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Teacher Implementation and Impact of Academic Vocabulary Instructional Protocols for Long Term English Learners

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Teacher Implementation and Impact of Academic Vocabulary Instructional Protocols

for Long Term English Learners

by

Rosa I. Isiah

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

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Teacher Implementation and Impact of Academic Vocabulary Instructional Protocols

for Long Term English Learners

Loyola Marymount University
School of Education
Los Angeles, CA 90045

This dissertation written by Rosa Isiah, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

December 22, 2015
Date

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Teacher Implementation and Impact of Academic Vocabulary Instructional Protocols

for Long Term English Learners

by

Rosa I. Isiah

English learners are expected to acquire academic language and content simultaneously. Long Term English Learners (LTELs), a growing English Learner subgroup, struggle academically and do not have the necessary academic vocabulary proficiency to achieve academic success in our current educational system.

This mixed-methods study examined the implementation of Academic Vocabulary Instructional protocols in the upper grades in a small urban elementary school district. Semistructured interviews, focus group, observation protocol, and data analysis methods were used as primary methods for data collection. Overall, four key themes emerged in this study. First, all 4th- and 5th-grade teachers implemented the new Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and protocol to address the academic language needs of English learner students. Second, teachers consistently used the academic vocabulary and grammatical frames. Third, teachers regularly modeled the use of an academic register. Finally, there was an increase in the use of grammatical

sentence frames and academic vocabulary by students across the content areas. Language

Acquisition and Sociocultural Theory in Language conceptual frameworks were used.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background

Long Term English Learners

The number of English Learners (EL) has dramatically increased over the last two decades. Current research indicates an extraordinary boom in the EL population. "Between 1979 and 2007, the number of school-age children (5 to 17-year-olds) who spoke a language other than English at home nearly tripled, from less than 4 million to almost 11 million" (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010, p. 1). Between 1992 and 2002, enrollment of ELs in the United States grew by 84% while the total K–12 population grew only by 10% (Walqui, 2006). The United States Department of Education estimated that "4,512,560 English learners are enrolled in public schools across the United States" (CDE, 2010, p. 1). The growth is evident across the nation, but especially in California, where "one of every four students is an English learner" (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010, p. 3). "California's proportion is approximately 34 percent of the national total" (CDE, 2010, p. 1). This explosion in numbers—in addition to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001— has created a sense of urgency around the limited academic achievement of ELs, specifically for a fairly new subgroup of English learners who tend to be overlooked: the Long Term English Learner subgroup.

The majority of English learners are in grades kindergarten through fifth grade, but most ELs at the *middle and high* school levels are what researchers consider Long Term English Learners (LTELs). Long Term English Learners (LTELs) are typically defined as "students in United States schools for more than six years without reaching sufficient English proficiency to

be reclassified" (Olsen, 2010, p. 1). These students generally struggle academically and have weak academic language. These students are native-born students. Many of them have been part of the school community since preschool and are not proficient in English or their primary language. "Recent statistical trends in U.S. secondary schools indicate that 80% to 90% of ELs in middle and high school are actually born in the United States" (Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2001, p. 1). They make up the majority of secondary school English learners, at about 59% and the numbers continue to grow (Olsen, 2010). "In 2008, the approximate number of LTELs was about 6,000,000, and in 2009 about 8,000,000" (Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2011, p. VI). Many EL students were born and raised in the United States and have been part of the educational system their entire academic careers. "In middle and high schools, 57% of EL's represent the second or third generation of immigrants to the USA" (as cited in Walqui, 2006).

The increasing numbers of native-born LTELs is distressing. The issue of Long Term English Learners is not only "a problem for the Latino community; it negatively affects the entire country" (Pelayo & Pachon, 2010, p. 15). The cost of low achievement for large groups of the population are high and can be measured in health care costs, dropout rates, and the overrepresentation of certain groups in prison populations.

This is an urgent social justice issue in education today. If this problem is not addressed, current educational programs will continue to produce students who will not succeed or meet the needs of a 21st-century world. Career options will be limited for these students. They might not have options other than service positions, at best. At worst, they face a life of poverty and adversity in meeting their basic needs and the needs of their families.

Restrictive California Reform Policies

Educators and policymakers play a significant role in the educational crisis faced by many language minority students. They must acknowledge their contribution to the existence of millions of Long Term English Learners. English Learners become Long Term English learners throughout the course of their academic experiences in our school system (Olsen, 2010). They are educated in a system that has implemented English-only policies, initiatives, and educational practices. Many of these practices are rooted in racism, defined as systematic oppression based on language, race, or class.

Proposition 227, known as the "English for the Children Initiative," is one such restrictive California initiative. Proposition 227 passed in 1998 with a 61% majority vote and has "been reported to be substantially influencing the organizational environments of bilingual students" (Garcia, 2005, p. 88). Not only has Prop 227 influenced the educational environment of bilingual students, but it has also completely dismantled bilingual education in California.

Proposition 227 and other restrictive language policies changed the way the educational system serves English learners, negatively affecting their schooling experience by disregarding the language, experiences, and knowledge that language minority students bring to schools. These policies "are subtractive in nature, ignoring the linguistic resources Latino students bring to the classroom."(Garcia, 2005, p. 89). The limited level of support and intolerance of cultural and linguistic diversity promoted by such policies is a serious concern. They add to the subtractive schooling experience and programming that many English learners experience.

Instructional Practices and Schooling Experiences

The schooling experience is a particularly crucial time for English language learners as they develop their academic identities. From the moment English learners enter public schools, they are expected to adapt to the dominant language and culture, acquiring English and mastering grade-level content at the same rate as their English-only peers. These expectations have a "significant impact on the language skills and academic performance, as programs can either promote language loss or language maintenance and development over time" (Menken & Kleyn, 2010, p. 399). In addition to the demands of mastering content in all curricular areas while learning the language, middle and high school teachers and administrators are ill prepared and struggling to support this diverse group of ELs. "These students are likely to be segregated in the classrooms and in their communities . . . they are also likely to be taught by teachers who lack the preparation and skills to meet their academic needs" (Horwitz et al., 2009). A school's and teacher's degree of encouragement can foster or hinder a student's commitment to academic achievement.

Calderón and Minaya-Rowe's (2011) research has identified a number of factors that contribute to the development of this growing EL group, the Long Term English learner. The major factors include inconsistencies with language policy and attention to ELs, inconsistent instructional programs, limited primary language support, low expectations, segregation from other students, and teachers who are ill-equipped to work with LTELs. Olsen (2010) also identified partial access to curriculum, social segregation, and linguistic isolation as contributing factors to the creation of LTELs (Olsen, 2010). California educators have begun to discuss best

teaching practices for educating LTEL students; however, they have not established concrete systems to support attaining academic language proficiency.

A variety of factors contribute to the substantial underachievement and social gaps for this population of ELs, preventing students from achieving English proficiency and academic success. Educators and policy makers are clearly contributing to the educational oppression of LTELs, as legislative policies and teaching practices shape the students' schooling experiences.

Statement of the Problem

The existence and rapidly increasing numbers of Long Term English Learners is not only an academic achievement issue, but also a social justice issue. The number of English Learners has dramatically increased over the last two decades. Current research indicates an extraordinary boom in the EL population. "Between 1979 and 2007, the number of school-age children (5 to 17-year-olds) who spoke a language other than English at home nearly tripled, from less than 4 million to almost 11 million" (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010, p. 1). The growth is evident across the nation, but especially in California, where "one of every four students is an English learner" (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010, p. 3). This explosion in numbers has created a sense of urgency around the limited academic achievement of ELs, specifically for the fairly new subgroup of English learners who tend to be overlooked: the native-born Long Term English Learner subgroup.

Research indicates that ELs are expected to acquire *academic language* and *content* simultaneously. LTELs generally struggle academically and have weak academic language. The lack of academic language impacts all areas of learning. The LTEL falls further behind as the student is advanced from one grade level to the next. Eventually, LTELs enter secondary school

at a disadvantage, unprepared for rigorous academic language demands, limiting their access to grade-level content (Dutro & Kinsella, 2010). Critical issues include the basic and dire need for academic language instruction across the content areas and instructional best practices for educating the LTEL student. Providing extensive vocabulary and academic language instruction supports comprehension, word knowledge, and overall academic achievement of ELs (Baker et al., 2014). The underachievement and stagnation of this growing group of students is an issue with critical long-term consequences and lifelong implications that need to be addressed.

Purpose of the Study

The Lovely Elementary School District's benchmark and state assessment data demonstrate a gap in the academic achievement of Long Term English Learners. The Lovely Elementary School District has implemented an Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and Instructional Protocol designed to address the academic vocabulary needs of LTELs.

The primary purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the extent to which 4th- and 5th-grade teachers implemented the new Academic Vocabulary Instructional protocols at the Success Elementary School and its impact on the academic achievement of LTELs, as measured by the California English Learner Development Test (CELDT).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was to raise teachers' awareness about the language development needs of LTEL students as they reflected on language instructional protocols implemented in order to increase the academic achievement of LTELs at the Success Elementary School. The findings from this study may be used to develop an understanding about the level of student verbal and physical instructional engagement in the classroom.

In addition to the implications mentioned above, the significance of the study to the field of language learning and academic achievement of the Long Term English learner may provide valuable data about a systematic vocabulary instructional approach. This data may be used to inform educational practice and policy as it pertains to English learner instruction and achievement in a small urban elementary school district. I expect this research to create an awareness and sense of urgency about the long-term implications for Long Term English Learners as a result of their language learning experiences.

Research Question

The research question that guided the study and explored the academic vocabulary instruction experiences of teachers, as well as the learning experiences of Long Term English learners was as follows:

- To what extent are 4th- and 5th-grade teachers implementing the Academic Vocabulary Instructional Protocols at the Success Elementary School as measured by the Lovely Elementary School District Observation Tool?

Methodology

This mixed-methods study examined the experiences of the Long Term English Learner through a Language and Sociocultural Learning framework. I utilized sociocultural and second language acquisition theories to demonstrate how schooling experiences, language policies, and school-based instructional practices impacted the academic achievement of Long Term English learners.

As part of the English learner family, Long Term English Learners have dealt with issues of ineffective language instruction, schooling experiences, and language policies. Those issues,

subtractive in nature, greatly affect the educational experiences of the LTEL. Schooling and language-learning experiences not only impact a student's identity but also influence how society perceives the student, influencing the student's level of participation and motivation for academic achievement. These issues, focusing on schooling, language learning, and developing one's academic identity can be appropriately explored through a sociocultural theoretical (ST) lens and language acquisition theoretical (LAT) lens.

