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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BILINGUALISM AND BIDIALECTALISM: THE EFFECT
ON LANGUAGE ARTS PEDAGOGY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Few studies on English language learners (ELLs) focus on teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism and describe the impact of those perceptions on language arts pedagogy. While numerous studies have explored the teaching of diverse students and the negative effects of standardized tests on the quality instruction these students receive (Bielenberg & Wong Fillmore, 2005; Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Garcia & Bauer, 2009; Jimenez & Teague, 2009; McCarthy, 2008; Valenzuela, 2005), none of these studies have examined teachers' perceptions of bilinguals and bidialectals and the effects of teaching them English. This research was designed to understand how teachers' perceptions are influenced by sociocultural contexts and shape their language teaching. I draw on sociocultural theories that support the use of students' lived experiences in the teaching/learning process (Lee, 2006; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005). The funds of knowledge phenomenon (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez) and cultural modeling framework (Lee) both subscribe to the notion that language minority students have knowledge that should be validated in classrooms.

A three-phased approach was used to understand how perceptions influenced teachers' language pedagogy. For the first phase, I completed a survey with nine teachers and the principal in a multilingual school. In the second and third phases, I interviewed and observed four teachers over three months to analyze as case studies. The data showed that the teachers focused on the Hispanic students as needing language intervention and mostly overlooked the Amish students who spoke a German dialect. The study suggests that although ELLs include several language minority groups, teachers associated language minority students with being Hispanic. Essentially, teachers conflated race/ethnicity with language in the discourse about language minority students.

Dedicated to my parents, Winston and Loris Byfield, and my “baby” brother, Ryan

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Chapter 1

Introduction

More than a decade ago, my language arts professor, a Canadian, greeted us (my undergraduate cohort at the University of the West Indies, Mona) with a story that made an indelible impression on me. I still recount this story—a story that I believe may shed light into how perceptions can determine the type of classroom experience that teachers and students have in any given classroom, whether, elementary or tertiary. My professor, a white Canadian, explained that prior to meeting her Jamaican husband in Canada; marrying him; and relocating to Jamaica, she had several images of life in Jamaica. She relayed that she thought Jamaicans locked their hair and lazed on the beach smoking marijuana (among other things). My classmates and I were shocked that she would, first of all, air her conceptions or misconceptions to the group on the first day of class (this was no doubt our icebreaker) and that she really thought that such a blanket statement could be representative of every Jamaican.

Most of us, who considered ourselves conservative Christians, were offended. The Jamaican “dread” (Rastafarian) smoking “weed” (marijuana) was an image that most of us associated with rebels of the Rastafarian religion who loved to chant Bob Marley’s “I feel like bombing a church.” It is ironic that on a national level, many of us prided ourselves as rebels whose ancestors rebelled against slavery as opposed to other English speaking islands in the Caribbean.

This incident at the beginning of the semester dampened the professor/student relationship. Even though the lecture mode was the dominant college classroom pattern in which students took notes from lectures with limited opportunities to talk, we were extremely quiet. We were quiet because we perceived her to be a “racist.” After our first assignment was returned our

perceptions were reinforced that she was “racist” because most of us were not satisfied with our grades. We eventually shared our grouse with a Jamaican professor who incidentally had a very close relationship with the Canadian (we were not aware of their close friendship until this point). Our intention was not for confrontation because it was not in good taste.

It was therefore surprising to us when subsequently she came to class and said she was open to discussing issues we might have with her. We were reluctant at first but later explained that her teaching style and method of communicating were inconsistent with our expectations. A formal classroom setting where students mostly listened to the knowledgeable other (the teacher) was customary and referring to her on a first name basis was also a new concept to us (titles were usually used). We did not directly say that the lazy and laid-back mentality, implied by her statement, more so than the marijuana smoking, was most offensive. However, after that conversation, I recount numerous visits to her office, even in batches to borrow books; including children’s literature, several reflecting Blacks and issues related to Blacks in the Diaspora (she had a large collection). We also learned more about her son who was also an undergraduate at the time (but in the U.S.).

I still remember this incident and think about how stereotypes are ingrained in people’s psyche. As a cohort, we perceived her to be racist and that affected how the first month of class was experienced. This cultural negotiation (Duranti, 1997; Morgan, 2001) in which we (students) read our professor and she read us through language was not successful until we had a mediator. When such cultural negotiations are made between teachers and K-12 students the result can be detrimental to the teaching/learning process.

I tell this story because I feel it sums up the reality that, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, race, education or income level, certain individuals, names, sounds, speech, etc.

conjure images in our minds. For educators, these images can directly impact the teaching/learning process. Therefore, I use my experience as a Jamaican, having taught for 5 years at the elementary level in Jamaica, and 5 years as a graduate teaching assistant, here at Illinois, to grapple with language and literacy practices and how these transpire in classrooms.

Language and literacy practices that occur in classrooms are shaped by teacher perceptions as well as the broader sociocultural and political contexts within which these practices are situated. Likewise, teachers' perceptions are influenced by these sociocultural factors. Literacy levels have become one of the most important issues in most educational debates, policies and practices. As a result, many students, especially those from poor and minority families, have been labeled as at-risk by school practitioners who sort some students into high-quality educational programs and others into low quality ones. Language arts instruction has been negatively affected given the current test-taking climate. Several studies have hinted at the quality instruction students, and by extension English language learners, receive as a result of standardized tests (Bielenberg & Wong Fillmore, 2005; Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Garcia & Bauer, 2009; Jimenez & Teague, 2009; McCarthy, 2008; Valenzuela, 2005).

Consequently, a number of educators struggle with finding the "right" methods that will be effective in meeting the needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. For many, the underlying assumption is that there is a generic set of teaching methods that will improve the learning experiences of these students. Scholars explain that this type of approach is a "one size fits all" approach that implies that instructional methods that are arguably effective with mainstream students will be beneficial for all students (Ovando, Combs

& Collier, 2006; Reyes, 1992). Reyes conveys that this approach assumes that if students are failing then the blame should not be on the schools but rather, the students.

According to the New London Group (1996), the notion of differences is an issue that must be addressed by educators. The authors argue that although there are many theories purported to meet the needs of diverse populations, there is still much anxiety regarding the appropriate course of action. They articulate that in order to meet the needs of diverse populations, educators are forced to come to terms with what is considered appropriate learning materials in any given context.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching diverse students has become an issue of concern for practitioners at all grade levels (Commins & Miramontes, 2005). There continues to be a gap in academic achievement between White, middle class students and their poor and or nonwhite counterparts (Berman, Chambliss, & Geiser, 1999). Berman, Chambliss, and Geiser argue that even after more than three decades of school reform many schools are still not achieving success for all students. Moreover, Berman and Chambliss (2000) argue that a number of education reform initiatives come to a standstill because practitioners do not want to take responsibility for students' low achievement and failure. Additionally, Berman et al. convey that efforts to raise achievement in low performing schools were diverted because educators were inclined to place the blame on students, their families, or schools without investigating the links between classroom practices and student achievement.

Increasing academic performance for language minority students is a challenge; nonetheless, it is an issue that must be addressed. Academic success in school is heavily

dependent on students being proficient readers and writers. Students with reading difficulties often lack mastery of many basic reading skills and, as a result, experience difficulties that affect their performance across subject matter (Devault & Joseph, 2004; Graves, 1986). To improve performance, students must be prepared with the necessary skills and provided the opportunities to apply reading and writing strategies in varying contexts.

Purpose of Study

In this study I sought to acquire an understanding of elementary teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism and how their perceptions affected the teaching of the English language arts to students from diverse backgrounds. Using the funds of knowledge theory (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005) and the cultural modeling framework (Lee, 2006) I explored the importance of capitalizing on the lived experiences of language minority students in the teaching/learning process. I investigated whether teachers acknowledged and used the social and intellectual resources of diverse students in preparing them to speak the language of wider communication. The main objective was to detangle the intersection of race, ethnicity, social class, identity, power, and language in language arts pedagogy from a sociocultural perspective. Both the funds of knowledge and cultural modeling frameworks subscribe to the notion that educators need to examine carefully the lived experiences of language minority students; the goal of this study was to understand how teachers negotiated cultural, social, and political influences in teaching the English language arts. Therefore, I focused on how these teachers' perceptions affected the methods of instruction employed. Essentially, I focused on understanding the interaction between monolingual English speaking teachers and language minority students.

A multi-leveled approach was used to select four teachers for in-depth case studies. For the first phase, I completed a survey with nine teachers and the principal at a multilingual school, Winifred, (pseudonym) to ascertain their ideas about bilingualism and bidialectalism (i.e., English Language Learners [ELLs] and speakers of non-prestigious dialects). In the next phase, I interviewed four of these teachers who indicated knowledge of bilinguals and bidialectals. For the final phase, I observed and interviewed these four teachers who had language minority students and were concerned about their unique needs and demonstrated the most interest in the study. Although teachers mostly had convergent views with regard to linguistic diversity, there were differences in their perceptions and pedagogical approaches.

The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism?
2. How do teachers' practices address the needs of bilinguals and bidialectals in language arts pedagogy?
3. How do social, cultural, and political factors influence teachers' perceptions and practices?

Theoretical Framework

Students should be encouraged to use their lived experiences as they engage in literacy activities (Moll, Saez, & Dworin, 2001; Reyes & Azuara, 2008; Reyes & Costanzo, 2002). The conceptualization of literacy as a sociocultural practice has been largely influenced by Vygotsky's (1978) theory on learning and development. Vygotsky states that "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level; between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (p. 57). This assertion implies that learning and internalization of knowledge originate from social processes where people interact with others. The sociocultural lens highlights how social interaction and cultural

institutions influence learning. Hence, this approach was used to unravel how race, ethnicity, social class, identity, power, and language factor into language arts pedagogy. Some of these issues, critics of the sociocultural approach argue, are not explicitly explored when this approach is employed ((Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2009, p. xi).

