city blocks adjacent to the school. The chain link fence that greets visitors upon entry stands in contrast to the modern sleek lines of the imposing school building. An eight-foot electronic sign is embedded into the ground next to a flagpole, where the American flag sways freely. The sign flashes “Bienvenidos,” “Welcome,” and other informative bits in both the Spanish and English languages. The school is striking with a three double-door entryway, walls of glass panes, and red brick bordered by indigenous Latin American patterns.

Goodall Elementary School serves approximately 900 students. Within the school there are two primary programs. One part of the school is supported by a creative arts curriculum, and the other part houses a dual language program. Although both focuses are under one umbrella school, there is often conflicting agendas that exist between the two. Fewer than 400 of the school’s students attend the dual language program, and the families of two-thirds of those students have requested the school choice option. The remaining third of the students reside within the school’s boundaries. The demographics of the school include a population that is 22% Black, 59% Hispanic, and 17% White. The ELL population (recorded as *Limited English Proficient*) of the school was 27%, and 87% of the total school population was identified as free or reduced lunch status.

Table 5: Summary of School Demographics

School	Number of Students	District Name	District Size	City Size (population)	Demographics %	Free/Reduced Lunch Eligibility %
<b>Henry Elementary School</b>	700	Kawi Public School System	21,000 students	78,853	Asian 1 Black 31 Hispanic 44 Nat Am <1 White 20 2+ 4 ELL 30	84
<b>Goodall Elementary School</b>	900	Clovis Public School System	23,000 students	99,738	Asian 0 Black 22 Hispanic 59 Nat Am 0 White 17 2+ 2 ELL 27	87

This table summarizes the demographics of both Henry Elementary School and Goodall Elementary School. The information was retrieved from the Department of Public Instruction of the state that the schools reside in. The source of the population data is the U.S. Census Bureau (2011).

### **Study participants.**

The method of choosing the participants of this study was one of purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007). Based on the intent to examine the experiences of highly effective teachers of English language learners, a set of criteria was established from a thorough perusal of the scholarly literature surrounding pedagogy and practices of learners of two languages (Appendix A). Administrators with experience in the field of bilingual education were asked to nominate those teachers they felt best represented the criteria. The following section provides a detailed introduction to each of the four selected participants of this study that seeks to understand their experiences within the larger context of this current era of education reform. A summary of the participants follows the introductions (Table 6).

***Luis.***

When I called Luis to introduce myself and let him know that he was nominated for my study, he responded with uncertainty. The uncertainty was not because he questioned the authenticity of my intentions. Rather, I learned later, he hesitated because he was perplexed by his nomination. Even so, he cordially agreed to meet the following week to learn more about the study.

Not having met Luis before, I had a sudden hyper-consciousness of my whiteness and the stereotype that follows female, white teachers in graduate level specialist positions. I wanted to be trusted, and it was my intent to create an authentic researcher/participant rapport. Luis has a commanding rough-around-the-edges stature of over six feet tall that is relaxed through his attire of pullover sweaters and black jeans. I immediately got the sense that if Luis were not here teaching in his fourth grade class, he would be sitting in an offbeat coffeehouse engaged in fervent political exchanges with like-minded acquaintances for hours on end. Nonetheless, he was there in that classroom, and after a few minutes of my awkward introduction, I realized that Luis was going to teach me a great deal about the complexities of living and teaching in places where he feels like a “second-class citizen” in his own country. The rawness of his declaration compelled me to offer him an honest statement of my ongoing reflection of myself as an individual who has experienced the world with visible and invisible privileges (Marx, 2006). I could tell in his eyes that he understood, and in the first meeting, even before accepting my invitation to participate in the study, the conversation with Luis was invigoratingly unpiloted through issues of hegemony, ignorance, and English dominance in

bilingual education. Luis was unyieldingly agitated and passionate. He told me he did not have the fight in him like he used to, but I had a glimpse, and knew there was more.

Luis is 45 years old. His life is a captivating sequence of decisions and moves. He was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and he remained there until he moved to the United States mainland at the age of 27. Luis is married and has two high school-aged children. When he speaks of his wife, there is an unquestionable bond that has only been strengthened through their journey across the water together. She shares his profession and was a teacher at the same school as Luis during the time of the study. Together they traveled the 30-mile commute to and from school every day, and I feel confident in my surmise that the space was filled with a combination of the love of their family and the politics of their school days.

As a child, Luis' first school experiences were in a public elementary school in Puerto Rico. He later moved to a bilingual Catholic middle school. Luis described his language experiences in Puerto Rico as if he has thought about them often:

In Puerto Rico, you have to take English when you start school. If you know English, you know everything. The rest doesn't matter [sarcastically]. In Puerto Rico, being a territory, English actually is an official language, so we have to take English since we started school... actually, since first grade. It wasn't the most sophisticated or the most complex English you can learn, because it was taught by teachers in which English was barely a second language. My parents always bought cable TV and I was exposed to English language television. I guess that helped me. Also, in middle school, I went to

a Catholic school. This school was, I would say, at least 30% bilingual. The English they taught there was definitely much more sophisticated and complex than the public school system. So, I had that experience, too. Once I got to college, I was taught either by Puerto Rican teachers that lived there that have full mastery of the [English] language... or I had American professors... that taught there. I always got an A in English. For some reason... that's before I even lived here... I always had a good domain of English compared to other Puerto Rican students. I remember that in college I had two or three American professors, and I always got an A in the class. They always motivated me, and they said your English is so good. I believed them until I came here [laughs uneasily]. They were very encouraging. They motivated me. I always did well. I was able to converse, and other students always came to me for help. So, my experience with English in Puerto Rico was a good one. (March 29, 2012)

It was through Luis' retelling of his early educational background that he unveiled a hint of the dichotomy in his experiences surrounding language and culture, and he offered a foreshadowing of a force that has had, and continues to have, an incredibly powerful impact on him. Of the four study participants, Luis was the one who shared the most detail about his background. In addition to being truly intrigued by his storytelling, I was certain that there was a great deal in his story that would contribute to my understanding of Luis as a teacher of bilingual learners.

As Luis continued telling his story, he reported on how he completed his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social Sciences - Geography at the University of Puerto Rico. He described that experience and the type of student he was:

When I finished my Bachelor's degree, I was 27. I decided to please my parents to enter college. Not really that I was interested, or I cared for it. I dropped out like three times. Finally, at 24, I decided to take it seriously. Basically, I knew... I got tired of having so many temporary jobs that didn't challenge me intellectually. I knew that I was underachieving. (March 29, 2012)

During his time in college, Luis met and married his wife. He had his first child, a son, during the last semester of school. Upon graduation, Luis and his wife decided to move to the United States mainland and break from the family expectation of working in their parents' businesses. His mother was a lawyer, and his father was the president of an insurance company. His wife's family owned a pest control business. He explained the decision he and his wife made:

First of all, the reason we left Puerto Rico is not the typical reason why someone will leave their country... My wife and I... I think this is something that is basically why we were attracted to each other. We had that burning desire to become totally independent. We said Puerto Rico is a little island. It's not big enough. We are going to have a whole ocean of distance now. That was the main reason we came. The family heavily criticized us. They said, "Why do you have to do that? You have everything here. Now you have to speak in English. You have to adapt to a new culture." (March 29, 2012)

Luis and his family moved to Cleveland. He remembered the day as August 30, 1994. My mind quickly retrieved the year 1994 as the period of time when anti-immigration backlash was intensifying, and even though Luis, as a Puerto Rican, is an American citizen, he continues to fight discriminatory sentiments. He ardently defended his rights:

I'm not going to let anybody make me feel like that. It's a ton of BS. This is ridiculous. We have the right to be here, like any one of them, because after all, we are American citizens... not by our choice. The United States invaded Puerto Rico in 1898. So, it's their wish. It's their will. They [the U.S.] made us American citizens... we didn't ask for it. They gave it to us [citizenship]. Now they have to deal with us... whether they like it or not. Moving from San Juan to Cleveland, it's like moving from New York to L.A. Why are we going to quit our goals, just because. I can say it with ease now... now, eighteen years later. It was pretty hard those first [years]... (March 29, 2012).

Showhamy (2006) talks about the political and societal mechanisms that can often "lead to violations of democratic processes and personal/language rights" (p. xv). Luis put a human face to this. His willingness to bare this to me, prompted me to honestly admit my own ignorance regarding Puerto Rico as a result of my experience with whitewashed versions of United States history curriculum. I wanted to delve further. I asked him about the early experiences in Cleveland. He reflected:

I knew that I was speaking grammatically correct, and the grammar was correct in my mind... the syntax, everything, but when the words came out, I

learned for the first time that my accent was so thick and so heavy that many people couldn't understand everything I say... first time I realized that I have that... that a lot of people consider not being normal, and it was something to be embarrassed about... it was something to feel bad about. It was something that I should feel that I wasn't competent... I was less intelligent. All of those things... what a cultural shock, and how humiliating. Especially when it came from people who were selling me a hamburger. In those first two or three years there was so much anger in me... in both of us... frustration and a lot of tears. (March 29, 2012)

Luis' face still reflects the anguish of almost two decades earlier. He easily remembered this time when he was a 27 year-old man experiencing this violation of his human rights for the first time. At that point, I realized that the discussion surrounding the data had to move beyond what I would experience in the classrooms of my participants. I could not discuss the preservation of highly effective practices, unless I situated the conversation in the context of these experiences. We are surrounded by the political and cultural mechanisms that deeply impact specific groups of teachers and students who are expected to achieve at the same pace and efficiency as those who have historically benefitted from these same mechanisms. It is for this reason that I am telling Luis' story first.

Luis and his wife moved to Orlando, Florida the next year, where they found a regional contrast to the Cleveland experience. He explained, "We started seeing a different United States. We go to a place, and now suddenly our accents don't matter. We suddenly start meeting, you know, Americans from Anglo descent who

were actually friendly. It was a totally different scenario” (March 29, 2012). In Florida, Luis worked as a substance abuse counselor at a halfway house. He also worked in a prison. Despite the “social comfort” that he and his family felt in Florida, economic reasons pushed them back to, “believe it or not,” (March 29, 2012) Cleveland. In Cleveland, he worked as a substance abuse counselor for a halfway house that focused more on Hispanic clients. As it happened, Luis and his wife, upon expecting their second child, moved back to Puerto Rico and spent a brief amount of time working in the family businesses. Then, as though he could not believe it, even as he recounted it, he told the story of the third return to Cleveland:

Luis: There, while I was working at the last residential treatment center, I got really depressed with that job. I don’t regret that experience. It was such a deep, profound experience I value so much, but it is also a very depressing line of work. It is a very depressing profession. I knew I didn’t want to do this for the rest of my life. I remember when I worked in the prison in Florida, there was an inmate that always kept telling me, “I wish I would have had a teacher like you when I was in school. I was a troubled child since very early. I wish I would have had somebody that would have influenced me like you have now.” He told me, “I think you should get into education.”

L.E: If you go back to thinking about when you first thought of going into education, was that it? That was the point?

Luis: Yeah. It was an African American gentleman... an inmate... very educated. He had a master’s degree. Unfortunately, he had a

substance abuse addiction that took him there. He was my most educated client on my caseload. He was more educated than me at that point. I didn't have a master's at that point. He had his master's.

LE: When he said that to you, what did you think about? Did you think, yeah, I could do that, or did you brush it off?

Luis: No, actually, I didn't brush it off. I started reflecting immediately. That night I even mentioned it to [my wife]. We started giving it some serious thought every day... and reflecting over it. So, we moved to Cleveland, and once again I was hired by the residential treatment center. But I never forgot this person. Those words always stuck in my mind. I remember when I left my job as a counselor in that prison in Florida, the last day he gave me a Bible as a gift. He told me, "I have something for you the last day." I said, "I want to do something for you the last day. There's so little that I can do for you. There are so many rules and regulations. What is something that you would really like?" He told me, "It's something that you cannot do. But for so many years, I have been craving just a hamburger with a Dr. Pepper and some fries." I asked him, "Which one is your favorite?" He said, "A Whopper." Then I thought, you know what? This is my last day. I'm going to do something illegal. I'm going to introduce some contraband here. If they fire me, it doesn't matter. I already resigned and I cannot get in legal problems because it's not something bad. It's just food. So, I'm going to get him a Whopper, fries, and a Dr. Pepper. I gave it to

him that day. He gave me that Bible. I always remembered his words. I told him, "I think I'm going to make the jump. The only problem is I don't have a degree in education." (March 29, 2012)

Luis softened when he spoke of this interaction, and I was convinced that his work in the social services field had benefitted many. Luis' encounter with his client in prison was a significant turning point in his life that moved him to eventually accept a position with the Cleveland Public School system as a paraprofessional. He lightened up when he remembered how he felt:

I was very excited. Very excited. I had been doing this other job, five years at that time. I kept thinking of [the inmate's] words. You know what? Yes, I would like to make a difference in someone's life... when I can really make a difference. (March 29, 2012)

This first assignment in the education profession required that Luis travel to different schools to work with bilingual students with special education needs. The following year, he was placed in a middle school. He explained:

It was such a horrible experience. It was a very long year for me. I told my wife, if I remain in the education field, I know one thing for sure... it will never be in middle school... I told the bilingual program department, if you can't assign me to an elementary school, I'm done. So, the next school year, 2001-2002, they placed me in a bilingual elementary school, and I was very pleased. I had an awesome year. I knew that if I got certified one day, these are the two grade levels [4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>] I would like to teach. (March 29, 2012)

It was at this time, that Luis contacted Cleveland State University regarding certification programs for teaching. He found out that he needed to complete credits equivalent to a second Bachelor's degree. Feeling disgruntled about the Cleveland State approach, Luis spoke to a fifth grade teacher at his school regarding an alternative certification program in a Midwestern city in the state where he now resides. He was accepted into the program and given the title of *intern teacher*. He began an assignment that following fall in a 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade split. He looked back on that experience with mixed emotion:

It was an awesome experience with the kids. Not so much with the [adult] mentoring. Not so much with the principal at that school, but with the kids... awesome. Like it's always been for me. I'm in this because of the children. I was just born with that gift... with these kids in particular. Very limited...I have to admit to you, I'm very limited... just 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> [grade]. It's something that's just natural. (March 29, 2012)

Luis applied for a permanent position the following year at a bilingual elementary school in a large urban school district in the "heart of the Hispanic community" (March 29, 2012). He spent the next seven years in fourth and fifth grade classrooms. It was during that time that he completed a master of education degree in educational leadership and nine credits toward a doctoral degree. Luis was frequently asked to fill in for administrative duties and felt like he was someone that others looked up to. In his mind, he was on the path to an administrative assignment:

The principals always assigned me to be the mentor for the new teachers and I filled in for them several times. New principals when they were on duty, they would call me to deal with certain parents, because they were afraid to deal with them. I was well known in the community. I was somebody that people looked up to... except with the last principal, I felt like he was using me too much to do work for him. Then, there was the opportunity to fill an assistant principal position. Even though he overused me, he pushed for somebody else to get the position. I think, well... this is my time to leave. I started being really... I have to admit, I started being very sour about it. My enthusiasm and my duty and loyalty that I had for the school, started diminishing. I changed my whole mentality... my whole attitude about being an administrator. (March 29, 2012)

Luis continued to talk about the many times he felt he was unfairly passed over for administrative positions. He was frustrated and began to believe that his aspirations were not worth the way he was made to feel. As I listened to this account, I thought about certain mechanisms at work in educational institutions and the possibility that Luis had experienced decisions based on the phenomenon of institutional racism. Cummins states this as “unequal divisions of power and resources between groups which are defined on the basis of race” (1989, p. 52). Aronwitz and Giroux (1985) discuss the devaluing of human beings that happens to certain groups based upon how they fit into the dominant culture structure. Certain core knowledge and experience of the dominant culture are upheld, while others’ are dismissed and marginalized. It would not be unreasonable to conjecture the

possibility of Luis' marginalization with his repeated attempts to break into an administrative position.

In addition, Luis felt increasingly aggravated by the focus on standardized test scores and the intense influence state tests had on teacher in-services and building staff meetings. He remembered telling his wife, "I'm sick of it. We're treated here like blue-collar workers. There's a total disregard that we're educated people. I'm sick and tired of that. There's got to be a place where at least they respect you as a professional" (March 29, 2012). Lingering health problems prompted Luis to set his sights on applying for a job in a more accommodating climate. Luis applied for a Nevada teacher's license. He was once again challenged by the additional requirements needed:

I persisted so much. I even sent a letter to President Obama and I sent copies there [state licensing office], because I'm not your ordinary applicant. I have doctoral credits. They didn't want to license me, because I went through an alternative certification program. I said, "I have been licensed eight years now and I have a Master's degree in education... I keep hearing the same nonsense from you people. I'm starting to think that maybe all of this is based on something racial or ethnic." (March 29, 2012)

Luis remembered that two days after challenging the system with that conversation, he received an email that they decided to license him and that legislative changes were going to be made. Luis did not make a change at that point, but he kept his sights set on moving to the Southwest in the future. Luis applied for a bilingual education position in a neighboring Midwestern urban school district.

He received a call for an interview for a sixth grade position. Although hesitant about middle school, he decided to give it a second try. He began the 2009/10 school year with renewed hope. Unfortunately, it was short-lived. Luis recounted the isolation he felt as a bilingual middle school teacher. He relayed an incident that he felt exemplified the climate of the middle school:

It was my experience that some of the regular teachers kept leaving my kids out of field trips. The busses came and someone didn't hire enough busses. One of the teachers said, "No, *they* (Luis' students) can't go. There is not enough room for them." My kids... my students had to hear that. They heard when that teacher said they're not going. There is no room for them. No doubt it was discriminatory. I have been living long enough here... going on 18 years that I know when it is, and when it isn't. I know when sometimes people say things, and they don't really mean it and they just said something stupid... but I know when they really mean it too. It was an evil intention. It was mean-spirited and it was blatant. My kids were totally marginalized and me, too. I could count with my fingers the people that would talk to me there. [They say], "Why is he a teacher?" They didn't have to say it. I read it in their minds. You know their attitudes. Not everybody's like that. You know, not coincidentally, the people that I had the longest conversations with were the custodians. Let me put it this way... a couple of Black guys were the only ones willing to have a long conversation with me... and the social workers... usually the social workers. (March 29, 2012)

The field trip incident, although a diminutive snapshot within this multiple case study, is representative of what Luis feels is endemic in school environments. Soto (1997) refers to these minuets as *stories of pain*. She states:

It is universally recognized that all human beings long to be valued and appreciated. Yet the stories of pain [in the study] show that schools need to evaluate their current modes of interaction and communication with linguistically and culturally diverse children to meet those basic human needs. Anglo-centered, detached ways of interacting are sending messages to Latino/a children that are being internalized as messages of rejection rather than acceptance. Intentional or unintentional, implicit or explicit, these messages and ways of interacting need to be reexamined and viewed in light of the needs expressed by language-minority informants. Educational climates of neglect are not helpful for the development of children or a democratic nation. (p. 91)

The next fall, Luis moved to his current fourth grade classroom at Henry Elementary School. He is coming to the end of his second year in this fourth grade, and he speaks fondly of this place around which he and I have centered our conversations.

***Ana.***

Ana moves and speaks with a purpose that suggests efficiency and the ability to keep several things happening successfully at once. The design of her third grade classroom is one that I understood and was completely comfortable in. Her space was literacy-rich, and the artifacts around her room provided ample evidence that

she filled her teaching with instructional practices that promote success for elementary learners. Mini-lesson posters and checklists for analyzing text bordered her carpeted sitting area, and bookshelves were strategically placed to provide students a haven for both Spanish and English reading. The student desks were deliberately grouped in a way that only a teacher who believed in student dialogue and collaboration would permit, and her desk was off to the side in a way that openly invited students.

Ana did not wait for me to ask questions. She jumped right in, and before I knew it, we were deep into Readers' Workshop data, discussing student achievement and leveled reading materials for individual needs. Realizing I had not turned on my tape recorder after five minutes, I quickly fumbled into my bag to retrieve the tool that would help me document the experiences of this colleague whose rich accounts I certainly did not want to miss.

Ana's petite frame moved around her desk to organize papers as she spoke with me. I was aware, however, that she was fully engaged in our conversation. Ana spoke of growing up on the northside of a large urban Midwestern city, an area that is rated as one of the top 10 most impoverished in America. Ana is Hispanic, and her home language as a child was Spanish. Although Ana swiftly moves through my questions regarding her background, she says enough to ignite a curiosity in me regarding her early schooling and how it influenced her present decision-making with her students. Ana told me about her experiences in a monolingual elementary school. I asked her about her early language experiences. Our conversation was brief, yet telling:

Ana: I remember when I very first started, there was a teacher who would pull me out for ESL services, and we'd play like Goldfish and little games. Then I remember once I got to third grade... that was it.

LE: Prior to entering kindergarten, did you speak just Spanish at home?

Ana: Yes, it was all Spanish.

LE: So you learned English in kindergarten?

Ana: Yes, my reading was always weak. It was just horrible... even through high school. I was doing okay on the math, but it depended on if there was a lot of writing. It was hard.

LE: Do you think that if you had a little more Spanish support... ?

Ana: I probably would have had a better time, because there was really nothing there... I couldn't ask anyone. Once you get to a certain age, you're embarrassed, so you just do whatever you can and that's it. In middle school... it's like, forget it, don't even... then the other kids think you're dumb. You don't understand it.

LE: Do you think that, in middle school, you could have used a little language support?

Ana: Oh yeah, middle and high school. Even like when I took competency tests, I remember those because I used to get sick every time they were announced—Oh, competency tests—I was like, oh my God, because the deal was they used to tell us we wouldn't be able to graduate if we didn't pass them. And then you had to go to summer school or something. So, of course, then I would get even more hyped

up about it. My whole thing was that if I'm going to flunk here, that just proves that I can't get through this. I passed them... I don't know how. (April 19, 2012)

Ana abruptly moved on, though I wanted to linger there, thinking about the number of minutes, in the number of days, throughout the numerous grades that Ana must have felt disconnected and silenced. Many scholars have written about inferior schooling for minority children (Ogbu, 1974), and the silencing (Freire & Macedo, 1987) and marginalization that are perpetuated in educational systems (Delpit, 2006; 2012; Giroux, 1992). Ana's story is in a sea of similar stories. Each one speaking to the issue of whose knowledge and background is valued. Popkewitz (1998), with postmodern sensibility, comments that "the uneven playing field of schools has continued almost uninterrupted, and the lives of children in schools are often worse now than when I started teaching in the 1960s" (p. 3). It is through subsequent interviews and observations with Ana, that I understand her impassioned commitment to making academic and cultural connections as a way of leveling the playing field for her students. In one discussion, Ana spoke openly about the responsibility she feels to create cultural bridges for her students:

It's very demanding. It drives me nuts, because I try to separate myself from it... but I can't, because they're Hispanic. I was brought up like they were. It's like the expectations are too high sometimes, but if I was able to do it... they're even better off. I told the students, "You guys are lucky. You are in a bilingual setting. I wasn't. I was literally in a monolingual setting. I couldn't

understand anything. So, if I was able to do it, and pulled through it, you can." (April 19, 2012)

Ana told me that she was at risk for not graduating, but her parents were firm about her finishing. She recounted how she did not feel like college material because of the bad experiences she had. Ana eventually entered college, and it was a circuitous sequence of events that landed her there. She recounted her struggles:

I was really back and forth doubting it, and I wasn't happy. When I was 16, I worked at Burger King. When I was 18 [I said], "I don't want to work at Burger King all my life." So, I went retail... shoe stores and all that. They were always giving me the weekends, of course, and then finally I wanted to get out of retail, so I ended up in the bank. I had obstacles at the bank. There were [job] postings that required at least a two-year degree. I kept hitting the wall... hitting the wall. Everything...the impossible. Every obstacle was just coming through. It was just one of those things... then I literally got depressed. Then I got married, and I had my daughter right away. One thing just led to the other. My point is, no matter how hard I worked before I started [college], it didn't matter because I didn't have an education. They would always pull me out from being a teller... to go to the international section to interpret... all the time... every time they had clients from Central America they would pull me out. That wasn't even my job description. Then there was a job opening at international [department]. I was like perfect... they know me, they always pulled me out, so they probably... maybe I'd have a chance, because I have some experience coming in and interpreting. Then

they rejected me, because I didn't have at least a two-year degree. I was livid. I was just like... I felt like nothing. I was good enough when they didn't have anybody. (April 19, 2012)

Ana spoke about being angry with herself, and how it was her fault for not having job opportunities. Lopez (1999), in her ethnography of migrant children in central Pennsylvania, discusses how institutional racism moves between the schoolyard into other arenas of society where young people look for work and life opportunities. She states:

The way students are treated in schools mimics the way they are to be treated in society. Public education is preparing these students for the secondary labor market. Fillmore and Meyer (1992) note that many schools with a special curriculum for English language learners focus on teaching basic skills instruction in place of the regular curriculum that other students receive. These students are not provided with opportunities to think or extend their knowledge in any open-ended format. (p. 83)

Ana clearly blamed herself for her own perceived inadequacies, that were presumably created through years of being a student in a system that has sent incessant messages of rejection framed by cultural deficit ideologies (Sleeter & Grant, 1987; Valencia, 1997). Remarkably, she did not idle in that space for long. After knowing Ana for just a few short weeks, I was not surprised to learn that the bank incident motivated her to move forward with her educational plan. She described her intentions and the mixed support she received from those around her:

What really motivated me was that they [the bank] were requiring a two-year degree. I thought I could do a two-year degree. You know, I just got married and then had the little one. Basically, I just told my husband, "This is what's happening... I really feel like going back [to school]." He said, "If you want to go back, that's fine. But, if you're going to go back, find a four-year college. Don't even go to a two-year." He said, "Find a place that you're going to be happy at and just go." It was really good support. I was all excited. [Her bright face suddenly turned sullen.] It was funny, because sometimes it's family that motivates you in a negative way. The rumor was that I was looking to go to school, and it came out to be, "Oh, she is looking to get a two-year degree." And one of the family members said, "No mas está haciendo ilusiones." Like you're just imaging illusions. I started crying. My husband asked me what was wrong. I said, "I just can't believe what they were saying. It's bad enough I don't believe in myself, but my family doesn't either." It was pretty bad. (April 19, 2012)

Ana's eyes filled with tears. Perhaps her story of pain (Soto, 1997) illustrates how institutionalized and societal expectations permeate families and deeply impact individuals. Throughout my time with Ana, she often referred to the encouragement she received from her husband as she went to school, worked outside of the home, and alongside him raised two children. Although the wounds of her relatives' words were still biting, it was evident that she was filled with gratitude for the counter-influence of her husband's support.