The focus on Sociocultural (SCT) and Language Acquisition Theory (LAT) as frameworks for this work supported the goals of this research study. Researching the educational experiences of Long Term English Learners is critical to our understanding as educational researchers for social justice. Vygotsky's basic concept stated that the individual can only be analyzed and understood as part of something bigger . . . a history, a culture, or of a society (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011). Experiences of the past very much contribute to the realities of today.

The triangulation of data for this research study included focus group interviews, protocol observations, and document analysis. The data collection was comprised of semiformal teacher interviews, document analysis of student CELDT data in student cumulative files, and classroom observations of the classroom setting using the academic language observation protocol tool employed by the Lovely Elementary School district. Figure 1 illustrates the triangulation of data for this research study.
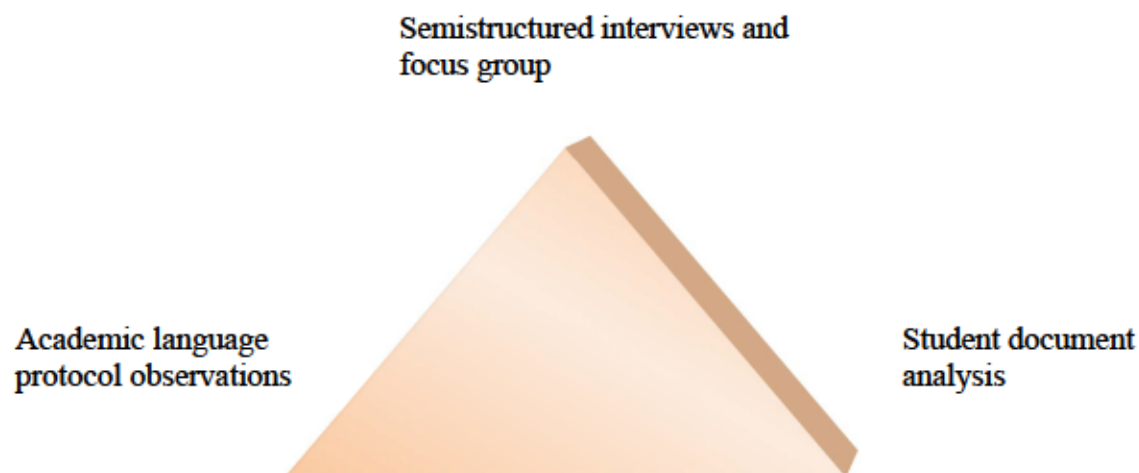
Figure 1. Triangulation of data collection, protocol observations, semiformal interviews, and document analysis.

The research was conducted in a small urban Title 1 elementary school district, with a meaningful Long Term English learner population. The overall student population was 80% Hispanic. Eighty percent of all students participated in the free or reduced meal program and 41% of students had been designated as English learners. One hundred percent of all teachers were designated No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001) highly qualified and all had met the English learner certification requirements (http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest).

Participants

As the researcher, I determined that the study participants should consist of educators of 4th- and 5th-grade Long Term English learner students enrolled at the Success Elementary School in the Lovely Elementary school district. The six participating teachers included three 4th-grade teachers and three 5th-grade elementary school teachers.

All participants held teachings credentials with English learner or bilingual authorization, certifying them to instruct English Learner students.

Assumptions and Limitations

My assumptions in this study included the assumption that teachers would be forthcoming about their attitudes and feelings concerning their experiences with the academic language instructional protocols. A second assumption was that the teachers' perspectives and teaching experiences would provide data or insight that would inform district policy and teaching practice.

As the researcher, limitations in this study included my position as principal of the elementary school for the school district in which the research took place. My role was that of an insider. This circumstance may have resulted in bias and may have influenced the level of teaching participation or willingness to share detailed events or information.

A second limitation was my status as an English learner. Past educational experiences as a second language learner may be perceived as a limitations that may result in bias or threat to validity, but this subjectivity can also support the research. While my experiences as an English learner provided insight and a unique perspective, my experiences could have resulted in bias or threat to validity.

A final limitation in this study was the small sample of six participants. As a result, the outcome of this research may not be generalized broadly. The conclusions drawn from this study aim to shed light on the instructional protocols that contribute to the academic vocabulary instruction and learning engagement of long-term English learners at the Success Elementary School in the Lovely Elementary School District.

Definitions of Key Terms

Academic Language: Kinsella (2005) defined academic language as the language of schooling. It includes vocabulary development, syntax, grammar, and register.

Academic Vocabulary: Baumann and Graves (2010) defined academic vocabulary as "words that appear reasonably frequently within and across academic domains. These words may be polysemous, with different definitions being relevant to different domains" (p. 9).

English Language Learner (ELL): Students who have been identified as learners of English as a second language. ELLs are students whose parents have reported a primary language other than English on the school district's state-approved Home Language Survey and who have been determined to lack English fluency, as measured by the California English Learner Development Test (CA Department of Education, 2012).

Fluent English Proficient (FEP): Students who are fluent-English-proficient are the students whose primary language is other than English and who have met district criteria for determining proficiency in English (CA Department of Education, 2012).

Long Term English Learner (LTEL): Olsen (2010) defined Long Term English Learners (LTELs) as "students in United States schools for more than six years without reaching sufficient English proficiency to be reclassified" (p. 1)

Redesignated or Reclassified Fluent English Proficient: The category of Redesignated Fluent English Proficient students contains English learners who have been redesignated as fluent-English proficient. Students are redesignated according to the multiple criteria, standards, and procedures, based on general state guidelines, adopted by the district, demonstrating that

students who are redesignated have English-language fluency in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (CA Department of Education, 2012).

Summary and Organization of the Dissertation

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine to what extent 4th- and 5th-grade teachers implemented the new Academic Vocabulary Instructional protocols at the Success Elementary School.

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study, the research setting, the purpose and significance of the study, the conceptual framework used for the study, as well as the research question and methodology. The research continues in Chapter 2 with a review of literature focusing on the historical background of language policies with a focus on California policies, language acquisition theory, Academic Vocabulary instruction, Long Term English Learner research, and assessment and accountability measures that have greatly influenced the schooling experiences of the LTEL. Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology, providing detailed information on the organization of the study including research procedures followed for data collection and analysis of the data. Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the student interviews, cumulative program analysis, and protocol observations. The final chapter presents an analysis and summary of findings, including implications and recommendations for future research, teaching, learning, and changes in district policy.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: LONG TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS, SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, AND LANGUAGE POLICIES

Background: Long Term English Learners

The public education system is experiencing tremendous growth in the number of English learners. There are millions of English learners across the nation struggling to master the English language. "In the 10 years from 1995 through 2005, the U.S. population in grades K-12 grew by less than 3 percent while the population of English language learners increased by 56 percent" (as cited by Walqui & Van Lier, 2010, p. x). Many English learner students were born in the United States and have been part of the educational system their entire academic careers. "In middle and high schools, 57% of EL's represent the second or third generation of immigrants to the USA" (as cited in Walqui, 2006). The majority of ELs failing to make progress or graduating from high school are Long Term English Learners. "In the future, demographers project English language learners will increasingly be students who were born and educated exclusively in the United States" (Walqui & Van Lier, 2010, p. x).

Most of middle and high school English learners are Long Term English Learners (LTEL). Dr. Laurie Olsen (2010) has defined Long Term English Learners as students who have been "in United States schools for more than six years without reaching sufficient English proficiency to be reclassified" (p. 1). Long Term English Learners are attempting to navigate the educational system but the current educational system is preparing them for educational failure. Students are advancing from grade to grade without achieving English language proficiency or meeting the academic requirements for language program reclassification. LTELs come from

homes where their native language is spoken exclusively, as well as where both English and their native language are used. LTELs often prefer to use English for social purposes, as they have stronger *oral* English proficiency. LTELs have weak *academic literacy* skills in both English and their home language, although they prefer to read and write in English as a result of their English-only schooling experience (Menken & Kleyn, 2010).

Long Term English Learners are a product of an antiquated and dysfunctional educational system. Middle and high schools are struggling and ill prepared to support this diverse group of English learners. "These students are likely to be segregated in the classrooms and in their communities . . . they are also likely to be taught by teachers who lack the preparation and skills to meet their academic needs" (Horwitz et al., 2009). California is beginning to discuss best practices for working with these students; however, educators and policy makers have not established concrete systems to support them or prevent students from attaining language proficiency or mastering academic content. Organizations such as Californians Together, are working to prioritize the issue of Long Term English Learners for policy work in the state of California (Olsen, 2010). "Although these students comprise a significant portion of the secondary English language learner population in the USA, very little research exists about them" (Menken & Kleyn, 2010, p. 399). Researchers have also referred to Long Term English Learners as *ESL Lifers*, *1.5-generation*, *5-Plusers*, and *III's Forever*.

Failing to meet the needs of Long Term English learners is not only an issue in local urban school districts, but also a concern for educators across the United States and a social justice issue. "Leadership for social justice interrogates the policies and procedures that shape schools and at the same time perpetuate social inequalities and marginalization due to race, class,

gender, and other markers of difference" (Marshall & Oliva, 2010, p. 31). Long Term English

learners need a voice; they need leaders who will advocate for social justice. As educational

leaders for social justice, "it is our job as educational professionals to . . . provide them with the

right learning opportunities so that they can address rigorous academic content *in a language*

they have yet to master" (Walqui & van Lier, 2010, p.1).

In this review of the literature, the research focused on the historical background of

language policies, Long Term English Learner research, language acquisition, development of

academic vocabulary, and assessment and accountability measures that have greatly influenced

the schooling experiences of the LTEL.

Theoretical Framework

This mixed-methods study examined the experiences of the Long Term English Learner

through a Sociocultural Learning Theory in Language educational framework. Sociocultural and

language acquisition theories were used to demonstrate how schooling experiences and school-

based instructional practices impacted the academic achievement of Long Term English learners.

Sociocultural experiences and language practices in a student's learning environment influence

how students view their schooling experience and, ultimately, how they view themselves as

members of their learning community.

Sociocultural Learning Theory in Language

Sociocultural theory falls under the umbrella of learning theories—specifically

socioconstructivist theory. Lev S. Vygotsky (1978), known as the founder of sociocultural

learning theory (SCT), focused his work on the relationship between learning and development.