Within the frame of this sociocultural approach, I adopted the funds of knowledge phenomenon and the cultural modeling framework to argue the importance of understanding students' backgrounds in providing culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009). In addition, I drew on sociolinguists, (for example, Alim & Baugh, 2007; Heath, 1983, 2002; Labov, 2001; Smitherman, 2006) to argue that linguistic divergence occurs in communities and used Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) dialogism to highlight the implications for classroom discourse.

Grounded in the funds of knowledge theory is the notion that language minority students have lived experiences that should be harnessed by school personnel in order for school to be meaningful for these students. The funds of knowledge refers to those historically developed and accumulated strategies (skills, abilities, ideas, practices) or bodies of knowledge that are essential to a household's functioning and well-being (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005). According to Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez, it negates the assumption that low-income and minority students are more likely to experience failure in school because their home experiences do not provide them with the prerequisite skills for school success in the same way as the home experiences of middle- and upper-class students.

The funds of knowledge phenomenon promotes the idea that the social, historical, political, and economic contexts of households are of critical importance in understanding teaching and learning (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005). The educational process can be greatly enhanced when teachers learn about their students' everyday lives. This theoretical

assertion highlights the notion that knowledge is not found but constructed, and that it is constructed through discourse (Foucault, 1970, 1972).

The main purpose of the funds of knowledge concept is to implement teaching strategies that draw on the knowledge and skills found in local households (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005). The belief is that capitalizing on household and other community resources far exceeds rote-like pedagogy many students commonly encounter. Furthermore, the complex functions of households within their socio-historical contexts will enable teachers to understand students from these backgrounds. The underlying rationale stems from the concept that the educational process can be greatly enhanced when teachers learn about their students' everyday lives (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez). Essentially, the border between knowledge and power can be crossed when students' lived experiences become validated as a source of knowledge.

Children are not passive bystanders, as they might seem in classrooms, but active participants in their communities in a range of activities (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005). In some cases, their participation is central to the functioning of the households, for example, when children contribute to the economic production of the home, or use their knowledge of English (for example, native Spanish-speaking students) to mediate the household's communications with outside institutions, such as the school or government offices (p. 74). According to Moll and Greenberg (1990) "This totality of experiences, the cultural structuring of the households, whether related to work or play, whether they take place individually, with peers, or under the supervision of adults, helps constitute the funds of knowledge children bring to school" (p. 75).

The funds of knowledge ideology calls for a critical redefinition of local households as containing important social and intellectual resources for teaching. The undergirding premise is

that minority (and low-income) students come from households abundant in social and intellectual resources. Interacting with these families provides teachers with an appreciation of cultural systems and an understanding that cultures are heterogeneous and that even practices within a group will vary. Moreover, empowering parents of multicultural backgrounds by having parents participate in class activities builds the home-school connection. Students' perceptions of their own parents as well as themselves improve when teachers extol the skills and knowledge of their parents.

A complementary framework is Carol Lee's Cultural Modeling Framework. Situated in the history of research on African American English as a resource for academic learning, Lee (2006) goes beyond the discourse of the mismatch between home and school practices highlighted by scholars, for example, Heath (1983/2002) and Prendergast (2003) among others. Lee's model focuses on African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) and youth culture and aims at connecting their everyday knowledge with learning the academic disciplines.

The cultural modeling framework calls for a careful examination of daily activities and an investigation of the modes of reasoning, thoughts and tendencies in daily problem-solving (Lee, 2006; Lee, Spencer, & Harpalani, 2003). The goal is to scrutinize points of compatibility and differences between problem-solving in everyday settings and problem-solving in academic disciplines. Lee argues that this requires an analysis of key concepts and strategies most generative for problem-solving in ways that are developmentally appropriate. For example, Lee uses African Americans' use of symbolism in response to literature to explain generative problem-solving.

Lee (1997, 2006) relays that African American youth who speak AAVE customarily participate in forms of talk that involve symbolism. She argues that this daily understanding of

metaphors and symbols in informal contexts can be transferred to deconstruct symbols in classroom texts. With this ability, she argues that readers can interpret a wide range of literary texts. Lee argues that AAVE-speaking youth routinely interpret symbols in signifying talk outside classrooms but often do not see connections between what they do to make sense of such symbols and what teachers expect when they encounter symbols in literature. According to Smitherman (1977, 2006), this signifying is a form of talk that is embedded in AAVE that involves a high use of figurative language, including symbols, irony and satire.

In this study, I considered how teachers interacted with language minority students and how these teachers perceived themselves in terms of their own and students' language usage. I examined if teachers built on the lived experiences of their students in the teaching/learning process. Heath's (1983, 2002) seminal work notes the mismatch between communities and lays the foundation for building the home-school connection. Heath's ethnography exposed the incongruence between home and school for Black and White students from working and middle class families and showcases the fact that race and class affect the teaching/learning process in the U.S. Furthermore, Labov (2001) argues that having conducted several studies in the speech community with thousands of speakers in many English dialects and other languages found that there was a negative reaction toward any deviant sounds or grammar than individuals are accustomed. Labov further relays that "Communities differ in the extent to which they stigmatize the newer forms of language" (p. 6) and he further explains that he is yet to meet an individual who greeted these newer forms with applause.

In addition, Bakhtin's dialogism offers an explanation for how language is learned. He delineates how self is situated within different contexts (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). Bakhtin's theory provides a frame for understanding language development. Bakhtin explicates how one's self is

situated within particular social, cultural, historical, and ideological worlds (1981, 1986). He maintains that humans incorporate the voices of other speakers as they participate in discourse and argues that humans combine a variety of voices they have encountered throughout their lifetimes to produce unique utterances. Bakhtin's notion of appropriation implies that an individual's speech is learned from others. As stated by McCarthy (1994) "discourses are dynamic, continually being shaped and developed by interaction and dialogue with others," (p. 202). Therefore, the Bakhtinian notion of appropriation gives an understanding of how language is learned. Through discourse, a new meaning is assigned to a discourse which already has, and which retains an intention of its own (Bakhtin, 1990).

Essentially, my argument is that literacy acquisition and activities vary across cultures, ethnicities and racial groups even though there are similarities. This variation has ramifications for classroom interaction when teachers and students are from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, language is first learned through interaction with family and later in communities (societal institutions including the school, church etc.). The failure of schools to strategically connect home and school experiences for language minority students indicates missed opportunities to increase their academic success. Hence, the funds of knowledge and cultural modeling approaches are forms of culturally relevant teaching that capitalize on students' lived experiences to increase student engagement and involvement. However, it is imperative to understand that not many, if any, cultures are monolithic and therefore, caution must be taken.

Significance of Study

Given the current demographic trend in U.S. schools and the growing number of students who are speakers of languages other than English, meeting the language and academic needs of linguistically diverse students is a major worry for educators (Commins & Miramontes, 2005). Many studies on ELLs examine the methods of instruction employed by monolingual teachers of students who are learning a new language or dialect and the implications for teaching students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Not many studies, however, extrapolate teachers' perceptions on issues such as bilingualism and bidialectalism and the impact on language arts pedagogy. In fact, there is no empirical evidence to establish the relationship between perceptions and practice, and only a few studies examine teachers' perceptions regarding teaching the language arts in general. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the sociocultural influences on teachers' perceptions and the implications for classroom practice as well as how teachers' own cultural experiences shaped their perspectives. In essence, this study will heighten awareness of the ways in which perceptions can affect the teaching/learning process, especially for linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Overview: Organization of this Review and Definitions

This review first presents a sociocultural model as a theoretical framework for understanding language teaching and learning. Next, there is an overview of the historical and social climate associated with the teaching of English language learners. Subsequently, the review (a) describes the unique qualities, backgrounds and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students, and (b) evaluates research that frames students as knowledgeable. The final sections explore studies that delineate programs implemented, ways to capitalize on students' strengths, strategies for teaching, the impact of policies on practices, and teachers' perceptions as well as myths about language usage in the U.S. The chapter ends with an overall discussion and a conclusion that addresses how the findings of this review will impact my own research.

Globally and in the U.S., English is considered the language of the marketplace and success. Moreover, English with a particular British or American accent symbolizes a type of prestige that is both revered and sometimes envied in some circles. However, it is a myth to believe that the U.S. is a monolingual English-speaking country (Wiley & de Klerk, 2010). According to Rivera-Mills and Villa (2010) Spanish predates the appearance of English and has had an uninterrupted presence in the Rio Grande corridor since 1598, and has spread geographically and demographically over the last four centuries. However, Native American languages predate European languages and are still spoken fluently on Indian reservations, although "many have become extinct since European contact" (Campbell, 1997, p. 4). With slavery and immigration, several varieties of English and other languages are spoken by millions

of Americans. This language variety brings about societal attitudes to languages and speakers of both prestigious and non-prestigious languages and dialects that influence language politics and policies (Rivera-Mills & Villa, 2010), and can affect the type of school experience that culturally and linguistically diverse students receive.

Several studies on the teaching of minority students focus on their achievement in comparison to their white counterparts. However, the aim of this literature review is to examine how language politics in society affect schools. The aim is to synthesize this dynamic in regards to teachers' perceptions of linguistic diversity and the influence on language arts pedagogy. Using several studies, I have focused on linguistic diversity starting with a brief history of language ideology in the U.S. (Hilliard, 2002), classic studies related to sociolinguistics (Au & Jordan, 1981; Heath, 1983/2002), critical research about bilinguals (Bielenberg & Wong Fillmore, 2005; Garcia & Bauer, 2009; Jimenez & Teague, 2009; Martinez-Roldan & Malave, 2004), impact of No Child Left Behind (Evans & Hornberger, 2005; McCarthy, 2008), work of renowned linguists (Alim & Baugh, 2007; Labov, 2001; Smitherman, 2006), and myths regarding the status of languages in the U.S. (Wiley & de Klerk, 2010), among others.