Ana completed her undergraduate degree in elementary education in a college system that she credits for understanding her own learning needs. She recognizes the influences her college experiences have had on her own interactions with students. She described it as:

There is no way you can fail. They would literally give you the time. Here it is, if you want to fix it... fine, if not, it will be your choice to either pass or fail. That was the mentality. So, of course, it was, "Oh no, I'm not failing this. I'll do whatever I have to do to fix it." Give me the opportunity... and that's how I work here, too. My system is that it is not a one-time deal kind-of-thing for reading, writing, or whatever we're doing. [I tell my students], "You didn't give me what I wanted, so take it back, fix it, and bring it." That's how I learned. Throughout the day, that's how we function. That's what I love about ... [the college], because I was so leery to go back to school. (April 19, 2012)

Since graduating, Ana has always worked with ELLs. Her first job was in a two-way bilingual program. Ana said that her first job was not what she had prepared for. Her account resembles the experiences of others in schools where bilingual programming is not structured on sound research-based foundations:

The program was two-way bilingual, but it was just a mess. Teachers were all teaching whatever they wanted... whatever language. If one teacher was strong in Spanish, that's all she would teach. If one teacher was strong in English... they were doing whatever they felt strong with. So, when I got them [students] in fourth grade, we had to do fifty percent English, fifty

percent Spanish. Then, I would say, "It's Monday, now we're teaching Spanish." The kids were like, "We can't really read in Spanish." So, then I would say, "Okay, then let's do it in English." Then, I'd have the other half saying, "We can't read in English." I just couldn't function that way. Then, I was working with two different groups, because they couldn't do the other language. I still had to teach the concepts. It wasn't the best setting for the kids or for me. (April 19, 2012)

According to dual language researchers (Collier & Thomas, 1992; Lindholm-Leary, 2001), Ana's instincts were correct. Dual language programs where teachers' language ability directs language allocation are approaches that put fidelity of programming into question. Lindholm-Leary writes:

"Students need significant exposure to the partner language to promote high levels of proficiency and achievement in that language. Based on program evaluations of effective programs and on opinions of experts in dual language education, students need at least ten percent but no more than fifty percent of their instructional day devoted to English. However, for programs that offer students ten percent of their instructional day in English, there must be incremental increases over the students' elementary school years to a fifty percent level in English to allow for the effective integration of language and content." (2007, p. 30)

Ana moved to a long-term substitute position in a bilingual elementary school. She hoped for a permanent position, but one did not become available. She

decided to take on the challenge of teaching Spanish in a charter middle school. Ana explained:

It was Spanish for Spanish-speaking students. It was like teaching foreign language, because they [students] didn't know any of the skills. So it was like teaching Spanish 101. My fifth year, I was really getting burned out in the middle of the year. I thought, "I don't know if I can finish the year, this is really a lot... dealing with behaviors. It's not what I want." I finally realized this is not why I came into this business. (April 19, 2012)

Ana completed her first master's degree with a Director of Curriculum and Instruction certification while she was working at the charter school. She subsequently finished a second master's degree in Administration. Ana began her current position at Henry Elementary School five years ago as the bilingual third grade teacher. She reflected on the time she spent on her graduate work, "All this money and look at what's happened. I don't regret it. It really did help... changing my instruction, best practices... all of that. Hopefully, it will eventually..." (April 19, 2012). Our conversation naturally came to a stopping point, as Ana shook off her thoughts. She appeared a bit unsettled, and I wondered if she was contemplating her next move. I left Ana's classroom that day, admiring her tenacity to push through the obstacles that were thrust upon her just by virtue of who she was culturally and linguistically. I knew Ana was exactly the type of teacher I wanted to have conversations with regarding the preservation of highly effective instructional practices with ELLs.

***Laura.***

Even before meeting Laura, I was curious to hear her story, since I learned through the nomination process that Spanish was her second language. Laura and I share the demographics of the majority of elementary education teachers in the United States. We are female, White, and in the age group of the predominant group of educators in public schools. The National Center for Education Statistics (2011) reports that in 2007-08, eighty-four percent of all elementary public school teachers were female, and 83% of all teachers were White. My curiosity about Laura stems from an ongoing inquiry I have about the potential effectiveness of White teachers who work with students whose home language is one other than the dominant culture language. Specifically, my interest lies with those teachers who work in the arena of literacy or reading specialist. Laura's perspective, as a teacher with a reading specialty, was a welcome addition to the richly diverse group of participants of the study. I was looking forward to learning from her, as well as continuing my catechization of the topic of White teachers and bilingual learners. It should be stated here that, although this is of high interest to me, the ethnicity of the participants was an element I deliberately sought not to include in the criteria of the nominations. I wanted to focus on the specific qualities and decisions of those teachers known to be highly effective regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds.

I first met Laura at Goodall Elementary School where she is currently teaching in a fourth grade dual language classroom. It was dismissal time, and as I walked through the students who were eagerly moving to meet their rides, I was

struck by the vast entryway that was filled with clear evidence that two languages were spoken in this school. Laura met me at the office, and we made our way up the stairs through a labyrinth of hallways toward the wing that housed the fourth and fifth grade dual language classrooms. Proficient dual language literacy skills were reflected in the creative writing projects that covered the walls. Laura's classroom resembled the plethora of intermediate classrooms that have weathered almost an entire school year of classroom challenges and celebrations. Student desks were in small group community formations, and the walls were lined with computers, a Smartboard, baskets of leveled readers, and bookshelves. Laura guided me to a back table, and I sensed that I needed to put her at ease regarding the motives of my research. I recognized in Laura's face what I see in the mirror after a day, in a line of days, of very little time for myself. Feeling very indebted for her time, I wanted to make this as effortless as possible. I knew what it was like to have to tie up a year with over two dozen students with only weeks left to do it. I had a deadline, and so did she. Deliberately adding lightness to my voice, I began by asking her to tell me a bit about her background.

Laura was raised in a rural Midwestern community, that today has just over 4,000 students, with boundaries covering ninety square miles. The school district's home web page describes the location as, "... in the midst of farms, lakes, and beautiful rolling hills." Reading further, I am lost in the idyllic scene of natural lakes, glacier trails, and miles of deciduous forests. When I asked Laura about the cultural diversity in her background, she replied introspectively:

I grew up in [town name]. There were no Hispanics. The only minority we had was from one African American family. When I went to [university name]... I felt like I'd had a really sheltered life, because then when I got to college and I met people from other cultures... I realized how sheltered my upbringing had been. Even just other religions... other people who were middle class white people like me, who had different backgrounds as far as their religious beliefs, it felt like... wow! I didn't realize there were so many different kinds of people out there.

(May 8, 2012).

I wanted to know more about Laura's story and how she came from a township where only nine-tenths of one percent of the school district population included ELLs, and a mere nine percent of the students needed assistance with lunch costs. I wanted to know how she came to be the kind of teacher who questioned herself about language and culture, when she could count the number of minority peers in high school on one finger. I thought about the literature I read regarding salvation discourses and pastoral care (Foucault, 1979; Popkewitz, 1998), and wondered if it might be useful in the explanation of Laura's professional course of events.

It is not uncommon for White teachers to approach the instruction of culturally and linguistically diverse populations with strategies designed to help students overcome cultural deficiencies and to rescue them from their environments (Delpit, 2012; Marx, 2006). The notions of pastoral care and teachers as saviors are included here because as a White teacher of ELLs for over a decade, I

recognize I am among the majority of teachers who have power to construct (and deconstruct) knowledge for culturally and linguistically diverse students in my classroom. I have rigorously examined my own practices, and believe redemptive forces must be interrogated as part of the honest, critical discourse regarding the schooling of bilingual learners. In a broader sense, it can be said that the ideology of rescuing students from their own environments and cultures is embedded in the decision-making of current education reform. These decisions profoundly influence salvation-based remedies perpetuated in classrooms.

As a researcher, I question the role of scholarly research in this system of reform. Popkewitz (1998) cautions, "That research continually looks at the successful teacher in successful schools to find the paths for achievement, competence, and, I have argued, salvation. Research may actually reinscribe the very rules of the unequal field that educators sought to change" (p. 119). The data of my current research on the preservation of effective practices has been analyzed through a lens that recognizes the impact of salvation and pastoral ideologies. Teachers such as Laura and myself, as willing agents of change, bear the responsibility to continue to have candid conversations about our identities as White teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

With all of this in mind, I engaged in a discussion with Laura about her decision to teach in bilingual education. I asked her to go back as far as she needed to tell me the story:

It all started with a love of Spanish. I started taking Spanish in junior high school, and I just picked it up real fast and I loved it. I took it all through high

school... took it in college. Originally, I was going to use the Spanish in a business major to do something with international business. I had a work-study position at a day care and a family moved into the area. The kids didn't speak English. They only spoke Spanish. It was so satisfying to be the person that could communicate with them. I realized... I don't want to be in business... I want to do this, because those kids, when I would walk in, their faces would light up. When I brought them Spanish books to read, and I sang them Spanish songs, they were so happy. Their mom was so happy that someone spoke Spanish. Nobody else spoke Spanish. I was the only one.  
(May 8, 2012)

Laura recognizes this work-study experience as one that changed the entire trajectory of her educational and professional course. Laura is filled with exuberance as she speaks of her love for the Spanish language and being bilingual. She continued:

Yes. It was such a good feeling to feel like...I'm really helping these people. I went to the School of Education, and I said, "I've got this Spanish major, and I want to teach kids, but I want to teach kids who speak Spanish. Is that even a job?" They said, "Yes, that's a job. We'll get you on that right track." That's how I ended up in bilingual education. It's been satisfying. It just seems like the children and their families are so grateful that there is somebody who speaks their language. Especially being in this program [dual language] where we elevate the language to the same [status]... or we try to. I think that... and the culture. I think it is just so important. That's kind of how I

came to bilingual education. I just stuck with it, because it's so rewarding. I've taught in the English portion of the program before where I didn't use my Spanish at all, and I found that I missed it. I like being bilingual and practicing, and being able to use both languages. (May 8, 2012)

Laura attended a Catholic and Jesuit university located in a large urban Midwestern state. The university has an enrollment of approximately 8,400 students who represent most of the United States and 68 countries. This was Laura's first experience attending school with a diverse group of students. I couldn't help but contrast this with my own elementary and middle school experience in the 1960s and early 1970s during the height of the Civil Rights movement and desegregation initiatives. I grew up in a public, diverse urban scene. Because of my own history, it is with tremendous interest that I listened to Laura speak about coming for the first time, after almost two decades of genuine homogeneity, to an ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse urban university. Laura remembered:

[The university] was really good at getting you out in the community. I did the work-study at the daycare. I was in the schools... all the time... just tutoring and helping... doing all kinds of things as part of my work. I really saw... I don't know... I guess I just really felt like there are all these different kinds of people, and we're all in the world. We can't just pretend those other people aren't there. You know what I mean? Everybody's like us, and I'm just going to stay by these people who are like us (sarcastic). It was a very positive experience at [the university] to learn about that. (May 8, 2012)

Laura's sentiment that she *learned about* diversity reflects the work of Popkewitz (1998) in his discussions of urban and rural spaces and the racialization that happens in those spaces. He uses the two words urban and rural as a single word, *urban/rural*, "to indicate how the two concepts are mutually related" (p. 18). As I have conversations with Laura, I see how her rural and urban sensibilities have amalgamated. More than just learning about diversity, Laura grew to ardently value it when it came to her own children:

Then, when I had my own children, I took them with me to school, because, I thought, if this is a school that is good enough to teach at, it's got to be good enough for my kids to go to. So, I brought them with me into school. For a while, we lived in the city, and then we moved out to [suburban city]. There was a time we were renting a house. My washing machine had broken, so I went to the Laundromat, and in the Laundromat there was an African American family. My daughter was four at the time and she said, "Why are they here?" She wondered why... it was kind of like they weren't supposed to be there. [I thought], "We can't stay here. We gotta go, because there are all kinds of people in the world and they [her children] need to know how to deal with them, because I didn't when I was growing up." I didn't want them to have that same experience. (May 8, 2012)

I cannot assume the meaning of the phrase, *deal with them*, but it is one that highlights to me the urban/rural racialization that takes place in all of us. It is notable, too, that the courses of her own children's education paths have been altered by her experiences. I am intrigued by Laura's approach to her own

children's education, as I know many colleagues who are passionate about their work in diverse urban settings, but would only consider private or reputable suburban schools for their own children. Laura, on the other hand, sought out diverse experiences for her children. She tells me about a neighborhood school that she chose:

My youngest [daughter] went to a neighborhood school with Middle Eastern children. She started picking up some Urdu and Farsi. I thought, "How cool is this?" She had a little friend. They would play together and teach each other words, and it was really cool. I was on the governing board and that school began saying, "We have been looking into this immersion idea." I told them, "I know all about that. I'm teaching in an immersion program. That's a great idea, and our language should be Urdu or Farsi, because we have all these kids here." You would have thought ... what a bomb to drop. [They said], "Urdu or Farsi, we don't want... they'll think we have a madrasa over here." [I said], "Come on, it makes sense. They're learning English. What a great cultural... coming together." No, they didn't want anything to do with that... so they went with Italian. There were no Italian kids in the neighborhood. They picked Italian. I don't know why. It's still Italian immersion. (May 8, 2012)

I wanted to know more about Laura's philosophy on multiculturalism. I asked her about it. She replied:

I guess there have been a lot of times where I've looked at my own attitudes about groups of people or groups of children and thought... and then tried to

look at them like I look at my own children. There was a parent here at one point when I said, "I don't know if this school will ever come together like it needs to come together." She said, "It will never come together until we both believe that the other group is worth coming to school with... has value." I thought, what a powerful statement. I said, "Everybody needs to hear you say that. That's true. (May 8, 2012)

Laura has always worked in schools that serviced students who were ELLs. Her first assignment was in a charter elementary school that had a 98% Hispanic population. Her own children attended the school, and she reports that they learned Spanish commands like "*siéntate* [sit down] and *ací no se hace*" [Don't do it like that.] (May 8, 2012). She knew she needed to make a change when the school made decisions that were contrary to her own philosophy. She explained:

The school made a switch and decided they were not going to teach Spanish any more. We were going to go all-English. I thought that was crazy. One of the reasons I put my own kids there, was so they'd learn some Spanish, and with 98% of the kids being Hispanic and Spanish-speaking, I thought that's insane. Why are they doing that? Then I left, because I decided this didn't go along with the way I thought we should be teaching. (May 8, 2012)

This was the first hint I had of Laura as an advocate for students' language rights. I have come to know Laura as resolute and unwavering in her commitment to standing up for the language rights of her students. She, like Ana, was unable to maintain loyalty to a program that did not represent her own educational philosophy about bilingual education. Because of her feelings of opposition, in

1999, Laura moved to the district in which she is currently teaching. She taught in a second grade dual language classroom for five years. When her first students were ready to move to the feeder middle school, she went with them. Laura talked about her experience in middle school:

Everything that [administration] was asking me to do seemed contrary to what I thought was best for the kids, and best for the program, and best for our goals. I had left the elementary dual language school, and I didn't realize what a special place it was until I left. The kids were all speaking to everybody in Spanish and English, because their whole school experience had been bilingual. I didn't realize how special that was until they were in a place where everybody wasn't bilingual. They'd walk up to the lunch lady and say, "Quiero dos por favor [*I want two please*]." The lunch ladies would be like, "Speak English." So, I had to do a lot of educating. I came from [an environment that said], "Look how smart these kids are. Look, they can do everything in two languages." I was such a cheerleader for the program, and the culture [people at the middle school] saw a bunch of Latino kids, and some White kids, and some African American kids and said, "Oh, that's like the ESL remedial class." I was like, "Oh no, we are not. We are not the remedial class." I had those kids joining teams and joining student government. I said, "You guys go out there and show them how smart you are." It was kind of a rude awakening for the kids and for me to be... whoa, we left that special place, and we didn't realize how special it was. I didn't really appreciate it like I should have. (May 8, 2012)

During the five years Laura spent at the middle school, she completed her master's degree and earned a reading specialist license. Laura remembered:

Every time I took a course toward reading, I would always say, "I'm teaching kids to read in both languages... can I look for specific research on kids who are learning in two languages, or kids who are learning in a second language?" All the professors always said, "Absolutely, if you can find research on that, go for it, because it's really an emerging field."

A Reading First coordinator position opened up at the bilingual elementary school that Laura had previously worked at and for which she had quite a fondness. With her new academic credentials in hand, she accepted this position that was funded by the federal government, as a way to focus on early reading instruction in the classroom. I am aware of the Reading First programs and the tenet that only *scientifically-based programs* were eligible for funding. There are many concerns regarding the funding and mandates attached to Reading First. Allington (2009) states that:

In many cases these initiatives have been badly misread, and unfortunately, because of the rules and regulations, there are now classrooms that are actually less focused on struggling readers than has been the case in the past. In too many school districts teachers are required, or at least advised, to provide a 90-minute block in some designated grade-level core reading program. In such cases struggling readers will not benefit much from the reading lessons offered. (p. 3)

The concern with initiatives of education reform, such as No Child Left Behind and Reading First, is that certain knowledge is valued and high stakes are attached to those decisions. Postmodern researchers (Atkinson, 2004; Giroux, 1988) question the notion of certainty attached to the authority of power and knowledge in learning structures such as this. The perspective that Laura brought had the potential to assist in revisioning the ways that these practices could be implemented for language learners. I did not want to miss the opportunity to delve further, so I asked Laura about her initial thoughts on her role as a Reading First coordinator with regard to bilingual learners:

I understood it... when I went to the training. I thought to myself, this makes sense. I really believe in guided reading. I think it's the way to go... for ELL kids, for SSL kids. You have to adapt to who you're working with, of course. I really believed in that, and thought, this is going to be good. When they were talking about all the different little things we could do for phonemic awareness, songs, riddles, and all that. I thought, oh yeah, I've got Alma Flor Ada. That will be fabulous. I thought this will be great, I know exactly how to do this in Spanish. (May 8, 2012)

Laura spoke about how she did not share her thoughts about Spanish implementation of Reading First, because she just assumed she could use the same concepts in a Spanish paradigm. When I asked her if she asked for Spanish materials, she responded:

No, at that point I had been in bilingual education long enough to know that they were going to say, "Why do we need that in Spanish?" I never even

asked at that point. I just knew that we had materials that I could do, or that I could show teachers to do, that would be the same way. I thought the idea behind Reading First really made sense. I liked the idea of... I sort of understood it, but some things were just so darn rigid... like the whole—you have to have a 90-minute reading block. That works up until third grade, because then in third grade if we're teaching English and Spanish, then we can't do two ninety-minute reading blocks that will work. (May 8, 2012)

Laura talked about the challenges she had when the Reading First auditor directed that there had to be 90-minutes of English reading. She expressed, "As a dual language program, I knew we could do better" (May 8, 2012). Laura used her expertise as an educator of bilingual learners. She also had a strong working knowledge of research-based literacy practices and supporting theoretical frameworks. It was apparent that her plan was to conform to the Reading First initiative with her own agenda as a way to *level the playing field* (Pokewitz, 1998). The Reading First position lasted a year, and Laura had a sense of relief when it was over. The following year, she moved into a fourth grade bilingual classroom where she is now finishing her second year. She is happy to be liberated from her duties as a reading coach and the expectation of maintaining the status quo.

As I was closing up my final interview with Laura, I asked her how she felt about the possibility of her ELLs finding future successes. Our conversation took a turn that I did not expect.

I would say yes. It's definitely possible for them to find success in the direction that we're going. I'll tell you, I live on the south side of [city]. We

are more bilingual than we have ever been before. My ballot was in Spanish the last time I went to vote. It's never been in Spanish before. That's new. I was really surprised at that. I thought that was amazing. Plus, there is not a store on the south side that doesn't have signage in both languages [Spanish and English]. Immigrants are an economic force. If you have to become bilingual, so that you can get your customers, people better be bilingual. I think that's a more powerful force than anything the government tries to do. People can come in here and tell me, "You can't use Spanish in the classroom." Of course, I'm still going to use Spanish in the classroom, because I know that's what's better for kids. What it comes down to is a bunch of people who are monolingual who feel bad when other people are speaking another language and they don't know what they're saying. It all comes down to that paranoia, (mocking) "I think they're talking about me." I'll admit, even when I first saw the ballot in Spanish, my first reaction was, should the ballot be in Spanish? Then, I thought, why not? There are plenty of people who speak Spanish who can vote. So, of course, it should be in Spanish. Then, my next thought was, what if you don't speak Spanish? What if you speak Urdu? Then, what... you don't vote? (May 30, 2012).

I admired Laura's honesty and her ability to interrogate herself in front of me. It's courageous to have conversations about language and race, especially when it's with someone you have known for a short month. Marx (2006), in her work on antiracism with preservice White teachers, discusses the courage, confidence, and resilience that self-exploration requires. She states:

They/we must consider this effort to reflect on and constantly challenge the racism in their/our lives as their/our duty. Those of us who work with children of color on a daily basis are especially obligated to critically examine our beliefs and our intentions. The successes of our students are truly at stake. Although this journey takes courage, and although our feelings may sometimes get hurt, the results can be amazing. (p. 172)

Laura continued her self-exploration, unprompted:

I asked myself the same thing when we started to say the Pledge of Allegiance in Spanish. Should we be saying it in Spanish? To me it felt, growing up, only ever having said it in English, it felt a little wrong the first time we did it. Why are we doing this? And then, I thought, no, this makes sense. These kids need to know the Pledge of Allegiance. They speak Spanish. Why shouldn't they learn it in Spanish. Of course, I'm going to teach it to them in English later. It bothered me more, that when I said draw our flag, and they drew the Mexican flag, not the American flag. That bothered me more. That was my real issue. I wanted them to see themselves as Americans, not as something else. America is for everyone, and that's what I wanted the students to see. Just the first time [seeing the Spanish ballot], it felt like, I don't know if this is right. I had to think it through, and then I came to the conclusion, yeah, this is the right thing to do. (May 30, 2012)

As Laura was speaking, I thought about the urban/rural notion suggested by Popkewitz (1998). I also had a sense that although the exchange was with me, there was still a bit of a dialogue happening within. Laura explained to me that after

struggling with the voting she resolved her feelings about it. She stated, “In the end, it all comes back to the idea of why should we limit, rather than expand? I always bring it back to that same argument” (May 30, 2012). I thanked her for sharing that with me and praised her ability to reflect on issues central to diversity. She finished by saying, “[Sometimes I ask], why is this making me uncomfortable?... We all have things we still need to work on. I know I do... sometimes it makes me uncomfortable” (May 30, 2012).

I left that classroom on the second floor that Thursday afternoon, replaying the dialogue with Laura in my head. She was turning a critical lens on her own beliefs. She recognized the discomfort, and she was courageous enough to share it with me. I looked forward to examining and reflecting on the transcripts with Laura. She is confident and steadfast in her opinions, and perhaps her capacity to confront issues with herself and others had something to do with her nomination as a highly effective teacher of bilingual learners.

***Carlos.***

It did not take long for me to notice how important the school/community connection is to Carlos. He suggested we meet in the public library, which I now know is quite fitting for this teacher and community activist. He is comfortable in the library, and he moves to the conference room at a pace that implies the wisdom of preserving one’s energy in a busy schedule. Carlos is a burly man, and under his glasses, there is a sparkle even at this late afternoon hour. His mouth draws up, making me believe that a story is ready to materialize at any given second. He studied me with a mixture of uncertainty regarding who I am and a confidence of

who he is. The glass-enclosed room is quiet and a welcome change from the distractions of an after-school setting. Carlos was pensive, as I briefly reviewed with him my intentions and the purpose of my study. His elbow rested on the table, allowing his hand to frame his face. I once again felt compelled to position myself as a White female who is very interested in joining the conversation about effective instructional practices and challenging the status quo. He was quite at ease with this. Carlos nodded his head knowingly and motioned with his hand, welcoming me to begin.

Carlos has been working in bilingual education for 29 years. He explained that his entrance into the field was “kind of by accident” (April 30, 2012), although as he told me his story, it seemed that he had been preparing for this profession all of his life:

I have always wanted to learn Spanish, even though I was born and raised here. I was raised in a pretty English dominant environment. My parents did speak Spanish, but I spoke English basically to them and understood some of the things that they would say to me. But, it was not until my mom’s family came from Texas that I finally acquired a... I felt a need to know more Spanish... mostly for defense against my cousins. [Carlos pauses to count on his fingers.] I had 18 cousins that all came at the same time from Texas... Spanish dominant... some English. So, that increased my desire to want to learn how to speak it and read it and write it. Whenever I could, I would talk to people and try to increase my vocabulary. I would read whatever I could,

whether it was a newspaper, or novela, or whatever. This is when I was like 7... 8 years old. (April 30, 2012)

As someone who has worked with seven and eight year -olds in a bilingual school setting for over a decade, I smiled thinking about Carlos, as a child, tenaciously reading Spanish adult print as a way to connect with a house-full of cousins. Motivation is an immense force when it comes to language learning.

According to Dörnyei (1998):

Motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning in the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process... Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching enough on their own to ensure student achievement. (p. 117)

Carlos, as a small child, took it upon himself to preserve his home language. With my own students, I have observed different degrees to which children will connect with their native or second language. Factors such as risk-taking, siblings, and the powerful forces of the dominant culture language (Cummins, 2000; Slavin & Cheung, 2005), all play a role in how children develop their second language. I wanted to know more about the language interactions that Carlos had had with his parents. Carlos explained his home language experience to me:

My parents always spoke Spanish to me... all the time. I just never spoke to them [in Spanish] until I had to, when my mom's family came. All my mom's friends that lived up here, they only spoke English. They were transplants

from Texas, too. They would always say, “Hi, Carlos, how are you?” Of course, I would speak to them in English. Not many would speak to me in Spanish, with the exception of one of my cousin’s grandmothers. She spoke Spanish. I knew what she meant, because my parents would always talk in Spanish (May 24, 2012).

García and Diaz (1992) discuss the phenomenon of the *third generation shift* that is a consequence of the assimilation process that happens in the United States. They state:

The first generation immigrants sustain their native or first language while learning English. The second generation, intent upon assimilation into a largely English-speaking community, begins the shift towards English by using the native language with first generation speakers (parents, grandparents, others) and English in more formal settings. By slow degrees, English is used in contexts once reserved for the first language.