Vygotsky emphasized meaningful interactions among individuals as the greatest motivation

force in human development and learning. Sociocultural theory maintains that social interaction and institutions such as schools, classrooms, and so on have important roles to play in an individual's cognitive growth and development (Donato & McCormick, 1994). Language learning is a social process. "Sociocultural theory states that learning is influenced by social, cultural, and historical factors within social interactions" (Lavadenz, 2010, p. 19). Swain et al. (2011) stated that Vygotsky's work teaches that the source of learning and development is found in social interaction rather than solely in the mind of an individual. Vygotsky (1978) described learning as a social activity, embedded in interactions with people, objects, and the environment that will allow children to make sense of the world, allowing them to coconstruct meaning. Those interactions shape the ever-changing identity of individuals; who they are, what they think, and who they will become.

Vygotsky and Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition has been strongly influenced by research conducted in linguistics, education, sociology, and psychology. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of language is based on the constructivist learning approach. He believed that language is a social concept that develops through interactions with others and not from biological causes. Vygotsky (1978) also believed that language comes before thought. Language is the tool that a child uses to develop concepts. Vygotsky's tenets of sociocultural theory include concepts that are key components of learning and language acquisition. The researcher has selected to focus on specific concepts that are essential elements of language learning and teaching. They are: mediation and meaning, the Zone of Proximal Development(ZPD), and the distinction between spontaneous and scientific concepts.

Mediation Tools and Artifacts—Making Meaning

Sociocultural theory teaches that we interact with the worldly material and symbolic objects around us to construct meaning. This concept of mediation refers to the process by which interactions and activities transform human behaviors into higher mental processes (Eun & Lim, 2009). Vygotsky (1978) claimed that all forms of mental activity are mediated by symbolic objects or artifacts. He defined these items as "material and/or symbolic means that are constructed within and through cultural activity" (Swain et al., 2011, p. 2). The concepts of meaning and mediation in human development are considered essential in the learning of a second language (Eun & Lim, 2009).

Vygotsky distinguished between tools and signs when discussing mediated activity. He believed that a "hallmark of human consciousness is that it is associated with the use of tools, especially 'psychological tools' or 'signs'" (Wertsch, 2007, p.178). Examples of psychological tools are symbols, diagrams, and *language*. In elaborating upon the concept of mediation, three major categories have been researched and identified: mediation through material tools; mediation through symbolic systems; and mediation through another human being (Eun & Lim, 2009). Vygotsky (1978) was most interested in mediation through symbolic systems, "ranging from simple signs to literary work" (Eun & Lim, 2009, p.16).

Zone of Proximal Development

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the site in which learning actively takes place; it demonstrates that learning can occur with assistance. "All forms of development begin as external social activity, which are then appropriated by the individual as a result of this activity. This occurs in the ZPD" (Lantolf & Beckett, 2009, p. 460). The ZPD is the difference

17

between the child's developmental or independent level and the child's dependent performance level. It is the zone in which a student is completely comfortable and capable of learning, but given a challenge or a push, is capable of pushing and exceeding the standard. Mahn (1999) states that Vygotsky used this concept to "differentiate between two levels: the actual level of development achieved by independent problem solving and the potential level of development reached with the guidance of an adult...or more capable peer" (Mahn, 1999, p. 347). Working with children doesn't end with discovery of a student's ZPD. The concept of ZPD includes determining and measuring the *potential* level of development and instruction.

Vygotsky (1987) believed that the instructor must understand a child's immediate needs while also focusing on future learning. Educators who create a supportive learning environment for students are able to help students connect learning experiences to their own backgrounds.

Spontaneous and Scientific Concepts

The distinction between spontaneous and scientific concepts is an important theoretical construct developed by Vygotsky (1987). Spontaneous concepts are those developed by everyday experiences without assistance of any kind. Scientific concepts are complex or abstract ideas that require learning and help categorize concepts. They are usually taught in school. Vygotsky took this information and determined that scientific concepts have an impact on the way people "conceptualize the world" (Freeman & Freeman, 2011, p. 78). The impact of formal academic learning creates people who are abstract thinkers who can make sense of the world in ways that everyday experiences do not support.

The practices that support spontaneous or everyday concepts are different than the school-related practices that support scientific concepts. These practices are important when

applied to language learning and understanding the difference between acquiring a language and learning one. Acquiring a language takes place in a manner similar manner to that of acquiring spontaneous concepts: casually and through everyday experiences. Studying a language at school occurs in a scientific manner: focusing on structure and categorizing language.

Language Acquisition and Fluency

Cummins: Two Types of Language

In exploring the concerns around Long Term English Learners, it is important to review the development of language acquisition. When students are learning a second language, they are expected to learn two types of language: conversational language and academic language. "The distinction between academic and conversational proficiency was first articulated by Jim Cummins (1981), who coined the terms *basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS)* and *cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)* 30 years ago and has written extensively about them…" (as cited in Goldenberg, 2010, p. 62). Conversational language is informal and acquired more easily than academic language. It is simple, everyday cognitively undemanding language. Long Term English learners do not have difficulty acquiring the BICS or basic interpersonal and conversational language. Academic language, CALPS, is the language used in textbooks, writing, and academic conversations. Students can acquire conversational language in a couple of years, but take much longer to master academic language. In general, Long Term English Learners have fluent listening and speaking skills in English, but low academic English skills, especially in the areas of reading and writing. LTELs generally lack the academic language needed for academic success.

Figure 2. Cummins's model of language acquisition with four quadrants (Madyarov, 2009).

Cognitively undemanding
simple language, everyday structures, familiar topics

BICS

Context-embedded
Face-to-face, gestures,
facial expression,
concrete objects of
reference

Context-reduced
Lack of non-verbal cues,
Abstract language

CALP

Cognitively demanding
Field specific vocabulary, complex language structures
abstract concepts, new ideas
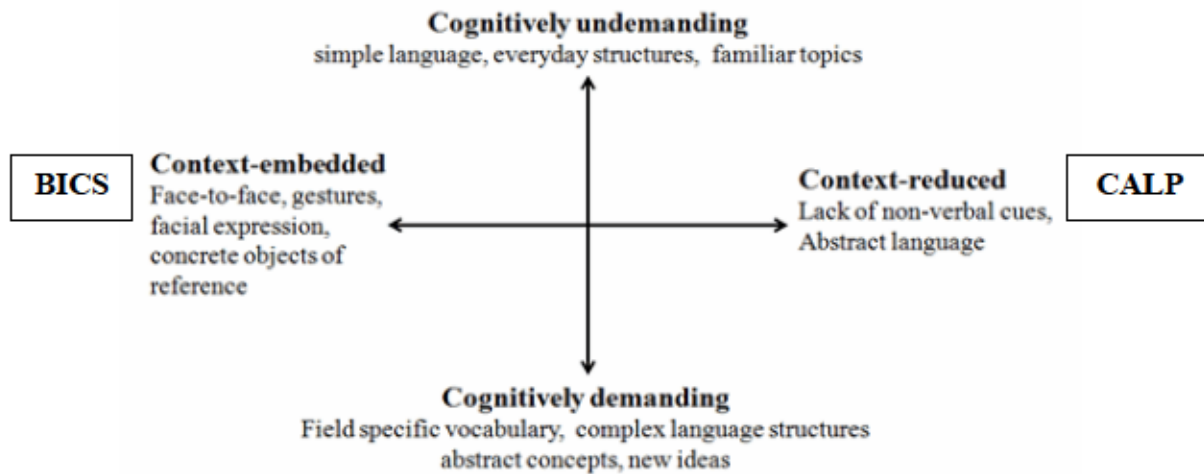
Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory

Stephen Krashen & Biber (1988) introduced the theory that would be known as the first Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory. His SLA theory was based on some basic concepts and the theoretical linguistic research of Noam Chomsky. "Research in language acquisition supports the hypothesis that we all acquire language the same way—by understanding messages" (Krashen & Biber, 1988, p.19). Krashen & Biber's (1988) theory of SLA is known as the Monitor Model and has greatly influenced classroom practice. The monitor model consists of five interrelated hypothesis or principles: (a) the Acquisition hypothesis, (b) the Natural Order Hypothesis, (c) the Monitor Hypothesis, (d) the Input Hypothesis, and (e) the Affective Filter Hypothesis (Freeman & Freeman, 2011).

The Acquisition Hypothesis states that there are two ways to acquire a second language. The most effective way is to simply acquire the language naturally as one tries to make sense of the world, using language to communicate. Krashen & Biber (1988) believed that children

acquire language through experiences; they do not *learn* language. The second way to acquire is to study, practice, and memorize language—a less effective way to enter into new language.

The Natural Order Hypothesis states that language is acquired in a natural order, following a very structured and predictable order or language acquisition. Krashen bases this hypothesis on his work with Dulay and Burt (1974). The Natural Order Hypothesis applies to language that is acquired and not learned. For example, a student who is learning English may learn the structure and grammar of a language, performing well on written assessments. This knowledge does not necessarily translate into the use of language in a natural setting (Freeman & Freeman, 2011).

Monitor Hypothesis assists in understanding the roles of language acquisition and learning. "Acquisition results in the phonology, vocabulary, and syntax we can draw on to produce utterances in a new language . . . without acquisition, we could not produce anything" (Freeman & Freeman, 2011, p. 118). Learning the "rules" of a language allows the learner to monitor or edit output as the student speaks or writes, in order to correct himself. Unfortunately, using the monitor system when speaking often means sacrificing meaning for accuracy of content.

Krashen believed that people acquire language in only one way—by receiving messages that they understand. The messages that are understood and that the brain receives—referred to as "comprehensible input" —make the acquisition of language inevitable (Krashen & Biber, 1988). This is the Input Hypothesis. Messages can be communicated orally or in writing and are known as *comprehensible input*. The comprehensible input should be at a slightly higher level of difficulty than the learner's current capability. Krashen referred to this as input plus one, or I + 1.

If the comprehensible is too far beyond the learner's current ability (I + 0), the learner cannot acquire language.

The key to all acquired language (Krashen & Biber, 1988) is *comprehensible input*. Krashen believed that output is important in cognitive development, but not necessary for language acquisition. The more background knowledge a student has, the more comprehensible the input. Having background knowledge increases comprehension, therefore increasing language acquisition.

Finally, the Affective Filter Hypothesis explains the role that external and internal factors play in language acquisition and an individual's ability to learn language by constructing an affective filter. Factors such as anxiety or level of motivation can block or create an affective filter, preventing a student from receiving comprehensible input and acquiring language. Anxiety and lack of motivation can be factors that impact language acquisition for LTELs at the secondary level. The acquisition of language takes time; it is a slow process that occurs in a relaxed and nurturing environment. In other words, pressure from a parent or teacher to learn the language "now" will not speed up the process.