My main argument is that the prevailing attitudes towards certain languages and dialects have ramifications for interpersonal communication and can negatively affect the classroom experience of language minority students. Identities and languages are inextricably connected, and, therefore, attitudes regarding certain languages can affect the teaching/learning process. Essentially, I intend to highlight the effects of language policy and attitudes on language arts pedagogy and the potential impact that these can have on the teaching of linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Theoretical Framework

According to Lindfors (1987) language permeates every aspect of our lives. Lindfors also maintains that each language has its own phonological, syntactic, and semantic system. These structured systems, she claims, are the essential elements of languages without which, there would not be languages, but rather, speech sounds and written symbols that do not have meanings affixed to them. In essence, a language is a system of communication that has its own unique sounds, grammatical structures, and meanings, and these are shared by members who use this system of communication.

The teaching of language should be hinged on the notion that cultural, social, and other contexts play integral roles in literacy learning. Using a sociocultural approach, I draw on theories purported by Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez, (2005) and Lee (2006) to argue the benefits of capitalizing on students' lived experiences. Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) dialogism will also be used to highlight the implications for teaching students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. The sociocultural framework situates learners as active meaning makers who interpret interactions as they make sense of their environment. This framework provides an understanding of how participants construct and co-construct knowledge as they draw from their linguistic and cultural resources. In addition, it gives an understanding of how learning is mediated by cultural artifacts, such as textbooks, literature, and speech.

It is critical that language arts tasks are structured in ways that connect with students' lives. These funds of knowledge Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez, (2005) are essential building blocks in knowledge and language acquisition. The funds of knowledge phenomenon operates on the assumption that students come from households and communities in which there are rich and varied activities and resources that can positively impact the teaching-learning process.

Therefore, it is necessary that teachers implement approaches that capitalize on these resources. Similar to the funds of knowledge is Lee's (2006) cultural modeling framework that subscribes to the notion that classroom discourse should be connected to African American youth culture. This cultural modeling framework positions these students as knowledgeable, refuting the deficit model traditionally assigned to this group.

Both the funds of knowledge and the cultural modeling frameworks take into account that students, in general, and particularly those at the elementary level, bring to the classroom a repertoire of skills and practices. For example, ways of speaking, behaving, and relating socially are influenced by the shows they watch, the games they play and specifically activities that their families engage in. Bakhtin (1981, 1986) argues that the "self" is situated in dialogue and that voices exist in a social milieu and engage each other. He further claims that these voices are appropriated and made into one's own voice, and meaning results when two or more voices of a listener respond to the voice of a speaker. Therefore, how language is practiced and developed are socially situated and negotiated.

It is crucial that teachers understand that students come from diverse cultural, linguistic, ethnic and racial backgrounds and consequently have different styles and mannerisms that affect the teaching of the English language arts. Studies including the Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP), (Au & Jordan, 1981) and Ladson-Billings (1994, 2009) describe the use of students' experiential backgrounds as the basis for their literacy acquisition. It is quite common for teachers to view students who are not from mainstream backgrounds as incompetent users of the dominant language or the language of wider communication. Nonetheless, what's revealed in Ladson-Billings and Au and Jordan is culturally relevant teaching that capitalizes on students' experiences. Essentially, considering the complexities associated with language usage and

teaching, a sociocultural framework enables me to examine how classroom experiences build on students' lived experiences.

Definition of Terms

Cultures are heterogeneous and no one description can encapsulate any given culture. Given the complex juxtaposition of race, ethnicity, class and culture in the U.S. solutions are not readily available to many of the ills, especially in education. With the history of subjugation and oppression of Native Americans, enslavement of Africans, and the current and past influx of immigrants to the U.S. from all parts of the world, educators are faced with an increasingly diverse student population.

In this research, “cultural and linguistic/language minority students” refers to students who speak languages and or dialects other than Standard American English (also called diverse students). English Language Learners, hereafter referred to as ELLs, are those students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, who are learning the English language arts. These students are also called bilinguals because they speak two languages or bidialectals (in the U. S. students who speak Standard American English and another variety are called bidialectals); the terms bidialectalism and bidialectism which both mean using two dialects of the same language, are used interchangeably in the discourse on linguistic diversity. English as a second language (ESL) is used to describe the program that is designed to transition ELLs into mainstream English speaking classrooms. Teachers affiliated with these programs are called ESL teachers.

Perception is defined as becoming aware by using the senses. According to Bunting (1988), this definition implies “the process of the mind taking sense data and interpreting these

data, that is, ‘making sense’ of sensory data” (p. 168). Social (organization of society), cultural (customs and social behaviors), and political (public affairs/ideas of a particular group) factors include how classrooms are organized, expectations about language practices and how language is taught, and ideas about what constitutes a language and acceptable discourse, respectively. In this study, I examined the way lessons were organized for language minority students, how lessons were executed, teachers’ perceptions of what constitutes acceptable school language/discourse, and the effects of standardized tests on pedagogy.

The expression “mainstream” refers to anything associated with the ideals of the majority (in the U.S. white middle class values) which may include but is not limited to language, aesthetics, etc. It must be noted that the concept of mainstream is considered to be culturally constructed and that not all whites fall within the purview of mainstream, neither are all Blacks and Latinos non-mainstream. Therefore, I do not argue that mainstream is equivalent to white. Furthermore, the terms low-income and minority students are sometimes used incorrectly as synonyms. However, there are low-income students who are Caucasians, and Blacks and Latinos who do not fall in the low-income category.

It is commonly known that one’s identity and social class determine, to a great extent, the type and quality of literacy experiences to which one is exposed. Students from middle class backgrounds are situated at an advantage while the opposite is true of students from working class or linguistically diverse backgrounds. Nonetheless, it must be understood, as hinted above, that cultures, races and ethnicities are not monolithic. Therefore, the terms highlighted above may not be representative of all students from a particular background.

Hence, there is a difficulty associated with naming and identity. Even though it might be a wide scale perception in the U.S. that whites are middle class and speakers of Standard

American English and Latinos and African Americans are poor or working class and speakers of non-prestigious languages or dialects, the converse is true. In a bid to detangle the power relations and issues pertaining to naming and identity, theorists such as Stuart Hall and literary icon, Virginia Hamilton, have interrogated the power relations between dominant and non-dominant cultures and identity. For example, Hall (1996) argues that there is fluidity of identities within contemporary societies. Hall contends that identification is the process whereby individuals are situated within symbolic boundaries for allocation of resources, regulation or even the withdrawal of resources. He further maintains that another way to think of identity and its production is with regard to stories that people tell of who they are and where they are from. Using the African Caribbean identity in Britain as a framework, Hall asserts that identity formation in relation to racism was or is a symbolic way of including and excluding individuals.

Moreover, in the racialized U.S., Hamilton (2001) questions the usage of words such as minority and comparable terms. She argues for the usage of the term parallel culture to represent the lived experiences of African Americans and Latinos. According to Hamilton, the notion of parallel cultures of which Blacks and Latinos are a part, flourish on equal opportunity of all peoples of color and view all cultures in an equal or parallel stance with each other. She asserts that the notion of parallel culture contradicts some scholars' view of cultural pluralism, which inadvertently recognizes cultures that are not White Anglo-Saxon as minorities. Hamilton further states that within the confines of parallel culture, individuals showcase their own lived experiences based on their own standards and not of others.

Furthermore, identities are interconnected with language. Weiss and Wodak (2003) postulate that "Language is not powerful on its own-it gains power by the use powerful people make of it" (p. 14). Therefore, given the history of marginalization of ethnic and racial minorities

in the U.S. it is evident why status would be ascribed to certain languages and dialects. The authors also claim that social inequality is expressed, constituted, and legitimized by language use. In essence, given societal values and the stigma that is attached to some ways of communicating there are merits and demerits to language usage. Besides, the way one speaks depends on family, background, occupation, level of education, and so on. Ultimately, negative attitudes and perceptions of minority students sometimes exist and are expressed through classroom interaction whether consciously or unconsciously.

Framing Linguistic Diversity

Historical overview. Hilliard (2002) highlights the historical events that led to the birth of English and by extension, American English. He explains that a knowledge of the historical facts should negate some of the myths associated with languages and ultimately should inform the teaching and assessment of language minority groups. He emphasizes the fact that educators must have an understanding of these myths in order to effectively meet the needs of language minority groups.

In an analysis of language policies, specifically English, Hilliard (2002) collected data from historical records. He evaluated the relationships between myths about language and language varieties and pedagogy, historical and cultural practices of minority groups and mainstream instructional practices, and the benefits of understanding students' home cultures and languages in informing teacher-directed classroom experiences. He maintains that language is strongly tied to culture, politics, and power. Therefore, instructional materials and strategies should portray linguistic minority groups in positive ways. He articulates that it is imperative that

teachers affirm the maternal languages of their students because this is significantly related to their academic success.

Similar to Hilliard (2002), Ovando, Combs and Collier (2006) argue that the traditional approach to meeting the needs of ELLs is unproductive. By examining archival data on bilingual policies covering several decades of school policies and programs for culturally and linguistically diverse students, the authors argue that in order for these students to excel academically, school policies must shift from a one-size-fits-all paradigm to one that ensures that all students are working in environments that cater to their individual needs (Ovando, Combs & Collier; Reyes, 1992). This one-size-fits-all approach, they maintain, is not a scientifically-sound decision. Ovando, Combs and Collier further maintain that when this shift occurs, students will no longer be viewed as having deficits.

Leibowitz (1969) argues, “Throughout U.S history, there have been numerous instances of language-based discrimination and coercive assimilation, especially during periods of territorial conquest and large-scale immigration” (p. 53). Ovando, Combs and Collier (2006) also use the English Plus Information Clearinghouse 1992 statement as a justification for their argument for bilingual education. Ovando, Combs and Collier state that “English Plus conceives bilingualism not merely as a problem but more importantly as a resource that ‘contributes to our nation’s productivity, worldwide competitiveness, successful international diplomacy, and national security’” (p. 55).