Encroachment of English into the domain of the first language serves to destabilize the native language. (p. 14)

By the third generation, it is observed that speakers cease to speak in their native language entirely (García and Diaz, 1992). The process of the shift is complete when the third generation in a family line is completely monolingual. I think of this when Carlos says, “I just never spoke to them until I had to.” It is a sentiment that I have heard many times with my students. Without deliberate efforts at language maintenance and revitalization, native minority languages diminish and are at risk for loss (Baker, 2006). Carlos, as a third-generation

member of a family that emigrated from Mexico, had deliberately chosen to push against the shift, about which he now has an acute awareness. His parents were born in Laredo, Texas, and their parents emigrated during the Mexican Revolution, because they did not want to be a part of it. He fondly recalled his grandparents and an unexpected connection he made with his grandfather one day:

I wish I had heard more stories of my grandparents. I am inquisitive by nature... always. Of course, culturally, you don't ask personal questions, but I'm not like that. I like to ask and find out... get to know. I think it's interesting. I always tell them I'm not judgmental. I don't care. I want to know what happened. I started doing that and finding out more and more about my family. The trouble is, my aunts and uncles are getting older... much older. My grandparents died before I had the opportunity to start investigating and asking. My grandfather never talked to anybody other than my grandmother. He never talked to his kids. I don't know if he talked to my dad, because my dad doesn't say anything about it. He [grandpa] was a grouchy old man, and everybody was afraid of him. Nobody wanted to be around him. My grandmother was totally opposite... loving... kind. One day, they made me stay with him [grandfather], because they were all going to the cemetery for Memorial Day... or Veteran's Day... I can't remember. They made me stay with him. I didn't really want to, but I did. He went outside, and he sat under the shade. To keep him company, I went and sat next to him in a chair. Just kind of hung out there to make sure he was okay. Out of nowhere he started talking to me. I was 14 or 15. I was like, I wish someone

was here to hear this. I was shocked by that, and nobody believed me when they came back. My grandfather actually asked how I was doing in school. He asked me what I planned to do after I got out of school. I told him that I was thinking about going to college. He encouraged me to do that. He asked me what my interests were. I told him that I like to read a lot and write a lot. He didn't criticize me. He didn't judge me. It never happened again. I was surprised. (May 24, 2012)

I could see in Carlos' face that this incident had a profound effect on him. There was a generational and cultural connection made with his grandfather that afternoon. While relaying different stories to me about his family during our sessions, it was clear that Carlos held his extended family very close to his heart. The strength of his family ties appears to have deeply influenced his philosophy about language and education. He told me that all of his early experiences were in monolingual English classrooms; however, those elementary school years were very formative ones when it came to his beliefs about bilingual education. He remembered:

I had very positive experiences. I was in an integrated school and had the experience of my family, that was Spanish-dominant, come up [from Texas] all of a sudden, in the middle of my elementary experience. Then, I would try to communicate with them, after all of my neighborhood friends only spoke English. It was quite an experience. One particular cousin was in my grade level, but the other ones were in the same school, but different grade levels. The teachers would use me for a translator for my relatives sometimes. They

would place me or sit me with them in the class, so I could tell them what they had to do, and help them with their work. As time went on, my Spanish increased, and finally, when I was in high school, I became a little more active in the Hispanic community. All the teachers were really, really... my whole experience was that they were really caring and supportive and friendly. I never had a bad teacher. (May 24, 2012)

Carlos went directly to college after high school. He commuted to a state university nearby to fulfill his requirements for graduation. Carlos started out with a psychology degree, because he thought he “wanted to figure people out” (April 30, 2012). Then he went into business, but found that tedious. He finally discovered his love for writing, and he changed his major to English Literature. He talks about his move into education:

Just by accident... one year, I was looking for a job, and a friend of mine was working at [a career center]. I told him that I wanted a job that paid well, and that didn't have many hours. He came up with two opportunities. One was working in [the school district] as an assistant, and the other one was working for UPS. UPS looked a little more like what I was looking for, because it was only a few hours a night. But, it was good pay... benefits and everything. So, I did them both. I took both jobs. I was an assistant [in that district] for seven years. Because of my Spanish, they hired me as a bilingual assistant at the time. (April 30, 2012)

Carlos spent five years in his first paraprofessional position. He then moved to an assignment that he described as a floater position, where he worked with a

range of students from Montessori to high school. This job required that he fill in for different people across the district. He found himself working with brand new teachers who were newly graduated and had little to no experience working with bilingual students. Carlos shook his head as he remembered how his colleagues persuaded him to go back to school to earn his teacher's certification:

My colleagues said, "You're doing the work of the teacher, you might as well go back and get your degree." So, I went. It was a 30-credit program at the time. I went through the program, finished it up, did it, and then got certified. My first student teaching was with a super teacher. Then, I went to a placement in [a different district]. There were a lot of minority [students]... it was an inner city school, and there were a lot of ELLs there, too. The bilingual program had just started. The principal really liked the work that I was doing and how I was getting along with the kids and everything. She hired me as soon as I was done with student teaching. She said, "I like the work you're doing here. I want you here." (April 30, 2012)

I asked Carlos what he thought prepared him most for working in a bilingual school setting:

What prepared me for that ahead of time was that I had worked in [school name] for five years as an assistant. Then, after that, I worked two years as a regular floating assistant. I think working there in the bilingual program... the kids, the teachers, the staff... gave me a lot of experience, so that when I did have my regular classroom, I knew how to start. Then, I just took off and knew what I was supposed to do. In fact, when I got my bilingual

certification, I had already been teaching in the bilingual program for three or four years. The supervisor came out to observe my class. She came out and looked around. She was there three hours. In fact, she stayed until the end of the day, and talked afterward. She said, “You know what you’re doing, I don’t even have to come back.” She said, “You’ve got this down. I have no comments or criticisms. You’re doing alright... keep it up.” (May 24, 2012)

The first teaching assignment that Carlos had was at an elementary school with a transitional bilingual program. Students, whose first language was Spanish, engaged in Spanish instruction and gradually transitioned to English. The focus was English development, and not maintenance of the Spanish home language.

According to Collier and Thomas (2009):

Transitional bilingual schooling is a *remedial* model, designed to move students into all-English instruction as soon as possible, but to provide some support for their academic learning through their first language. Transitional bilingual classes are generally offered for two to three years, after which English learners are moved into the mainstream with no more special support. Transitional bilingual classes are usually self-contained, separate from the mainstream. They are frequently perceived by native-English-speaking students as remedial classes designed for students who have “problems.” (p. 65)

Carlos and a group of teachers within the school had a strong understanding of the different bilingual program models. They understood that the research spanning over several decades overwhelmingly suggests dual language

programming as the most effective approach to teaching bilingual learners (Collier & Thomas, 2009; Genesee et al, 2006; Lindholm-Leary, 2001). Dual language programs, in contrast to the transitional approach, are taught through two languages with two different language groups. “Alternating between the two languages takes place not by translation, but by subject or thematic unit or instructional time, so that after several years students become academically proficient in both languages of instruction” (Thomas & Collier, 2009, p. 66-67). The teachers were persistent about their beliefs, and they succeeded in working with administrators to develop a plan that would transform their school’s program to the dual language model before they moved to their new site. Carlos talked about the teachers’ active role in the changes that were made:

We felt like gypsies. They kept pushing us around. Finally, one of the school board members heard our pleas, and they agreed to give us a site of our own. Before we moved, we decided because of the political things that were going on with testing and requirements and everything... we thought it was best to change programs from the transitional to the dual language program for the sake of the kids and the teachers in the program. It was a better model, and it had more success. (April 30, 2012)

It is evident that Carlos feels invested in, and committed to, the efforts of the dual language program. He clearly recounted the action that he and his colleagues took to educate district administrators and community members about the tenets of dual language programming and how important the maintenance of integrity and fidelity is to student achievement.

The whole school was dual language. We existed there. It was pretty successful. We knew exactly how much money we had. Our budget was just ours. We had autonomy. We had a site base with parents involved, as well as teachers and administrators involved in making decisions. We had a Hispanic principal, and almost everyone on the staff was bilingual with the exception of maybe a few specialists. The rest of the staff... the secretaries, all the teachers, the lunchroom... they were all pretty much bilingual. It was pretty nice. We started the transition [to the dual language model] before we made that move. (April 30, 2012)

There is strong anecdotal and statistical evidence that the dual language program that Carlos and his colleagues worked hard to develop and maintain was highly effective. Students were achieving in both languages at or above grade level, and they were succeeding with an academically challenging curriculum. Carlos stayed connected with many of his students who he served in bilingual education, and he believes that the dual language ideology has helped to provide stronger opportunities for them. He explained his thoughts regarding the different student outcomes between the transitional and dual language models:

I was always disappointed with the [transitional] bilingual program because even though I would encourage them to succeed and go on to college, not many of them would. The students found my class as a sanctuary. They could come in and have an activity and do fun things and learn something about school. I felt like they never felt they were a part of it [school] or even wanted to be a part of it, because there was no invitation for them. I would

encourage them to be a part of the activities. I think it was because they just didn't feel welcomed... [people would say] *those bilingual kids*. I think the stigma really affected them. Opposed to the dual language [program], where they all feel like they have the opportunity to go on to college. I'm starting to see more and more actually finish school and go on to college and go into leadership roles and take on leadership positions in middle school and high school. I think it's because of the confidence they had in this program. Then, going on to college and applying and doing well. It makes me feel good to see them like that. I always want the best for them. (May 24, 2012)

The students in this autonomous all-school dual language program were succeeding by all measurements, including the state standardized tests. The district administrators took notice and as a remedy to improve one of the failing elementary schools in Clovis Public School District, they designed a plan to combine the student population of the dual language school with the failing school. The new Goodall Elementary School became one building attempting to combine two programs with two separate curricular agendas. In this new situation, the students would not share academic space, but they would have opportunities to integrate in the social aspects of school. I asked Carlos to describe how all of the teachers felt about making that change after building such a successful program:

I was skeptical. That skepticism didn't even occur when we were at the all-school site. It was only when we were at the new site. When they [the administration] moved our bilingual program, one of the administrators made a comment, "We want to put your kids there because they are so well-

behaved and such good students. We are hoping that they will rub off on the other students.” I didn’t like the idea [improving student achievement by combining the two different schools. I didn’t feel like it was our responsibility to try to do that. And I didn’t feel it was our students’ responsibility to try to exemplify that. They were forcing us to melt together... the two programs... and kind of work together and combine common issues. We kept saying they were not common. They are two distinct programs. You have to let them develop. Every time they threw us together, they weren’t letting that other program develop. Of course, it caused us to delay any kind of development or growth. (April 30, 2012)

Carlos, along with a core group of bilingual educators and the assistant principal, understood with certainty that they “needed to separate for the integrity of the [dual language] program” (April 30, 2012). The group unrelentingly sought autonomy for the dual language program, and Carlos proudly accounted for his role as one of the leaders in this pursuit. He has a steadfast belief in the need to preserve and maintain the Spanish home language of his bilingual learners. He advocated for a physical restructuring of the school building that would allow for more scrupulous attention to language use throughout the school day. Baker (2006) summarizes this language philosophy as one that promotes an enrichment model, which “aims to extend the individual and group use of minority languages, leading to cultural pluralism and linguistic diversity” (p. 214). Carlos spoke with clear conviction regarding his language development philosophy:

We were trying to maintain the importance of the Spanish language socially and academically. We wanted to create more of a Spanish environment, because kids were hearing too much English and using it socially. The dominant language has a habit of infiltrating into the environment. We moved all of the third, fourth, and fifth grade into this area [to achieve the restructuring of dual language space]. This was about four years ago. It's kind of developing. There's more [Spanish spoken]. A lot of it is because I'm on them [my colleagues] about it. I tell them I want more Spanish visible in the hallways... projects, writing samples, activities. I want it in the hallways, so people can see what they're doing. Our wing should be as much Spanish as possible. (May 24, 2012)

Carlos speaks with a convincing firmness, supported by years of experience. I learned that Carlos has taken his determined efforts into the community arena. He is an active leader in the local League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) organization. This association is the largest Latino civil rights group in the United States, and its mission is to "improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans from every region" (LULAC, 2012). Carlos exemplifies this motto in his role as an educator, colleague, and community member. He lives what he expects from others, and he has been advocating for the preservation and revitalization of the Spanish home language since he was a seven-year-old boy. For a half century, Carlos has been contemplating, in one way or another, the additive value of language in the lives of bilingual learners.

The many hats that Carlos wears as an educator, family member, community activist, and friend is something he is quite proud of. I developed a quick respect for his wisdom and experience, and I deliberately moved into a conversation about what he would advise a new teacher regarding the politics of bilingual education. He closed his eyes for a quick moment and responded:

It's inherently political. If you're sincere about the programs and the kids and the families, it is. Many beginning teachers, and even some established teachers won't get involved, because they don't want to cause waves... they don't want to be seen in a bad light. Yet, with their colleagues they might come and complain, "That's not right, that shouldn't be happening." [I say], "Why don't you say something about it?" They tell me, "Why don't you say it? You say it so well." I might be able to do that, but I'm the only voice they ever hear, and now they are starting to believe that I'm making it all up. They need to hear from the other people. That's one of the reasons why I joined LULAC, because they need to hear it from more than one person. If they don't hear a small group of people, then maybe they should hear it from a whole community. (May 24, 2012)

His comments sparked a new cluster of questions that I began to articulate. Carlos' cell phone rang, and I was stopped short. His phone call was a reminder to him that he had another meeting to attend. As we walked toward our cars together, I noticed there was jauntiness to his gait. He appeared content to be moving on to his next obligation. Before he turned to go, I slipped one more question in. I asked

him what he absolutely felt he must preserve in his classroom with his ELL students. He replied, “Respect and pride for the language... the Spanish language.

With that, Carlos nodded his head with certainty and moved out into his community. As I made my way home, I felt quite indebted to Carlos, Laura, Ana, and Luis for the candid insights into their professional and personal lives. I reflected on the past ten weeks of data collection, grateful for the unique perspectives of each one of these nominated, reputable participants. They were genuine and committed, and their stories are a tremendous contribution to the understanding of effective instructional practices for those students who experience school in two languages.

Table 6: Summary of Participants

	<b>School</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Years in Bilingual Education</b>	<b>Educational Background</b>
Luis	Henry Elementary School	4	Transitional Bilingual	13	B.A. Social Sciences M. Ed. Educational Leadership
Ana	Henry Elementary School	3	Transitional Bilingual	12	B.S. Education M. Ed. Education-Curriculum & Instruction M. Ed. Administration
Laura	Goodall Elementary School	4	Two-way Dual Language	18	B.S. Education M. Ed. Education-Reading
Carlos	Goodall Elementary School	5	Two-way Dual Language	29	B.S. Education

## Themes

This multiple case study seeks to understand the instructional practices of highly reputable teachers of English language learners and to interrogate and revision the effects that power and decision-making have on their experiences. A

naturalistic inquiry design was chosen, as a way to yield genuine insight into the complexity of the issues surrounding the teaching of English language learners with literacy intervention needs. Naturalistic inquiry is a discovery-oriented approach (Guba, 1978) that minimizes the researchers' manipulation of the study setting and allows for authentic experiences to unfold (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Realities, from this perspective, are considered experiential constructions that are local derivations from specific vantage points (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hatch, 2002), and the knowledge that is produced in these particular contexts are time-and space-dependent. From a postmodern perspective, this flexible design allows for inferences to be drawn that offer a wisdom regarding the experiences of the participants who are known to be highly effective. These inferences should not be considered generalizations, as generalizations contradict the essence of both postmodernism and naturalistic inquiry that renounce the notion that knowledge is absolute and centralized.

The strategy of naturalistic inquiry was used in this research to provide data gathering opportunities that would allow themes to organically emerge from the stories of the participants (Creswell, 2007). Through the information gathered in this study, three central themes materialized. These themes were generated by, and inform the conversation of, this inquiry that aims to understand how nominated teachers of English language learners preserve highly effective instructional practices in an era inundated with educational reform decisions. The themes representing the data include the notions that teachers (a) are active decision-makers based on a cognizance of their own expertise; (b) have recognition of and

reaction to discriminatory practices; and (c) take active roles to work toward change. An in-depth account of each of the themes has been presented here.

**Theme One: Active decision-makers based on a cognizance of expertise.**

The nomination criteria for this study on highly effective teachers of English language learners were based on a comprehensive perusal of decades of literature in the fields of literacy, bilingual education, and second language learning. The four participating teachers have reputations represented by the criteria that were used by the administrators to recommend them for this research. Through the months of interviews and observations, it was clear that all four participants were cognizant of their expertise that was the foundation of the decisions they made on a daily basis. This professional awareness was recognized in the knowledge the teachers had regarding (a) general literacy, (b) bilingual education and second language acquisition, (c) reading intervention practices, and (d) the relevance of culture to the success of their students.

***Knowledge of general literacy.***

The teachers of this study repeatedly demonstrated their understanding of general literacy skills and consistently embedded the tenets of effective literacy instruction in their practices. Allington and Walmsley (2007) state:

We define high-quality instruction as that offered by teachers who have expertise in how literacy develops (and what impedes its progress), and in how to facilitate literacy development. Expert teachers use their knowledge of literacy development and literacy processes to decide where to go next, independently of the commercial materials they use; when to intervene and

when not to; when to draw children's attention to which features of text and how to model and explain strategies in ways that children can make their own. (p. 33)

Research has recurrently demonstrated that effective instruction for teaching bilingual learners is influenced by many of the evidenced practices in general literacy based on monolingual English studies (August & Shanahan, 2008; Fitzgerald, 1995; Goldenberg, 2008). An understanding of mainstream instructional practices is necessary, as the expectation in educational systems is often one that requires the use of curriculum based on research that was conducted with monolingual English students, and decisions are made and implemented through that lens. It is surmised, then, that it is imperative that teachers of bilingual learners have strong knowledge of multiple literacy practices, so that decisions can be made as to the most effective ways to integrate curricular expectations with the particular academic and language needs of the students in their classrooms (International Reading Association, 1999).

The participants often articulated their knowledge of researched-based literacy practices, and lessons that were a part of the observations during data gathering were filled with evidence of their knowledge. For example, Ana's classroom conversations were filled with dialogue about text analysis, and she used every opportunity to both create meaning and develop the more mechanical aspects of text. Morrow and Tracey (1997; 2007) describe this as a comprehensive balanced approach that fosters understanding, while serving the needs of a diverse

group of students. Ana demonstrated this often, and it is exemplified in a lesson she did within her unit focusing on biographies.

Ana: Now, we are not just reading to read. Now we're reading to really understand. Remember one of the targets was, "I can describe a character's actions and connect them to the sequence of events in a story"? Well, we've been doing that with biographies. Remember we talked about biographies? How do you layout a biography?

St: (Student) Childhood, school years, and adulthood.

Ana: Most of the time that is how it is set up. Today, we are going to read about Albert Einstein. The first thing we are going to do is come up with a question based on the title [*Albert Einstein*].

St: I think he created Frankenstein.

Ana: What do you call that, when you think about what could be happening?

St: An opinion.

Ana: If we're trying to figure out what the story is about without reading it, what are we making?

St: Inferences.

Ana: Good job. Inferences. What's another word that relates to inferences?

St: Predictions.

Ana: Good job. Did he make a prediction or an inference when he said, "I think"?

Students gave a variety of answers that included inference, prediction, and opinion. Ana read the literacy posters on the wall with the students. The students then unanimously decided it was a prediction. During one of the observations, Ana offered an example of how she comprehensively balances her reading instruction.

St: It rhymes. Frankenstein... Einstein.

Ana: I guess you're right. The title is Albert Einstein. What do you think this is going to be about? Let's think. When we hear that name and see the picture, what kinds of questions come through your mind?

St: He builds stuff.

St: Or he could be a scientist.

Ana: What kind of question can we put up here, so we can figure out who this man is? (Several students answer.) Let's write, "Who is Albert Einstein?" Don't we want that to be answered? It is going to be very important to this biography. Why did I put a capital letter at the beginning of these words?

St: Because they are names.

Ana: What do we call these words?

St: Proper nouns. (April 12, 2012)

Ana initiated a discussion on proper nouns and common nouns. She then asked the students what she forgot at the end of the sentence. The conversation continued, as she took a moment to clarify the use of the different end punctuation marks. Then, the class continued to create questions that helped them to understand who Albert Einstein was.

Ana's lessons are filled with these types of conversations that engage the students, create connections, and set them up for success. She often talks to the students about being problem-solvers. When one of the students asked her about what to do if there is not enough room on the Post-it to write an answer, she replied, "Remember, we are problem-solvers. We always try to solve our problems" (April 12, 2012). She proceeded to talk the student through a solution to his question.

On another day, Ana used the study of biographies to talk about character traits. A classroom discussion regarding Susan B. Anthony and her fight for women's rights ensued. Ana integrated some previous social studies concepts into the discussion, deliberately making cross-curricular connections:

Ana: What did we talk about in social studies related to this story?

St: Common good.

Ana: What was the common good that Susan B. Anthony contributed?

St: Volunteering.

St: And responsibility.

Ana: Did she show responsibility? Yes, she showed responsibility in making sure that women had the right to vote. As you can see, what we're learning in social studies applies to everything that we are learning and it applies to everything that we do, because we have responsibilities as citizens.

St: Today, we are going to vote.

Ana: Yes, today I have to vote... for governor, not president.

St: Can we tell you, and then you can go vote?

Ana: I have the right to vote for whomever I want. I have the right to keep it to myself. I don't have to tell anyone.

Sts: Please... please!

Ana: I have the right to keep it to myself, and not let anyone know. I am going to keep it to myself.

St: It's her private business. (May 8, 2012)

Ana exemplifies what many researchers have concluded: effective literacy instruction with minority students should be highly meaningful, with a focus on comprehension, composition, and immersion in significant cultural and world knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll, 1992; 1998; Pressley et al. 2001).

Luis also filled his lessons with conversation intended to foster meaning in the text students were engaged in. When he introduced the chapter book *Stone Fox*, he told the students that he had read the story seven times, and every time he reads it, something new interests him. He passed out the books, and challenged the students to think about the meaning of the title. This particular lesson is during an English reading session. Luis modeled his thought process for the students:

The first word I thought about was *stone* and then I'm thinking about mountains and rocks. Then, I look at the other word, *fox*. Even me, as an adult, I think right away about how *stone* goes with *fox*. Maybe it is about a fox that likes to hide behind a particular stone. That is what I thought about first. I didn't look at the illustrations or the pictures. I was just thinking about the title. I'm interested in knowing what comes to your mind when you think of the title. (April 12, 2012)

The students shared ideas about what they thought the title was about. Luis made a prediction chart based on the ideas of the students. He described how their ideas were very similar to what his were when he first read the book. Luis modeled how he took a picture walk through the book to take a deeper look. He emphasized how this made his prediction change. The students were put in partners to develop their predictions. After five minutes, they came back together and volunteered to share the ideas of their partner. Luis talked about the importance of listening to the ideas of a partner and how it can add to their understanding. He pulled the pre-reading session together with a discussion on predicting the problem of the story by using the visual cues in the book. Luis read the first chapter of *Stone Fox* with an approach that demonstrated his understanding of the elements of guiding students through a reflective process. He knows that students will enjoy a story most when they understand it. In his lessons, Luis demonstrated his understanding that, “Teachers need to model reading explicitly and to share what they know about the process and purposes of reading” (Allington & Johnston, 2002, p. 69). The *Stone Fox* reading session ended with dialogue that included predictions of the next chapter. Students asked to read more, but they were reminded that dismissal time was near.

All of the teachers demonstrated modeling, scaffolding, and guided practices as they discussed with their students the importance of understanding the text that they read. Students in all four of the classrooms were also given ample time to practice the skills that were presented. Student choices were a prevalent theme in the independent reading sessions. Although all of the teachers offered a variety of Spanish and English text, Carlos was the only participant who had an explicit

Spanish independent reading period where all students engaged in Spanish reading. The twenty minutes of Spanish reading gave evidence that the students in this dual language classroom had developed a certain proficiency in Spanish, as they worked toward their biliteracy goals. During this independent reading time, Carlos, like the other teachers, engaged in one-on-one conferencing with students.

During the observations, notes were made on how the teachers value talk and conversation in the classroom. The students appeared to have deliberate opportunities to read and share with partners, small groups, and the larger group in non-threatening mini-lesson formats. Carlos commented on the importance of building prior knowledge through classroom discussions:

If you allow students the opportunity to converse, and to talk, and get to know them in situations and activities that are relevant to what the instruction is... reading or language arts, then you find out more about them. Then, you're better aware... how to prepare for what they need as far as background knowledge before they start to do something. (May 24, 2012)

Carlos was introspective as he talked about his students over the years. I asked him to reflect on his nomination as a highly effective teacher. He answered:

I always wonder, too. I always thought I was strict, or kids thought I was mean. You know how kids interpret things, but yet, they always come back. They come back to my classroom and want to spend time again like when they were in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. They'll come back to volunteer, even the ones that I thought were my toughest customers. Maybe they sense that I really genuinely care about them. All kidding aside and all joking aside, even

though sometimes I get silly with them, I think they realize that I really want them to do their best. I try to challenge them and want them to challenge themselves to continue to improve and to succeed. (May 24, 2012)

When Laura was asked about the things that she absolutely has to preserve in her classroom, without hesitation she responded that keeping her literacy instruction student-centered is very important to her. She stated:

I think the student centeredness of it all—if I choose a book and they're not interested, I should be choosing different books. When we read *Paddle to the Sea*... I liked the idea of talking about the book, and then asking students what they want to learn more about. I liked that they were able to say, "Well, I want to learn more about animals of the Great Lakes." This was mixed ability. So, I could say, "You four kids go over there and learn more about the animals of the Great Lakes." Or some might say they want to learn more about shipwrecks, and we were able to spend a week just online and in the library... looking for information and sharing. Student centeredness would be the thing that I would say overall is the most important. I would fight the hardest to preserve that. (May 30, 2012)

When Laura was asked what she would advise a new teacher, she stated:

Know your students. Make sure you know who they are. Not only who they are academically... their strengths, their skills, their weaknesses, but their interests and a little bit about their families and what's important to them. Know your students. (May 30, 2012).

Through the time that was spent with the teachers in this study, it was obvious that they had the characteristics of exemplary teachers who were caring, confident, and believed that they could teach children to read. They epitomized what researchers on exceptional teachers have concluded. Pressley (2002) states:

They create classrooms that are language-rich, with much discussion about reading and writing between teacher and children as well as between children. They use a variety of curriculum materials, with students reading many different genres. Although they plan their instruction well, they also take advantage of teachable moments by providing many apt mini-lessons in response to student needs throughout the day. Rather than worry about how their students will perform on standardized tests, they focus on their efforts and areas of improvement. They are keenly aware that their students all have unique developmental trajectories, and they are determined to foster the development of each and every student in their care. (p. xiii)

***Knowledge of bilingual education and second language acquisition.***

The literature review of this study on effective classrooms reveals that highly effective bilingual education teachers are those who “understand theories about bilingualism and second-language development as well as the goals and rationale for the model in which they were teaching” (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006, p. 187). Many research studies suggest that specialized training in language education pedagogy and curriculum is a necessary component in the quest for maximizing academic achievement for language minority students (Cloud, Genesee, Hamayan, 2000; Cummins 2000). The participants in this study have demonstrated an

awareness of their own expertise in the field of bilingual education and second language acquisition. Although each teacher came into the field of bilingual education from unique circumstances, they all share a certain knowledge about how to educate the population of students that they are responsible for in their classrooms.