Cummins (1986) reported that it takes five to seven years to approach proficiency in tests of academic English. Native English speakers are not standing still while the English Learners are trying to catch up. Native speakers are building academic language quickly, gaining subject matter knowledge and language ability (Krashen & Biber, 1988). Advocates of immersing kids in the language feel that this is a nonissue, while advocates of use of primary language for instruction do not believe it's that simple (Goldenberg, 2010).

Educators must have patience and an understanding of the English language acquisition process, literacy, and language proficiency particularly those teachers who have an opportunity to work with English Language Learners. Classrooms should be a place where information is comprehensible and accessible to all students, regardless of their English Learner proficiency level.

Kinsella: Academic Language and English Language Learners

English language learners need direct, recognizable, and accountable instruction of what Kate Kinsella (2005) has referred to as *high utility* or *high yield* vocabulary words. Kinsella (2005) defined high utility words as words that students must readily understand and utilize in any academic context. Why is this important? "Research on second language learners illustrates that vocabulary knowledge is the single best predictor of academic achievement across subject matter domains" (Kinsella, 2005, p. 2). Research highlights the benefits of explicit vocabulary instruction to support learning across the content areas. Explicit vocabulary instruction supports literacy for all students, including English Learners (Dutro & Kinsella, 2010).

Because of the pivotal role academic vocabulary plays in the academic success of Long Term English Learners, it is vital that students receive explicit academic vocabulary instruction. Basic exposure and reviewing words will not develop strong academic word knowledge and literacy across the content areas (Kinsella & Hancock, 2014). Explicit and consistent academic language instruction promotes strong language acquisition. This process requires active student interactions with words: reading, repeating, and using the academic vocabulary or high-utility words. Teachers of Long Term English should provide students with numerous opportunities to

23

engage orally and in writing. This engagement will foster understanding, ownership of words, and improvement in reading and comprehension across all academic content areas.

Critical Reform and Restrictive Language Policies

Historical Background

There is an expectation that all students are treated fairly and equally. We are often reminded that fair is not always equal in the world of education, especially when addressing language acquisition and language use. Many students enter the educational system with unique needs that must be taken into consideration when providing access to state and federally funded educational programs. This is critical when addressing the diverse language needs of students.

Congress and the Supreme Court have acknowledged this country's commitment to educating all students through federal legislation. The rights of language minority students are protected by the Fourteenth Amendment, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964), the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, and the Equal Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA) (Thomas, Cambron-McCabe, & McCarthy, 2009). Despite this "protection," California has followed with a number of propositions that impact educational programs for English learners, some more popular or effective than others.

Table 1

Federal and California Language Policy Timeline

Year	Policy	Language Policy Implications
1868	The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution	Equal Opportunity
1896	Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court Decision	Separate but equal. Foundation for racial segregation in public education
1931	Alvarez v. Lemon Grove School Board- CA Supreme Court Decision	Challenged notion of *Separate but equal.* Desegregation regardless of national origin and language
1954	Brown v. Board of Education	No longer "separate but equal," ending segregation by race
1964	Civil Rights Act	Equal Opportunity for linguistically diverse students
1974	Lau v. Nichols Supreme Court Decision	Equal Benefits
1981	Castaneda v. Pickard Supreme Court Decision	Linking theory to programs for ELs
1994	Proposition 187- Overturned	Made it illegal for "undocumented" students to attend public schools. Would impact Lang Learners.
1997	Proposition 227- English for the Children	Monolingualism- subtractive language programs
2001	No Child Left Behind (NCLB)	Testing in English and Accountability for all subgroups. The word "bilingual" was completely removed from federal policy.

(Santa Ana, 2004)

California State Policies and Mandates

Many California state mandates have implications for educational language policies that impact attitudes, beliefs, and educational practices toward language. Among the cases and propositions that have impacted public educational services for English learners are the Supreme Court rulings on Alvarez v. Lemon Grove School Board (1931), Lau vs. Nichols (1974), Castaneda vs. Pickard (1981), Proposition 187 (1994), and Proposition 227 (1998). This section provides a brief historical background of the policies and mandates that influence educational programs for Long Term English learners in the State of California.

Alvarez v. Lemon Grove School Board, the Lemon Grove Incident. In 1931, the principal of the Lemon Grove Grammar school banned students of Mexican descent from attending his school, a school they had attended for years. He determined that the students were poor and uneducated. The students were separated from White children and placed in a two-classroom schoolhouse as a result of their language and race, in the hopes of Americanizing them. The school district assumed that parents would not dispute the changes—but parents were outraged and sued the Lemon Grove School Board. They challenged school segregation, and won. The California Supreme Court determined that the students had the right to an equal education, thus challenging the "separate but equal" doctrine (Alvarez, 1986).

Lau vs. Nichols. In 1974, after years of educational failures for language minority students, a landmark Supreme Court Ruling, Lau vs. Nichols, based on title VI of the Civil Rights Act granted educational rights to K–12 English language learners. A class action suit was filed on behalf of Kinney Lau, a student in the San Francisco Unified School District,

declaring that he was not provided access to English language acquisition or to the curriculum, violating Title CI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The decision unanimously declared:

> There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, and curriculum, for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education. Basic English skills are at the heart of what these schools teach. Imposition of a requirement that, before a child can effectively participate in the educational program, he must have already acquired those basic skills is to make a mockery of public education. We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experiences wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful. (U.S. Supreme Court, 414 U.S. 563)

The ruling made it clear that if an English Learner cannot participate in the mainstream classroom as a result of limited proficiency, schools must provide services to promote the student's English Language proficiency (Ragan & Lesaux, 2006). The key in the ruling was that limited English proficient students became a "protected class, that for these students the *same* treatment did not constitute equal treatment" (Hakuta, 2011, p. 163). The label of Limited English Proficient was born and used by school districts that struggled to meet the needs of the students. Districts were responsible for providing language access and for protecting the rights of English Learners (Olsen, 2010).

Castañeda vs. Pickard. After *Lau,* congress enacted The Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA), requiring the public school system to take appropriate action to develop programs for Limited English Proficient students that would assist them in overcoming language barriers. The EEOA did not specify methods of instruction or specific programs, allowing states to define

27

"appropriate action" (Kihuen, 2009). In 1981, in Castañeda vs. Pickard, the Fifth Circuit Court finally provided some guidance on how states could comply with the EEOA. It established a three-part test to evaluate the adequacy of ELL programs:

> (1) The district or local educational agency must pursue a program informed by an educational theory recognized as sound by experts in the field; (2) the programs and practices actually used by the district must be a reasonable reflection of the educational theory adopted; and (3) after a trial period, the success of the program in overcoming the language barriers that confront students must be demonstrable. (Mahoney, MacSwan, Haladyna, & Garcia, 2010, p. 50)

If the program is determined to be ineffective, the agency must revise implementation until the inequity is remedied. The *Castañeda* framework supports the idea of providing equitable educational programs for ELs by linking the theory to programs, implementation, and outcomes (Hakuta, 2011).

Proposition 187. California, a state with one of the largest English learner student populations, has had its share of initiatives focused on educational services for ELs and undocumented language learners. In 1994, Proposition 187 was passed as a result of the political issues around immigration and the education of English learners. This "Save our State" initiative sought to deny social, educational, and health services to illegal immigrants. "The passage of proposition 187 made it illegal for undocumented students to attend public schools" (Parrish et al., 2006). In November 1997, the law was deemed unconstitutional on the basis that it infringed on the federal government's jurisdiction over immigration matters. The proposition was

overturned and appealed by Governor Pete Wilson in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. In 1999, the new governor, Gray Davis, withdrew the appeal.

Proposition 227 and bilingual education. Proposition 227 was sponsored by millionaire Ron Unz and written with the intent to provide English learners more English instruction in California public schools by those who *assumed* that "teaching children in their native language served only to hold them back in their acquisition of English and therefore in their future educational success" (Garcia & Stritikus, 2006, p. 52). The proposition was referred to as the English only initiative. Prop 227 passed in 1998 with a 61% majority vote and has "been reported to be substantially influencing the organizational environments of bilingual students" (Garcia, 2005, p. 88). With over 1.5 million English learners in California, the law affected one-fourth of California students.

This initiative was born out of the deplorable state of English Learner achievement (Gándara & Baca, 2008). "Proposition 227 requires that ELs be taught 'overwhelmingly in English' through sheltered/structured English immersion (SEI) programs during 'a temporary transition period not normally intended to exceed one year' and then transferred to mainstream English-language classrooms" (Parrish et al., 2006). The goal was to teach students English as quickly as possible. Supporters of Proposition 227 did not feel that children became monolingual English speakers quickly enough to justify the existence of the bilingual educational program. Not only has Prop 227 influenced the educational environment of bilingual students, but it has also completely dismantled bilingual education in California. "Since the passage of Prop 227, the percentage of English learners receiving primary-language instruction has decreased from 29.1% in 1997-1998 to 5.6% in 2006-2007" (Wentwork, Pellegrin, Thompson, & Hakuta, 2010, p. 37).

Hakuta (2011) noted that, ironically, some of the strongest research on the topic of educating English learners has supported the conclusion that "instruction in the native language results in better outcomes in literacy in English after all" (p. 166). Yet, the research on the benefits and cultural values of bilingual education and linguistic diversity is not seen as credible or valuable by many policy makers and educators (Goldenberg, 2010; Hakuta, 2011).

Proposition 227 changed the way California serves English learners, negatively affecting their schooling experience by disregarding the language, experiences, and knowledge that language minority students bring to schools. The limited level of support and the intolerance of cultural and linguistic diversity promoted by Proposition 227 intensified the subtractive schooling experience and programming that many English learners experience.

Language policies have greatly impacted the educational experiences of English learners. Our courts have committed to supporting legislation that provides equal educational rights for students. However, there continues to be a struggle to establish language policies and practices that will support and value the language and experiences that English learners share. Policies for language acquisition and proficiency continue to have negative implications for culturally and linguistically diverse students, including long term English learners.

Assessment and Accountability for Long Term English Learners

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 marked a new era in the federal government's involvement in public schools. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) brought about change to the world of accountability and assessment for historically marginalized students. NCLB placed

a laser-like focus on many student subgroups, including English Language Learners, and imposed a laundry list of accountability measures on public school districts. The most important provisions impacting English learners are Title I and Title III. Title I aims to support socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Title III supports language instruction and assessment of English fluency for limited English proficient and immigrant students (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2012). The goal of NCLB is to close the achievement gap that exists for many historically marginalized students by establishing explicit accountability measures for school districts and schools across the nation. "NCLB is the first federal education statute to disaggregate achievement data for racial and ethnic minorities, low-income students, students with disabilities, and ELs" (Kihuen, 2009, p. 3). This attention to data has benefited all students and brought to light the inequities in achievement for language minority students. As a result of its focus on closing the achievement gap, NCLB has been interpreted as a Civil Rights statue by many (Kihuen, 2009).