Ovando, Combs and Collier (2006) further argue that programs for linguistically and culturally diverse students within the United States have been, for the most part, politically motivated. They suggest that transformation of schools is dependent on educational practices that can effectively meet the needs of language minority students. Essentially, they investigate the

relationship among a deficit theory of language-minority students and their learning, policies and programs and ELLs' learning, power relations between groups and decision making, tracking and school performance, and myths regarding language learning.

Heath's ethnography. Heath's (1983/2002) ethnography examined community learning and literacy and highlighted the ways people used language to make sense of their lives and to organize and empower their communities. In her ethnographic study of Roadville and Trackton, during the period 1969-1978, she gave a detailed description of the literacy practices in both communities. She also mentioned suburban Blacks and Whites who led different lifestyles than the rural residents of Trackton and Roadville, Blacks and Whites, respectively, who had presumably different social interactional goals.

In Heath's (1983/2002) study of the African American community (Trackton), she found that the questions asked at home were incongruent with those at school. The questions asked by parents elicited inferential thinking as opposed to the teachers' questions seeking answers that were readily available. For example, one particular student from the black community relayed to his mother that his teacher, "Asks dumb questions she already know 'bout." Hence, students would not respond when teachers asked questions to which the answers were obvious, that is, literal level questioning. On the other hand, the teachers said, "They don't seem to be able to answer even the simplest questions."

In contrast, in Roadville (White community), the parents or adult caregivers had different literacy practices from those displayed in Trackton. In Roadville children were taught to behave in acceptable ways that were somewhat aligned with school practices. Although these children were not from middle class families, their families aspired to achieve that status; hence, there

was an emphasis on imitating mainstream practices. For example, when a young couple expected a child, the preparations that were made were somewhat congruent with mainstream ideals.

Nonetheless, although Roadville households seemingly practiced behaviors that were on par with school expectations, both Roadville and Trackton communities were disenfranchised from the mainstream society, and students failed academically. Further, in comparing Roadville and Trackton with the “townspeople,” who were both Blacks and Whites, Heath (1983/2002) found that their middle class status positively influenced their children’s academic achievement.

Theories to Frame Students as Knowledgeable

Smitherman (2006) posits that teachers must recognize that students acquire language from the community of speakers they play, live, grow up, and socialize with; hence, it is instrumental for teachers to reevaluate some of their views of language. Having this understanding is vital for teachers to incorporate students’ home languages and cultures by using different forms of media such as music, film, and video games, among others, that students are interested in, as a springboard for language instruction.

Smitherman (1997, 2006) explains that within African American communities there are several forms of communicating that involve extended usage of figurative devices. For example, she explains, “Narrativizing is a Black rhetorical strategy to explain a point, to persuade holders of opposing views to one’s own point of view and to create word-pictures about general, abstract observations about life, love, and survival” (p.16). Smitherman showcases the relevance of teachers understanding students’ backgrounds. Without knowledge of students’ backgrounds optimal teaching and learning opportunities will be lost, as work produced by students who are from different backgrounds may be viewed as lacking substance relevant to classroom discourse.

Talkin black talk (Alim & Baugh, 2007), explores the issues associated with educating Black children within the United States and the implications in today's linguistic and culturally diverse classrooms. The book collates the thoughts of leading scholars who examine Black language, culture, and education. In a volume that is useful for preservice as well as practicing teachers, linguists and other scholars, the authors of this text relay the issues associated with the African American Vernacular and the importance of affirming students' usage of it in classrooms. The contributors argue that the vernacular should not only be viewed as a vehicle for teaching "Standard American English" but rather as a language with its own grammatical structures, syntax and lexicon. Further, Alim and Baugh highlight that the ideology espoused is an attempt to negate the phenomenon that some linguistic patterns are superior and therefore, is the language of social mobility, and financial and academic success.

Not only do the authors in *Talkin black talk* (Alim & Baugh, 2007), convey the benefits of developing bilingualism in Black students, but they also highlight the difficulties encountered generally by students of color when their home cultures are viewed as deficient. Smitherman (2007) in *Talkin black talk* posits that psychologically, language is intimately tied with one's sense of identity and group awareness. Hence, it is imperative for educators to be cognizant of the implications of language and literacy instruction for students of color, who more often than not, attend school with native languages that are not in the U. S. mainstream.

Teaching Diverse Students

Several programs have been designed to address the needs of linguistically diverse students. They share the goals of supporting students' use of their home language and developing pedagogical strategies to build on students' linguistic and cultural resources.

Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP). The Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP), Honolulu, Hawaii was a language arts program designed for underachieving native Hawaiian children (Au & Jordan, 1981). Developed in the early 1970s to help these children improve their reading skills, it emphasized anthropological knowledge and the importance of cultural compatibility in educating students. The children's native culture was used as a basis for instructional practices.

Observing the children's home culture, researchers learned that Hawaiian children typically turn for assistance to their peers and older siblings rather than to adults. KEEP utilized this observation as an effective teaching practice and capitalized on this community practice by setting up peer-learning centers in the classrooms. The centers encouraged children to help each other with learning tasks. The organization of learning in peer centers contrasted sharply with the way instruction was typically organized during teacher-led lessons, the most frequent form of instruction.

In peer centers, the students had a fair degree of responsibility for their own learning, much like the Hawaiian children have in their own homes. In teacher-directed lessons, the instructor had tight control over the actions of students, a feature that clashed dramatically with the norms of the Hawaiian community. In addition to the emphasis on peer teaching and learning, researchers noted that Hawaiian culture promotes joint turn-taking during conversation, a characteristic speech event in Hawaiian communities called "talk story." KEEP successfully translated this participation structure into the literacy curriculum. Children were encouraged to engage in the cooperative production of responses. They co-narrated stories on the basis of a home speech-community pattern, in which turn-taking was negotiated within a group of peers. Equal rights were exercised during talk-story and were applied to both teacher and students. By

design, the allocation of turns at speaking during the lessons resembled the rules for participation in the “talk story,” a recurrent speech event in Hawaiian culture.

In addition, the students were allowed to build joint responses during story time, either among themselves or together with the teacher. This strategy of collective turn-taking parallels the joint narration of a story by two or more individuals, which is typical of the “talk story.” Joint turn-taking contrasts markedly with the one-speaker-at-a-time convention that prevails in mainstream classes.

Unlike KEEP, Jimenez and Teague’s (2009) study reveal that many programs were unsuccessful for ELLs. The authors argue that some programs implemented for ELLs contribute to further underachievement of these students. The authors, having reviewed several studies on the types of experiences that ELLs are afforded, found that in a number of cases the programs were poorly developed and students were relegated to copying vocabulary words and writing simple sentences. Jimenez and Teague convey that their review reveals some teachers had low expectations and attitudes toward ELLs and resistance to using students’ native language as a springboard for instruction.

Building on students’ knowledge. Ladson-Billings (1994/2009) relays how eight African American and White teachers successfully taught students from “harsh social and economic realities,” (p. 2). She emphasizes how these teachers successfully taught students who were from different cultural and, in some cases, racial backgrounds by implementing strategies that incorporated the students’ home culture. These teachers implemented multiple and creative strategies in ensuring that their students succeeded; in some instances, going beyond the call of duty to ensure that their students were prepared for the challenges of academia. In fact, Ladson-

Billings promotes culturally relevant teaching to highlight the fact that teachers who do not share the same backgrounds as their students can effectively teach those students.

In a case study of four students, Weinstein (2007) claims that these students show a high level of written language in their rap lyrics. She unravels the relationship between rapping and other “non-school” activities on school practices, role of writing rap lyrics and literacy development, and teachers’ perceptions about rap and the implications for classroom success. She analyzes the role of writing rap lyrics and the implications for literacy instruction in school, giving a brief overview of the history of hip-hop. She argues that there is a direct relationship between social writing and in-school engagement on achievement. Weinstein concludes that teachers should tap into students’ out-of-school activities in creating conducive learning environments and critically assess how their (teachers’) perceptions of students’ abilities affect the quality work that students produce. She also highlights the importance of teachers recognizing the strengths that students have and build on those, and reconsidering the assumptions they have of students from linguistic and cultural minority groups.

Weinstein (2007) argues that while some teachers are frustrated with students’ creation of rhymes in classrooms that are not related to assigned activities, other teachers have recognized that these are signs of students’ writing accomplishments. The study reveals that these writers have a sophisticated understanding of figurative devices. Weinstein wrote, “Focusing on the intricacies of a genre that gives so many young people so much pleasure, and in which they participate so enthusiastically, can only enrich our understandings of how and why engagements with literacy develop” (p. 281).

Understanding ELLs and dialect speakers. According to Souto-Manning (2010), students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have been traditionally identified

based on three models. These models are identified as inferiority, cultural deprivation, and diversities (Carter & Goodwin, 1994). The inferiority model stems from the view that people who differ from whites, culturally and racially, are genetically or biologically inferior (Goodwin, Cheruvu, & Genishi, 2008). To show deficiency, the culturally deprived ideology uses white middle class standards to compare people who are diverse in terms of race, culture, language, and socioeconomic status. In contrast, cultural diversity subscribes to the notion that differences are not deficient. Using difference as a theoretical lens, Souto-Manning investigated how classroom discourse may enable teachers to reconstruct their perceptions of ELLs from needing to be reconditioned to being knowledgeable. Souto-Manning argues that “by paying close attention to children’s speech events and learning from their cultural and linguistic resources, teachers can open doors to the opportunities provided by multiple languages and cultural practices” (p. 258).

Mahon (2006) reveals that English academic achievement is significantly related to English proficiency. She emphasizes the fact that Hispanics include ELLs as well as English-only speakers. This distinction, she argues has implications for the type of pedagogical experience that students should participate in. She concludes by highlighting the importance of improving the English academic proficiency of ELLs as this is significantly related to academic success.