Maintaining, developing, and preserving the Spanish language was a common response to my question to the participants regarding what they would not negotiate in the schooling of bilingual learners. It is interesting, however, that Carlos and Laura, from the school with a dual language model were much more vocal about the preservation of Spanish as compared to Luis and Ana, who had assignments in a school with a transitional bilingual model. Carlos and Laura staunchly protect the space in which Spanish is spoken in their school. When Carlos is teaching in his fifth grade classroom, it is a stringently Spanish place. Carlos understands the importance of elevating the status of the Spanish language to counter the influence that the dominant culture language, English, has on the development of language in a program that aims to develop biliteracy. He carries his austere position throughout the hallways and classrooms within the dual language program. Carlos described how he gently confronted a colleague that very morning as she was using English instruction during a time when he thought she should be using Spanish:

I was with one of the teachers this morning. I stopped in her room and they were doing math in Spanish. A little girl said, "Teacher, how do you do this?" [The teacher] said, "Did you read the directions? You need to read the

directions. See what it says there? It says you have to multiply, you have to divide.” I was just looking at her and all of a sudden she caught... she must have sensed me. Then she says [to the little girl], “¿Qué necesitas? Necesitas revisar estos.” [*What do you need? You need to review these.*] (May 22, 2012)

A great deal of the conversation with Carlos focused on language development and use. He offered his belief in the success of the dual language program he is currently teaching in:

I think the success of our program has been that the kids have such a strong Spanish basis. It’s because we have those teachers who don’t default to English in kindergarten, first, and second grade. They’re Spanish-dominant and they came from Mexico or Puerto Rico. They speak in that language first, and then if all else fails, they’ll put their other hat on and go to English, but then go right back to Spanish. Eventually, the kids start to realize and pick up and start to talk and speak. By the time they get to second grade, they’ve got a really strong foundation... orally and written. (May 24, 2012)

I asked Carlos if he believed a non-native Spanish-speaking teacher could be as effective in a dual language program as a native Spanish speaker. He replied:

If they honestly and truly believe in the purpose of the program and the methodology, yes. Yes, I think they can be if they’re really sincere about it, and if they make that effort to really push that part of it. I would encourage any of them to occasionally go back and immerse themselves for a while in something during the summer, whether it’s Puerto Rico, Mexico, or Spain. Take that trip, if possible... or enroll in some coursework where they can

regenerate. I have my family. I go and I talk to my family. I can practice. But with people who are English-dominant, it's hard for them to continue to regenerate and practice. They should converse in Spanish, so they can develop and continue to work on fluency. (May 24, 2012)

Laura confidently talked about her position regarding the use of Spanish in a dual language space. She described her experience in an all-school dual language program:

We had a place where Spanish was a language really close to the same status as English. We did announcements in both. Kids thought everyone was bilingual. We all spoke... Spanish everywhere. (May 8, 2012)

Laura and her colleagues collectively decided that only Spanish would be spoken in the classroom where Spanish literacy is taught, and when concepts were bridged from Spanish to English, it would happen in the classroom space where English literacy was taught. She explained:

I do all the bridging for both groups... Spanish to English. We made that decision because we didn't want to give up any of the Spanish time to be bilingual. We didn't want kids to be bilingual in that room. We wanted them to be Spanish in that room. (May 30, 2012)

The teachers' deliberate choice was to protect the Spanish language in this way, because of their awareness of how easily individuals will default to the dominant language if given the opportunity. When Laura was asked about the overall physical space of the school and how it worked to have the dual language program housed separately, she replied:

When I came in it wasn't like that. We were all mixed together. Little by little we have separated ourselves. We wanted to protect the language. You see the signs where it says, "Aquí se habla español." [*Spanish is spoken here.*] We wanted to have our Spanish space. We need that. We had an OCR (Office of Civil Rights) complaint that we were trying segregate our kids. It came from someone at the school. We are not trying to be exclusionary. There is just no way around it [the importance of Spanish maintenance]. It's been a difficult road. (May 8, 2012)

Laura continued to reflect on the difficulty of promoting an understanding about the creation of a Spanish environment to develop, maintain and preserve the language. She talked about the abrasive environment in which she and her colleagues are trying to accomplish just that:

How do you do that when people who have advanced degrees walk into a lounge where everyone is speaking Spanish and assume that they are being talked about. Just because we are speaking another language, doesn't mean we're talking about you. That's very tricky. For a long time, no one spoke Spanish in the lounge. All the teachers who spoke Spanish ate in their classrooms and talked to each other, because that's what they wanted to do. Now, it's the other way around. Now, we all speak Spanish in the lounge, and the other teachers don't come to the lounge. I wish everybody could come to the lounge and we could go back and forth between English and Spanish, and it wouldn't be a big deal. But that hasn't happened yet. (May 8, 2012)

Research in bilingual education supports what Carlos and Laura adamantly defend. Classroom discourse studies have demonstrated the importance of the deliberateness of language use and the creation of space in which to exclusively use a particular language. When language space is not valued, majority language dominates classroom discourse, which causes an under-development of the minority language for all language groups (Valdés, 1997).

For Luis and Ana, in the transitional bilingual education program, the target language for all language groups is English. Creating a Spanish space is more difficult, because the language scale tips toward the English-dominant culture language. Even though they genuinely expressed their belief in preserving the Spanish language for students, the system in which they were working, contradicted their belief.

Luis and Ana often used Spanish in their classrooms as a way to clarify concepts or build confidence in students. Ana recounted a situation that exemplifies her position on Spanish use in her classroom where English language arts is the focus:

There was a story about a kid in a snowstorm and there was a question that asked, "Have you ever been in that situation?" Half of them said, "No," to the question. We live in a place with snow, but they said, "No," because then they would have to explain a situation. For some of my kids... my low ones... they couldn't say it in English at first. So, I would say, "Say it in Spanish. It's okay, tell me in Spanish." So, that's when they started moving up. It was okay,

because it was comprehension. Everybody started progressing. It's that simple. That's what we're going to do. (May 11, 2012)

Whether or not Ana's students would still be considered "low" in a situation where they were engaged in Spanish instruction is not clear here. However, Ana recognized the notion of language transfer. When her students are challenged with their English instruction, she takes instruction back to what is already known for them in Spanish. Language transfer suggests that what students learn in one language context or setting, influences what can be learned in another language context or setting (Baker, 2006; Cummins, 2000). Crawford and Krashen (2007) describe transfer as it relates to literacy, "Once you can read, you can read. Being literate in one language makes it much easier to develop reading ability in additional languages. In other words, literacy transfers across languages" (p. 20). Ana offered many examples of how she used the concept of language transfer to improve literacy progress in the parameters of a transitional instructional approach, where the intention was more about using Spanish to develop English, rather than a dual approach of working in Spanish to develop, maintain, and preserve the language while acquiring English proficiency. Ana's experience has taught her to begin each third grade year with the students working in Spanish, and then move them into English as is expected in a transitional program. She stated:

At the beginning of the year, we start off in Spanish. Then easily, what starts to happen, even though the students are a little bit low in Spanish, the students continue to move up in their reading. What happens, is once they reach a certain level, then they easily... they make the transition. Every year,

I always start out in Spanish based on where they are coming from. For me, to right away go full-blown into English... then I'm actually regressing. (May 11, 2012)

Ana displayed a strong understanding of the importance of educating students through their home language, yet the external expectation of English achievement is so strong in her environment, that she positioned herself defensively, and almost apologetically for incorporating Spanish in her lessons. She confided:

I don't know if you noticed, but at the carpet [space during whole group lesson], some of the kids responded in English and some in Spanish, which to me is fine. I know that you're not supposed to mix one language with the other. I'm sorry, but if they can't think, but they got it in [the other] language... just tell me. The conversations at the carpet get so deep... the understanding gets so deep, that it would be wrong for me to say, "No, no, no, you have to tell me in English." (April 12, 2012)

Throughout the time with Luis, it was evident that he also struggled with the philosophy of a program that lacks native language maintenance and development. It appeared counter-intuitive to him. In one discussion, Luis expressed a frustration with the language limits that are placed on him with regard to the expectation that by second semester, his students must be "transitioned" to English. Transitioning students in bilingual education is the idea of moving the language of instruction from one language to another through different levels of language support (Baker, 2006). Luis said:

Transition...I really dislike when they call second semester the transition. I have been hearing that since I started teaching in the bilingual program. I have a little problem with the transitioning. Transitioning is something that is going to keep happening. I'm transitioning. Transitioning for a second language learner could be a lifelong thing or, in this case, we're talking about children who were born and raised here or they came here little. They come from homes in which Spanish is the first language. The whole transitioning could take them through their entire elementary school. Some of them could take through middle school. All of them have different needs in different ways. Why do we expect that all of them make a transition at a certain level, at a certain grade... because of a calendar? I do feel the pressure, and I'm sure they do, too. That doesn't mean that they are going to acquire English at the same speed or at the same pace as others. They don't learn English at exactly the same time. They don't become proficient at the same time... the same hour... the same minute. (April 16, 2012)

Embedded in his frustration about transitioning, was his understanding that it can take students many years to acquire the academic language necessary to become proficient in a second language. Research spanning decades has repeatedly demonstrated that students can acquire basic communication skills in a second language quite rapidly when they have exposure in the school environment (Cummins, 1984b; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1979); however, the academic proficiency of the student's second language takes several years longer as measured by the

performance of their English-speaking peers (Collier, 1987; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1981).

In a separate conversation, Luis spoke about the expectation that students be at grade level by fourth grade and the practice of being assessed only in English. His feelings unravel in this discussion:

If the first language isn't nearly eradicated, totally eradicated, then it is like the goal hasn't been accomplished. I don't know what extent I can say... inadvertently... or purposefully... that's what it promotes basically.

Yes, it's eradication of language and culture, because thinking is the main component of culture. It is the most crucial component, how you think... your idiosyncrasies. (March 29, 2012)

Luis is certain of his conclusion, as he has lived the life of a second language learner. He reflected, "How do I know this? Because that's me... I am a second language learner. I know how to define these things well, because that's my story. My story is their story" (May 4, 2012). Luis understands what researchers and bilingual educators know optimizes the academic achievement of bilingual learners, yet he is bound by a system that evaluates both his students and him from a dominant language paradigm.

All of the participants showed an understanding of the time it takes for students to acquire academic proficiency in their second language, and they often referred to this knowledge in discussions. Although they did not always articulate the academic nomenclature, it was evident, in conversations and their lessons, that they had knowledge of the concepts of language transfer, cross-linguistic influence,

interference, interlanguage, and contrastive analysis (Gass & Selinker, 2001) that are imperative to understanding the academic achievement of bilingual learners. In addition, strategies were used in these classrooms of which only teachers knowledgeable about effective practices in language education would have an awareness. Ana revealed her awareness of what her students need:

They need visuals, sitting down and explaining to them... breaking it down. Like when I sit down with them at the rug. There is no way that I'm going to assume that they got it and keep moving on. No, if I have to break it down, and it takes me forever, then it takes me forever. The language part is the reason that they don't move as fast, but if there is a missing link, then that's even worse. As an English language learner trying to put these puzzles together, if one little piece is missing, it throws everything off. (May 11, 2012)

Luis described the way he uses a sheltered English approach when helping students to make connections. He stated:

I can identify when they're creating their images and making the connections regarding home, regarding parents, regarding community. I can see it on their faces, and I see that they're having some difficulties understanding the question. I just don't read the question like it is there [in the book]. I make the question lower. You know what I mean by that is, in English sometimes you might describe something with three words, and we might describe the same thing in Spanish with 20 or 30, or 5 sentences. That's what I do with those questions. If they are falling short, I keep on bringing all the elements

to the question. I just start adding. That's basically what I do until I get the answer. (March 29, 2012)

Carlos described a strategy that I often observed in the classrooms of the participants:

Even if the students are very English-dominant socially, academically, they may not be with the vocabulary and content. So, not only do we have to explain it to the students, but we have to show it to them, too. They have to see it. The more visual it is, the more connections they can make, the better the retention and the understanding. (May 24, 2012)

Laura demonstrated a different way that the teachers make connections in their classrooms. She used the cognates shared by English and Spanish to further students' comprehension skills. She discussed the cognate wall that she had up all year:

The students see something like the word *flow* and they would say, "Oh, flow... fluir. It sounds the same." This used to be my cognate wall. We had all the cognates that we could come up with on the wall and I had pockets where they could take an index card and write. They'd say, "I think this might be a cognate," and then we'd talk about it. (May 8, 2012)

One of the strongest threads connecting all of the participants was their capacity to use their knowledge of second language acquisition and bilingual education to identify curriculum and practices that they then adapted to meet the needs of language learners. Pearson (2003) states:

We want teachers who use their deep knowledge of subject matter along with knowledge of children's histories, routines, and dispositions to create just the right curricular mix for each and all—we want them to use their inquiry skills to alter those approaches when the evidence that passes their eye says they are not working. (p. 15)

The teachers in this study continuously referred to adapting their instructional strategies as *making it work* for the bilingual learners in their classroom. They spoke about professional development, materials, and specialist resources that were constantly presented to them through a dominant language perspective. All of these nominated effective teachers learned to expect that their resources were based on an all-English paradigm, and they responded to it in ways they believe best served their students.

Ana spoke candidly about her responses of anger in the past, and how she now tries to think positively about her role in adjusting instructional practices. She offered:

Instead of arguing and wasting my time on that, I'm just going to think positive and think about what this program offers. When I'm in a professional development presentation, I think I'm just going to see how it is going to fit our ELL kids. [I used to say], "I wish my kids could do that, but they can't." I start tuning all of that out now. I don't think that way any more, because I have to shift to how new programs are going to benefit my kids. I have to do it anyway, so now I have to make sure that I operate in a way that is going to benefit them. What are we going to do with our kids [ELLs]? Well,

let's think about what this program is about, how it's going to fit into our ELL program, and then let's tweak it and make it work. (May 11, 2012)

Luis shared his experiences about adapting professional development he received from the literacy teachers at his school:

Luis: [The literacy teachers] arrange to come to our classroom and model lessons for us. Which I think is very productive, you know. At first, they came any day and sat down. They left a note, not evaluating you, but just saying, "Thank you for letting me come into your classroom." I had them come four or five times. It's nice to see somebody else. It's pretty refreshing. I have adapted things. I have stolen a lot of things, which is good, which is what it is for.

LE: Are you getting the support you need? Does it benefit your bilingual students?

Luis: Not really. It benefits me more as a teacher.

LE: Does it benefit them through you?

Luis: It helps me with strategies and adding more to my repertoire. But in terms of how it will help me as a bilingual teacher, and you know my approach to my students and bilingualism, no. Not in that sense.

(March 29, 2012)

Laura focused on not having the resources needed. She stated, "Often you can find the perfect material, but it's not in the right language, so you have to spend your time translating, or you just can't find the material you want in the language that you want it" (May 30, 2012). Laura also provided an example of how she

knowingly went out on a limb to adapt the entire Reading First program to *make it work* for the students:

I don't know if I was allowed to implement Reading First in Spanish, but that's what I did. It was trial by fire. Nobody really knew I was working in Spanish. Occasionally, my principal would say, "Wait, you're doing what?" And I would explain why, and he would say (sigh), "Okay." Or somebody would say, "You know, she's only doing that in Spanish. She's never working with these kids in English." Then he [the principal] would ask me, "Is this true? Are you just working with these kids in Spanish?" I would say, "Well, yes, and here's why." I would explain that these are the kids who don't already speak English. Their native language is Spanish. We need to build them up in Spanish before we can work on their English. (May 8, 2012)

The review of literature included in Chapter Two of this study presented what many scholars believe to be exemplary practices (Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999; Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003; Wharton-McDonald, 1996), and it has been noted that many of the practices deemed effective in mainstream reading instruction have also been evidenced as effective for English language learners (August and Shanahan, 2006). The quality of the teacher impacts student learner immensely (Darling-Hammond, 2009), and the expertise of the teacher with bilingual learners is essential. Freire (2005) states:

Teachers' political, ethical, and professional responsibility puts them under an obligation to prepare and enable themselves before engaging in their

teaching practice. Teaching requires constant preparation and development on the part of teachers, as is made clearer and clearer by their teaching experience, if well lived and apprehended. Such development is based on a critical analysis of their practice. (p. 32)

It was evident that the four teachers had a comprehensive, strong knowledge foundation regarding the tenets of bilingual education and second language acquisition, and their expertise has contributed greatly to their roles as highly effective teachers.

***Knowledge of reading intervention practices.***

Recent research has demonstrated that, in many school populations, as many as two-thirds of the students are performing below proficiency level in reading (The National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2009). It has been estimated that the prevalence of significant reading disabilities in children is one in five, with 33% having difficulties learning to read (Greenwood, Kamps, Terry and Linebarger 2007). According to Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998), children who have difficulty learning to read most often live in central cities, attend urban schools, live in families of lower socioeconomic status, and are part of a minority ethnic/linguistic group. The participants of this study have demonstrated specific understandings of the nuances associated with the low reading achievement of the bilingual learners in their classrooms. The primary observation related to the experiences the teachers had, is that the school system did not have appropriate programming in place to meet the needs of the bilingual learners requiring literacy intervention. In all of the

cases, the teachers believed the best interventions for their students were the ones that they could provide in their bilingual classrooms.

Ana discussed one of the things that she works hard to preserve in order to have a classroom where all students' needs are met. She believes that language needs are not met when children are pulled out for intervention and special education needs. She explained:

I don't refer them any more, because we are doing a disservice by doing that. We're wasting time, and we're wasting their time. The instruction here [in the bilingual classroom] is a lot more beneficial than what's happening out there. I want to preserve... making sure these kids are still learning, even though they do have a learning disability. Even though the specialists are giving them help, the students get so intimidated, because they don't know how to speak the language [English] well. Those are the kids who are struggling with both languages, because of a learning disability. So, then they don't have that confidence to ask. Whereas, if they are in my classroom, they do have that confidence and they will be asking me questions about it. (April 19, 2012)

Ana believes that the execution of special education services becomes ineffective when students do not receive instruction through their native language. Cummins (2000) suggests that there exists a common underlying proficiency that is the foundation for learning any language. Hamayan, Marler, Sanchez-Lopez, and Damico (2007), in their research on special education considerations for ELLs state, "The common underlying proficiency principle suggests using the first language as a

resource for developing the second language, as well as a means for learning new concepts” (p. 65). Ana told a story that highlights the issues of pulling kids from their bilingual class to receive intervention services:

Ana: In fourth grade, there was a set of twins. One qualified for special education, and the other one didn't. The one that qualified was getting pulled out for services, and you should have seen the [state test] results. The one that stayed in the bilingual classroom, because she didn't qualify for services—by a hair, she passed the [test]. The one that was getting extra help... [motions low]. The teacher said, “I can't believe this. I feel like telling the special education teacher to forget it. Don't take her. Just leave her here with me.” I feel the same way.

LE: It may be expert instruction.

Ana: But, it's not benefitting our kids.

LE: What's missing?

Ana: The language. (April 19, 2012)

Luis spoke with great certitude about his belief that low achieving students should remain in his classroom, rather than leave to receive English intervention services. He declared:

When they leave, they are not getting their bilingual services. It's an either/or situation. That's why I don't regret... I'd rather keep my student, than sit through an IEP and think to myself that it is a bunch of lies. That is a

worse situation, much worse, because they are totally removed from their main placement, which is the bilingual classroom. (March 29, 2012)

Luis prefers a classroom model where the special education teacher steps into the role of a consultant, and the student remains in the bilingual classroom. He recounted a situation with one of his students that brought him to this conclusion.

Some days, the special education teacher takes him. When she can find some time to pull him and service him alone for a little while. She attempted to pull him every day. He would cry. He would be very upset. So, I am left to meet his needs. All of that is illegal, I know. I'm afraid of bringing all that up. It is best for him to be with me, because his cultural needs cannot be addressed. His language needs to be addressed, because he is still a bilingual student. (March 29, 2012)

Luis tells me how he feels when he works with his low achieving readers.

[I am] more of a pure bilingual teacher. I am using both languages. I am thinking again in both languages, because they require that use. With the lower level students, I feel like more of my bilingual pedagogical sense is put into use. (April 16, 2012)

Luis continued explaining that he is the primary resource for students with intervention needs, because he has the ability to provide native language instruction and make cultural connections. He believes these opportunities put him in a "more natural true bilingual educator mode" (April 16, 2012).

Carlos expressed concerns about his students receiving services. Although Goodall Elementary School employs a bilingual reading specialist, she often gets

pulled from her time with the dual language program to assist with administrative needs. Carlos usually maneuvers his daily schedule to spend small group time with those students with intervention needs. He has strong native language pedagogy, and he first and foremost protects the Spanish space that students are working in. During the study, it was observed that Carlos used the Spanish independent reading block to work with students individually. He used that time to engage in explicit word study with the students. Carlos described his intervention strategy:

For those particular students, usually I work in a small group... smaller group. Usually I have a constant project that goes on at the same time—whether it's writing an essay or some research or something. While the others are doing it, I work with the particular group of students that need help. (May 24, 2012)

Laura used her reading specialist skills, Reading First experience, and her Reading Recovery training with students with intervention needs. She took a very systematic approach to servicing students. It was evident that Laura had a strong knowledge base and used her skills to determine which students required help based on learning or language needs, and which students would benefit from help in both areas. Laura discussed the situation in her classroom.

Some of them are just behind because they need another year or so to master English. Some of those kids are native English speakers. For them, it's not a second language thing. They're having some difficulty with their English. The same thing is happening in Spanish for them. Some native English speakers are doing better in Spanish. Outside of my classroom, I don't get much help.

We have a bilingual resource teacher who works with certain students when she is able. The problem is, she is not always able. She doesn't have a set time for just my kids. There isn't a slot for fourth grade. (May 30, 2012)

Laura continued by saying that she does not find the services of the resource teacher helpful, and that her students do not benefit from the practice of being pulled from the classroom. Laura, like the other teachers, is confident in her ability to service the needs of all her students, especially because they are experiencing school in two languages.

***Knowledge of the relevance of culture to student success.***

It is evidenced that all of the participants have profound beliefs in the relevance of culture to successful school experiences for their students. The diverse backgrounds of the teachers offer the backdrop from which to explore their awareness of the pertinence of culture throughout the instructional day.

An event occurred in Ana's class during one of the observations that exemplified her commitment to building cultural connections for her students. During one of the lessons on biographies, the class was discussing Martin Luther King Jr. and segregation. Ana was making one of her many usual connections and the discussion took on a life of its own. Notable in this event is that Ana's instruction, which is primarily conducted in English, took a language shift as the conversation with the students evolved:

Ana: Remember we read that there were bathrooms for African American people and there were bathrooms for Caucasian people. If the African Americans were caught in the Caucasian bathrooms, they would get

arrested. He [Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.] was fighting for the rights of people, wasn't he?

St: De los negros. *[Of the Blacks.]*

Ana: La palabra que él dijo, acaba de decir... tenemos que tener mucho cuidado como la usamos. Yo sé que en español *black* quiere decir negro, pero, pongan atención, es muy importante. Pero nunca nos vamos a referir a una persona que es morena como negro porque la palabra es muy ofensiva. It's very offensive to use that word. Entonces la palabra en español apropiada para referirse a una persona así es afro americano o moreno...okay? *[The word that he just said... we have to be very careful how we use it. I know that "black" in Spanish is "negro", but pay attention, it's very important. We are never going to refer to a dark person as "negro," because the word is very offensive. The appropriate word in Spanish to refer to a person is African American or moreno (dark-skinned).]*

St: Chocolate.

Ana: No tampoco eso. También es ofensivo, y no es de risa. Ustedes no les parecería que a ustedes les dijeran otras cosas que también son ofensivas para los latinos, cierto o no. No es de risa. Les acabo de decir las palabras que son apropiadas para eso... moreno o afro americano, así es como se refieren ellos; pero ni chocolate, ni negro. ¿Entendido? Yo sé que ellos la usan entre ellos. La palabra, la voy a decir y no quiero que la vuelvan a repetir. La palabra *nigger*, es muy

ofensiva. *[Not that either. It's also very offensive, and it's not funny. You would not like it if somebody referred to you with an offensive word, would you? It's not funny. I just told you the words that are appropriate... "moreno or African American... not chocolate or negro, understand? I know that they use it amongst themselves. I am going to say it, but you are not going to repeat it. The word "nigger" is very offensive.]* [Ana switches to English.] It's very offensive. I know they use it among themselves. You guys cannot refer to them as that. The reason why you can't use it, is because back then, even before Martin Luther King Jr., that's how people referred to them when they were slaves. That's why now you have to be very careful how you use it. They can get very offended. For example, what would be a word for a Hispanic that you would get very offended by if someone used it with you. I know you have heard some of those words and you do get offended.

St: Mayate. *[June bug or beetle.]*

Ana: Pero otra vez, eso también es ofensivo. ¿La palabra correcta, que dijimos que era? *[Again, that can also be offensive. What is the correct word?]*

St: African American.

Ana: No vas a ir a decir, "Oh, afro americano...," le vas a decir por su nombre. *[You are not going to go up to a person and say, "Oh, African American..." You are going to use their name.]*

St: Si lo sabemos. [*If we know it.*]

Ana: Si lo sabemos. Si no, si no, tratas de... ¿Cual palabra es la correcta? [*If you know it. If not, you will try to... What is the correct word?*]

Sts: Afro americano. [African American.]

Ana: Okay, we got that out of the way. (April 12, 2012)

Ana directs the discussion in English back to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the reasons why he is honored regularly. She also included a review on who Cesar Chavez is and the rights that he fought for. Ana directs the students back to their seats. Before they get ready for lunch, she is compelled to summarize the discussion on offensive language. It is apparent that the students want to continue the conversation. Ana's use of both Spanish and English is interesting, and she explained later that she did not even realize how she moved back and forth between the languages. She used Spanish as a way to strengthen the connection she deeply wanted to make with the students.

Ana: Cuando se refieren a nosotros, personas dicen, "Oh conocí a un..."

[*When they are referring to us, people say, "Oh I met a..."*]

St: Mexicano. [*Mexican.*]

Ana: Bueno, puede ser mexicano. ¿Todos aquí somos mexicanos? ¿Ella, qué es? [*Well, it can be Mexican, but are we all Mexican? What is she?*]

St: Durango.

Ana: ¿Pero, otra palabra correcta... si no sabemos si es mexicano, hondureño, o puertorriqueño? [*Another correct word... if we do not*

*know whether they are Mexicans, Honduran, or Puerto Rican?]* What would be another word that we can use for everybody?

St: Hispano. [*Hispanic.*]

Ana: Hispano, muy bien. So you can say, “Oh conocí a un hispano en la Escuela Henry.” Porque tal si dice mexicana and she is not Mexican, right? Eso sería la palabra un poco más correcta solamente que si supieran que era mexicano o puertorriqueño. [*Hispanic, good. So, you can say, “I met an Hispanic person at Henry School.” Because what if we say Mexican, and she is not Mexican, right? That’s a better word to use, unless, you did know if the person is Mexican or Puerto Rican.*]

St: How do you call the people of Zacatecas?

Ana: Zacatecas esta en México, so mexicanas. [*Zacatecas is in Mexico, so Mexicans.*]

St: Ooooh.

Ana: Todas las personas que son de México son mexicanos o mexicanas, okay? Todas las personas que son de Puerto Rico, son puertorriqueños. Pero si no sabemos que es la persona, podemos decir hispano o hispana o latino y latina. [*Everyone who is from Mexico is a Mexican, okay? Everyone who is from Puerto Rico is Puerto Rican. If we do not know where the person is from, we can call them Hispanic or Latino or Latina.*]

St: Unas personas que son mexicanas les llaman *frijoleros*. [*Some Mexican people are called “frijoleros” (bean-eater).*]

Ana: Dice ella que cuando piensan... when they think they are Mexican, they call them... las llaman *frijoleros*. [*They call them "frijoleros."*]  
That's an offensive word. Exactly the same way that it would be offensive to use the other words we talked about over there. I'm not even going to use them because they are very offensive. So, that's a very offensive word, *frijoleros*. That's not nice, right? So that's why I mean you have to be very careful how you refer to people. (April 12, 2012)

The students are reluctant to stop the discussion, but they are scheduled for lunch. Ana talked about this particular classroom conversation in a subsequent meeting. She said:

When you get an opportunity, it's actually more valuable to just go off on that and say, "Well this is a perfect example to discuss." They can see how it connects to our own real-life experiences, because otherwise when are they really going to have that opportunity, if it's not here in the classroom? (April 19, 2012)

Luis shared Ana's sentiments about the relevance of culture as he used the read-aloud choice of Roberto Clemente as an opportunity to make real-life connections for his students. His voice softened as he reminisced:

The last thing I chose was a non-fiction biography about Roberto Clemente. Which is a very personal story for me. I told them, "That person is not only my favorite baseball player ever, but my childhood hero. My admiration for him transcended baseball, because for as good as he was as a baseball player,

he was a good human being, too.” I always read it every year, and I always read it about this time because baseball is about to start. It always touches me. I relate to the story and I add anecdotes to it. The students are really engaged. They get emotionally involved in it, because they see me. I’m emotional. He died trying to take humanitarian aid to another country... in a plane crash. I was about to be six years old. I do remember some things, and then the students ask me all these questions. They asked if I knew where the plane crashed. I tell them, “Yes, it’s not far from where I grew up.” That brings a series of connections to the world. I told them that his dream was to create a sports city for children, and I was able to play in that sports city when I played for my high school team. I had a chance to play on one of the fields at Roberto Clemente Sports City. I’m still fascinated... bringing all those memories back... and my students...they’re totally fascinated. (March 29, 2012)

Luis makes deliberate choices to embed culture into his instruction. He searches for literature that will promote connections geographically and linguistically. Luis chose to conduct a guided reading unit with a chapter book titled *El lugar más bonito del mundo [The Most Beautiful Place in the World]*. He introduced the story during a Spanish reading period, and the objective of the lesson during the observation was to present students with background knowledge from which to begin reading. The classroom engaged in an activity where the students shared their ideas about where the most beautiful place in the world might be. Luis guided them through the session as they made inferences about the setting of the

story using the picture of a woman and a small boy on the cover. He skillfully connects the new story to what the students are familiar with:

Luis: ¿A algunos de ustedes le es familiar ese tipo de vestimenta que está usando la señora? [*Is the type of clothing the woman is wearing familiar to any of you?*]

St: Traditional.