Some argue that the combination of NCLB and the passage of Proposition 227 in 1998 created a new and difficult challenge for English Learners in California. First of all, NCLB set a tone that discouraged bilingual education by excluding it altogether. The NCLB Act removed all references to Bilingual Education within the U.S. Department of Education and changed the name of the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs to the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students. In addition, the NCLB accountability measures require all students, regardless of English fluency, to be tested annually. This includes students who, as a result of Proposition 227, are now denied the use of their primary language for instruction (Gandara &

Baca, 2008). "State restrictive language policy, making it illegal to use students' primary language for instruction is incompatible with federal assessment policy, which requires students to be tested annually, whether or not they speak English" (Gándara & Baca, 2008, p. 202). The federal policy recommends that students be assessed in their primary language, at least in the first three years, but state policy requires that "all students be tested in English only, whether they are in bilingual programs, have been educated in another language outside the country, or only speak a non-English language and provides no systematic accommodations for these students" (Gándara & Baca, 2008, p. 208).

Although reform efforts have focused on closing achievement gaps, the problem lies in the failure of English Learners as measured by standardized tests that are administered in a language that they do not understand (Gándara & Baca, 2008). These rigid testing standards are unrealistic. School districts and schools must meet the proficiency targets leading to 100% proficiency in language arts and math by 2014. If they do not consistently make progress, schools face sanctions and reorganization that include removal of administrators and teachers. Many teachers have focused on teaching to the test, in fear of being labeled a "program improvement" school. This has resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum and a culture of test prep for students who need the most support: English learners.

Our population of English Language Learners continues to grow, especially in California, where one of every four students is an English learner (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010). The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) has brought much-needed focus to how our nation educates this growing student population. The focus includes accountability for the academic achievement of specific student subgroups, including ELs. In contrast, EL advocates argue that NCLB has

contributed to the limited support of bilingual education and policies that promote an English-only culture. They argue that the achievement gap for English learners continues to grow as teachers focus on test preparation in fear of failing to meet strict and unrealistic accountability measures. As Gándara and Baca (2008) argued, the combination of NCLB and California's English-only initiatives created a "perfect storm" for ELs throughout the state, providing them with "inadequate and incomprehensible academic instruction" (p. 210).

English Language Development Assessment: CELDT and Intermediate Level of Language Proficiency

The California English Language Development Test (CELDT) is administered to newly enrolled students whose primary language is not English, as determined by the Home Language Survey. It is given as an *initial* CELDT assessment. It is also administered to English Learners as an annual assessment, thereafter. The CELDT is a test of the four domains of English language arts: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It is not related to the academic uses of English that students encounter in school (Walqui et al., 2010).

Test scores on the CELDT rate students from level one to five: beginning, *early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced,* and *advanced.* The state considers levels 1–3 to be less than "reasonably fluent." The goal of English language development and instruction, as measured by the five levels of language proficiency, is to establish the crucial English foundation needed to achieve academic success across the content areas. Generally speaking, students should be able to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to go from a novice English learner to an intermediate learner within two to three years of their initial California English Language Development test (CELDT). The problem lies in getting many students past the intermediate

hump into early advanced or advanced language proficiency. This is not unusual for Long Term English learners. Across Los Angeles County, 39% of the annual students assessed scored at the intermediate level, and across the state of California 38% of students tested scored at the intermediate level. These percentages remain consistently high for Long Term English Learners over the past five years with an average of 37% of students scoring at an intermediate level (http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest).

Long Term English Learner students are unable to get past the intermediate proficiency level as a result of their inability to manage the demands of academic work in the higher grades (Olsen & Romero, 2006). Of the students who are able to get past proficiency, many lack the academic language and background knowledge to achieve proficiency on the California Standardized assessments, preventing them from achieving reclassification.

Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) students. Timely reclassification from EL status to fluency status is very important to the academic success of English language learners. Long Term English learners are not making adequate academic progress or achieving state assessment proficiencies necessary to reclassify from English Learner status to Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) status. Based on the California Department of Education's CELDT (2010) reclassification guidelines, California state law indicates that English Learners are eligible for Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) reclassification once they score at least Early Advanced on the California English Development Test (CELDT), with nothing below intermediate level on any of the four assessment domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Achieving proficiency on the CELDT is no guarantee that a student will be reclassified. Reclassifying students from EL to RFEP status is a process that uses *multiple* criteria. The

CELDT proficiency, in addition to teacher recommendation, parental consultation, and at least one other measure of academic achievement indicating that the student is proficient, are all used in the reclassification process (Stokes-Guinan & Goldenberg, 2010). The achievement assessment most commonly used was the California Standardized Test (CST).

Research has indicated that students who reclassify into mainstream English classrooms, even as late as eighth grade, have improved academic outcomes (Flores, Painter, Harlow-Nash, & Pachon, 2009). RFEPS continue to do well academically even after reclassification, outperforming English learners on state assessments.

Research has also determined that the length of the EL program participation and grade exited predicted students' academic achievement outcomes; the higher the grade level that the student reclassifies, the lower their scores on state tests in English Language Arts and Science (de Jong, 2004). Early exit is a strong indicator of academic success for English learners. The limited numbers of reclassified students from English learner status to Reclassified Fluent English Proficient was used as an accountability measure during the Proposition 227 campaign and remains a source of "concern and confusion until this day" (American Institutes for Research & WestEd, 2006, p. I-18). This is a critical issue for LTELs, considering that they are remaining in EL programs longer than five or six years. We are not preparing students for reclassification early enough.

Conclusion

The literature covered in this study identified typical characteristics of Long Term English Learners. The typical LTEL is struggling in all academic areas, and assessment scores are usually two years below grade level. "By eighth grade, students who are still classified as

English Learners demonstrate some of the lowest performance of any student group" (Olsen, 2010). In addition, most English Language Learners are natives, U.S. born students. Seventy-six percent of elementary-age ELLs were born in the United States, as were 57% of ELLs in middle through high school (as cited in Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010, p. 2). Long Term English Learners feel more comfortable speaking English and many are also limited in their primary language. "Many are in the process of losing their home language" (Olsen, 2010, p.23). The loss of primary language is significant and common for LTELs.

Many educators have a difficult time identifying Long Term English Learners based on their basic oral communication skills. Long Term English Learners are able to communicate easily with their peers, but have a difficult time using academic language in oral and written communication. Often times, they have "fossilized errors" in their use of language and weak oral language in English, hindering their ability to engage in academic discussions or comprehend text in the content areas (Kinsella, 2005). They have fluent listening and speaking skills in English, but lack the necessary academic English skills to reach mastery in reading and writing. This weakness in academic language impacts literacy and the ability to access information, resulting in missed learning opportunities.

The information in this chapter makes it clear that the issue of Long Term English Learners is not only "a problem for the Latino community; it negatively affects the entire country" (Pelayo & Pachon, 2010, p. 15). There is a lack of urgency about the growing LTEL population in schools. If educators do not learn from the experiences of students, the current educational system and policies will continue to produce students who will not succeed in a 21st-

century world. It is the responsibility of all educational leaders to encourage, teach, and lead every child to academic success, constituting a critical social justice issue in education today.

Chapter 2 included information on local and state policies that have contributed to the creation of Long Term English Learners. The research points to the need to address and revise policies in order to resolve the issues impacting the academic achievement of LTELs. No Child Left Behind and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act have placed a spotlight on our English learner subgroup of students. However, our current educational system is not meeting the needs of language learners. There is an exigent need for leadership that will challenge the status quo, develop socially just educational policy, and make English learners the focus of school improvement and high quality programs in the nation. Educational leaders across the state must take a strong stance in addressing program design, implementation, and best practices needed to educate English learners.

As explored in this chapter, a variety of factors contribute to the substantial underachievement and social gaps for this population of ELs, preventing students from achieving English proficiency and academic success. Educators and policy makers are clearly contributing to the educational oppression of LTELs, as legislative policies and teaching practices shape the student's schooling experiences.

Chapter 3 will describe the methodology used to conduct this mixed-method study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used in this mixed quantitative and qualitative methods study. This section includes the research question, the research setting and participants, my role as researcher—including limitations and delimitations—data collection methods, analysis, significance, and a summary of the methodology. Positionality, validity, and reliability are also addressed.

I utilized a qualitative method of research consisting of semiformal interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. Creswell (2009) defined qualitative research as "interpretative research, with the inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants" (p. 177). I transcribed the interviews that contributed to the overall data analysis.

I also utilized a quantitative method of research consisting of a 17-question observation protocol tool. I observed the level of instructional implementation in the classroom setting using the observation protocol tool, completing three observation protocols per teacher over a three-month period. The observation tool allowed me to measure the level of academic instructional protocol implementation.

Research Question

The research question that guided the study and examined the implementation of Academic Vocabulary Instructional protocols in the upper grades in the Lovely Elementary School District as well as learning experiences of Long Term English learners, was as follows:

- To what extent are 4th- and 5th-grade teachers implementing the Academic Vocabulary Instructional Protocols at the Success Elementary School as measured by the Lovely Elementary School District Observation Tool?

It was necessary to use a number of tools and processes to conduct the study and answer the research question. The tools used in this study included semiformal interviews and a focus group, document analysis, and classroom observations using an observation protocol.

Methodology

The Lovely Elementary School District's benchmark and state assessment data demonstrate a gap in academic achievement of Long Term English Learners. The Lovely Elementary School District had implemented an Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and Instructional Protocol designed to address the academic vocabulary needs of LTELs.

The primary purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the extent to which 4th- and 5th-grade teachers implemented the new Academic Language Instructional protocols at the Success Elementary School. In addition, I sought to create awareness about the long-term implications for this distinctive group of students, Long Term English Learners at the Success Elementary School. Historically, the needs of English learners have not been prioritized. This study is significant as I seek to raise teachers' awareness about the language development needs of LTEL students through their discussions on the use of the language instructional protocol. My study also sought to develop an understanding about the level of students' verbal and physical instructional engagement in the classroom, as measured by the protocol data. This study is significant to the field of language learning and academic achievement of the Long Term English learner, as it will provide insight into the systematic language instructional approach. This data

will inform educational practice and policy as it pertains to English learner instruction and achievement at the Success Elementary School in the Lovely Elementary School District.