In her study, Mahon (2006) analyzed English language proficiency based on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) scores. Data were gathered from tests scores of 200 fourth and fifth graders in four elementary schools representing two school districts in Colorado. She examined the relationship between English proficiency and performance on academic tests, English proficiency level among CSAP proficiency categories (unsatisfactory,

partially proficient, proficient/advanced) in reading, writing and mathematics, and English language proficiency and English academic achievement, as measured by the CSAP in reading, writing and mathematics. Mahon states,

[The] study substantiates the concept that it takes more than one year to learn English. Programs that claim to teach ELLs English in one year contradict the evidence that shows that English acquisition is a lengthier process. School reformers should offer programs that support the language and academic achievement of ELLs for more than one year. (p. 495)

In another study conducted by Escamilla and Coady (2005) the authors analyzed writing samples of second language learners. In this case study, they investigated the relationship between students' writing in a first language and how this informed their second, and how cognitive and academic strengths in a first language developed the second. They found that students' competence was viewed as deficient because they were tested in a foreign language they were exposed to for only 7 months. They conclude that teachers must understand the implications of teaching second language learners and that it takes 5 to 7 years to gain proficiency in a new language. They state, "There is an assumption that effective holistic writing assessment is universal and does not need to be modified when applied in languages other than English or when applied with students for whom English is a second language" (p. 46). Essentially, Escamilla and Coady argue that teachers must be cognizant of the fact that academic proficiency in the native language can lead to success in acquiring another language. Moreover, they relay that accommodations should be made in order to meet the language needs of ELLs and that it takes 5 to 7 years to gain academic proficiency in a new language.

Harklau (2002) examined the relationship between the role of writing and second language acquisition, and implicit emphasis on the spoken language. She analyzed studies done on students' second language acquisition, through document analysis and interpretation, using

documented data. She found that there is an emphasis on spoken language in second language acquisition and not on the written aspect. Harklau argues that “Although L2 [second language] reading and writing has undergone tremendous growth in the past two decades, very little has been conducted in reference to broader theories of classroom second language acquisition” (p. 342). She proposes the importance of teachers using a combination of strategies in teaching the written and spoken language, and an interactionist approach to the teaching of the English language arts to second language learners.

Finally, Gopaul-McNicol, Reid and Wisdom (1998) conducted a case study using comprehensive and qualitative ecological assessments of a student in a non-academic setting. In this study, a 14-year-old African American eighth grader who speaks both Ebonics and Standard English was under study. They investigated the relationship between the student’s maternal language or dialect and scores on standardized assessments, use of mainstream assessments with this student who is considered bidialectal, limitations of mainstream assessment on non-mainstream students, traditional and non-traditional assessment approaches, and the value of alternative measures. The authors found the following occurred when alternative, non-language-based assessments were used: (a) the assessments provided a better understanding of the student’s true academic potential than did the traditional assessments, (b) the student was considered by family members and friends to be smart and on par with her peers in non-academic settings, (c) language ability was found to be borderline rather than deficient (when ecological assessments were conducted), and (d) the student utilized words in her natural setting that she was unable to define on the written IQ test. The authors highlight the importance of reconsidering the assumption that all test takers have similar backgrounds, and the need for using alternative methods of assessment for language minority students.

Strategies for teaching ELLs: Comprehension instruction. Pierce (2005) placed emphasis on the need for ESL and classroom teachers to collaborate in effectively meeting the needs of ELLs in a case study of two teachers (reading specialist and ESL teacher) employing different methods of instruction. Findings suggest that teachers should collaborate and identify students' learning needs; for example, ESL and bilingual teachers should collaborate with grade-level, mainstream teachers to effectively address each learner's priority needs. The authors maintain that teacher collaboration is essential in meeting the needs of ELLs and challenging the assumption that students from linguistic and cultural minority groups have families that do not value education.

Pierce (2005) also stresses that teachers should explicitly teach reading strategies because these do not necessarily transfer automatically from the maternal language to the new language. The study also illustrates the important role teachers play when they cater to the needs and interests of their students. Pierce wrote, "By using routine instructional activities for reading to evaluate ELLs' use of reading comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading, we can help these students actively apply reading strategies and become independent learners" (p. 81). In summary, it is erroneous to assume that language minority students' families do not value education. As Pierce articulates, it is imperative that teachers reconstruct their views of linguistically diverse students and collaborate in meeting their unique needs.

Impact of Policies on Practices

Various studies, (Bielenberg & Wong Fillmore, 2005; Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Garcia & Bauer, 2009; McCarthey, 2008; Valenzuela, 2005) emphasize the ramifications of federal mandates on the types of experiences students and by extension ELLs are afforded. These studies

highlight the implications of teaching language minority students and recommend that teachers critically examine the types of methods they employ in the teaching of diverse students.

Bielenberg and Wong Fillmore (2005) state that the current interest in standardized tests within the U.S. has negative consequences for ELLs. They argue that “By holding schools accountable for the academic progress of all categories of students, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has the potential to create greater education equity” (p. 45). However, the authors maintain that these tests may lead to greater inequities for ELLs with the punitive measures that are meted out to schools where students do not excel on these tests.

McCarthy (2008) conveys that NCLB has negatively affected the types of experiences that students, and by extension, ELLs, are afforded, particularly in writing instruction. In a qualitative study, McCarthy interviewed and observed teachers from both low- and high-income schools to ascertain their attitudes toward writing in light of NCLB mandates. She found that although NCLB has had an impact on teachers’ attitudes and writing instruction, school contexts played a role in teachers’ instruction.

Additionally, Valenzuela (2005) examined the relationship between NCLB legislation and teacher accountability, accountability and equity among schools, and high-stakes testing and the implications for language minority students. Using a qualitative approach in the analysis of the impact of NCLB on language minority students in Texas, she conducted interviews of school and district administrators, and document analysis of the federal mandates. By highlighting the impact of federal mandates on the teaching/learning process, she argues that other measures must be implemented that will hold teachers accountable while not forcing them to teach to the test.

Valenzuela (2005) found that students’ performance on tests determined teachers’ jobs and school bonuses which directly impacted the type of teaching methods employed. Valenzuela

argued for a new approach in holding teachers accountable that will not negatively impact the instructional methods they employ.

Moreover, Garcia and Bauer (2009) question if the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act produced high-quality instruction for diverse students. They argue that “One of the problems with the standards-based state tests is that the standards do not tell us how to instruct students from diverse backgrounds so that the literacy gap can be resolved” (p. 249). Essentially, they argue that the literacy gap is still in existence between low-income and high-income students, a gap which NCLB was intended to eliminate.

Teachers’ Perceptions

General. Dooley and Assaf (2009) in a retrospective cross-case analysis compared two fourth-grade language arts teachers’ beliefs and practices in light of the test-taking dilemma; one works in a suburban school and the other in an urban. Although the focus of their study is not on bilingualism and bidialectalism, findings from this study have implications for other perception studies. Dooley and Assaf reveal that both teachers held the assumption that their students are engaged when exposed to a print-rich environment and that “best practices” for example, guided reading and literature discussions are important methods. Findings also indicate that both teachers are also critics of the high number of district-mandated assessments. The authors emphasized that instruction in the urban setting was skills-based as opposed to the social construction of knowledge in the suburban setting, which resulted in inequitable academic achievement.

Culturally and linguistically diverse students. Dantas-Whitney and Waldschmidt (2009) used a qualitative approach to analyze two preservice teachers’ reflections on teaching

ELLs. The authors found that the preservice teachers believed teaching to be a neutral act and offered a surface-level acknowledgement of the unique needs of these students. These reflections came from portfolios the preservice teachers were required to maintain for their final English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course. The authors argued that the main aim of the ESOL course was for students to critically examine their biases and perceptions in order for them (preservice teachers) to facilitate learning for language minority students. Dantas-Whitney and Waldschmidt conclude that the teacher education program should sensitize students to culturally responsive pedagogy.

According to Delpit (1998), it is imperative that teachers show an appreciation for students' linguistic background and see their diversity as a means of scaffolding. She articulates that teachers "should recognize that the linguistic form a student brings to school is intimately connected with loved ones, community, and personal identity" (p. 19), although "it is equally important to understand that students who do not have access to the politically popular dialect form . . . are less likely to succeed economically" (p. 19). Delpit (1995) maintains that daily interactions are filled with assumptions made by educators and mainstream society about the abilities of low-income students and students of color; bringing to the forefront the notion that the power disparity within classrooms occur at a broader societal level that "nurtures and maintains" stereotypes (p. xii). She articulates that the resistance of people with power and privilege to "perceive those different from themselves except through their culturally clouded vision" is detrimental (p. xiv). This is especially detrimental in classrooms where educators view low-income and minority students as other.

Garcia and Guerra (2004) recount a professional development workshop they facilitated in the United States Southwest in response to superintendents' call for bringing awareness, to the

mostly white female teachers, to the unique needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Garcia and Guerra convey that superintendents felt teacher education programs were not sufficiently preparing these middle class teachers to meet the needs of these students which resulted in the achievement gap between poor and culturally and linguistically diverse students in urban public schools.

For 33 hours, Garcia and Guerra (2004) explored topics of diversity and equity with 69 teachers, over a two-year period. Drawing on scholarship by Sleeter (1992) and Sparks and Hirsch (1997), the authors incorporated elements relevant to effective intercultural communication and multicultural education. Using this model, they discuss five assumptions: deficit thinking permeates society; schools and teachers mirror these beliefs; professional development in diversity is not just for White educators; intercultural communication permeates every aspect of schooling; cultural sensitivity and awareness does not automatically result in equity practices; and professional development activities must explicitly link equity knowledge to classroom practice. The authors relay that the main goal was to examine the deficit views teachers had of these students.

In addition to a deficit view of language minority students, Wiley and de Klerk (2010) discuss six widespread myths that are promulgated in the debate on language and literacy diversity in the United States. Along with these myths, they argue that attitudes and beliefs reinforce the notion of English monolingualism as the dominant language pattern in the U.S. and that languages other than English are not the norm. These beliefs, attitudes and assumptions, the authors convey, undergird a large portion of the discourse on linguistic diversity and provide an explanation for research, policies and practice that contribute to disadvantaging ELLs.