Luis: Tradicional, ¿Tradicional de donde? [*Traditional. Traditional from where?*]

St: De Mexico. [*From Mexico.*]

St: Es como si fuera de México. [*I looks like it is from Mexico.*]

Luis: Ustedes están familiarizados y reconocen estas ropas, como ropas tradicionales de México. Entonces, ¿Cual es la relación, entonces, entre México y Guatemala? [*You are familiar and know the clothes as traditional from Mexico. These clothes, then, what is the connection between Mexico and Guatemala?*] (Students discuss amongst themselves.)

Luis: Guatemala justamente comparte borde con México. Eso quiere decir que este tipo de vestimenta tradicional no es exclusivamente de México. También la vemos en Guatemala, en Honduras, en El Salvador, en gran parte de América Central. México y Guatemala son países vecinos, están uno al lado del otro, así que va a haber muchas cosas en esta historia que ustedes se van a relacionar fácilmente, porque hay muchas cosas similares entre Guatemala y México. Son países vecinos. [*Guatemala shares a border with Mexico. That means, this traditional type of clothing is not exclusive to Mexico. We also see it in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and in much of Central America. Mexico and Guatemala are in neighboring countries, they are side by side, so there will*

*be many things in this story that you will be able to easily relate to, because there are many similarities between Guatemala and Mexico. They are neighbors.] (May 2, 2012)*

Luis continued the inquiry about Guatemala by having the students work in groups of four to research five facts about Guatemala. The students used laptops, and they were instructed to complete their work in Spanish. Some students struggled with the Spanish objective. One student approached Luis and asked, “¿Como se... how do you say “popularidad” in Spanish?” Luis pointed out to the student that he just said it in Spanish. Luis feels discouraged, because he feels the effects of the language loss that students have and he attributes it to the lack of deliberate language development and the pressure to move toward English in a transitional model. He explained:

I say, how could this happen? Whenever I do something in Spanish, their reaction... their gestures...their body language is like we’re doing something that is totally out of the norm... out of what is predictable... out of what is familiar. It shouldn’t be like that. That is still the language of familiarity at home. (May 2, 2012)

Luis’ experience lies in contrast to the observations of Carlos. Carlos only teaches Spanish literacy, as another teacher conducts the English literacy portion of the dual language instruction. He brings cultural relevance to his lessons daily. Carlos has an expectation that language, culture, and community are embedded in the daily objectives. He is a storyteller at heart, and it is common for him to regress during his lessons to make a relevant connection for the students. Carlos

commented on how he shares his experiences about being a second language learner with his students, “I share personal stories with my kids in Spanish. I engage in storytelling about when I was younger and things that happened to me. They always enjoy them. They always want me to go on” (May 24, 2012).

The cultural connections that Laura brings to her classroom represent those that she is most familiar with, and appear to be those that are most common through a dominant culture platform. Although it has been evidenced in this study that Laura has strong beliefs about the value of diversity and multiculturalism, there was not ample opportunity within this study to observe cultural conversations that were conducted in her class. Laura works hard to preserve student-centeredness in her instructional practices, and she was asked how language and culture influenced her approach. She responded:

Laura: Sometimes a lot, sometimes not so much. I guess it depends on the topic. With pilgrims and the first Thanksgiving... a lot, because I've got a good half of my group... we celebrate Thanksgiving, and we know why. We know this is what we do and another group... it is not that important of a holiday, because they're immigrants. But it should be an important holiday to them, because they are immigrants. It's the whole idea of tying the first Thanksgiving to being thankful that you have immigrated to this place. To me that was huge. I wanted to make that connection for them.

LE: Did you take the meaning of the word pilgrim out of that context? Did anything come up about present day immigration?

Laura: A little, but they're not terribly informed. I didn't bring that up, because we had already done so much. I don't think at fourth grade they're ready to tackle some of those issues. I did have some students say, "How come the president hates Mexicans." Things like that.  
(May 30, 2012)

Laura continued to describe a few specific students in her classroom who have very current immigration issues happening within their families. She is extremely sympathetic, but did not connect curriculum content with the students' current experiences and the implications of the history of immigration in the United States with topics such as pilgrims and Thanksgiving. Bartolomé and Balderrama (2001) suggest that many teachers "uncritically" and "unconsciously" hold beliefs that reflect the dominant culture, and these beliefs can translate into deficit-based views of Hispanic students. In addition, García (1991) writes about teachers of bilingual learners with ideological clarity. He describes the importance of teachers to move beyond the content and the technical elements of their work to "provide the kind of cultural and linguistic validation that is missing" (p. 139). He believes that it is the role of the bilingual educator to create these learning spaces for students.

### **Theme Two: Recognition of and Reaction to Discriminatory Practices**

The second theme that is prevalent in this study is that all of the teachers had a multitude of experiences where it was evidenced that they recognized and reacted to discriminatory practices. It has been shown above that the teachers possess a confidence and awareness of their expertise as educators of bilingual learners. This cognizance of expertise is a platform from which the teachers can

recognize and react to practices that are discriminatory. The participants expressed their willingness to push up against practices that were inequitable as a way to preserve what they believed was in the best interest of the bilingual learners in their classrooms. Banks and Banks (1995) suggest that the deliberate choice to participate in the interrogation of inequitable practices represents the notion that teaching is a multicultural encounter that serves to validate and inform the lives of students.

The data that was gathered revealed that the teachers experienced forms of discrimination through individual critical incidences, as well as daily systemic occurrences. Although the two are described in separate sections, it is recognized here that individual and systemic discrimination are endlessly intertwined.

#### ***Individual critical incidences.***

The critical incidence approach (Patton, 2002) is used in this multiple case study as a way to provide examples of how the participants described their recognition of and reaction to discrimination. The teachers described these incidences in ways that profoundly affected them, and they had an awareness that these incidents are embedded in larger systemic ideologies.

Ana relayed the story of how the expansion of the bilingual program opened a position for her, but at the same time displaced a well-loved teacher. Her intense retelling of the story gave the impression that the incident had a profound effect on her. She was uncomfortable as she remembered:

Comments were made in front of me. They [certain teachers at the school] said, "I can't believe they're displacing teachers to get teachers that will be

teaching these kids in Spanish. They should just go back to their country. What's the point?" I guess the [displaced] teacher was pregnant at that time, and she was so nervous about it. The teachers were so angry about the displacement, that they began telling parents, our parents, that they shouldn't sign their kids up for the bilingual program. They [the teachers] wanted the bilingual program to totally crash. They were telling them not to sign them up, because all we were doing is teaching the students Spanish, and they weren't learning any English. We had a whole bunch of kids leave [the bilingual program]. (March 27, 2012)

At the time, Ana was put in a position that made her feel "horrible," as if she made the decision to give herself the job. The force of the discrimination by the individual teachers was so powerful, that Ana nearly apologized for the abhorrent behavior against her. The actions of the teachers had a serious impact on the education of the students. The parents later wanted their children to return to the dual language classrooms, but there were no longer classroom openings.

During an interview session with Luis, he recounted an event that he could not shake off from earlier in the day. There were times he felt his students were marginalized, and he offered this example that was obviously heavy on his mind:

Today we had the talent show. The [students] wanted to do something. I said, "I don't know if I can help you, but I know many Mexican songs and I enjoy singing them, but I'm not so sure that I'd be too proficient doing a traditional dance. But, I'm from Puerto Rico, and I love dancing salsa. Last year it turned out to be good. Everybody loved it. Now this year, we let the

fifth graders do it, since they already knew the choreography. They did it today. They did a nice job. I was very proud of them. But today, I was in shock. This is our second year and everybody knows what we do. They [audience] barely clapped for them. I said, "Wow, I noticed that." The kids came back to the classroom and said, "They didn't clap... they barely did." I said, "You noticed that? What do you think about that? Tell me how you are feeling." The students said, "I think they're jealous." "I think they're racist." There were two more classes of bilingual kids, and they were dancing to an English song and the same thing happened. For example, one of the teachers in charge of the song put it [volume] really low... lower than the others, and cut it short, too. It's a good example... a fresh example... I had on my mind. It just happened. I thought it was appropriate to bring that example and share it with you. It's fresh. It's there, and it shows clearly the *us v. them*. (May 4, 2012)

Luis continued to talk for some time about the incident that happened earlier that day. The discrimination was familiar to him, and he continued to dialogue about his concerns for his students:

I said [to the students], "I understand your feelings, and I can relate, because I can feel the same way. I respect totally the way you feel. Take it as an experience." The students... they are so savvy... asked me what I learned from it, and I told them that next year I am not going to do that [talent show]. They asked why. I told them I didn't want to put them through that [reaction from the audience]. I don't want my students to feel bad out of something

good we are trying to do... sharing your culture with others, and not to be appreciated. I said, "I don't want you to feel sad or bad or angry. I'm not going to put you through that, so I'm not going to get involved." They were quiet, and they said, "Aw, we understand." It doesn't matter if they are 10 or 45, the feelings are the same. (May 4, 2012)

Luis' reaction to this experience resulted in his belief that he should remove the possibility of any future occurrences like this for his students. He spoke a great deal throughout the interviews about wanting to protect his students from some of the harsh realities of being a minority in a dominant culture. In a discussion on how his personal experiences influence his teaching, he described his need to protect the students:

I think my experience plays a major role. I don't have to talk to them specifically in these terms, but I'm a teacher, and in so many ways, I feel like a parent, too. I'm trying to protect them from all the things that I went through. I guess it comes naturally. (March 29, 2012)

Although these incidences that are described are written here as individual occurrences, it is recognized in this study that they represent a snapshot of a multitude of scenarios rooted in grander ideologies about the attitudes regarding race, culture, and language. Laura spoke candidly about the tension between the dual language program and the creative arts program at Goodall Elementary. She provided an example of a time that she felt the students in the dual language program were excluded:

The coordinator for the other program brought in this theater group. They came and put on a play with the kids. She had written a grant. I thought that was going to be great for the kids. She [the coordinator] said, "We don't want any dual language kids to participate. Since it's a creative arts type of performance, we want it to be a creative arts initiative, and we don't want dual language." I said, "I'm not telling that to parents. If that's a decision you guys are making, you get to tell the parents about that, because I don't want to be the one saying, no. They are going to be the ones to ask why can't my kids participate." The other dual language teachers were upset, too. They said, "What do you mean my kids can't participate?" (May 8, 2012)

Laura's reaction was to turn her efforts into organizing a cultural program that was exclusive to the dual language program. Laura remembered, "It became this huge divide, and it was awful. It all worked out, but that was the environment, the atmosphere here... very politically charged, very divided." (May 8, 2012)

Carlos often pointed out incidences that he believed were discriminatory at a district level. In his long career in the field, he has advocated for many issues that were contrary to those that devalued culturally diverse pedagogy. He described an incident that exemplified the action toward administrators who were vocal about programming needs:

Some building principals are proactive when it comes to bilingual programs. At times, too proactive, to the point that they get penalized... transferred. We had a former principal, who would come to monthly meetings we had with the school district to express concerns we had with the instruction of ELLs in

the district. He was always there to encourage and support the program. Some of the teachers were there, because they were representatives of the councils that represented the ELL community. I was there as part of [a council]. The principal was the council president. He didn't reapply, because the district discouraged him from joining again, because we were being a little too vocal and radical because of the [dual language] program. The principal was moved to a non-bilingual school. (May 24, 2012)

Carlos was deeply involved with the issues that affected the education of Hispanic and dual language students in the district. He was concerned that the decisions made at the district level did not prioritize the needs of the bilingual program:

Decisions are made as an afterthought. I know right now the district is pushing for language in all schools, but I think it's more for an economic advantage for just a certain group of parents, because they really want to implement Chinese in schools. I see this as being more of an economic program for upper middle class Anglo families. (May 24, 2012)

Carlos continued discussing his belief that ELL students succeed because of the experiences they encounter with respect to language and culture. He shows grave concern that the educational needs of 30% of the district's population of students continues to be disregarded as evidenced by district decisions to dismantle effective bilingual programming.

*Daily systemic occurrences.*

The incidences of discrimination described above are easily identifiable as critical events; however, there is something more that was experienced by the four teachers of this study. The teachers described atmospheres that were laden with deficit views and inequitable practices. Feagin and Feagin (1978) describe these as “Practices carried out by members of dominant groups which have differential and negative impact on members of subordinate groups.” Marx (2006) refers to this as passive racism that “is so ingrained in American institutions, philosophies, and practices that it is often times completely invisible... they/we cannot see it because it is embedded in nearly every aspect of all of our daily lives” (p. 10). The participants of this study recognized and reacted to their experiences of institutional discrimination in ways that were revealed in (a) accessibility of educational services, (b) testing, and (c) how bilingual learners are valued in the dominant culture system.

*Educational services.*

All of the participants spoke extensively about the institutional practice of creating bilingual programs in their districts, but they were unanimous in their accounts that there were not equitable services for those students with reading intervention needs.

Henry Elementary School is a Title I school, and Luis was told that Title I services were not approved for use with Spanish literacy. He explained:

I think that’s part of the problem. The role of Title I is to increase their [the students’] English reading level. Last year, the teacher worked with some of

my students, and it was not in Spanish. It was in English. My understanding is that they cannot use Title I teachers as a resource to improve that child's literacy in their native language, if they are in a bilingual classroom with a bilingual teacher. But, I say, that's what we need. I have to be honest with you, I don't understand. I get upset. (March 29, 2012)

Luis speaks specifically about a student in his class who has shown very little progress over several years:

I believe they [the district] keep fumbling the ball with many students. This kid has shown year after year... the progress he shows is so little. He is still struggling big time. What explanation do you have? Nobody has said anything about progress monitoring. There is no understanding of the bilingual programs, how the bilingual program works, and what the needs of the bilingual program are. Administrators don't know anything about it. I feel there is a lot of apathy, and it's like, they saw my classroom and said there is a bilingual teacher, then the student has been serviced. I wish it was that easy, but it isn't. So, our students don't get other support. Something else... right now I have a kid who is classified special ed in math and he has barely received any services. The reason why is that there is an inclusion teacher that is working two classes. My student will have to go in one of the two [English] classes that she works in. The boy feels uncomfortable there, he will cry, so she told me that he is better off in my classroom. I cannot blame her. Believe me, at this point, you know where I stand in terms of injustices and all of that. Believe me, if I knew it was that she just didn't want

to service him, because of prejudicial issues or something like that, then I would have made a big issue about that. But, that's not the case. There's still a child with needs. To be honest with you, I can't even blame the principal. It's more of a systemic thing. In this case, we can go as big as the district. It will be the district. (March 29, 2012)

Luis thinks about what he has said. He asked for an opportunity to recant his remarks:

Actually, I'm going to take back some words. I'm going to retract a bit of what I said. The principal could do something about it, because special education teachers are being used as inclusion teachers. Knowing that this child has needs, they have to find a way. In that sense, I would have to say the special ed teacher failed that part. The principal wouldn't know unless the special ed teacher lets the principal know. Ultimately, the district and the principal would be made responsible, but she could have done more. I could have done more. I'm to blame, too. (March 29, 2012)

Luis illustrated how the decisions made at different levels affect the services that the bilingual learner has received. Carlos also elaborated on the fragmented services that bilingual students in his classroom receive, despite the fact, that the school has a bilingual special education teacher:

The special education teacher partners with me. Unfortunately, that issue has been longstanding. The priority in the district has not been the students themselves. She is supposed to be partnering with me and working with particular students on modifications or the instruction of the particular

lesson that they are doing. I have three identified [special education] students. Unfortunately, they pull her a lot for discipline problems in other rooms instead. She doesn't get to be in my room that often, but she tries her hardest. Sometimes because she has to go somewhere else, she'll pull the kids with her and take them, even though they're supposed to be in my [bilingual] room. She can't service them, because she has been pulled over there. At least she tries. It's not her doing, and I don't blame her at all. She is just as upset about it as I am. (May 24, 2012)

Carlos removed the blame from the special education teacher, despite the fact that the *Individualized Education Plan* (IEP) of that student is not being met. As in Luis' case, the students in Carlos' class can receive reading intervention services; however, the reading specialist does not speak Spanish. Carlos explained the situation:

I was supposed to have the reading coach to show how to improve language lessons, but she only spoke English. Well, I want my lessons in Spanish. I don't want them in English. If I have to do it, then tell me what I'm supposed to do. In English classes she demonstrated, taught the lessons, and worked with the kids. Here she couldn't do it, because it would have been in Spanish. She would do it with the other teachers during English language literacy, but she couldn't do it with me. I didn't have that benefit. (May 24, 20012)

Ana spoke about another reason that her students didn't receive services.

She described the situation as one she could not tolerate:

It's uncalled for. Our kids in Title I... our kids weren't being serviced because they were already getting ESL [English as a Second Language] services. They [Title I] said, "That's called *double dipping*. I was so angry. They thought that because they were getting help from ESL services, getting help from a different program was double dipping. But our kids are entitled to those services. If we should be servicing the bottom 10%, and some of our kids are part of that 10%... we fought. We fought. (April 19, 2012)

Ana's student did begin receiving services, and the Title I teacher was a Spanish-speaker. Ana explained the complexity of that situation:

Just because we have a Spanish Title I teacher, doesn't mean she has to service our students. Title I does not have to service our kids in Spanish. They really don't have to. She does it, because it's best practices. This doesn't really mean that other Title I teachers give that support. (April 19, 2012)

When Ana was asked about the special education services her students receive, she replied:

When we have referred some of our kids and they have qualified for special education, they do horrible when they get pulled out and work with the special ed teacher. Again, they're giving them the service in English. The kids are still not understanding what they need to do, versus when they are in the classroom with us, they are learning and we are giving them the support. (April 19, 2012)

Laura's experience reflects those of the other three participants. The inconsistency of services, the lack of attention to native language, and the misinformation about the needs of bilingual learners are all concerns that Laura has. She also spoke on several occasions of the discrimination that is built into decisions made regarding textbooks and materials:

We are assured again and again that we will not be forced to use materials that are not in Spanish or that we do not approve. Then on September 1, there are those materials that we cannot use. And the attitude is not, "Oh sorry, you cannot use them... we forgot you needed them in Spanish." The attitude is, "Oh, you don't want those materials, okay, we'll give them to someone who does." That drives me crazy, because that is discriminatory. The money that is being spent on our children is not benefitting our children. This happens over and over. (May 30, 2012)

Luis has concerns about the minimal number of Spanish books he has to develop his Spanish literacy curriculum. He stated:

"With the limited books I get, here is what happens. I spend more time with the Spanish with these students during the first couple of months. I usually run out of books to read quickly. Then basically, it's more English, and then whatever I can get my hands on or find on the Internet that is in Spanish. (May 2, 2012)

Carlos talked about one of the things he finds inequitable in the dual language program for his fifth graders:

Not being able to find literature for reading is challenging for our program. We wanted literature that was more authentic and not just a translation, but with the enrichment of Hispanic authors. We haven't been able to find this. Regular education teachers supplement or compose their reading curriculum by using literature sets. We don't have that opportunity, so we try to find something in Spanish that is comparable to what they use in English. It is kind of difficult. (May 30, 2012)

*Discrimination in testing.*

All of the participants have ongoing experiences with mandated tests that they believe are incongruous with effective practices for English language learners. The teachers were required to administer the state and district standardized tests, and they all reported discontent with the reporting and grading that accompany assessment issues.

As a Reading First coach, Laura spent a large amount of time with testing issues and bilingual learners. She commented on her experience.

It didn't go very well at all. We were doing measurements with DIBELS, which you can do in Spanish. Which is good. At some point, the teachers had all been told they needed to do it in Spanish and in English, even though some of the kids didn't even read in English at all. I questioned why we were doing that. I asked, "Do you have kids do it in English, even if they don't know any of the letters in English? Do you sit them down and give them a zero?" So, we had to streamline all of that. I had the first grade stop [taking the test] and the second grade stop. The third grade did it in the second half

of the year, because that's when the kids had begun transitioning and they were ready. But, the kindergarten kids, I still had them do it in the beginning of the year, because some of the kids came in knowing all of their letters and sounds in English. (May 8, 2012)

Laura commented on the number of tests that were taken:

In our program, we are tested to death. Between the [state testing], the [language proficiency tests], and then we do a kindergarten screening. We just started MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) testing. We also have Supera [Spanish language version of a state academic standardized test], which we will be changing, because of budgetary reasons. That, and our fourth grade got chosen to do NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) testing. So, because we did NAEP testing, it was like, here's another test. NAEP is English... mandated by the federal government. They told us we have to do it. I think that's why we took our Supera out, because it was just going to be too many tests for one year. There's not a month that goes by when you don't have a test. The Supera probably won't come back, because no one was really looking at it. We would every now and then, but no one else seemed to care. (May 30, 2012)

Laura felt concerned about a perceived achievement gap that was created when the scores of bilingual learners were reported.

Our ELL kids reach a level of language proficiency, and then they are no longer tracked. So, it always appears as though there is a gap, even though

the number of ELL students is getting smaller and smaller and smaller. It still looks like there is a gap when you look at the graphs and the numbers.

Even when you have really good groups where everybody exited and there were no ELLs except for three. You look to see how the ELL students did compared to non-ELLs, and it looked bad. You had to know the class, to know that the sample was so small. Even if it's 45 kids to 3...it doesn't show up on the graph. Now it's even harder, because now we report as one school, not just the dual language program. I feel like we are a little misrepresented there. (May 30, 2012)

Carlos explained further:

Our classification has changed. Now, according to the new regulations, any student who tests out of the DPI (Department of Public Instruction) skills at a score of 5 or 6 are no longer considered ELLs, even though Spanish is their home language. I think that it's a detriment to our program, because now just because the students have learned and become more proficient in both languages, it causes a loss in funding. The ELL classification diminishes. As far as I know, it reduces funding, because there aren't as many in the student ELL population, so they figure the need isn't as great. In that aspect, it doesn't help. I wasn't too happy about that. (April 30, 2012)

Luis has similar worries about the perception of bilingual learners that is perpetuated through test scores:

Aside from the bilingual colleagues, most other educators in this building will measure English literacy as the only measure to determine success or not.

The main focus has been the pushing of the English language. The maintenance of Spanish is not a priority any more. That's part of the pressure. Not only the test scores, but the local climate... the local culture of the school. That's another pressure, because most people are not going to be looking at whether or not this kid is reading above level in Spanish. They don't even care. I'm not even blaming those people, because it's the testing itself. (April 16, 2012)

Both Ana and Luis were in a situation where they wanted to celebrate the increase in scores of the [state] assessment, but received very little support from the rest of the school. Luis recounted the situation:

You see, we were doing a celebration [about the state assessment scores], and the celebration was organized by the bilingual teachers. The rest of the school was not participating. There was no recognition... no assembly... no announcement. I read the report that the superintendent sends. There is a mention of the positives and negatives [about testing], but there was no mention about the bilingual classes scoring higher. They did not make mention of it in the name of "let's make it equal" and not make other students or others in the main segment of the community feel bad. The mainstream cannot feel bad about anything, we have to be sensitive toward them, but there is no sensitivity when it comes to bilingual students' issues. (March 29, 2012)

When the teachers were asked how they prepare their students for the all-English state assessment, their answers were similar in the sense that although they

considered it an intrusion, they approached it as another dominant culture practice to tolerate. Luis shared his test preparation strategy:

I turn the students into experts. It's about using the elimination process on a multiple-choice test. I do so many drills, role-playing, and theater regarding that. My students become experts at that. I think that's why they do so well. It's something I put so much emphasis on. I play out so many different scenarios about how to use the elimination process effectively. I can't resist it [the test]. I used to resist it. I used to get mad about it. Not any more, because, you know what? They will be taking tests all of their lives and when they go to college, the same thing is going to happen. I see it as a set of skills that is needed. Whether we agree with the system or not, it is what it is.

(April 16, 2012)

Laura has a different approach:

I haven't done a lot of test prep like I used to, but I guess I would say the weeks leading up to it, I know for sure I cover certain things in September and October, because I know they're going to be tested in November. So, there are certain things I try to juggle in the curriculum to make sure I cover them before we get to that test in November. We probably do a couple of days of test prep the week or two before with the whole idea of reading and looking at the questions and bubbling correctly... just your basic test prep. Then when the actual test comes, pretty much all teaching is out of the

window. (May 30, 2012)

Ana rallied the bilingual teachers to a meeting to look at the state assessment scores. The group created a chart of the different categories of performance to identify which skills need to be worked on with which students. The teachers then work between the grade levels to establish a plan to increase the scores of low achieving students for the next school year.

*Valuing bilingual learners in a dominant culture system.*

The participants had an overarching belief that bilingual programming was not valued in the dominant culture educational system. Luis explained his belief that every time our system removes a child from his/her language or culture, it is a message about what the dominant culture thinks. It is a message that says, "You're a problem. There's a problem with you" (March 29, 2012). He continued by talking about his belief that the system banks on the idea that parents of ELLs will not confront the inequities. He stated:

I think the districts continue to lean on the fact that most parents don't ask or will not challenge them. They're banking on that. They take their chances, and it's one in a million. When it comes to bilingual students, they are banking on that because they know that 99.99% are never going to question anything the school or the district does. They are going to keep gambling with them. It's an easy bet. (March 29, 2012)

The deficit thinking expressed by Luis is supported by Marx (2006) who concludes, "Families who choose to retain aspects of their home culture, such as language and values, are often misunderstood and, thus, disparaged by those in the dominant culture, including teachers" (p. 57).

Carlos believes that there is a different dynamic for parents when the administrator and parents are bilingual:

I still feel that being bilingual is an important asset, because you want that parent connection. You want that parent to feel comfortable to come in and have that discussion with the principal. If it has to be in Spanish, let it be in Spanish, if that's what the parents speak. (May 24, 2012)

The participants often referred to what happens in the devaluing of programming for language learners as "bilingual education as an afterthought."

Carlos summarizes what was heard from all four of the teachers. "Bilingual education has always been an afterthought. It's like, 'Oh, by the way we need to... ' You would think after 29 years, that would've changed, unfortunately it hasn't" (April 30, 2012).