Data Collection Procedures and Method

Data collection procedure. I applied for approval from the Institutional Research Board (IRB) in August of 2014. After IRB approval was received, I contacted potential participants via email, offering participation in the study. I also offered a detailed overview of the research study and my role as researcher, as well as their roles as potential participants. I provided logistical information, the Experimental Subjects Bill of Rights, and the Informed Consent Document as soon as the potential participants agreed to participate.

Quantitative and qualitative research methods. After much consideration, mixed-research methods were used in this study. The basic data gathering strategies of qualitative research include observations, interviews, and data analysis (Hatch, 2002). The methods of data collection included in this study are semiformal interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. As the researcher, I had access to classrooms, the site, and student data through the district's student and data collection systems, in addition to cumulative files of students. I also used a quantitative method of research consisting of a 17-question observation protocol tool. The observation tool allowed me to measure the level of academic instructional protocol implementation.

Semistructured interviews. Semiformal qualitative interviews allowed me to conduct face-to-face interviews for this study and to gain an understanding of the unique experiences of each participant. The semiformal interviews were conducted over a two-month period. The interviews allowed the participating teachers to share their experiences with the Academic

Vocabulary Toolkit and how its use impacted learning in their classrooms. All interviews were taped and conducted in the school setting.

Document analysis. As researcher, I reviewed a number of student documents in an effort to record the academic vocabulary experiences of Long Term English Learners. Student files provided insight into the student's enrollment history, Home Language survey, language interventions, and academic assessment data. Cumulative files including report cards, interventions, and enrichment activities logs were reviewed for useful information. These data provided valuable details that observations and semiformal interviews did not capture. The data assisted my ability to create a well-rounded and complete LTEL instructional program profile.

Classroom observation tool. Naturalistic classroom observations on the "behavior and activities of individuals at the research site" (Creswell, 2010, p. 181) were conducted. This allowed me to observe instructional strategies outlined in the Academic Vocabulary Toolkit. In addition, I was able to observe the level of instructional implementation in the classroom setting using a 17-question observation protocol tool. I completed three observation protocols per teacher over a two-month period. The protocol addressed the level of teacher interactions and engagement with students during lessons. See Appendix B.

Research Setting and Participants

The Lovely Elementary School District. The research was conducted in the Lovely Elementary School District (LESD), a pseudonym, focusing on one of its schools, Success Elementary School. The Lovely Elementary School District was located in California's South Bay. LESD served students from transitional kindergarten through eighth grade. The elementary district consisted of eight elementary schools and two middle schools ranging from 500 students

to 1,100 students per site with a total enrollment of about 5,900 students in the 2014–2015 school year. The district had a high percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged students with 85% of students qualifying for free and reduced priced meals.

The Lovely Elementary School District Was a Title I district. The district qualified for funding under the Education for the Disadvantaged Title I grant based on the numbers of low-income families in the district:

Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (ESEA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Federal funds are currently allocated through four statutory formulas that are based primarily on census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state. (http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html)

The student population in the Lovely Elementary School District consisted of approximately 80% Hispanic/Latino, 10% African American, and the remaining 10% a combination of Vietnamese, Indian, and Pacific Islander. The English Learner population was approximately 41%. The district was in Program Improvement NCLB status as a result of the failure to meet the needs of English Learners. In recent years, school sites and student subgroups made growth, as measured by the California Standards Tests (CSTs), with the exception of the English Learner subgroup. English learners were struggling academically in the Lovely Elementary School District. Forty-eight percent of ELs in the Lovely school district scored proficient or above in 2013 as measured by Federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Sixty-two

percent of all Whites were proficient or above, and 74% of Asians scored proficient or above (http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest). The achievement gap between ELs and other subgroups was evident. The Lovely School District had recently begun to focus its fiscal and human resources on English learners.

Success Elementary School. Success Elementary School was one of eight elementary schools in the Lovely Elementary School District. The overall student population consisted of 75% Latino students. About 80% of all students participated in the Free or Reduced meal program, and 33% of students had been designated as English learners. One hundred percent of all teachers were designated No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001) Highly Qualified and all had met the English learner certification requirements (http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest). This is important information as it demonstrates the level of expertise and experience at Success Elementary School. A majority of the teachers working with 4th- and 5th-grade students had taught at least two academic years.

There was an achievement gap between English learners at the Success Elementary School and other subgroups of Success elementary students, as measured by the 2013 California Standards Tests (CSTs). Fifty-five percent of ELs scored proficient or above in 2013 as measured by Federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Sixty-four percent of all Whites were proficient or above. Fifty-seven percent of Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students were proficient. Sixty percent of African American students were proficient, and 82% of Asians scored proficient or above (http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest).

Participants. The participants consist of a total of six 4th- and 5th-grade teachers, employees of the Lovely Elementary School District. The participants were invited to participate

in the study and selected based on the following criteria: teachers of 4th- and 5th-grade English learner students at Success Elementary School who were implementing the academic language instructional protocols. Additional details about the participants included:

1. All teachers had at least two years of teaching experience.

   a. Two teachers had 15 or more years of teaching experience

   b. One teacher had five or more years of teaching experience

   c. Three teachers had two or more years of teaching experience

2. The teachers were all in their first year of implementation of the academic language instructional protocols at Success Elementary School

3. All teachers had met English Learner certification requirements

4. Long Term English Learners were enrolled in every teacher's classroom. The students were classified English learners upon initial enrollment in a US school, five to seven years ago, as noted in their cumulative student files

Pseudonyms were used to identify participants in the study (see Table 2).

Table 2

Participants in the Study

Number of Participants	Role at the Success Elementary School	Participation	Pseudonym	Classroom % of ELs /% of LTELs
1	Teacher	Interview and Focus Group	S2	18 /14
2	Teacher	Interview and Focus Group	S3	21/21
3	Teacher	Interview and Focus Group	S4	19/19
4	Teacher	Interview and Focus Group	S5	30/30
5	Teacher	Interview and Focus Group	S6	33/27
6	Teacher	Interview and Focus Group	S7	13/13

Data Collection Analysis

The data collected by the researcher included interviews, observations, and cumulative file data. The interviews and observations were transcribed and coded in order to establish trends in the data. The researcher reviewed all documentation and data for themes and patterns as they related to the research question posed in the study.

The semiformal interview and focus group process allowed the researcher to gain insight into the teacher's experience with academic vocabulary instruction. This form of interview, as well as the open-ended interview questions, also allowed the interviewer and interviewee some flexibility in the "flow" of the interview.

The review of student files and records allowed the researcher to understand the LTELs schooling experience, academic standing, and English learner profile in the Lovely Elementary School District. The researcher analyzed the data for trends in academic achievement and

language programs. The data added to the interviews and classroom observation data, in developing a well-rounded analysis. All data from the interviews, observations, and document analysis were triangulated for validity.

Assumptions, Limitations, and the Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I was aware of the possible subjectivity and identified biases, personal background, and characteristics that may have influenced the interpretation of data.

Limitations in this study included my current position as principal of the Success Elementary School where the research took place. My role was that of an insider which may result in bias. This may have also influenced teachers' level of participation or willingness to share detailed events or information. As an insider, I had full access to district-, school-, and student-level data.

A second limitation was my English learner status and past educational experiences. This may be perceived as a limitation, as it may have resulted in bias or threat to validity. Qualitative research lends itself to subjectivity based on the experiences and perspectives of the researcher, but this subjectivity may have also supported my research. My experience as an English learner provided a unique perspective and insight that others do not possess.

A third limitation in this study was the small sample of six participants in this study. As a result, the outcome of this research may not be generalized broadly. The conclusions drawn from this study may not reflect the academic vocabulary instruction experiences across school districts in California, but will shed light on the instructional experiences that contribute to the academic vocabulary success of long-term English learners at the Success Elementary School in the Lovely Elementary School District.

Assumptions in this study included the assumption that subjects would be truthful and forthcoming about their attitudes and feelings concerning their teaching experiences in the current school district. The teachers participated in an interview process that could result in bias as they self-reported instructional experiences.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodology used in this mixed-method study. The chapter included the research questions, methodology, data collection methods, data analysis, and participant and site information. Chapter 4 includes research data and findings of this study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Long Term English Learners continue to struggle academically, despite being U.S. born and completing six or more years of public schooling. LTELs do not have the necessary academic vocabulary proficiency to achieve academic success in our current educational system. Although LTELs appear to be orally proficient, they have significant gaps in reading and writing. Research indicates that ELs are expected to acquire *academic language* and *content* simultaneously. Limited academic language proficiency highly impacts the academic achievement of Long Term English Learners across the content areas (Olsen, 2010).

The existence and rapidly increasing numbers of Long Term English Learners is not only an academic achievement issue, but also a social justice issue. Through this research, it is hoped that the findings will contribute to the academic vocabulary instructional best practices and academic achievement for Long Term English Learners at the Success School and the Lovely Elementary School District.

Restatement of the Research Question

The research question guiding the study and exploring the academic language teaching experiences of teachers, as well as learning experiences of Long Term English learners, is as follows:

- To what extent are 4th- and 5th-grade teachers implementing the Academic Vocabulary Instructional Protocols at the Success Elementary School as measured by the Lovely Elementary School District Observation Tool?

Summary of Key Findings

The data from the interviews, focus group, and data analysis revealed a few key findings. First, all 4th- and 5th-grade teachers were implementing the new Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and protocol to address the academic language needs of English learner students. Second, teachers consistently used the academic vocabulary and grammatical frames. Third, teachers regularly modeled the use of an academic register. Finally, there was an increase in the use of grammatical sentence frames and academic vocabulary by students across the content areas.

Emerging Themes in the Data

As the researcher, I collected and organized the data from the semi-ornal interviews, the focus group questions, and the data analysis for thorough analysis. I was able to read through the interview transcripts and the observation tool data, identifying general trends and themes. Four general themes emerged after a comprehensive analysis of the research data:

1. All 4th- and 5th-grade teachers in the study were fully implementing the Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and Protocols

2. Teachers consistently used academic and grammatical frames to support academic vocabulary use in the classroom

3. Teachers regularly modeled the use of an academic register

4. There was an increase in student use of grammatical sentence frames and academic vocabulary across the content areas

All teachers in the study fully implemented the Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and Protocols. The first theme that emerged was the level of implementation of the Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and the protocols outlined in the observation tool. I had opportunities to

observe each teacher three times during the early weeks of implementation in the fall, specifically during the months of October and November 2014. One hundred percent of the teachers were observed teaching the lessons and engaging with students. All teachers scheduled and taught the academic vocabulary toolkit, fully implementing the toolkit, as noted in observations and teacher lesson plans. Teachers voiced a significant comfort level using the resources provided by the district for teaching academic vocabulary. The resources included a teacher handbook, academic vocabulary language cards, and a student partnering poster that focused on student partnership best practices.