Myths include the promotion of the idea that the U.S. is a monolingual English-speaking nation. Scrutinizing the U.S. Census over the last three decades, Wiley and de Klerk (2010) argue that the trends suggest that the U.S. is a multilingual nation in which English is the principal language of discourse. They convey that there are more than 55 million speakers of languages other than English. Another myth is the threat of the dominance of English. The authors maintain that this fear of English losing its dominance has surfaced and resurfaced for over two centuries.

Not only are schools perpetuating the notion of English dominance but families of ELLs sometimes prefer the usage of English over the native language. In a qualitative study of a 7-year-old Mexican American student and his family, Martinez-Roldan and Malave (2004) investigated both the child's and parents' ideas about language. Through bilingual literature discussion the authors tried to ascertain the child's emerging understanding of language and also his parents' assumptions about the use of a minority language in public schools. Martinez-Roldan and Malave found that language and literacy issues are complicated by both familial and societal contexts. They revealed that the child studied initially had a negative image of Spanish-speakers and the language and associated those speakers as not smart. However, throughout the study the child began to develop an appreciation for bilingualism (Spanish and English).

To better understand bilingual education and to strategize on closing the achievement gap between ELLs and others, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) organized the Bilingual Education and World Language Commission (Chicago Public School Bilingual Education and World Language Commission, 2010). The commission (comprised of teachers, principals, area instructional officers, parents, language education experts from local universities and from city and state government, and the wider community) assembled to devise a plan on closing the

achievement gap between ELLs and other students. On examination of its policies, the CPS system found that although the policy stipulated meeting the needs of different language speakers, Spanish and Polish were treated as important languages (due to the large number of Latinos and Poles) for bilingual education and a number of schools, institutions of higher learning, and educational organizations recognize the necessity to create the space for students of both minority and majority languages to study their language.

The CPS commission asserts:

To become a truly global city, it is necessary that Chicago take advantage of its rich cultural and linguistic heritage. We cannot continue to look at speaking more than one language as a luxury for the privileged nor as an ancillary endeavor for the overachievers. Instead we must adopt a mindset that values language learning and sets this expectation for all. (Chicago Public School Bilingual Education and World Language Commission, 2010, p. 1)

Discussion

Classroom interaction should reflect culturally and linguistically appropriate materials that will show a reasonable reflection of students' knowledge. The mismatch exposed in studies (for example, Heath, 1983/2002; Weinstein, 2007) reveals how students from linguistically diverse backgrounds are often labeled as underachievers because classrooms do not capitalize on their cultural knowledge. Teachers' perceptions of students' out-of-school activities will determine if these funds of knowledge Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (2005) will be harnessed in the teaching/learning process. Moreover, students' experiences will be validated using the cultural modeling framework (Lee, 2006). These theories legitimize the experiences that language minority students bring to classrooms. In a number of cases, language minority students are situated in a dichotomy in which they have to choose between their own lived experiences and school practices.

Literacy in sociocultural terms emphasizes the social worlds and cultural identities of students and views the act of making meaning as always embedded within a social context (Moll, Saez, Dworin, 2001; Reyes & Azuara, 2008; Reyes & Costanzo, 2002). This suggests that teachers need to be cognizant of the discourses that students draw upon to make sense of their worlds, as the family, school, and society as a whole require students to be literate in various language uses as the need arises. Research also conveys that children learn to use language in culturally specific ways (Foster, 1992). Moreover, Florio-Ruane and Morrell (2004) posit that “classrooms are language-rich environments, and much of that language takes the form of talk about texts, knowledge, and ideas,” (p. 47).

Florio-Ruane and Morrell (2004) further maintain that it is challenging to examine educational discourse without assessing three main features of conversation in cultural terms. They argue that conversation is constructed by participants in a joint venture in which they engage in connected oral texts; it is a medium for speakers to negotiate meanings within a particular social context; and it is rule-governed in order for there to be commonality with others, but it is also creative when conversations shift from one speaker to the next and one topic to the next.

Conclusion

Although there are many challenges in meeting the needs of diverse students, I believe that teacher reflection on their preconceived notions about language minority students is an area that can improve the teaching/learning process. Researchers and educators can find value from research that investigates how teachers’ perceptions affect the quality of instruction students are

afforded as well as how teachers' perceptions of prestigious and non prestigious languages affect language arts pedagogy.

With the rapid growth of minority students in U.S. classrooms and the increasing demands of mainstream teachers to meet their unique needs there is a need for research that identifies, investigates, and proposes solutions to some of the language-related issues that both teachers and students encounter. Many studies on ELLs examine the methods of instruction employed by monolingual English-speaking teachers of students who are learning a new language or dialect and the implications for teaching students from cultural and linguistic minority backgrounds. There are also numerous studies that highlight the achievement gap between mainstream and non-mainstream students as well as the challenges that teachers and students encounter in this test-taking era. Not many studies, however, investigate monolingual teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism and the ramifications on language arts pedagogy.

I strongly believe that teacher perceptions and practices to a large extent directly impact learning outcomes and therefore, can significantly contribute to the knowledge base on effectively meeting the needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Overview

This qualitative study examined how teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism impacted teaching the English language arts to bilinguals and bidialectals. The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism?
2. How do teachers' practices address the needs of bilinguals and bidialectals in language arts pedagogy?
3. How do social, cultural, and political factors influence teachers' perceptions and practices?

In this chapter, I describe the research design and methodology organized with the following sections: (a) rationale for research approach; (b) selection of participants; (c) historical context of the site and participants; (d) role of the researcher; and (e) data sources and collection procedures.

Rationale for Research Approach

Rationale for qualitative case study approach. The purpose of using a qualitative case study approach was to understand teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism in a multilingual school. In this approach I sought to investigate and understand these perceptions in their richness, complexities, and depth as perceived, understood, and constructed by these teachers in their social contexts (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Erickson, 1987; Stake, 1995, 2005). Fay (1996), Flyvbjerg (2001), and Oakley (2000) maintain that one of the aims of qualitative research is to garner the meanings associated with human actions. The underlying premise of

qualitative research is an interpretivist approach and Schwandt (2000), illustrates that “what distinguishes human action from physical objects is that the former is inherently meaningful” (p. 191). Furthermore, Schwandt argues that human action is understood in terms of the systems of meanings that determine how actions are categorized and objects are labeled.

Moreover, given that the qualitative case study approach encourages the researcher to focus on meaning-making processes rather than outcomes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), I focused on the meanings participants made as they engaged in the teaching of the English language arts to language minority students. In addition, considering that there is no single “truth” but multiple “truths” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Dyson & Genishi, 2005), I made an effort to study multiple perspectives of the participants, as well as focusing on how perceptions were aligned with the methods of instruction. In essence, I examined the sociocultural influences on teachers’ perceptions and the implications for classroom practice.

This study was a collective case study (Stake, 1995) involving four teachers and, according to Stake, a collective case study is one involving two or more subjects. Ragin and Becker (1992) relay that multiple case studies give the researcher thorough insight and the intricacies of the cases which provide familiarity. Flyvbjerg (2006) also argues that “cases are important for researchers’ own learning processes in developing the skills needed to do good research” in addition to the notion that cases “[are] suited to produce context-dependent knowledge” (p. 223). However, data were collected in three phases in order to select these teachers. In the first phase, nine teachers on staff as well as the principal completed surveys in order to garner an understanding of their knowledge about linguistic diversity. In the second phase, four teachers who provided information relevant to answering the research questions were selected for two in-depth interviews. In the final phase, these four teachers were selected in order

to get a deeper understanding of how sociocultural factors including, social, cultural, and political contexts impact language arts teaching. I interviewed and observed the teachers and interpreted the teachers' perceptions and their practices.

A naturalistic case study approach facilitated a comprehensive and holistic description of the four teachers' perspectives. Their perspectives shed light on how perceptions of linguistic diversity can affect decision-making processes in the classroom. According to Merriam (1988) this holistic view using the case study approach facilitates the investigation of complexities that exist within classrooms, exploration of teachers' personalities related to specific circumstances, examination of past procedures and the influences on the present, as well as the present procedures of the class, and compilation of information from multiple sources and presentation of this information in a variety of ways.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) articulate several characteristics and principles that lay the foundation for a naturalistic approach. These principles and characteristics are consistent with the methods and approaches that were undertaken in this study. Following are the authors' principles that are consistent with my study:

1. Study used qualitative methods of inquiry to best characterize the meanings and perspectives of the participating teachers, as qualitative methods are "more sensitive to and adaptable to the many mutually shaping influences and value patterns that may be encountered" (p. 40).
2. Research was conducted in context, in the natural setting of the teachers' classrooms.
3. The data collection instrument was primarily the researcher.
4. Data analysis was primarily inductive in efforts to identify multiple realities or perspectives of teachers.
5. Used case study as a reporting method (to allow for a better description of context, interactions, and influences on which analysis is derived).

Selection of Participants

Selection criteria. In order to select participants, I used purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2001, 2009) or what Flyvbjerg (2006) calls strategic sampling. I was interested in identifying teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism and the implications for language arts pedagogy. Therefore, a multi-leveled approach was used to select four teachers, in an elementary school with a multilingual student population in East Central Illinois, for in-depth case studies. Studying four teachers enabled me to get a rich description of their beliefs and practices (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In the first phase, nine teachers and the principal completed a survey to ascertain their ideas about bilingualism and bidialectalism (i.e., English language learners [ELLs] and non-prestigious dialect speakers). In the next phase, I interviewed four of these teachers who indicated knowledge of bilinguals and bidialectals. In the final phase, I observed these four teachers as they taught the English language arts to diverse students.

Criteria for including teachers were selecting teachers on a continuum including classroom demographic data; views on linguistic diversity; strategies they believed promote language development; their experience in teaching diverse students; beliefs about the role of the native language in learning English; and willingness to participate. For example, I included one teacher who expressed that the native language should only be used if there is something students do not understand. Other teachers believed it was important to maintain the native language and promote a dual language approach. In essence, by selecting from each continuum, I was able to present findings representing various views. In phases two and three, I selected teachers who, according to Bredekamp and Copple (2009) "acknowledge how their own cultural experience shapes their perspective" (p. 12).