Ana and Luis spoke at great length about a grading system that is based on a published leveled literacy program. The program is based on English reading levels, and the students' report card grades are correlated to the level in which the students are measured in English reading. Ana and Luis met with the administrators to talk about the inequities of grading students on a language they are not yet fully proficient in. Not only were the students expected to take English leveling tests five times a year, but their report card grade was solely based on that level. The teachers of the bilingual classrooms refused to use this system until it was modified. As a result, a system was created to allow the native Spanish-speaking students to be bumped up two levels of the published program to receive their quarter grade. For example, in this A-Z leveled literacy system, a third grader

must read at or above an M to receive a C grade. An N or above receives a B, and anything over an O secures an A grade. If a bilingual reader makes a quarter's progress from an E to a J, he will be bumped up to an L and still not receive a C, even with the staggering progress of improving five levels. Luis commented:

What we're telling that child is that you failed. You are a failure. That is the message being told. You're still creating your images and think in your native language, so you're not going to be successful until you speak fluently in English, and when you also think in English. (March 29, 2012)

Laura believes that the devaluing process is from the trickle-down effect of what is happening at the higher levels of educational decision-making. She recognized that the federal government has taken out any reference to the word *bilingual* and replaced it with words like *limited English proficient* or *English learners*. She reported a similar sequence of events within the school district:

I do know that there are no longer any bilingual programs in our district. Nothing is bilingual. Everything is language assistance... LAP [Language Assistance Program]. It's what they call it. It's ELL with home language support. We are no longer called a *bilingual* program. We are a *dual language* program. The lady who is in charge of us is the same lady who is in charge of French at the high school and German at the middle school. She's our coordinator. It used to be the person who is in charge of ESL and bilingual programming. Now, there is no more ESL and bilingual programming. It's all under World Languages, and it's called the Language Assistance Program. It's hard for me to trust anything they do. Because the

district has said things and not followed through so many times, it's sort of a *wait and see*. I'll tell you, a lot of other staff think it's a trick to try to "divide and conquer." I think it might be a little paranoid, but I totally know where they're coming from, because we've been jerked around so much. (May 30, 2012)

### **Theme Three: Active roles to Work Toward change**

The four teachers participating in this study overwhelmingly demonstrated a multitude of ways that they took on active roles to influence change in their school environments. The teachers' ability to become change agents is grounded in their expertise in educating bilingual learners. It is from this expert knowledge base, combined with the ability to critically recognize discriminatory practices, that these highly effective teachers are compelled to advocate for equitable and appropriate instructional services for their students. It has been demonstrated that the teachers set out to accomplish this advocacy through (a) participating in leadership roles and on committees, and (b) educating teachers, administrators, and the community about the needs of effective dual language programming.

#### ***Leadership positions and committee representation.***

There is an extensive list of leadership positions and committee representation that was revealed in the conversations with the teachers. This list is a result of the observation that the teachers participated in committees regarding textbook adoption, assessments, data analysis, Response to Intervention, and specific efforts to improve practices for bilingual learners. The teachers often

sought out leadership opportunities in roles such as bilingual unit leader, group spokesperson, and community/school liaison.

Laura summarized why the teachers in the dual language program often find themselves serving on committees:

When the district is making decisions, they forget about us [the dual language program], and that happens on a regular basis. Myself, along with several others, are on every committee, so that they can't forget about us. There is nothing more infuriating than being part of a committee that's making decisions and I have to say, "Don't forget that we're going to do that in Spanish. Don't forget that half of our teachers teach in Spanish. Don't forget that we're going to need that in Spanish"... over and over and over again. Then, when the final decision was made, they forgot that you needed that in Spanish. It's enough to make you say, I'm not sitting on another committee again, because what's the point? What's the point of sitting there and saying Spanish, Spanish, Spanish, and then having everybody say, "Don't worry about it." I can't tell you how many meetings I've attended where district officials have said that to me. [Teachers participate], so that we have a voice. (May 30, 2012)

Laura continued discussing the frustration she felt at not being heard. She spoke about a time when a group of teachers took action to develop a plan to apply for charter school status as a result of the lack of understanding and support from the administration regarding the needs of the dual language program:

What made a difference is when we decided to fill out a charter school application. We went to the school board and we said, "You know what? We'd like to apply for charter school status. We'd like your approval, because you don't support us." Then everybody sat up and took notice. That was two years ago. They denied our charter. They said, "No, we will not approve your charter application, but we'll support you." We've gotten a little more support since then, but that's what it took. It took us threatening to leave the district and go our own way. (May 30, 2012)

Ana explained her reasons for becoming a part of the many committees that she participates in:

I've been joining so many things. I join purposefully, just so that I can say, "Hey guys, what about bilingual kids. How are we going to solve that? Or when we're planning something, that's great, but how are the bilingual kids going to fit in there? I throw it on the table every time." They say, "You're right. We have to think about it. Maybe we should change it a little bit." (April 19, 2012)

Ana often described how she was glad that she participated in the decision-making process on these committees, because she believes that the needs of bilingual learners would go unnoticed otherwise. When the decision was being made regarding a universal screening instrument for the district's intervention process, Ana decided to participate. She was the only member of the committee with knowledge of the tenets of bilingual education. During the process, five screening assessments were presented. Ana decided to endorse the choice with the

most promise for bilingual learners. She stated, "I'm glad I was there because otherwise who knows if they would have picked another one and the [bilingual] teachers really would have been angry." (March 27, 2012)

Another example given by Ana was when she inadvertently found herself serving on a committee that she only intended to observe for course work:

Again, thank God I was there. The only reason I was invited was because I was doing my practicum for the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. I was working with the director. I told him that the committee would be a good thing for me to observe. I ended up participating, because I couldn't just sit there. I know I was just in there to observe, but then I thought, wait a minute. The director was very supportive. He said, "We have a bilingual representative here, and I think we really need to focus on questions we have for her." That's how I got on that committee. I ended up being a part of the committee, because of all of the questions. (March 27, 2012)

The teachers also offered examples of situations in which they tried to get colleagues to become involved as a way to share in the leadership roles. Ana described her belief in the importance of serving, yet she recognized it as tiresome at times:

Ana: I'm on the [reading] committee. I want to get out of the committee, and they [bilingual teachers] keep telling me, "No, you should stay." I say, "Somebody else has got to [do this]." They say, "No, they already know you, because you're the unit leader." I want someone else to have the opportunity. It is a really good opportunity. I understand

why they want to keep me in there, but it's getting to the point where I'm getting too pushy. I'm feeling very uncomfortable about it. I can get away with it because we have established a good relationship.

LE: You're saying that you're getting to a point where you're too pushy?

Ana: Yes, kind of demanding. There are issues.

LE: Issues that arise with ELLs?

Ana: Oh yeah, because they [specialists and administrators] don't think that way. They're never going to think that way. So, I have to make sure that they do... all the time.

LE: Is it wearing on you?

Ana: It gets tiring. It's like, here we go again. [I say], "Okay guys, I need a break. Can someone else come in and do this for a little while, so I can sit back and relax?" But then I know that I'm not that type of person, so I say, "Okay, fine, I'll stay." (May 11, 2012)

Carlos also talked about the importance of others speaking up, so that his voice is not the only one that administrators and the community hear. He believes that issues will have more strength behind them, if more people dialogue about the challenges in bilingual education. Carlos puts forth great effort to get colleagues and community members actively involved. He proudly spoke of himself as someone who "wears many hats." Carlos is an activist in school, around the district, and in the community. He is confident expressing his opinions on bussing, standardized testing, dual language programming, and ways to improve student achievement. He

voiced his opinion recently to district administrators regarding a plan to expand language programming. He stated:

The school district wants to expand the language program... and so what they want to do is offer the dual language program at neighborhood schools where there are large centers of the Hispanic population. They want to provide a single strand of dual language within a larger school. I was against it. I even told the administrators that it wasn't the best model. (April 30, 2012)

Carlos also became active in issues surrounding mandated state testing and an effort to have the school granted exempt status. He explained:

We had the issue of trying to get waived because of the all-English focus of the test for a dual language program. We talked to the administrators. We tried to get waived and were trying to get them to understand that they should lobby for it. They felt like, no, it's just a directive [from the state]. They said, "We can't do anything about that, we have to administer the tests. So instead, our program went from a 90/10 program [90 percent Spanish to 10 percent English instruction each day] to an 80/20 program, to increase the amount of English in the primary grades, so the students could be ready for the test when they had to take them in third grade. (May 24, 2012)

The teachers maintained tremendous passion and a natural inclination to place themselves in roles that had the potential to create change. They did this even knowing that their efforts did not always come to an agreeable ending. Although all of the participants often expressed an exasperation in having to constantly defend

and campaign for the needs of their students and program, Luis was the one who appeared weary as he described his decision to step away from the leadership roles that he tirelessly embraced in years past:

I used to have that passion before. I was very vocal. I have to admit to you, the flame is gone. I have lost all that passion and... the passion that I have left, I only use with them [students]. These other issues that go outside or beyond my classroom door... I guess that I decided to finally pick my battles. It's self-preservation. My energy is going to keep going lower because of age and now a little physical impairment. The little energy I might have... I use it with them [students]. I used to spend a lot of energy before in having these conversations and take issues to the staff level meetings and even outside of the school buildings, but I lost all hope in that sense. It might be wrong, some people might say, you should never lose that. (May 4, 2012)

The fatigue that Luis spoke about is not uncommon for teachers in situations where there is a constant need to challenge and interrogate decision-making powers. Popkewitz (1998) presents this concept of power in terms of who represses and who is repressed as a model of sovereignty. He suggested, "The sovereignty view of power is found in the notion of democratic schools, which asks who participates (and is given "voice") and who is excluded from the decision making of schooling" (p. 16). The participants of this study understand the notion that the repression and exclusion of their voices only works to disable and marginalize students further. Perhaps this is why they are in constant pursuit of forums from which to counter this disempowerment.

***Educating teachers, administrators, and the community.***

Another way the participants were active in creating change in their environments was in finding opportunities to educate fellow teachers and administrators as to the nuances of bilingual education and second language learning. All of the teachers talked at great length about deliberately seeking out opportune times to have conversations with their colleagues regarding native language use, intervention needs, and optimizing programming for bilingual learners.

Ana and Luis spoke about a situation in their school regarding a leveled grading system in the literacy program. Both of these teachers recounted several times when they worked to educate teachers about the illogical way in which bilingual students were being measured against a monolingual English assessment. Luis stated:

I was the first one to open my mouth, and I explained to them [Title I teachers and administrators] that our students were transitioning in second grade, and that not all of them were fully transitioned. I told them that I could not base a grade on the scale based on native [English] speakers.

(March 29, 2012)

Luis provided more details of this semester-long advocacy in a separate conversation:

Some of us made the Title I teachers aware. They at first demonstrated a lack of understanding. At first they said, "Why?" We said, "Because they're bilingual and they learn to read and write in Spanish first and that was their

story for two years. It isn't until second grade in second semester that they start to learn English formally." They [Title I teachers] didn't even show awareness of it, and after we explained it, they accepted that proposal from us. Their reaction was one that was more based on ignorance. (April 16, 2012)

Ana remembered sitting with the Title I teachers regarding the grading situation and saying, "We need to change this. It's not fair, because we're not assessing the students in their native language... which is the language they're learning in academically" (March 27, 2012). She continued talking about her relationship with her colleagues and her approach to making changes as "a work-in-progress." Ana's approach to working on conflict and differing ideologies within her district is to build relationships. She believes that strengthening connections through dialogue is essential to the construction of a common knowledge and decision-making. Ana told about her experience as a new teacher in the school five years earlier. Her new position was created as the bilingual program had expanded to third grade. She felt unexplained tension between several teachers and herself. She chose to confront the issues and learned the origin of the teachers' actions:

The teachers said to me, "You know [the teacher before you] got displaced and had to leave because of you." I said, " Oh, my God, are you serious, I didn't even know that. That's horrible." They just looked at me. They thought I knew. They held that against me for a while. I went to the [displaced] teacher and said, "I don't know how this district works, but I feel really bad. I had no clue that I was walking into something like that.

Whatever it's worth, I feel bad. Not that I should apologize, but I do feel bad."

The teacher said, "No, no, don't worry about it. It's not your fault." I think that kind of opened up the relationship, because I got to meet that teacher right away. Now every time I see her we talk. That's kind of nice. I wish I had known [about the situation]. I would have reacted a little bit differently. Maybe I could have found a way to educate. To me it's more about ignorance. You just need to educate. (March 27, 2012)

Once Ana had built that relationship with her colleagues, she felt positioned to advocate for what she needed for the bilingual learners in her class. She spoke about an incident involving changes that needed to be made regarding assessments and native Spanish use:

I went to the Title I teachers. We had established a good relationship with Title I. I said, "Hey, these tests are focusing on comprehension... I think it's fair that if the students want to answer the questions in Spanish, we should allow that. At first they said, "Mmm.. this is kind of fishy." But when I explained it, they said, "No, you're right." We have talked to them about our kids all of the time. They [Title I teachers] are the experts. We treat them like they're the experts in reading. That's how we established that relationship. We are not here to fight against each other. They are the ones that are servicing the kids, and what we need to do is educate them on why it's so important to help our kids, too. We actually did that, and that's why we have such good rapport with them. (March 27, 2012)

The teachers also spoke about educating the administrators within their school buildings. Ana spoke candidly about her deliberate decisions to constantly keep the administrator informed. She talked about her deliberate strategy to educate someone rather than fight back.

Yes, I totally do that. It's funny, because we had a new principal, and she didn't know much about the program. She would express that it was just so hard to understand... which is good, because that was the interest. So, I took it to my advantage and I told her that if she wanted, I could fill her in. I said, "Right after school, even for thirty minutes. If you have questions, or whatever, we can just go over them." She said, "That would be great." I told my bilingual colleagues that we have to fill her in, and help her understand the program, so that when we are asking for something, we are not sitting there explaining the program then. The good thing is that when the current principal came, the Title I teachers were kind of already there [level of understanding]. Now they say, "We're doing this, but we have to make sure that the bilingual program [is accommodated]." So, now they are [helping to] do our job. They're actually now advocating for our kids. They love it. (April 19, 2012)

Ana shared her vision of being an administrator some day:

One thing that I would change right away, if it was a bilingual setting, would be to educate every teacher... regular education, bilingual, and monolingual teachers. I would tell them how our program operates. I think the mentality in a school should be that we all have the same goals. We all have the same

mission, and we need to work together to get there... regardless of whom you're teaching. I think that's the biggest issue. (May 11, 2012)

It is natural for Carlos to speak to administrators and community groups regarding dual language programs and changes that need to be made to benefit students. He organized a group of teachers as advocates for changing the bilingual program from a transitional model to a dual language immersion model. He explained:

It was a group of us on the staff... teachers. We talked about it and finally agreed that changing the program is what we should do, and that the change should happen before we made our move to the new site. So, gradually we started. We explained the whole thing. We talked to the principals and those administrators that were in Central Office. They seemed to be on board, and they understood the need and they saw it as a much more positive program in terms of acceptance. (April 30, 2012)

Carlos also uses opportunities to be sure parents are well-informed. He always places communication to parents as a top priority. He made sure that others understood the long-term commitment that was required for involvement in a dual language program. He said:

I always made it understood to the parents, that if they were going to be part of that program, they had to be committed. They were making a commitment to keep their kids in there, unless there were extenuating circumstances that would change things. They were making a commitment to keeping that

student in the program from kindergarten all the way to eighth grade. I talked to many parents, as well as teachers. (April 30, 2012)

Laura, in her many duties as a Reading First coach, actively engaged in opportunities to educate the professionals around her. One of the first things that she did in her role, that she described as “semi-administrative,” was to look at how both the Spanish and English languages were allocated during the literacy block. Equipped with the knowledge that deliberate language use is essential to effective dual language programming, she immediately made changes. She recounted her discussions with the teachers:

When I came back [into her new role], I had to get right into the classrooms. I asked the teachers, “How come you don’t put [the time] when you do English and when you do Spanish on your schedules?” I wouldn’t be able to tell by looking at their schedules. They said, “We don’t do it, because nobody cares.” I said, “Well, I care now. Can you start putting that on your schedules, please?” (May 8, 2012)

Laura made it her mission to align the practices in the dual language program to what she knew to be highly effective strategies for bilingual learners. She often found herself working against monolingual English paradigms that were in contrast to her beliefs for language learners. She talked about her efforts to remove a specific reading program from the literacy intervention practices used with the students in the dual language program:

Our school had a policy that we had to do a certain amount of time for intervention. They had in place a program called [name]. They had the

kindergarteners, first graders, and second graders in the dual language program doing [this program] in English for a half an hour a day. I asked, “What is [name]?” I wasn’t familiar with it when I came back. I was told it was this great program for English development. I sat and did the program. I went to the principal and to the teachers and said, “These kids should not be doing this. It doesn’t make any sense. They should be doing a different type of English development. It shouldn’t be [English] phonics-based.” I got that discontinued. Then the teachers were upset because that was an easy way to do their English. Just go to the computer lab and plug the kids in for a half hour. I didn’t make friends on either side. So, it was tough, but we got rid of that. (May 8, 2012)

Laura also moved beyond the classroom to be sure educators had necessary information to effectively lead a dual language program. In her role as Reading First coach, Laura would explain to her school administrators her decision-making process for the bilingual learners and the research support she had for these decisions. On one occasion, Laura spoke to the administrator about the need to implement intervention services through the Spanish native language. She remembered:

I would explain that the students needing interventions were those who didn’t already have English proficiency. Their native language is Spanish and their test scores are very low in Spanish. We need to build them up in Spanish before we can work on their English. I showed the graph (Thomas & Collier graph that compares dual language progress to other bilingual

programs such as transitional and English immersion). I talked about language transfer and all of that. The administrator had some training. He understood the graph when I showed it to him. He understood about that. He understood about building the language of the home before moving on. (May 8, 2012)

The changes that were made as a result of the teachers' actions to educate and advocate for their students were often quite significant. Both Laura and Carlos were involved in a movement to work against an effort that would add more English in the instructional day of the bilingual learners as a way to improve achievement. The effects of their efforts prompted a decision of the district to invite the Center for Applied Linguistics to conduct an evaluation of the dual language program. Laura recounted this event with clarity:

The [evaluator] came and observed for a week in September and then again in January. She looked at all of our test scores. She interviewed staff, students, parents, community members...all kinds of people. She wrote this really long evaluation. It was very good, because a lot of the things that I had said as the Reading First teacher, she had as recommendations. I said, "Ha-ha...hooray, see I'm not the only one." It was April when the evaluation came out and we could read it. I said, "Alright we've got 15 recommendations, what are we going to do first?" My principal said, "Slow down, let's just wait and see what everybody thinks." That was really hard for me, because I said, "Look, I've been saying this all year. I finally get some validation. I've been

waiting all this time to do some of this, and now you're telling me to wait and slow down?" (May 8, 2012)

Advocacy for bilingual learners and educating colleagues was something for which all of the participants accepted responsibility. They spoke with pride about their efforts, but they were fully aware that they were involved in a pursuit that extended far beyond their own school environment. Laura commented on her passion to persevere with her efforts to advocate. She stated, "I'm not the only one. You'll hear the same thing from [lists teachers]. Everybody here is like this." (May 8, 2012)

Throughout the data collection period, the information that was gathered was monitored closely for the emergence of patterns and themes. The conversations with the participants revealed that they all had both a breadth and depth of knowledge regarding effective literacy practices for ELLs. The teachers used this knowledge alongside their personal experiences to identify and act upon practices that were both overtly and passively discriminatory (Marx, 2006). Furthermore, these reputable teachers were compelled to become actively involved through leadership roles, committee memberships, and collaborative relationships to become agents of change. The experiences of these four teachers nominated by their respective administrators provide insight and understanding into the complex issues of preserving what they believe to be highly effective practices in an era influenced by education reform initiatives and mandates.

## Chapter Five

### Discussion

This research study has examined how nominated teachers of English language learners (ELLs) preserve highly effective practices in this current era of education reform. Data has been gathered and analyzed through a naturalistic inquiry process. The interpretation of the analysis took place from the postmodern understanding that knowledge is relative to time and space, and it is never absolute. The research was conducted with the perspective that truth is considered “contextual, contingent, and bound up in power relations” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 25). Considerations of power are rooted in this discussion because of the notion that reality is “socially constructed and culturally embedded” (Patton, 2002, p. 100). The experiences of the teachers were deliberately connected to larger educational issues as a way to link the individual to current political and societal concerns. The intent of this study is to present these specific experiences as a forum from which to initiate critical conversations and create possibilities for change.

This discussion chapter is organized in a manner that first addresses the research questions and what was learned through the interactions with the participants. Following that, a model is offered that (a) represents the actions that the four participating teachers engaged in as a way to preserve their effective instructional practices, and (b) suggests how those actions have the potential to create or dissuade changes in practice and policy. From there, it is necessary to critically interrogate the problematic tenets of the experiences of the four teachers with regard to the educational systems they worked in and the expectations of

student achievement that were placed upon them. In conclusion, reflections on implications for practice and policy, thoughts on limitations of this study, and recommendations for subsequent research are presented.

## **Discussion of Research Questions**

### **Primary research question.**

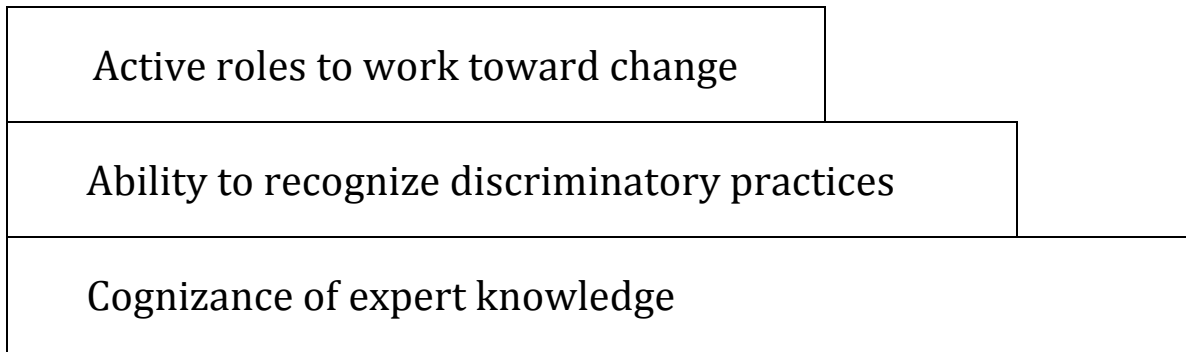
The origins of this research are based on the primary question that seeks to understand the following: In the case of English language learners (ELLs) with reading intervention needs, how do effective teachers preserve high quality instructional practices in an era emphasizing high stakes accountability measures and mandated policies?

This essential question developed after the researcher of this study spent over a decade in the field working with students who were learning English as a second language, yet experiencing school in both Spanish and English. It was observed over that period that expectations and mandates from all levels of the educational hierarchy were significantly affecting decision-making regarding instructional practices in bilingual classrooms. The prevalence of this phenomenon appeared to be increasing as the first decade of the new millennium was progressing. The topic of preserving instructional practices that have been deemed highly effective grew in relevance with each passing school year. It is with this recognition that this research inquiry was born, a study design was created, and data collection and analysis were conducted. The purpose of this following section is to offer a response to the primary research question that asks what it is that

reputable teachers do to preserve effective instructional practices in this era of education reform.

As was presented in Chapter Four, three prevailing characteristics (themes) appeared as common threads through the experiences of all four of the nominated, highly reputable teachers in this study. According to the themes that unfolded during the naturalistic inquiry process, the exemplary teachers (a) were active decision-makers based on a cognizance of their own expertise, (b) had the ability to recognize and react to discriminatory practices, and (c) took active roles to work toward change. The three identified themes developed in a way that suggested the building of a structure. The foundation of the structure is the awareness of one's own expert knowledge. Because of this knowledge of literacy, language learning, and cultural experience, the teachers had the ability to recognize practices and behaviors that were incongruous to the equitable and effective schooling of bilingual learners. The teachers all demonstrated that they used their knowledge and ability to identify inequities with confidence, as they sought out leadership and committee membership roles in ways that permitted them to work for change (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Characteristics of the Nominated Teachers of English Language Learners



This figure is a visual representation of the three themes that emerged. These themes developed as a structure that is dependent on the level before it. The nominated teachers demonstrated a cognizance of their expertise, which appeared to give them the tools to recognize discriminatory practices. This awareness and recognition led to the self-assuredness to take on active roles to work toward change.

The three themes that emerged from the data became the structure within which the primary research question could be explored. What did the nominated teachers do to preserve highly effective instructional practices for ELLs with literacy intervention needs? It appeared in this particular research space that these four teachers used their expertise of literacy, language, and culture to recognize discriminatory practices that, in turn, prompted them to become active in creating change. When issues arose regarding instructional practices that were contrary to the teachers' beliefs, they made decisions that involved four different types of actions, including (a) educating colleagues, (b) engaging in compromise, (c) isolating self from group practice, and (d) accepting compliance. Although all of the options for action have potential to create change, the consequences of each differ. Following the discussion of each of the options for action, Figure 2 is presented as a visual model that represents the ways in which the teachers of this study worked to preserve instructional practices and the potential each of these actions had to create change.

### ***Educating colleagues.***

All of the participants were consciously aware of the actions they took to educate their colleagues. When situations arose that contradicted their beliefs, the first step the teachers took to promote change was to find opportunities to share their expertise. The teachers moved swiftly into conversations with individuals and groups regarding the needs of their English language learners, and they were able to do this because of their strong knowledge base and confidence with confronting inequities. The teachers often spoke about the bilingual program as being *forgotten*, or inclusion of the needs of ELLs in curricular decisions as an *afterthought*. They deliberately joined committees as a way to bring issues to the forefront, and they often acted in ways that strengthened their voices collectively.

In some incidents, the teachers' actions, based on intent to educate, made a difference in the way an instructional decision was carried out. Ana stated on several occasions that she was glad she participated in leadership roles. Otherwise, the needs of bilingual learners would go unnoticed, or the wishes of her bilingual colleagues would be ignored, and the result might be unacceptable to them. When teachers worked together, significant changes were made. Both Laura and Carlos worked on a committee that researched different types of dual language programs (Rolstad, Mahoney & Glass, 2005; Slavin & Cheung, 2005). Through their group effort, they were able to work with administrators on developing a plan to switch the school model from a transitional bilingual program to a two-way dual language model (Collier & Thomas, 2009). The teachers understood what researchers in the field of bilingual education have concluded regarding the positive effects of

programs where two language groups are learning in two languages (Collier and Thomas, 2009; Genesee et al, 2006; Potowski, 2004), and they relentlessly worked to educate those in decision-making roles.

Other times the teachers expressed the feeling that the attempts to educate were exercises in futility. Laura talked about the times she asked herself what the point of serving on committees was, when in the end, decisions were made that neglected the information the teachers offered. Both Luis and Ana mentioned that it was tiresome to constantly engage in efforts that are disregarded. Despite this, the teachers continued to protect what they believed in by taking actions to educate their colleagues.

Often the teachers spoke about the attitudes that others had regarding their incessant advocacy. Ana commented that her repeated efforts to educate colleagues made her feel pushy and uncomfortable. Carlos claimed people felt he yelled too often about his desires to promote the Spanish language space, and Laura believed she didn't make friends on either side of certain issues. Nonetheless, the teachers expressed an understanding that educating others is a significant part of their responsibility as a teacher of English language learners.

Educating colleagues was always the first line of action in which the teachers of this study engaged. When teachers were able to create change successfully, the preservation of highly effective practices for English language learners was likely. The quantity and quality of resources were strong because of the support from colleagues and the shared vision that was created. An example of this is the way Ana worked relentlessly to dialogue with the Title I teachers, so that the needs of the

bilingual students at Henry School would be met. Her deliberate approach was to work on conflict by building relationships. Once the relationships were favorable, she began the education process. Ana has successfully reached a point where her Title I colleagues are now advocating for the same students that she once felt were neglected.

It appeared that successful change through educational efforts was more probable with school level decisions, and was incrementally more difficult as the power of decision-making moved up the educational hierarchy towards district, state, and federal mandates. For example, educating colleagues about school-level intervention grouping may result in a more successful and timely outcome than working toward changes regarding the expectation that English learners participate in all-English state standardized tests. The preservation of instructional practices was much more likely when the teachers were able to locally influence decision-making to benefit the needs of their students.