Table 3 displays the data reviewed to determine implementation of the Academic Vocabulary toolkit at the Success Elementary School.

Table 3

Findings from Classroom Visits and Observations: Use and Implementation of the Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and Protocols

Teacher	Observed implementation/ Possible observations	Frequency %
S2	3/3	100
S3	3/3	100
S4	3/3	100
S5	3/3	100
S6	3/3	100
S7	3/3	100

Teachers in the study credited the full implementation of the vocabulary protocols to the professional development received prior to implementation. A subtheme to this theme was the positive response to the amount of professional development (PD) provided to teachers prior to launching the academic vocabulary toolkit and protocols. Teachers were invited to two full PD days in the summer, as well as PD on a Saturday and three district-wide minimum day PD opportunities. This is a statement from teacher S2 about the professional development opportunities:

> S2: Starting with the training sessions that we had in the summer, and all the way through the last couple months, I think we can maybe agree that it's almost seamless . . . once we got our materials, it was basically just starting it. It was rather seamless. All the toolkit information, we knew ahead of time.

Other teachers felt that the district-wide professional learning opportunities were more than adequate. Statements from teachers S6 and S3:

> S6: I think we have definitely received adequate amounts of PD and everyone in the room attended the sessions. And we went to the summer thing, the two full days. So by the time we had that, and then all the Thursdays and that Saturday, it was like, "We get it. Thank you. Just let us do it."

> S3: Yeah, we all attended. So I think that's huge because I think their intent was to make sure every single person heard it. And we all chose to go to all the optional trainings.

Teachers consistently used academic and grammatical frames to support academic vocabulary use in the classroom. The second theme that emerged in this study was the consistent use of academic language and grammatical frames in the classroom. I observed

consistent modeling and use of grammatical frames by the teachers. The majority of teachers included visible samples and displays of grammatical frames. They acknowledged, encouraged, and praised students when they used the frames.

This is a statement from teacher S4 regarding the use of frames to support academic vocabulary use in the classroom:

S4: They really enjoy sounding smart, and they're all about using the sentence frames. "I welcome a contribution from Hannah. I would like to record . . . I appreciated this answer, and I recorded so-and-so's idea. My partner and I chose this plural noun." So, they enjoy using that language and speaking like a scholar.

Teachers S3 and S5 also discussed their experiences with the grammatical frames:

S3: I have those (sentence and grammar) frames displayed in my class with "popcorn" in the background of them, so that they know when they're calling on another student, they can use one of those frames.

S5: I was just going to add to what she said. It's pushing my students a lot. So, when I give an example that they thought of, they get a little upset because like, "You stole it," and it forces them to think of another one. They're doing it on their own because they don't want to have the same answer in the frame that I do. So, it's pushing them a lot to say, "Okay, something similar . . . What else can I think of?" So, they're becoming very original with their examples. They want to share their examples.

Table 4 displays the data collected regarding teacher modeling and use of the grammatical frames in the classroom. The data were collected through the Academic Vocabulary observation protocol.

Table 4

Findings from Classroom Visits and Observation Protocols: Consistent Modeling and Use of

Grammatical Frames by the Teachers

Teacher	Number of observations	Observed modeling and use of frames: Observed, Not Observed, N/A	Frequency %
S2	3	Observed 3 of 3 times	100
S3	3	Observed 3 of 3 times	100
S4	3	Observed 2 of 3 times Not Observed 1 of 3 times	66.6
S5	3	Observed 3 of 3 times	100
S6	3	Observed 3 of 3 times	100
S7	3	Observed 3 of 3 times	100

Teachers modeled the use of an academic register. A third theme that emerged in this

research study was the use of an academic register by the classroom teachers. I observed

consistent use of an academic register during academic vocabulary instructional time and during

informal visits. There was a noticeable change in how the teachers involved in the study

addressed students in the classroom. Prior to the implementation of the Academic Vocabulary

Toolkit, the teachers addressed the students in a casual register, referring to them as kids,

students, and friends. During the implementation of the Academic Vocabulary toolkit and

protocols, the teachers addressed the students as scholars, mathematicians, explorers, and

learners, as noted in the observation protocols. Teachers made a noticeable effort to use an

academic register with students throughout the school day.

Teacher S6 articulated his feelings about the use of academic register during the academic vocabulary instructional time:

S6: The English Language Learners were not being exposed to the academic register needed to keep up academically. So, the only time they're hearing English, sometimes is at school and a teacher isn't always speaking in that academic register. So, providing that 20 minutes a day, where you're giving hardcore instruction explicitly in the academic register, will help them succeed in school.

Teacher S3 talked about reinforcing the academic language and modeling correct use throughout the lesson. This teacher used the term "scholar" in the interview:

S5: That's so true, because we did the frame today, and scholars were echoing me incorrectly. They weren't using apostrophes, or the ending of words, they tend to leave off -ed, -ing, -'s, and I stopped and went over it. We had a big discussion about –'s versus without the apostrophe. So, it raises the level of awareness of the academic vocabulary. So, it was helpful for them to see that you can't leave endings off of words. It makes a difference; it matters.

Table 5

Findings from Classroom Visits and Observation Protocols: Consistent Teacher Modeling and

Teacher Use of Academic Register During Academic Vocabulary Instruction

Teacher	Number of observations	Observed consistent use of academic register: Observed, Not Observed, N/A	Frequency %
S2	3	Observed 3 of 3 times	100
S3	3	Observed 2 of 3 times	66.6
S4	3	Observed 2 of 3 times	66.6
S5	3	Observed 3 of 3 times	100
S6	3	Observed 3 of 3 times	100
S7	3	Observed 3 of 3 times	100

There was an increase in student use of language discussion frames and academic vocabulary across the content areas. The final theme in the data analysis was the increased use of language frames and use of academic vocabulary across topics and content areas. Teachers reported the use of sentence and grammar frames by students when having group discussions in language arts and social studies. Students also regularly used the frames to communicate opinions or comments about a topic or reading text.

The following are statements from teachers about student use of sentence frames during partner and whole-class discussions, as well as statements about the increased use of academic vocabulary across the content areas:

S4: The students seem to enjoy the program. They're all working toward beating each other by having the best answers during classroom discussions. The sentence frames are

great . . . we're using them when reading and discussing literature. I've never had richer

discussions in all my years of teaching.

S7: My students have responded enthusiastically. They enjoy sharing responses in an

academic register . . . when working in partnerships they're so proud when they think of

an original example.

S6: Students have really internalized the protocol. Their favorite part is sharing their

ideas out loud in an academic register and sounding smart. They get upset when they

don't get to share their contributions.

Teacher S6 also shared that students were using the academic language at home:

S6: My students are identifying target vocabulary words out in the real world . . . the

community. A parent shared that her daughter read and recognized the word essential at

the mall and wanted me to know. So she took a picture of the word *essential* at the store

and emailed it to me!

Chapter Summary

This chapter summarized the findings of this mixed-method study. My goal as the

researcher was to explore the academic vocabulary teaching experiences of teachers, as well as

learning experiences of students.

The mixed-method study approach allowed me to analyze both quantitative and

qualitative data concurrently, developing themes from the data. The data from the interviews,

focus group, and data analysis revealed a few key themes. First, all 4th- and 5th-grade teachers

were implementing the new Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and protocol to address the academic

language needs of Long Term English Learners. Second, teachers consistently used the academic

vocabulary and grammatical frames. Third, teachers regularly modeled the use of an academic register. Finally, there was an increase in use of grammatical sentence frames and academic vocabulary by students across the content areas.

The implications of these findings and recommendations for additional research will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The numbers of English Learners and explosive numbers of Long Term English Learners has increased over the last two decades. The growth is evident across the nation, but especially in California (Goldenberg, 2010). This eruption in numbers has created a sense of urgency around the limited academic achievement of ELs, specifically for the fairly new subgroup of English learners who tend to be overlooked: the Long Term English Learner subgroup.

Research indicates that ELs are expected to acquire *academic language* and *content* simultaneously. LTELs generally struggle academically and have weak academic language. The lack of academic language impacts all areas of learning. The LTEL falls further behind as the student is promoted from one grade level to the next. Eventually, LTELs enter secondary school at a disadvantage and unprepared for rigorous academic language demands, limiting their access to grade-level content (Dutro & Kinsella, 2010). Critical issues include the basic and dire need for academic language instruction across the content areas and instructional best practices for educating the LTEL student. Research indicates that providing extensive vocabulary and academic language instruction supports comprehension, word knowledge, and overall academic achievement of English learners (Baker et al., 2014).

The underachievement and stagnation of this growing group of students is an issue with critical long-term consequences and lifelong implications.

The Lovely Elementary School District's benchmark and state assessment data demonstrate a gap in academic achievement of Long Term English Learners. The Lovely

Elementary School District implemented an Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and Instructional Protocol designed to address the academic vocabulary needs of LTELs.

The primary purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine implementation of the new Academic Vocabulary Instructional toolkit protocols in the upper grades at the Success Elementary School. The study sought to answer the following research question:

- To what extent are 4th- and 5th-grade teachers implementing the Academic Vocabulary Instructional Protocols at the Success Elementary School as measured by the Lovely Elementary School District Observation Tool?

To answer the research question, mixed-research methods were used in this study. The basic data gathering strategies of qualitative research included observations, interviews, and data analysis (Hatch 2002). The methods of data collection included in this study were semiformal interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. I had access to classrooms, site and student data through the district's student and data collection systems, and cumulative files of students. A quantitative method of research consisting of a 17-question observation protocol tool was also used. The observation tool allowed me to measure the level of academic instructional protocol implementation.

Reflections on the Data

From 2012 – 2016, the academic needs of Long Term English Learners had not been met at Lovely Elementary School District or at Success Elementary School. Students across the grade levels had made significant gains as measured by our district and benchmark assessments. Unfortunately, that achievement was not evident with our LTEL subgroup. The level of

implementation of the academic vocabulary protocol will impact the future academic success of our LTELs in the Lovely ESD.

The data from the interviews, focus group, and data analysis revealed four key findings. First, all 4th- and 5th-grade teachers were implementing the new Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and protocol to address the academic language needs of English learner students. Second, teachers consistently used the academic vocabulary and grammatical frames. Third, teachers regularly modeled the use of an academic register. Finally, there was an increase in use of language discussion frames and academic vocabulary by students across the content areas.