Ethical considerations. Consistent with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) regulations, I sought permission from all participants prior to conducting the study. In light of the fact that there are gatekeepers (Dyson & Genishi, 2005), I first enlisted the help of the director of the Office of School-University Research Relations in the Bureau of Educational Research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) in finding a study site. She facilitated contact with the district superintendent, who welcomed the idea for a study at this school. I then contacted the school's principal via telephone to set up a meeting to discuss my study. I followed up with emails and other visits to solicit teachers' participation. Moreover, considering the reality that the principal has a critical task of managing the school as a whole and what occurs in these classrooms, I also asked the principal to participate in the initial survey. By including the principal, I had the opportunity to comprehend how school-wide policies can influence teachers' perceptions. With this inclusion, I better understood how the teachers' perceptions are shaped by factors such as personal beliefs, and school-accepted and nation-wide norms. Finally, I made it clear to all participants the purpose of the study, methods that would be used to collect data, issues of anonymity and confidentiality, dissemination of findings, and the fact that participation was voluntary.

School contexts and participants. The study site is an elementary school located in East Central Illinois. Winifred Elementary School (names of school and participants are pseudonyms) served mostly Caucasians and Latinos. Four hundred and thirty (430) students were enrolled at Winifred, a K-6 school at the time of the study. The only public elementary school in the township, the school boasted a state of the art Media Center with two classroom-sized computer laboratories, a fine arts wing, and bilingual and special needs classrooms. There were 36 teachers on staff including the principal, specialists (for example, music and band), physical education,

title I, and bilingual and ESL teachers. At Winifred there were two preschools, one for regular education students and the other for students with special needs (special needs might be ELLs or students with learning disabilities). Any child could attend the regular preschool but the special needs students had to be screened.

The school served students who were White (56.3%), Hispanic (40.3%), Multiracial/Ethnic (1.8%), Asian/Pacific Islander (1.0%), and Black (0.6%). With a 36.6% low-income rate, the school served 7.9% students with Limited-English Proficiency, and 22.9% received Individualized Education Program/Plan (IEP; School district report card, 2011). The 2009-2010 academic year was the first time that the school was considered a Title 1 school because they had approximately 40% of the elementary students on free or reduced lunch.

The major criterion for selecting this school was having a multilingual student population. Demographic information from the school district was examined to determine eligibility of teachers and students, and the decision to draw on this school was influenced by the potential number of bilinguals and bidialectals. The school had a diverse student population because of the rapidly growing Hispanic population and it is located in an area that is considered to be an entrance to Amish country. My intention was to focus mostly on bilingual issues and potential dialect issues.

Both the ISAT and Iowa tests were done annually at Winifred. The school also used the STAR Early Literacy, Math and Reading from first through sixth grade. At the time of the study, at the school-wide level, the staff was thinking about looking into a writing rubric to compare students across different school districts with similar demographics. However, the school had not made Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) for 2 years, and it was reported that the townspeople were blaming the Hispanics. However, there were poor white children who were underperforming and

that number was growing rapidly. Winifred (the town) was getting poorer, so in terms of the categories, it was not just the language minority group; it was across the board that students were underperforming. The school community faced various challenges and in addition to a growing language minority population, the number of Winifred's residents becoming poor was also affecting performance. In essence, language minority and poor white students were underperforming.

ELL program at Winifred. The ELL program was very new because there was more recent attention given to preparing teachers to meeting the needs of ELLs, more so than in previous years. In recent years they have had in-services and received books on dual language learners. Before they revamped the program for ELLs they had a bilingual teacher and the philosophy of the program was different. The teachers now felt this current ELL program did a better job at integrating content and language. With this new program, the ESL teacher assessed all students based on a language survey conducted at registration and the WIDA test was used. As a school community they did not believe they were meeting the needs of ELLs and, therefore, they screened all students to determine their language competence and the appropriate measures to take in order to meet their language needs. Teachers believed that the main challenge was to get the new students to feel comfortable in their new environment.

There was an ESL teacher who worked one-on-one with ELLs starting in the pre-K classrooms and this was built into the regular schedule. This individual session with the ESL teacher was done once per week for 10 minutes. The ESL teacher went once per week in the morning and once per week in the afternoon to facilitate the special education pre-K teacher's (Anna's) two groups of students. During the afternoon session that I observed, the ESL teacher worked with two students who needed accommodation the most in learning English.

Historical Context of the Site and Participants

Geographic location. This study took place in Winifred, a rural community in East Central Illinois. An entrance to one Amish community, Winifred is considered one of the most historically-rich towns in Central Illinois. Having a legacy of broomcorn, the town also boasts the famous series of books written by a father who lost his daughter to a vaccination for smallpox. Until 1916, most children were educated in small country schools or at home. During 1916 a new high school was built and a small building for K-4 for the “towns kids.” Leading up to the 1940s, country schools still existed. However, in 1948, the community unit school district was created and combined K-12 into one school district. The elementary school was then completed and connected to the high school, thereby, centralizing both operations under one roof (the Winifred School District is comprised of two parts: the Winifred Elementary School [K-6] and the Winifred Junior/Senior High School [7-12]). Additional classrooms were completed by 1960, bringing the total to 26 for the elementary school. By 1996, the Junior High was expanded by adding a cafeteria adjoining the gymnasium and all students in the district now use this facility. With constant expansion, in 2003, a new library, two computer laboratories, eight classrooms, chemistry laboratory, a new gymnasium, locker rooms, and offices for the superintendent were completed.

Population. Founded in 1855 when the state’s Central Railroad was built through the town, Winifred has a total population of 2,916 as of the 2010 census. With an increasingly diverse population, whites represented 89.0% of the population, Hispanic 19.9%, Native American 0.6%, other race 0.6%, Asian 0.5%, and Black 0.3%. The Amish population is estimated at approximately 10%; 17.3% of the population is reported to have a German ancestry, 9.8% English, 7.3% Irish, 2.7% Scottish, and 1.8% Italian. English, Spanish, German, two

Philippino languages, and Hindu were languages represented at the school. There was also an increase in poverty, which at the time of the study was 15.2%. At the popular tourist garden, visitors to the area can learn about the history and heritage of the local Amish and ride traditional buggy rides. Tourists are also at liberty to observe different farming styles from the latest in farming technology to the Amish farmers' traditional horse-drawn device.

In 1865 the Amish families moved to Central Illinois because they wanted to lead a stricter and simpler life, and felt that the Mennonite Church did not live up to their expectations. In this area, they are considered to be "House Amish," due to the fact that they prefer hosting services in their homes rather than a church building. With large simple homes, they rotate services from home to home. They have greatly influenced their environment with 25 Amish church districts in three counties. Although mostly known for farming (using horses), they have also excelled in woodwork with limited farm land. Sunday is observed as the Sabbath and a day of rest; therefore, the Amish shops are usually closed. The public school, Winifred Elementary, served a number of Amish students, although there were five private K-8 Amish schools, and one K-12 Mennonite school in the district. The K-12 had an enrollment of 57 students while the K-8 schools each ranged between 37 and 43 students.

There was a wave of immigrants from Mexico to Winifred in the 1960s that led to further diversity. Several Mexicans migrated to Winifred for work during this period, and initially these were males who, after they were settled, sent for their families. With two broom factories as the major employers, Kernek (2001) conveys that there is an increasing Hispanic population, who, for many, are drawn to "manufacturing and agriculture-related jobs" found in Winifred.

Participants. To be selected, participants had to be teachers at Winifred with language minority students enrolled in their classes. They also had to demonstrate a willingness to

participate in the study and were told that it was completely voluntary, and they were at liberty to withdraw at any time. Participants were informed that the study was governed by stipulations by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's Institutional Review Board. Potential participants were identified at the end of January 2011, first by meeting with all teachers on staff and explaining the study goals and timeline. All the participants were white females with teaching experience ranging from 2 to over 32 years. However, teachers who were case studies had a minimum of 8 years teaching and volunteered to participate in the study.

The first four teachers described below were the case studies, followed by the other five teachers and the principal who completed the survey; however, the four case studies are further described in chapter four.

Case study teachers.

Anna Kirby. Anna had been teaching at Winifred for 7 years and had a bachelor's degree plus 10 hours. She had 24 years of teaching experience and was the special education pre-K teacher at the time of the study. Having worked across grade levels (with both older and younger students), she has always worked with special needs students.

Nancy Roscoe. Having 30 years of teaching experience, Nancy, one of the RTI teachers, had a master's degree in education and taught small groups of students to get them on grade level. She had several bilingual students and was a Title 1 reading teacher at Winifred for a little under 30 years.

Sue Hill. As the RTI coordinator, Sue had 8 years of teaching experience. Her first year as a classroom teacher was in Tennessee, and she had always done remediation. Holding a master's degree, she was the Special Education Resource, K-3 teacher, at the time of the study.

Katie Hogan. Bilingual in English and Spanish, Katie is a fifth grade teacher and had been teaching for 30 years at this particular school, although she was originally a substitute teacher for approximately 15 years. She had been at the fifth grade level, full time, for 15 years and was hired as an interim for English and language arts in the high school and junior high before going to the elementary. Holding a master's degree in education plus 22 hours, she also had the reading and language arts endorsement.

Survey teachers.

Barbara Gove. A fourth grade teacher, Barbara, taught both ELLs and native English speaking students. Having 19 students, Hispanic and white were almost evenly split. Four credits short of a master's degree, she had been teaching for three years at Winifred.

Kay Coleman. Kay was a first grade teacher with ELLs and native speakers. With a bachelor's degree and a minor in Spanish she was able to communicate with her students and parents. For the last two years she has been teaching at Winifred, and followed closely the state standards for language arts. Of her 19 students, nine were bilingual in Spanish and English.