***Engaging in compromise.***

Preservation of effective instructional practices was more likely to occur when efforts to educate colleagues resulted in positive, transformative outcomes (Cummins, 2000; Freire & Macedo, 1987); however, what happened when efforts to educate colleagues fell short and change did not occur? When the teachers did not experience change through their own efforts to educate, they often began to engage in a system of compromise. Compromise is defined in this context as a “partial waiving of one’s theories or principles for the sake of settlement” (Geddes & Grosset, 2002 p. 77). Using the action of compromise was a way that the teachers

adjusted to decisions that were contrary to bilingual education pedagogy. When the teachers talked about compromising their beliefs, they often used words like *adapt*, *negotiate*, *adjust*, *tweak*, and *make it work*. Compromise was a daily familiarity for all of the teachers, and it was observed that with some instructional issues, they viewed it as a positive step toward change, and other times they were unwillingly caught up in a system that significantly placed the needs of their students at risk.

When the teachers willingly engaged in the action of compromise, they saw it as an opportunity to continue to educate others, while moving toward positive outcomes for their students. Compromise, in these situations, seemed to occur when the locus of control was decentralized for a variety of reasons. The teachers perceived the decentralization as an accountability issue perpetuated by a lack of awareness or forfeiture of interest on the part of administration (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010).

Luis provided an example of a compromise that led to a favorable, but not ideal, outcome. This experience was typical of those that were shared by all of the participants. Luis had a student with a special education identification. The student was a bilingual learner with a propensity toward English. The special education teacher, who did not speak Spanish, had a daily obligation to meet with the student. Luis, however, felt the student's needs would best be met in his classroom where Spanish support was available. The dilemma was that the student would not receive his legal right to a bilingual education, if he was removed from the classroom to receive services in an all-English setting. On the other hand, if he remained in the classroom, he would not have the objectives of his Individualized Education Plan

met. A compromise occurred when Luis expressed his wishes that the student remain in his room, but used the special education teacher and school psychologist as consultants who would support the instructional practices inside his classroom. In this case, preservation of effective practices for his student was possible, because of the collaboration with the special education teacher. Decisions made in this manner are dependent on the personnel directly involved and may not be sustainable when staffing changes occur and decisions are not shared across a school or district (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2011). In addition, student's individualized special education programming may come into question, and legal consequences could eventuate.

Other examples of the teachers taking action through compromise centered on decision-making regarding materials and packaged programming. Ana described how she took the third grade leveled reading program and “tweaked it to make it work” for her ELLs. She would use the all-English text during instruction, but then allowed her students to express their understanding of the text in Spanish during the assessments. Another example is how Laura adapted the Reading First approach to meet the needs of her students who have Spanish as their first language. She felt strongly about maintaining Spanish as the language of instruction, so she deliberately adjusted the interventions based on an all-English paradigm to meet the needs of children who found greater success with Spanish instruction. Laura was maintaining her belief that early literacy instruction for Spanish-speaking students is best implemented through the Spanish language (Baker, 2006; Crawford & Krashen, 2007). Although the adaptation and tweaking of

materials places the burden for change solely on the teacher, it allows for the possibility of preservation of effective instructional practices.

The teachers also engaged in compromises unwillingly. In mandated situations of standardized testing, English-only programming, and grading systems, teachers were left with no choice but to compromise. Standardized tests are a tremendous compromise to the pedagogy for ELLs because of the English-only paradigm (Menken, 2008; Pandya, 2011). Students who speak Spanish as their first language are required to test with the same expectations as their monolingual English peers. The teachers understand that it takes ELLs most of their elementary school years to become proficient in the language necessary for academic testing (Cummins, 2000), so they become reluctant or indifferent participants in the act of testing with their students. Luis spoke about the prevalence of all-English tests and the challenges this presented throughout the school year for the preservation of Spanish instruction. He believes that standardized testing compromises the balance of Spanish and English. Laura and Carlos both experienced the decisions made by administrators to compromise the Spanish minutes in the dual language program by increasing English minutes as a way to boost state test scores. All of the teachers spoke about lost instructional time and a decrease in Spanish time because of test windows and test preparation time. With incidences such as this, preservation of instructional practices is placed at risk and intermittently interrupted (Pandya, 2011).

The teachers expressed concern about the frequent administrative decisions that were made that significantly affected reading intervention practices for their

students. They believed that student achievement was profoundly compromised when special education and reading intervention obligations were not met (Klingner, Hoover, & Baca, 2008). The specialists were often pulled from the bilingual classrooms to work in non-bilingual classrooms or to attend to administrative duties. In all four classrooms, special education plans were not fully implemented, and the bilingual teacher often carried out the intervention instructional practices for those students. The special education services for bilingual learners were described as an *either-or* situation by all of the teachers in this study. Their students were receiving either bilingual services or special education services, but they seldom received special education services within bilingual settings. According to the teachers, this situation occurred because of the great demand for the special education services in the non-bilingual classrooms and the phenomenon that occurs when specialists cannot provide services in the minority language, which in these cases was Spanish (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). The lack of fidelity to intervention services dramatically affected the preservation of highly effective practices for the bilingual learners.

The grading system at Henry Elementary School is a clear example of how compromise led to significant inequities for a large group of children. The English leveled reader system that was implemented in the school was an integral component of reading instruction for Ana and Luis. The students were assessed five times a year to determine progress based on English levels. The books that the students read were leveled A-Z. The students were graded on their report card solely by the level at which they were reading. The bilingual teachers recognized

the inequity of this practice and met with the reading specialists. As a way to “level the playing field,” the group decided to assess the bilingual students, but move their letter score up two places. So, if a child read at a J-level, she would be moved to an L-level for the report card. All children at an M-level or above received at least a C on their report card. In the case of the English learner who moved up two reading levels, the final grade was still below a C report card grade. This reported grade, however, did not authentically portray the progress that the student had made. All of the adults were engaged in the decision to compromise with the two-level shift. Still, there existed a grander compromise that directly affected the students’ right to have their home language left intact, rather than eradicated by a system that was meant for students who were fully proficient in English (Soto, 1997). This type of compromise seriously affects the long-term preservation of those instructional practices that have been proven to be highly effective for bilingual learners.

The action of compromise is one that was used when efforts to educate did not directly lead to acceptable change in decision-making. The choice to engage in compromise often led to change that allowed for the possibility that effective practices for English language learners could be preserved. Compromising also allowed the teachers more time to seek opportunities to educate others to influence change. Situations in which compromise did not lead to change resulted in the realization by the teachers that other courses of action needed to be considered. These considerations included the teachers’ decision to either isolate from group practice or accept the issue as one that was bound by the decisions of others and

would not contribute to the preservation of effective practices for bilingual learners. The discussion of these two actions follows.

***Isolating from group practice.***

When the teachers made a decision to isolate themselves from the practices of the larger group, it appeared to be the result of unsuccessful attempts to create change through education and compromise. The term *isolate* is defined in this discussion as the act of “setting apart from others” (Geddes & Grosset, 2002, p. 201).

The teachers chose isolation, because it was a way for them to stand firmly in their beliefs and to preserve instructional practices for their students. They recognized that there was no system in place to support students’ needs, so they worked to detach from the group practice in order to protect what they felt was non-negotiable. When isolation decisions were made, it was understood by the teacher that change was created; however, it was localized in the space and time that it occurred. The consequence of isolation is that it is not a sustainable solution, as it is dependent on the commitments of specific teachers.

At times the teachers chose to isolate themselves while they continued to educate their colleagues with the hope that change would eventually occur. An example of this is the way Carlos went to great lengths to create a Spanish language environment, and he would isolate himself and his students from the daily practices that had the potential to infiltrate his Spanish space and work against his belief to uphold the status of Spanish. (Baker, 2006; Cummins, 2000; Freeman & Freeman, 2001; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005). As he worked diligently to maintain his commitment, he also continued to educate teachers and

administrators about the tenets of native language maintenance and revitalization (Baker, 2006). Laura also chose to isolate herself and the students, while continuing to educate others. During her time as a Reading First coordinator, she deliberately disengaged from expectations that instruction and assessment would occur in English, by transferring the intervention procedures to a Spanish instruction model. She continued this practice while she educated her colleagues and administrators about native language instruction and the notion of language transfer (Gass & Selinker, 2001). In both of these examples, the teachers were able to create a localized change while working toward a broader transformation of institutional decision-making.

There were also times when the teachers chose to isolate from group practices with an understanding that a broader change was not possible and the local change created was the definitive course of action. Ana spoke candidly about her decision to no longer refer students with low achievement needs for special education services. She believed the system in place was a disservice to the students and a waste of time. Ana was steadfast in her belief that the best placement for those students was in the bilingual classroom, even if it meant that isolation was the trade-off. Luis shared this conviction in his repeated statement that he will always be his students' best resource when it comes to reading interventions for low achieving students.

If teachers unwillingly found themselves isolated from group practice, it was often the symptom of a district that did not have adequate systems set up to meet the needs of teachers and students (Olsen, 2010). The teachers often reported that

administrative decision-makers were not knowledgeable about the nuances of bilingual education, and because of this, educational policies from an English dominant paradigm were perpetuated. With reduced support, the teachers would feel ostracized and lose confidence in the ability of the system to meet the needs of the students. In addition, the integrity of the bilingual education program was placed in jeopardy, and both the students and the teachers were at risk for failure. Examples of this occurred every time materials and resources for bilingual learners were inappropriate or non-existent. Without equitable, appropriate reading materials, students were systemically stratified as low achievers and the notions of achievement gap and language as a deficit were perpetuated (Sleeter & Grant, 1987; Valencia, 1997).

Situations of isolation were also observed in the experiences of the teachers that were a result of deficit ideologies towards individuals of the minority culture and language. Practices of exclusion and bias alienated teachers and students in a way that prevented understanding and collaboration (Ruiz, 1984). When teachers felt marginalized, their tendency was to create barriers in attempts to insulate themselves and their students from further acts of discrimination. The incident that Luis had with the school talent show and the experience that Ana had with the displaced teacher are examples of how prejudice and deficit ideologies led to situations where teachers and students felt isolated from the dominant group. Preserving effective practices became difficult in these incidents, as opportunity for student achievement was decreased and the quality and quantity of school resources were negatively impacted. Change in these situations occurred when

individuals sought opportunities to educate and to build relationships with others as a way to promote understanding, such as Ana did when she made conscious efforts to have conversations with the teachers who blamed her for the displacement of their colleague.

When teachers chose to isolate from group practice, they did so in attempts to preserve what they trusted were the most effective practices for English language learners. They did this with the understanding that change would be localized unless they continued to seek opportunities to educate. There were times, however, when change was not plausible because of stringent mandates and initiatives. In these instances, it was observed that the teachers would reach an acceptance that compliance was their only option.

***Accepting compliance.***

The teachers of this study reached a point of surrender when education, compromise, and isolation were not viable pathways to change. Acceptance happened when the promise of change was out of reach and they felt that any further challenge would have negative consequences. For example, all of the teachers experienced this circumstance with the expectation for mandatory participation in state standardized testing. Teachers were unable to isolate themselves and localize change without the risk of severe consequences, such as job loss. Instead, teachers moved directly to the action of acceptance with the understanding that change was unlikely to occur. Luis chose to accept the reality of standardized testing, by molding it into something workable. He decided to “turn the students into experts,” as he worked through the weeks of test preparation. He

realized the forfeiture that happened, but decided to teach the students to become expert test-takers. Laura's acceptance of state testing resulted in her feelings of indifference and an objective to "just get through it" to minimize interruption of instruction.

The teachers appeared to understand that high stakes policies and mandated initiatives required a relinquishing of a period of time that would have otherwise been devoted to ongoing preservation of effective instructional practices. There was awareness that change was unlikely, unless broad policy changes were enacted at district, state, and federal levels. The resilience of these four teachers moved them beyond these issues, so that they could direct their energies toward actions that had the potential to aid the preservation of what they believed to be effective instructional practices.

### **Sub-questions.**

The sub-questions guiding this inquiry attend to the specifics regarding the preservation of daily quality of instruction that has a cumulative effect over a substantial period of time. They are:

1. During the reading intervention process, how are teacher's instructional decisions affected by policy initiatives?
2. In what ways are teachers consciously adapting their pedagogy to uphold their commitment to high quality instruction for ELLs?
3. What resources and support systems contribute to the successful preservation of high quality instruction for teachers of ELLs with reading intervention needs?

These sub-questions relate to the actions that the teachers took to protect instructional practices, and they are summarized in the following section.

***Sub-question 1.***

The first question addresses how the teachers' instructional decisions are affected by policy initiatives. It was observed in this study that the degree that instructional decisions were affected was dependent on the origin of the initiative. If the policy initiative originated at the school level, then teachers' ability to influence change was promising, and the preservation of instructional practices deemed effective for bilingual learners was likely. If, on the other hand, policy initiatives were mandated at the state and federal levels, teachers' ability to create change lessened. Depending on the degree of stringency, preservation of effective instructional practices was possible in some circumstances. When potential for change in policy was non-existent, instructional decisions were impacted greatly, and the preservation of effective instructional practices was unlikely.

***Sub-question 2.***

The second question attends to the ways in which the teachers consciously adapted their pedagogy to uphold their commitment to their students. Based on the cognizance of their expertise and the ability they had to recognize inequity, the teachers adapted their beliefs about teaching by deliberately taking on active roles as leaders and committee members. They made choices to educate their colleagues to work toward change. They understood that engaging in compromise and isolating from group practice were adaptations that were often necessary to uphold their commitment to preserving what they believed to be exemplary practices.

There were situations that required compliance and acceptance, and the teachers moved through those swiftly as a means to minimize interruption to their commitment. The teachers displayed an understanding based on their expertise that adapting beliefs about teaching is essential to the pedagogy in bilingual education. They understood through years of experience that the act of teaching language learners requires the ability to adapt, adjust, and negotiate, while maintaining a critical watch over the policy trends and expectations.

***Sub-question 3.***

The final question is an inquiry regarding the resources and support systems that contributed to successful preservation of effective instructional practices for ELLs. Although the resources varied for each individual teacher, there were common support systems that strengthened the efficacy of instruction. The teachers were knowledge-seekers. They were conscious of their expertise and constantly worked to deepen their understanding of literacy and language acquisition. They collaborated and depended on the funds of knowledge of others in their field. The teachers built relationships with colleagues who specialized in arenas such as special education, reading, school psychology, and school leadership, and used that information to benefit their students. When resources and materials were minimal or unavailable, preservation of practices became more challenging. When this occurred, the teachers became their own best resource and engaged in the actions and decisions that would allow them to defend and fortify what they believed to be most effective for their students.

## **Model of Preservation and Change**

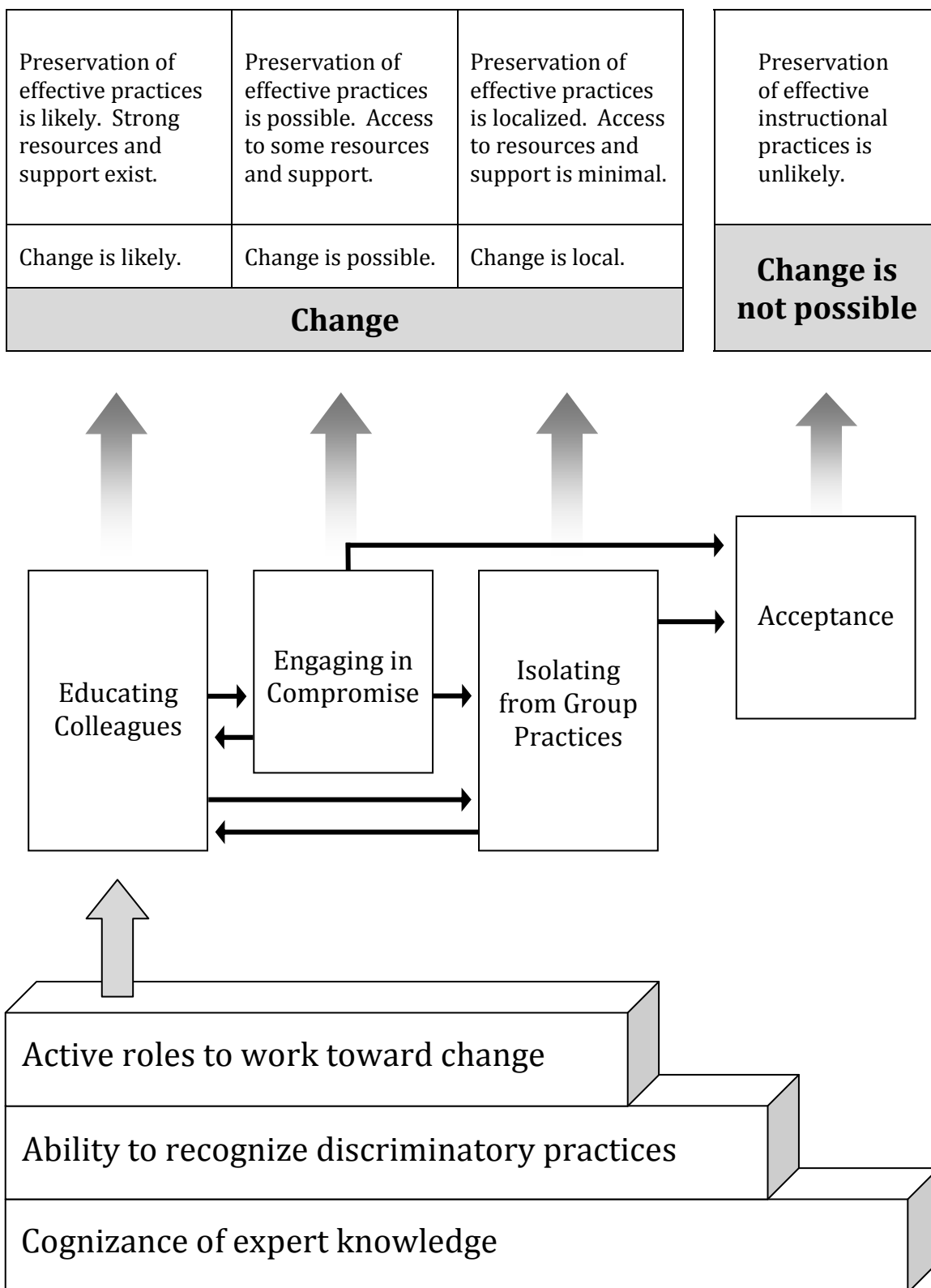
Figure 2 represents the findings that developed through the examination of the four reputable teachers and the inquiry regarding the preservation of highly effective instructional practices for bilingual learners with literacy intervention needs. It is offered as a framework quite like the one Patton (2002) refers to as “the metal frame on a backpack that gives support and shape to the load on a hiker’s back” (p. 169). This model is a visual representation of what has been offered and unpacked in this discussion. The base of the model illustrates the three characteristics (themes) of the participants that emerged as their experiences were analyzed. These themes are depicted as steps as each one appeared to build on the previous. In this study, the teachers demonstrated a cognizance of their expertise in the areas of literacy, language learning, and cultural experiences. With this knowledge they were able to recognize situations of inequity and discrimination that were contradictory to effective instructional practices for their students. From there, the teachers made decisions to take action. The base of the model is solid, providing the foundation from which teacher actions occurred. One arrow moves up from the base toward the four different actions that the teachers were observed taking. This arrow moves directly to the action of educating, because educating colleagues was the action that the teachers of this study implemented first. They worked to create change through educating others. If they were able to directly influence change, then preservation of effective instructional practices for bilingual learners was likely as represented by the arrow moving upward. If this happened, the resources and support systems available to the teacher increased.

If change through educating was not successful for the teacher, then a decision was made to engage in either compromise or isolation as a way to preserve effective practices. Many times the teachers chose these options with the intention of continuing to educate as a way to influence change. This is portrayed in the model by the two-way placement of the arrows between the action categories. If change occurred in either of these situations, then preservation of effective instructional practices was possible. In the case of teachers choosing isolation, however, the probable change was localized to the isolated area.

When teachers engaged in compromise or isolation and change did not occur as a result of stringent policy initiatives, then teachers often made the decision to comply with the mandate, accepting that change would not occur and preservation of practices would be temporarily interrupted. This is outlined on the right-hand side of the model.

The intent of this original model is to authentically represent the analysis of the experiences of the four teachers and offer an interpretation that suggests ways that change can be initiated when the goal is to preserve effective instructional practices for English language learners. This model is also meant as a tool to encourage critical conversations about inequitable policies and practices that become institutionalized and unwaveringly adhered to at the expense of culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

Figure 2: A Model of Preservation and Change:  
The Actions of Nominated Teachers of English Language Learners



### **A Critical Conversation**

It remains the goal of this researcher to engage in a genuine inquiry that has critical and transformative qualities. The intention of this study has been to question the dominant culture assumptions that are in place with regard to achievement, literacy, language, and the expectations placed on those from diverse backgrounds. A postmodern perspective has guided this scholarly work that seeks to politically engage and interrogate the role that education reform plays in the decision-making of teachers of linguistically diverse students. A critical postmodern viewpoint deconstructs what appears obvious, and works to create a new vision (Atkinson, 2004; Bernstein, 1988; Giroux, 1988). A critical stance is maintained here, and it is grounded in the belief that the interactions among students and teachers are the most central aspect of student success (Bartolomé, 1994; Cummins, 1996). How much these interactions are supported by decision-makers is significant to sustaining a successful program. With this in mind, the findings of this research study have been interrogated so that a critical conversation can be presented. This conversation focuses on the problematic tenets that were revealed as the model of preservation and change unfolded in the examination of the four exemplary teachers of English language learners.

It was clear throughout this research that the teachers participating in this study cared deeply for the students in their care, and they worked tirelessly to ensure that student success was optimized. Daily experiences were documented as the teachers negotiated bilingual program objectives within schools and school systems that had monolingual English agendas. An analysis of the findings

generated a model that explained the actions that the teachers took to create policy change and influence the likelihood that the preservation of highly effective practices would occur.

As the model developed, issues emerged within the larger educational system that appeared problematic in the discussion of effective programming for ELLs. The three issues that this critical conversation will be centered on include (a) the sustainability of bilingual programs embedded in larger dominant culture paradigms; (b) the absence of informed leadership and the defacto policies that materialize; and (c) power relationships that affect the education of English language learners.

#### **Sustainability of bilingual programming.**

The model of preservation and change that is offered here illustrates how teachers based hopes of policy change on a cognizance of their own expertise in the areas of literacy, language learning, and culture. The teachers recognized that inequities exist and they made decisions to create change. They made decisions to first educate colleagues as a way to improve programming access and quality for bilingual learners. The teachers discussed feeling passionate about educating others, yet isolated in the act of doing so. The problematic aspect of this is that teachers were placed in a position that left them with the burden of ensuring the success of the English language learners in their classrooms. They carried the responsibility to advocate for materials, space, appropriate grading, programming, assessment, and human capital. Administrators often praised the teachers for their

knowledge, offering little support, and absolving themselves of any responsibility, as if the task was best left to the expertise of the bilingual teachers.

Because of the absence of support, teachers were isolated in their roles to the extent that they saw themselves as the experts. Others saw them as the experts, and the isolation was perpetuated. When this happens, effective instruction then becomes dependent on the capable, charismatic individual teacher. When the teacher leaves the position for one of many reasons, the system begins to break down, leaving any hope of sustainability diminished. When effective programs are not sustainable, they are unlikely to be institutionalized across a school system.

Olsen (2010), in her research with “long-term English language learners,” confronted the systems issues related to English learners in the state of California where mandated English-only initiatives were prevalent. She outlined some of the challenges that exist in districts as they work to support programs for ELLs. These challenges include: shortage of knowledgeable teachers, lack of appropriate curriculum and materials, a misunderstanding and lack of knowledge and clarity regarding the research surrounding ELLs, and inadequate assessments and instructional programming. In addition, she calls attention to the notion that there exists “inadequate infrastructure and district systems for monitoring and providing support to school sites in meeting the needs of English language learners” (p. 43). Olsen comments on the idea that, although there is a great deal of knowledge available for offering high quality education for all students, it is also a time where initiatives have been mismanaged and ill advised. She offers this recommendation:

It is time to wake up to the reality that large numbers of English learners are

mis-served by our schools. It is time to recognize that weak programs and approaches are foreclosing life options for many students who struggle along, year to year, falling further and further behind. And it is time to create the policies and practices and mobilize at the state and district levels to provide direction and support for schools. (p. 49)

It was clear in many cases of this research that the burden of ensuring student success was left to these teachers who were relentless in their commitments to preserve effective programming for their English language learners. In systems where this occurs, teachers are grossly under supported, students are placed at risk, and entire systems are weakened.

**The absence of informed leadership and de facto policies.**

As the teachers of this study spoke about their experiences, it was evident that there was an absence of informed leadership regarding effective schooling for English language learners. The teachers made autonomous decisions to take action, usually unsupported by administrators and colleagues. In many cases, the teachers reported that administrators at both the school and district level were the subjects of their attempts to educate.

The model of preservation and change that is offered in this study, considers the action that teachers take in order to influence change. What appears problematic is the absence of a level of leadership throughout the entire process that the teachers engage in. Policies make their way from the top down with minimal awareness of the inequity in the expectations for diverse groups of students. Teachers recognize the inequities and take action. This action results in

compromise, isolation, and surrender (in some cases) of their beliefs regarding effective practices.

Effective leaders are needed in the system as a way to promote sustainability and work towards the institutionalization of practices that produce positive experiences for students and teachers. Fullan (2010) refers to leaders as those who know how to move whole systems forward. They are those individuals who create positive motion forward, yet understand how to deal with the lack of movement. Researchers (American institutes of Research and WestEd, 2006; Williams, Hakuta, Haertel, et al, 2007) have found that when schools and districts have focused leadership that prioritizes communication and ensures that all staff members understand the needs of ELLs, the result is higher student achievement in those school systems. Baker (2006) states:

The leadership of the school is a crucial factor, and ideally the appointee has an excellent knowledge of curriculum approaches to language minority children and communicating this to the staff. Strong leadership, the willingness to hire bilingual teachers and high expectations of bilingual students tend to be part of the repertoire of effective leaders. (p. 315)

It appears, however, that de facto policies develop when informed leadership is minimal or absent. Researchers (Menken, 2008; Showhamy, 2006) have spoken about de facto policies as a way to describe what happens when deliberate policies are not decided upon and supported. In essence, without a common vision about a policy, individuals at all levels become the policy makers. According to Menken (2008), "The results of top-down policy, like *NCLB*, are that it is "interpreted and

negotiated by the individuals at every layer of the educational system—in often contradictory ways” (p. 119). With regard to language, Showhamy (2006) describes how power comes into play in situations where de facto language policies develop. She states, “It is through a variety of overt and covert mechanisms, used mostly by those in authority, that languages are being manipulated and controlled so as to affect, create and perpetuate ‘de facto’ language policies, i.e., language practices” (p. xv).

At every level of decision-making, initiatives are interpreted and inconsistencies result. In the absence of informed leadership teachers are left with the responsibility for successful achievement outcomes and navigating how effective practices can be preserved in the midst of top-down policy initiatives. The individual teacher becomes the language policy-maker. This may appear to work with a highly effective teacher, but when the teacher leaves the position, or instruction involves a new or less capable teacher, effective programming becomes unsustainable and diminishes.

### **Power relationships and the education of English language learners.**

In the conversation regarding teachers’ capacity to work toward change and the preservation of effective practices for English language learners, it is essential to examine the issues surrounding power and whose knowledge is valued.