Discussion of Key Research Findings

The findings in the research addressed the research question, providing insight into the implementation of the protocols, but also shedding light on the student's response to the teaching and learning of academic vocabulary.

Research Question: To what extent are 4th- and 5th-grade teachers implementing the Academic Vocabulary Instructional Protocols at the Success Elementary School as measured by the Lovely Elementary School District Observation Tool?

The first finding—All 4th- and 5th-grade grade teachers were implementing the Academic Vocabulary Instructional Toolkit and protocols—addressed the question by demonstrating consistent use, implementation, and fidelity to the academic vocabulary program. Teachers discussed academic vocabulary instruction during grade-level collaboration time and had opportunities to reflect. They shared ideas about the sentence and grammar frames, the vocabulary words, and instructional best practices. The grade levels developed common agreements about academic vocabulary instructional time, making it easier for classroom

observations and classroom walk-throughs. The common teaching time also supported implementation, as it kept the entire grade level accountable. I had opportunities to observe each teacher three times during the early weeks of implementation in the fall. I observed 100% of the teachers teaching the lessons and engaging with students 100% of the time. All teachers scheduled and taught the academic vocabulary toolkit, fully implementing the toolkit.

The second finding—teachers consistently used the academic vocabulary and grammatical frames—was key to implementation of the program. Long Term English learners often lack the academic language proficiency to engage in academic discussions. The modeling and use of grammatical frames are necessary instructional scaffolding tools. The teachers included visible samples and displays of grammatical frames. They acknowledged, encouraged, and praised students when they echoed the teacher's use of grammar frames. The students were eager to share and sound "smarter" than their peers, as noted in the focus group interviews. The following are statements about the use of frames during classroom discussions:

S5: Students loved sharing their thinking and ideas and nominating and selecting other scholars to share their responses using the frames. They're always upset when we don't have time to hear from everyone.

S4: They really enjoy sounding smart, and they're all about using the sentence frames. "I welcome a contribution from Hannah. I would like to record. . . . I appreciated this answer, and I recorded so-and-so's idea. My partner and I chose this plural noun."

Research highlights the benefits of explicit vocabulary instruction to support the learning across the content areas. Explicit vocabulary instruction supports literacy for all students, including English Learners (Dutro & Kinsella, 2010). Teachers who model for students and

encourage using language frames make learning accessible to students by both allowing them to access the language and providing practice examples. The teachers in this study demonstrated consistent use of academic vocabulary and grammatical frames.

A third finding was: Teachers regularly modeled the use of an academic register. The data noted the change in use of an academic register as soon as teachers began implementation of the vocabulary protocols. The student-to-student and teacher-to-student interactions were rich in academic language. Research indicates that less proficient readers and English learners struggle with the double demands of rigorous content and language they have yet to master (Kinsella & Hancock, 2014). Teachers who model for students and interact with students in structured vocabulary practice help students develop accurate fluency and the ability to produce correct and contextually appropriate language (Dutro & Kinsella, 2010). The data in this study demonstrated that teachers addressed the students as scholars, mathematicians, explorers, and learners. Teachers made a noticeable effort to use an academic register with students throughout the school day.

The final finding—there was an increase in use of language discussion frames and academic vocabulary by students across the content areas—was an unexpected finding. The teachers in the focus group reported an increase in use of language discussion frames and academic vocabulary by students across the content areas. Students identified the words in the "real world" and used the language in their writing and speaking without prompting from teachers. Many parents proudly shared their children's vocabulary learning experiences. Teacher S6 shared such an experience with the focus group:

S6: My students are identifying target vocabulary words out in the real world . . . the community. A parent shared that her daughter read and recognized the word essential at the mall and wanted me to know. So she took a picture of the word *essential* at the store and emailed it to me!

Teachers in this research study fully implemented the academic vocabulary protocols and provided their students with explicit vocabulary instruction. Teachers modeled the use of academic language and provided examples and opportunities to practice with their peers. Teachers were mindful and explicit about their academic register in the classroom. Students thrived and transferred their skills across the content areas. They used the academic language frames across the content area. It is my conclusion that the research study key findings addressed the research question: To what extent are 4th- and 5th-grade teachers implementing the Academic Vocabulary Instructional Protocols at the Success Elementary School as measured by the Lovely Elementary School District Observation Tool? The findings demonstrate strong implementation of the academic vocabulary protocols as measured by the interviews, focus group, data analysis, and observation tool.

Significance of the Findings

The findings of this study are significant to the Success Elementary School and the entire Lovely Elementary School District teaching community in a number of ways. The study validates and supports the work of the teachers of second language learners at Success Elementary School and throughout the school district. LESD has worked to support the academic progress of Long Term English Learners and to develop a systematic approach to academic vocabulary instruction. This study and the findings focusing on the implementation of the

Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and the protocols support the systematic district-wide approach to academic vocabulary instruction that is desperately needed.

On a larger scale, this research study is significant as it will raise awareness about the academic language instruction experience of the LTEL in a small urban school district and can influence district policy. It is significant to the field of language learning and academic achievement of the Long Term English learner, as it provides valuable data about the instructional experience of the LTEL teachers. The data can inform educational practice and policy as it pertains to English learner instruction, assessment, and achievement in a small urban elementary school district. This study is significant to educators, educational leaders, and policy makers interested in developing and delivering equitable educational programs to historically marginalized language learners. The study can create an awareness and sense of urgency about the long-term implications for Long Term English Learners and their academic vocabulary learning experiences.

Recommendations

The findings of this mixed-methods study indicate that the Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and Protocols were consistently implemented at the Success Elementary School. The focus on academic vocabulary instruction increased the use of academic register across the content areas by teachers. My recommendations for teachers include continued implementation of the academic vocabulary toolkit and protocols. I also recommend that teachers begin to analyze and track student reading and writing assessment data to determine the impact of explicit academic vocabulary instruction on students at Success Elementary School.

A significant finding was the increase in student application of language discussion frames and academic language use across the content areas. Based on that finding, I recommend that researchers consider future mixed-method research studies focusing on student experiences, perspectives, and academic achievement. Possible research questions include:

- How do Long Term English Learners feel about explicit academic vocabulary instruction?

- What are LTEL student experiences with implementation of the Academic Vocabulary Toolkit and Protocols?

- How does academic vocabulary instruction impact teaching and learning of Long Term English Learners in math and science?

- How has academic vocabulary instruction impacted Long Term English Learner student performance on district-wide benchmark assessments and standardized CA assessments?

Implications

The findings and recommendations of this study have implications for the Success Elementary School, the Lovely Elementary School District, and all elementary school districts that educate learners of English. An implication may be that not all teachers will continue to implement the academic vocabulary toolkit and protocols with fidelity. It is important that teachers continue to receive support, training, and collaboration time with peers to support ongoing implementation of the protocols and improve instruction of academic vocabulary for all English Learners. It may also benefit teachers to conduct walkthroughs of each others' classrooms as well as classrooms in other schools. This would allow teachers to learn and

collaborate with their peers as they develop capacity and continue to develop their academic vocabulary teaching practices.

An implication for the district would be to develop and implement an explicit English Language Development program for students in grades four through eight. The implementation of the Academic Vocabulary Instructional protocol is a great beginning, but the LESD and its students will benefit from an ELD program that addresses the specific language needs of Long Term English Learners.

Limitations

Limitations in this research study included my current position as principal of the Success Elementary School in the Lovely ESD where the research took place. My researcher role was that of an insider. It is my hope that this circumstance did not result in bias or influence the level of teaching participation or willingness to share detailed events or information.

A second limitation was my English learner status and past educational experiences. This is perceived as a limitation, as it may result in unknown bias or threat to validity. I also feel that this subjectivity supported the research. My experience as an English learner provided a unique perspective and insight that others do not necessarily possess. These experiences may have resulted in possible bias or threat to validity.

Conclusion

This mixed-methods study identified a variety of factors that contributed to the substantial underachievement and gaps for Long Term English learners, preventing them from achieving English proficiency and academic success. This study focused on a specific and

significant issue for Long Term English Learners: the lack of academic vocabulary and oral language proficiency needed to access content-area information (Olsen, 2010).

It is my hope that through this study and my recommendations, educators will develop awareness of the academic language instruction experience and academic vocabulary needs of the LTEL. It is my hope that this study will inform educational practice and policy as it pertains to English learner instruction, assessment, and achievement. My expectation is that educators, educational leaders, and policy makers interested in developing and delivering equitable educational programs to historically marginalized language learners read my research and implement my recommendations in future research studies on this topic. And finally, I expect this study to increase awareness and a sense of urgency about the long-term implications for Long Term English Learners. It is the responsibility of all educational leaders to encourage, teach, and lead every child to academic success.

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Focus Group Questions: 4th and 5th Grade Teachers, Success Elementary School

1. Please describe your understanding of the Lovely Elementary School District's Academic Vocabulary Instructional Protocol.

2. Please share your experiences with implementation of the Academic Vocabulary Protocol.

3. Have you received professional development focused on English Learners and the Academic Vocabulary Instructional Protocol? Please describe

4. Do you need additional resources or support to implement the observation protocols?

Semi-formal Interview Questions: 4th and 5th Grade Teachers, Success Elementary School

1. What have been your experiences with the classroom implementation of the Academic Vocabulary Protocol?

2. How have students in your classroom responded to the protocol?

3. Do you have any recommendations for improvement or additions to the instructional protocol?

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

AVT Observation Tool v2

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1. School Site

[⌄]

2. Grade Level

[⌄]

3. Teacher arranges seating and pairs students appropriately.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

4. Teacher consistently uses an academic register.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

5. Teacher refers to visible display of expectations and procedures for partnering and/or group tasks.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

6. Teacher sets up task with visible displays, clear explanations, and modeling.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

7. Teacher visibly displays an academic response frame and a model response.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

8. Teacher identifies and explains vocabulary and grammatical target(s) in frame.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

9. Teacher leads verbal rehearsal with model response(s).

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

10. Teacher cues which partner will speak first.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

11. Teacher monitors interactions.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

12. Teacher offers feedback while monitoring interactions.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

13. Teacher pre-selects reporters while monitoring.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

14. Teacher uses varied strategies to elicit additional reporters for discussion.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

15. Teacher requires active listening during all lesson phases and assigns listening tasks.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

16. Teacher requires use of an audible public voice.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

17. Teacher models and coaches the use of an audible public voice.

☐ Observed   ☐ Not Observed   ☐ N/A

18. Notes

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