Cummins (2000) suggests that exploring power relationships is essential to understanding the intervention needs for English language learners. He states that power relationships can be collaborative or coercive, and that the dominant-

subordinate role expectations and relationships that are found, will most likely deny culturally diverse students their identity and home language (Baker, 2006).

The teachers of this study often felt their efforts to influence decision-making were exercises in futility, because they were often ignored or dismissed. They repeatedly expressed that they were expected to adapt the dominant culture practices to the needs of their students. This appears to happen as a result of decision-making (i.e. policy makers) that assumes the traditional model of school is suitable for everyone. There exists a belief that all children are given an equal chance to succeed just because they are provided with the same opportunities (Lopez, 1999; Olsen, 2010). Current systems are operating with this ideology, despite the fact that almost forty years ago the landmark Supreme Court ruling of *Lau v. Nichols* based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Law, asserted: "....there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum...for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education...." (in Olsen, 2012).

The teachers in this study were working within a system that values specific institutionalized knowledge, yet they continued to demonstrate efforts to educate those around them. The quandary lies in where these expert systems of knowledge originate. This topic is important to the identification of who is shaping the knowledge in this era of education reform. If, in fact, the teachers are entrusted with the knowledge base, one could assume that the learning experiences would be focused on the students' advancement in their cultures and communities. With

regard to educational reform and standardized initiatives, this is generally not the case.

The standardization of knowledge that has been evidenced in this study is problematic because it has been viewed as a tool for both cultural hegemony (Bennett, 2001) and the reproduction of inequality in schooling (Anyon, 1981). Many postmodern and critical thinkers believe that standards aligned with testing are a misguided starting point for systemic change with the goal of improved teaching and learning for all students (Banks, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Klinchelo, 1993). Darling-Hammond (1994) explains that standards sent down from above cannot account for the many different ways that success in learning will be accomplished for different students in schools all across the country. She adds that the schools should be the appropriate starting point for change. School communities should possess the agency to set standards and develop consensus for their own diverse teaching and learning experiences. Equity in education means equal opportunities for all students; it must not be confused with identical experiences or sameness of outcomes (Bennett, 2001; Sleeter, 2005). Sleeter (2005) states, "Allowing for development of diversity in expertise can serve as an intellectual resource for constructive participation in a multicultural democracy and a diverse world" (p. 7).

The critical perspective of this study places diversity at the forefront. It does not accept the master narratives that limit whose knowledge will be chosen to guide instructional practices, and it provides grounds on which to deeply question the motives of educational systems that continually marginalize and exclude particular

groups of students. The intent of this approach was to genuinely portray the experiences of the teachers in this study, while challenging problematic tenets as they have been discovered.

## **Conclusion**

### **Implications for practice and policy.**

Literacy education has been profoundly impacted by education policy changes over the past decade. This study has examined how these changes have affected the decision-making processes of teachers as they react and respond to mandated policies and initiatives. The central focus of this research exposes the incongruous relationship between education policy and literacy pedagogy that is considered to be highly effective in achieving successful outcomes for English language learners. It has been revealed that the teachers in this study actively engaged in decision making with the objective of preserving those instructional practices that they believe optimize literacy education for their students who are experiencing school with resources in both their first and second languages.

It is essential to document the experiences of teachers under the conditions of current education reform as a way to cultivate an understanding of how excellent educators can be developed, effective instructional practices can be preserved, and equitable education systems can be sustained. This research offers implications for the areas of (a) preservice education, (b) professional development of inservice teachers, and (c) education policy and decision making. Ways in which each of these areas can be informed by the findings of this study are presented in the following section.

***Preservice education.***

The teachers in this research study were nominated by the administrators of their districts to be exemplary. The administrators used the characteristics of effective instructional practices as outlined in Appendix A. These characteristics were developed based on a thorough perusal of the scholarly research on exemplary teaching. Through this process, the assumption was made that the research participants represented a group of highly effective educators of English language learners.

Researchers (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Wright, Horn, and Sanders, 1997) have concluded that the most prominent factor associated with student achievement is the effectiveness of the teacher. They believe that educational improvement can occur more by improving the effectiveness for teachers than any other single factor. This conclusion is supported by numerous studies over the last three decades regarding exemplary classroom instruction as it relates to literacy development (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Wharton-McDonald, 1996), reading intervention programs (Clay, 1985; Mertzman & Short, 2009; Taylor, Short, Shearer, & Frye, 1995), and learners with diverse cultural and linguistic needs (Au, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll, 1992; 1998).

Through the data gathering of this study, the teachers demonstrated a cognizance of their expertise in areas of general literacy, reading interventions, second language acquisition, and culturally relevant pedagogy. They attributed their expert knowledge to preservice education programs, field experience, and

their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They articulated the significant role that their teacher education programs played in the development of their skills related to literacy education for English language learners. This research suggests that effective teacher education programs are paramount for the development of exemplary teachers who are challenged with decision making as they respond to education reform policies. The teachers were able to respond to expectations of assessment and programming based on their knowledge of literacy and language acquisition.

One implication for preservice teacher education programs is the importance of including methods classes that are specific to the literacy needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. It is essential that effective teacher education programs offer opportunities for teachers to develop expertise. Pressley et al. (2001) state, “the development of such expertise takes a great deal of time and actual immersion in the practice of the profession” (p. 220). They believe that experience in the field enables teachers to (a) match students to tasks and (b) develop abilities to teach and monitor skill development. These findings support this current research by suggesting that teacher education programs offer a variety of experiences for preservice teachers that immerse the teachers into situations of reflection, problem solving, and collaboration with teachers who have established expertise in the literacy education field and especially in culturally and linguistically diverse environments.

In addition, the teachers in this study have demonstrated a thorough understanding of the theoretical frameworks of literacy, reading interventions, and

second language acquisition. Course work designed around comprehensive exposure, interaction, and application of theoretical frameworks in these areas is suggested as an integral part of preservice programs.

A final significant implication to teacher education is the notion that the teachers in this study knew their community of students. They had background experiences embedded in culture and language, and these experiences had significant effects on their interactions with students. Offering students opportunities to explore diversity and share personal histories is essential to effective teacher education programs.

The aspects of extensive fieldwork experiences, discovery of theoretical frameworks, and exploration of language and culture in teacher education programming are vital to the development, preservation, and sustainability of exemplary teaching.

***Professional development of inservice teachers.***

There were many ways in which the teachers of this study demonstrated their commitment to ongoing excellence in their practice. The teachers understand and demonstrated that exemplary literacy instruction takes place throughout the entire day. Their students were given opportunities to develop explicit skills, content area reading, writing, and oral language. Each teacher considered professional development in all of these areas to be an integral part of their responsibilities.

A significant implication of this study for educators is the importance of a dynamic approach to literacy education for English language learners. This requires

consistent professional development that recognizes the wide spectrum of language and learning needs that exist with culturally and linguistically diverse groups of students. The exemplary teacher uses professional development opportunities to explore how practices can best meet the needs of their students. The teachers of this study have demonstrated that continuing higher education and district professional development experiences have informed and provided frameworks from which they based their decisions.

A review of research supports the notion of teacher professional development and the relationship to student success. Haager and Mahdavi (2007) and McCutchen (2002) concluded that teachers who engage in professional development are more likely to implement instructional practices that are connected to higher academic achievement. In addition, they reported the need for continued education with (a) adequate depth from which to build knowledge and skills, (b) built-in time for teachers to practice principles learned, and (c) the inclusion of administrator participation as a way to strengthen support systems for teachers.

Another significant implication this study offers for educators is the value that reflective practices have on exemplary teaching. The teachers of this study engaged in constant dialogue with themselves and others regarding the effectiveness of their instructional practices. When new programming or changes in programming occurred, the teachers immediately reflected on how the changes would affect their students, and they interrogated the practices for the purpose of deciding how they could be adapted or tweaked to meet the needs of their students.

The reflective approaches the teachers took guided their ability to engage in decision making to preserve instructional practices and work to create change.

Many scholars believe that reflective methods should be a part of professional teacher preparation or development (Giroux, 1992; Marx, 2006). The use of reflection journals, collaborative teacher networking, and material and human resources are ways to develop the skills necessary for evaluations of programs, assessments, and general equitability of curriculum. Patton (2002) refers to professional reflection as *reflexivity*. He defines it as “a way of emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one’s perspective” (p. 299). The teachers of this study have repeatedly demonstrated this reflexivity as they evaluated programming, engaged in trial-and-error, utilized classroom data to inform practice, conducted classroom action research, and collaborated to focus on student outcomes.

The significance of this implication is that the individual teacher is engaging in ongoing practices to develop and maintain expertise. Student outcomes are favorable; however, when these efforts are collaborative and supported, the strength of the outcomes for both student and teacher success increases.

### ***Education policy and decision making.***

There is an intense misunderstanding between decades of research on how to best educate English language learners and the education policy expectations that have gained momentum in public schools. The divide between what has been repeatedly proven and what is being mandated in classrooms has increased. This research of exemplary teachers has highlighted the challenges this situation has

caused for the individual classroom teacher and the potential it has to weaken the sustainability of an educational system. The findings offer implications for those involved in the creation and implementation of policies that affect instructional programming for English language learners.

The first implication involves educating the policy makers as a way to address the divide that exists between the expectations of policy and the desires of teachers to provide expert instruction (García and Kleifgen, 2010; Menken & García, 2010). The teachers of this study have demonstrated that they work tirelessly to educate their colleagues, administrators, and community members. It is suggested here that educators move beyond the local borders to educate those in decision-making roles on the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Professional communities are essential in the creation of action plans, implementation of advocacy, and lobbying of legislation. Collective voices and actions are needed that explicitly outline ways in which academic accountability can more accurately be measured. Examples of this would be to establish Spanish early literacy models to determine literacy acquisition proficiency in young Spanish readers who have not yet been exposed to sufficient amounts of time with the English language. Advocacy can include actual demonstrations of the difference between Spanish assessment and English assessment for primary students who are engaged in Spanish formal literacy instruction.

Another implication highlighted by this study is the need for language acquisition and bilingual education experts to be included in the decision making at all levels. Policies are often created without a language education plan, and when

this happens initiatives are implemented with de facto language policies that can have detrimental effects related to achievement outcomes for English language learners (Menken, 2008; Shohamy, 2006). Educational systems at all levels should require structures in place that will help realize the shared objective of student success in the classroom. Involving experts in the fields of bilingual education and language acquisition is a way to narrow the divide that exists between practice and policy.

A final implication is to advocate for local control over decisions regarding programming and assessment, so that decisions can be made based on the student population that will be serviced. Top down policies are often implemented through decision-making processes that are far-removed from the environments of the students that will be most affected by implementation (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Escamilla, 2008; Thomas & Brady, 2005). Materials, human resources and curriculum for culturally and linguistically diverse students are often under-considered. Although difficult for individuals to accomplish, collective voices can petition and work for change.

Literacy education for English language learners is a complex process that becomes even more challenged with the increasing expectations of education policy. This study on exemplary teachers of ELLS suggests changes can be realized through collective voices that are committed to educating those in decision-making roles.

#### **Study limitations.**

Although this study of nominated teachers of English language learners provided plenty of data to successfully inform the analysis and critical conversation,

it is recognized that there were also limitations. The primary limitation of this study is that it was bound by the amount of time that was available to complete the research. Because of the time frame, the decision to include only four participants was made. Although, it was a reasonable decision, increasing the number of participants would have added to the rich diversity of experiences included in the data. The time constraints also affected the decisions regarding school locations. The approach to school selection was one of purposeful sampling based on the geographic location of the schools and the researcher's access to those schools within the specified time frame. Another limitation to this study is that the teacher perspective was the only lens that this study was conducted through. Multiple perspectives would offer increased insight into the experiences of other decision-makers with regard to the education of English language learners. Finally, it is recognized that the researcher, as a teacher of English language learners, has brought beliefs and biases that had the potential to influence the gathering, analysis, and discussion of the data on the issue of preserving effective practices for English language learners.

#### **Recommendations for further study.**

Further research is needed to expand the knowledge base regarding effective literacy interventions that address the specific nuances of learning to read and write in two languages. It is essential to explore the ways support systems can be created for teachers, so that they can develop instructional practices that will optimize and strengthen the literacy and linguistic development of the students. The roles of

families and community members could be included as a way to comprehensively measure support systems.

In addition, longitudinal studies are needed that can provide insight into how transformation can occur over time when deliberate models of change are incorporated into a program model. Providing teachers with specific leadership skills and tools for change and then documenting their experiences would be helpful in creating a model for systems at risk for failure.

There is an absolute need for research that engages multiple perspectives of the decision-making process that influences the quality of schooling for English language learners. There is a paucity of research with regard to the role of school and district administrators and the most effective ways to educate these key individuals to become leaders of culturally and linguistically diverse students. The perspectives of policy-makers at the state and federal education department levels also need exploration, as a transformative objective requires that the entire system is understood and is part of the positive conversation and collaboration to create change.

Lastly, it is suggested here that one of the most crucial directions for research involves the examination of how practices in pre-service teacher and administrator higher-education programs can be improved as a way to strengthen and sustain bilingual education that promotes additive schools and *language as a resource* ideologies.

**Final reflection.**

In 1954, the landmark Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education* declared education as a right for all. Almost sixty years later, there continues to be significant issues regarding the equitability in how certain groups of children are educated in the United States. This study finds its roots in the spirit of those who challenged policies and practices throughout recent history, and it recognizes the enormous impact that individual teachers make when they courageously stand up against institutionalized praxis to create equitable, dynamic learning environments for students.

From the inception of this study, the intent has always been to authentically portray the experiences of the four participants as a way to expose and understand the daily instructional challenges that are endured because of beliefs that optimizing life outcomes for children are worth the effort. Critical conversation has been presented as a way to deconstruct the problematic tenets surrounding expectations placed on teachers of English language learners. It is hoped that possibilities for change rise out of these conversations, so that sustainable systems of equity can flourish. This study has sought to move beyond the traditions of education policy and practice to revision how culturally and linguistically diverse children can experience school.

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## Appendix A

### Teacher Nomination Form

Thank you for agreeing to nominate two teachers within your school district that will be willing to participate in a qualitative research study that seeks to explore how highly effective teachers of English language learners preserve quality practices in an era of education reform. The teachers will be asked to participate in a series of interviews and observations that will focus on their day-to-day practices with English language learners. Please use the criteria below to nominate the teachers you feel exemplify the focus of this study. Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,  
Leanne Evans

### Study Criteria

Teachers fulfill the qualifications of this study if they exemplify **all** of the following characteristics:

1. The teacher is working in an established bilingual program and has at least two years of experience in that program.
2. The teacher is working with a sufficient number of English language learners with literacy intervention needs.
3. The teacher is working in an intermediate level (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade) elementary classroom where education assessments and initiatives are most prevalent.
4. The teacher has a reputation of being highly effective in his/her use of programming based on what is known in the fields of bilingual education and second language learning.

The following characteristics of highly effective instructional practices can assist you in your nomination of two highly reputable teachers. The effective teachers of English language learners with reading intervention needs include the following tenets in their daily instruction:

- Learning communities based on theory and knowledge of literacy, biliteracy, and second language acquisition.
- Language-rich classrooms
- Literature-rich classrooms
- Home language and culture as the essence of learning experiences
- Learning experiences based on dialogue and conversation about becoming and maintaining biliteracy.
- An expectation that there will be variance among learners
- Implementation of instructional practices that meet the needs of individual learners
- An understanding of the nuances of language learning that move beyond the conventions and parameters of the dominant language.
- A belief in an additive schooling ideology that works to equalize learning and life opportunities for English language learners

Please list the two nominated teachers here.

1. Administrator \_\_\_\_\_

School District \_\_\_\_\_

Nominated Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

School Name \_\_\_\_\_

School Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Comments Regarding Nomination (Optional)

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2. Administrator \_\_\_\_\_

School District \_\_\_\_\_

Nominated Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

School Name \_\_\_\_\_

School Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Comments Regarding Nomination (Optional)

## Appendix B Initial Interview Guide

### I. Introduction

- A. The questions presented during this session are inquiries designed to gain meaning about your experiences as a teacher in a program that serves a diverse group of children. This interview will be used as a means of developing a future interview design for a research study that will investigate how highly reputable teachers preserve quality instructional practices in an era of education reform.
- B. The responses and discussion that take place will be transcribed and the data will be filed under a coded number, so that you have the assurance that the information will remain confidential and your identity will be known only by myself, the primary investigator.
- C. As a way to record the actual and true version of this interview, I would like your permission to tape record this session.
- D. At this time, do you have any questions regarding this interview/study process?

### II. Teacher Background

- A. Can you tell me about your language and cultural background?
- B. Can you tell me how you came to be a teacher of English language learners?
- C. Is there anything else you can tell me about your background that will help me to understand what you bring to the English language learner classroom?

### III. Descriptive Information

- A. What is your official title?
- B. Can you describe the grade levels and classroom structures of the students you teach?
  - B1. Can you describe the cultural and linguistic makeup of your students?
- C. What is your capacity to speak the language(s) as spoken by your student?
- D. What is your capacity to communicate with the families of your English language learners?

#### IV. Background Information Regarding Teacher Preparation

- A. Can you summarize your teacher preparation program, both undergraduate and graduate?
- B. How did the teacher preparation program you experienced prepare you to meet the needs of low achieving readers?
- D. How did the teacher preparation program you experienced prepare you to work with culturally/linguistically diverse students?
- E. Explain how your teacher preparation experience prepared you to work with language minority students with reading intervention needs.
- F. Describe how your district oriented you to your role as a reading teacher for English language learners.

#### V. Meeting the Needs of Low Achieving Readers

- A. Describe the course of action you take with students who have reading intervention needs?
- B. How would you describe your abilities to meet the needs of these students?
- C. Are there differences in the course of action you would take for students who have reading intervention needs if they are English language learners?
  - C1. Explain these differences.
- D. How do you differentiate between the needs of a low achieving reader and the needs of a student acquiring English as their second language?
- E. What has your professional training taught you about the differences between a low achieving reader and/or the needs of a student acquiring English as their second language?

#### VI. Education Reform

- A. How familiar are you with the tenets of current education reform?
- B. In what ways do federal policy mandates affect your daily teaching?
- C. Describe the ways in which your district interprets the tenets of No Child Left Behind legislation.

- D. Describe the ways in which your district interprets the tenets of the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004.
  - E. Are there ways in which you adapt initiatives to meet the needs of your English language learners? Please describe these ways.
  - F. Describe ways in which policy initiatives support your practices with English language learners.
  - G. Describe ways in which policy initiatives hinder your practices with English language learners.
  - H. How would you describe your professional ideology as it relates to standardized tests?
  - I. How would you describe the experiences of your students as they experience mandated accountability measures?
- V. Challenges
- A. What is your biggest challenge(s) as a teacher of English language learners who have reading intervention needs?
  - B. What would help a new teacher in your position with this (these) challenges.
  - C. In a hierarchal education system, such as we currently have (fed, state, local, teacher, student), where do you feel the most decision-making impact can be made to effect the experiences you have described in teaching language minority students who have reading intervention needs?
  - D. What, in your opinion, is the role of the teacher in adapting current curricular interventions to meet the needs of English language learners?
  - E. If you could design a teacher preparation program for teachers that would prepare them for the needs of linguistically diverse children what would you include?

#### VIII. Wrap up

- A. Summary/Member Check
- B. Questions/Thank you
- C. Schedule follow-up

Appendix C  
Observation Guide

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Site to be Observed: \_\_\_\_\_

Focus of Observation – Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Focus of Observation – Concepts: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Role of Observer(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Observation Protocol		
Observation Description	Observation Reflection	Methodological Notes

Layout of Setting

Analytical Comments/Reflections:

## Appendix D

## Follow-up Interview Protocol

1. What occurrences that have happened since our last meeting that you feel have significance to this study?
2. What occurrences have you experienced that you were able to document in your reflection journal?
3. In my observation today, I documented\_\_\_\_\_. Can you tell me about this occurrence from your perspective?
4. Question 3 to be repeated if situation requires.
5. Describe any incidences that you have experienced where you felt challenged to preserve your quality instructional practices for English language learners.
6. What role have policy initiatives such as high stakes testing or mandated standardized curriculum played in your instructional practices within the last month?
7. In what ways did these initiatives require you to adapt your pedagogy?
8. What resources or support systems do you use that contribute to successful preservation of your quality instructional practices with your English language learners?
9. Please describe any incidences or occurrences that you feel are significant to this study.

Appendix E

Document Review Protocol

Document Name \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Document

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\_\_\_ Document was used in the natural setting during the observation.

\_\_\_ Document was used in the natural setting, but was not observed.

\_\_\_ Document was presented by the teacher as a teacher document.

\_\_\_ Document was presented by the teacher as a student document.

\_\_\_ Document represents communication from the school.

\_\_\_ Document represents communication from the district.

\_\_\_ Document represents communication from the State.

\_\_\_ Document represents communication from the federal government.

Comments on significance of document:

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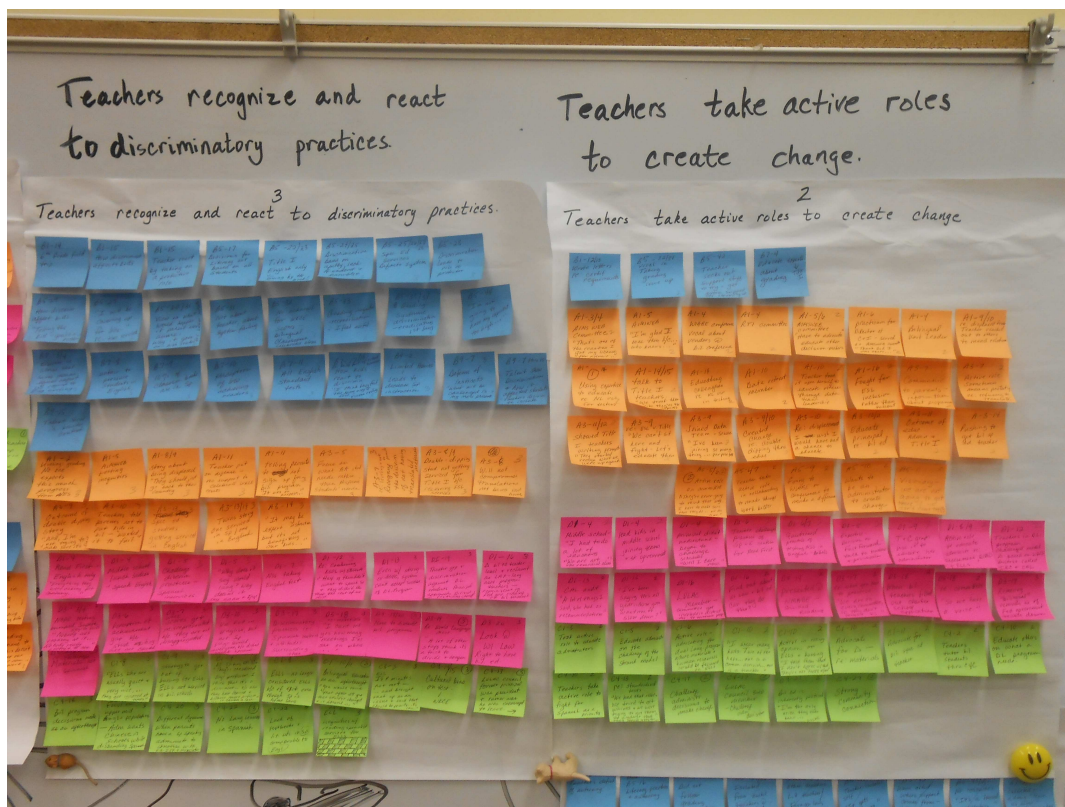
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Photocopy of document is attached if applicable. Reflection journal entries can be included here.

## Appendix F

## Presentation of Coding Organizational System

Field notes from observations, transcripts, interviews, and documents were processed promptly and referred to often throughout the data-gathering component of the study. Open coding was the organizational system used and concepts were grouped as they pertained to the phenomenon of study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Information that was deemed significant was written on a Post-It note. Each participant represented a different color. Categories and themes were developed, and organized on large posters. This process remained a reflective work until a final set of established themes emerged for interpretation.



## Curriculum Vitae

### Education

- Ph.D. December, 2012. Urban Education Doctoral Program, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. Curriculum and Instruction specialization, Linguistics minor, literacy and second language acquisition focus.
- M. Ed. December, 2001. Carthage College, Kenosha, WI. Kindergarten – 12 Reading Specialization, Reading Teacher License-316, Reading Specialist License-17.
- B.S. 1983 - 1984. University of North Texas, Denton, TX. Elementary Education Major.

### Licensure

- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: 22 Grades Prekindergarten-12, 316 Reading Teacher.
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: 45 Elementary Teacher, 118 First-Eighth Grade.
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: 17 Reading Specialist.
- Texas Education Agency: Elementary Education Grades 1-8, Lifetime.

### Teaching Experience

- August 2001-Present Reading Specialist. Dual Language Program, Dr. Jones Elementary School, Racine, WI.
- August 2005-July 2008 Adjunct Instructor. Education Department, Carthage College, Kenosha, WI.
- August 2000-June 2001 Language Arts and Social Studies Teacher, 6-8. St. John Nepomuk School, Racine, WI.

August 1998-June 2000      Fourth Grade Teacher.  
 St. John Nepomuk School, Racine, WI.

### **Presentations/Publications**

December, 2012              Doctoral Dissertation: The Preservation of Effective Instructional Practices in an Era of Education Reform: The Experiences of Exemplary Teachers of English Language Learners. University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

October 26, 2012            Presentation: Multicultural Children’s Literature in the Elementary School Classroom: Why it Matters. District Professional Development Day-Racine Unified School District, Racine, WI.

April 26, 2012              Presentation: Promoting Biliteracy Through Writing. The Alliance for Multilingual Multicultural Education/ New Mexico Association of Bilingual Education Conference, Albuquerque, NM.

March 14, 2012              Presentation: Teaching Initial Literacy in Spanish to Language Majority Students in a Dual Language Spanish Immersion Program. District-wide Council, Racine Unified School District, Racine, WI.

February 20, 2012          Presentation: Multicultural Writing Projects. District Professional Development Day-Racine Unified School District, Racine, WI.

February 3, 2012            Presentation: Engaging in Writing Projects that Promote Biliteracy. Wisconsin State Reading Association Conference, Milwaukee, WI.

- April 27, 2011                      Paper Presentation: The Reading Teacher in a Transformative Role-The Language Minority Student With Reading Intervention Needs.  
American Education Research Association Conference, New Orleans, LA.
- December 3, 2010                      Presentation: Research on Dual Language Programming and Student Outcomes.  
District-wide Council, Racine Unified School District, Racine, WI.
- February 5, 2010                      Presentation: Promoting Biliteracy Through Innovative Writing Projects in a Dual Language Setting.  
Wisconsin State Reading Association Conference, Milwaukee, WI.
- February 6, 2009                      Presentation: Literacy Issues in Bilingual Education.  
Wisconsin State Reading Association Conference, Milwaukee, WI.
- Fall, 2001                                  Masters Thesis: A Bibliotherapeutic Analysis of Childhood Risk Factors and Coping Mechanisms in Newbery Award-Winning Literature.  
Carthage College, Kenosha, WI.

### **Affiliations/Memberships**

- American Educational Research Association
- International Reading Association
- National Association of Bilingual Education
- Wisconsin State Reading Association
- Wisconsin Association of Bilingual Education
- New Mexico Association of Bilingual Education