Mary Parker. As a first grade teacher, Mary obtained a master's degree plus 16 hours. For 13 years she has been a classroom teacher and taught students from diverse backgrounds including Latinos, Asians, African Americans, and whites. In her first grade class with 20 students, she had 4 bilingual students who spoke both English and Spanish.

Kelly White. Over 12 years Kelly has taught music and band K-12. She had a bachelor's degree and taught Asian, African American, white, and Latino students. The languages represented in her classes were English, Spanish, and German.

Lori Fields. Thirty-two years as a classroom teacher, Lori, a third grade teacher, had a master's degree and taught students from diverse backgrounds. Other than English, she listed Spanish, German, and two Philippino languages, spoken by students in her class.

Principal: Rose Stewart. At the time of the study, Rose was in administration for the last two years. In all, she has been an educator for 20 years having taught in this school district for 18 years with 32 additional hours beyond her master's degree. Her experience in Winifred goes back even further because she attended this school.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I chose a reflexive approach in relation to my identity and the impact on this study. Through this reflexivity, I acknowledge that as a researcher my observations and interpretations were shaped by my personal experiences. What I documented and how events were interpreted were influenced by my lived experiences. I am cognizant of the fact that I entered the site loaded with assumptions: Assumptions about teaching because of my 10 years of teaching experience at both the elementary and tertiary levels. I not only had ideas about how to teach but particularly how to teach students from diverse backgrounds.

I was also at the point of my career where I was interrogating what it means to be literate and the various ways that competence in a language may be demonstrated. I was raised in a family where it was important for me to speak "properly," and I was also still trying to negotiate what stance to take regarding how best to teach language minority students. Even though I knew the importance of teaching the language of wider communication, I knew it had to be in what I call an "authentic" way. So I had a difficult time describing instead of evaluating teaching

methods. Therefore, my observations and what I documented were subjective for these and other reasons.

As a black female who grew up in Jamaica, I have had first-hand experiences of the complexities associated with the divide between those who were considered fluent English speakers by Jamaican standards, and those who were labeled as speakers of “broken” English. In Jamaica, classroom instruction has always been in English due to the country’s historical ties with the British. Although most Jamaicans are of African descent and speak a native language that has West African roots, for the most part, the native language has not been affirmed by educators. Recently, with a shift in language ideologies, many Jamaican scholars and linguists are now calling for a revision of the education system as it pertains to the use of the native tongue. Teachers and teacher educators are now encouraged to promote the affirmation of the native language, which was once viewed (and still is by many) as broken English.

My “overlapping identities” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 57) surfaced in data collection and analysis. As a former elementary teacher and understanding the complication of family, societal, and school expectations about the teaching and learning of language, I looked at several factors in teasing apart the teaching of language to students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Until today, my maternal grandmother insists that I speak in Standard Jamaican English when we converse via telephone. It is not only a sign of being well-educated but also one’s economic standing, and my family insisted that I speak “properly” which meant, Standard English. My maternal grandmother, who was a stickler for “speaking properly,” would constantly correct me as a child. As a child I spoke both Standard Jamaican English and Jamaican and cannot specifically say at what point I learned either. However, I knew English was the language to be used in school, at church, in official settings, etc.

By the time I graduated from college, more scholars were beginning to embrace Jamaican as a language with its own grammatical structures: A language, that these scholars argued came with the slave trade. When I became a teacher, this influenced the way in which I interacted with students, who, for many, were not fluent English speakers. During my first year of teaching, I was conscious of the fact that it was my duty to affirm my students' native language but at the same time prepare them to speak the official language of the country. By my third year of teaching, the Ministry of Education had undertaken a project to revamp the education system and acknowledge Jamaican as a language that would be used along with English in classrooms. Teachers were trained in a series of workshops, in which I participated, on various ways to ensure that both languages were validated in classrooms. Emphasis was now placed on giving students the opportunity to translate from one language to the next.

Given my experiences and the language discrepancy here in U.S. classrooms, I see many similarities in the power relations between speakers of Standard American English, non-standard dialects of English, and other languages, including Spanish. I argue that although I am not an insider to the language issues within the U.S. because of my foreigner status, my experiences helped me to better understand some of the complexities related to language teaching and learning. However, I tried to be careful, because even though there might be similarities, situations are experienced differently by participants as they continuously negotiate meanings in different cultural contexts (Eisenhart, 2001). Therefore, although my identities and roles were crucial in interpreting the data collected, it was imperative that I queried my identities and roles with regard to the study. Moreover, I was forced to think about how my life experiences, having been raised on an island that was once a British colony, and being of African descent, influenced the way in which this study was conducted and analyzed.

Data Sources and Collection Procedures

The main sources of data for this study were surveys, interviews and observations. For the first phase, nine teachers and the principal completed surveys for me to get an understanding of their views on ELLs, and speakers of non-prestigious dialects. In the next phase, I interviewed four teachers whose responses offered in the survey significantly contributed to my research questions. The third phase was in-depth case studies of four teachers consisting of interviews and classroom observations. Data collection spanned approximately 4 months, starting February 1, 2011 through May 26, 2011. Conducting the study in phases enabled me to identify a smaller sample of teachers for further investigation of the teaching of linguistically and culturally diverse students (see Tables M1, M2, and M3 in Appendix M for Phases of Data Collection and Analysis).

Phase 1. The study began with an initial survey of nine teachers and the principal, which was designed to collect data about the teachers' education, professional experience, perceptions on linguistic diversity and teaching goals. Contact was made with the school via email (see appendix A) and telephone (see appendix B) to inform potential participants about the study's goals and methods. I then presented my study goals and procedures to the staff at a meeting facilitated by the principal. I invited all 36 teachers, but only nine consented. Participants were given consent letters (see appendix C) in order for them to sign in agreement with the procedures and time requirements. The survey (see appendix E) was given to the nine teachers and principal who gave consent to participate in order to determine their views on bilingualism and bidialectalism beginning February 4, 2011. Surveys were completed for individual teachers at different times and were returned within one week (it was estimated that surveys would take 30 minutes to complete, and the venue and times of completion were left up to the teachers).

The survey was intended to get a general understanding of the teachers' perceptions of bilinguals and bidialectals as well as their general understanding of working with language minority populations. I wanted to know their classroom demographics, languages and dialects spoken by students, ways language minority students were accommodated, and general instructional activities that were used.

Phase 2. After the initial survey, teachers who provided relevant data were drafted for two in-depth interviews (see appendices F and G). Four teachers were selected with divergent views regarding teaching students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Criteria included experiences with language minority students, lesson adaptation to meet language needs of dialect speakers and speakers of other languages, how their own backgrounds affected teaching students from other backgrounds, and their views on the role of the native language or dialect in literacy acquisition. The underlying premise was that teachers' perceptions of linguistic diversity would impact their approaches, materials, and participation structures in classroom settings. Therefore, these four teachers who demonstrated knowledge of working with diverse students on the initial survey were selected for in-depth interviews. These interviews lasted for approximately 45 minutes, in which teachers were asked about the aspects of language emphasized in their teaching. Participants were asked to give examples of how students' native languages and dialects were supported. They were also asked to discuss the selection process for language arts materials and how choices were made with regard to texts used in classrooms.

Additionally, teachers were asked to discuss the languages they speak and the preparation they have undertaken to teach ELLs and other culturally diverse students. They were asked to recount their perceived successes and or challenges they have experienced with ELLs and dialect speakers. Regarding instructional methods, they were prompted to discuss possible reasons for

the underperformance of language minority students and whether they believed that these students should receive explicit instruction in skill areas. Essentially, they were asked to highlight what language support, if any, language minority students received.

Phase 3. In the final phase, I focused my attention on these four teachers who had language minority students. These teachers were contacted for further participation in the study. After they expressed agreement to participate in this phase, I requested that they distribute consent and assent letters for parents and students, respectively (see appendices H and I). Teachers were observed three times weekly, March 28, 2011 through May 26, 2011. These observations served to identify how they perceived bilingualism and bidialectalism and how their perceptions affected their teaching of the English language arts. I investigated if there was a link between their perceptions and pedagogy (see appendix J). Additionally, I had informal conversations/debriefing interviews after classroom observations (see appendix K) with the teachers throughout data collection, whenever I had the opportunity to clarify issues that came up during observations. These conversations broadened my knowledge of classroom events as well as limited the imposition of etic perspectives that might be inaccurate. To ensure that these conversations were not misconstrued, I documented these in my retrospective journal and later included in my field notes. Also, in conjunction with the field notes and the interviews, I asked teachers to share with me curricular documents and texts (basal readers etc.). In perusing these documents, I examined whether there were diverse representations of a wide cross-section of racial and ethnic groups.

Furthermore, during observations, I took notes of how the teachers and students communicated and the language spoken by both teachers and students as they interacted. I documented how discourse was negotiated and if students who were considered to be from

linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds were afforded the opportunity to use their native languages/dialects. Attention was also given to teachers' responses to students who did not speak in Standard American English and whether the environment supported the native language as students learned the language of wider communication. To make certain that I was using a critical approach, for my field notes, I included observer's comments (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). My observer comments enabled me to reflect on the theory informing the instructional methods employed by these teachers. By making observer comments I was not only recording events (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) but also adding my ongoing interpretations of these classroom events.

Specifically, I took note of the classroom environment and how lessons were structured. I took into account the arrangement of desks, posters on the wall (if there were), books that were made available, and if these were multicultural and the time allotted for activities. In addition, I tried to capture the dialogue between teacher and students and the strategies that were frequently used. I checked if there was reliance on basal readers or if these were supplemented by a variety of materials. Moreover, I tracked if teaching strategies were varied and built on students' experiences. For example, I documented if elements of students' different cultures were represented in classroom activities. I also noted if the focus was on rote-learning in which students were drilled in a skills-based fashion.

After each observation I wrote a summary of the day's events. I tried to capture significant language-related interactions that formed the basis for coding and data analysis (Krathwohl, 1998). As a participant observer, I tried to experience observation simultaneously both as an insider and outsider and recorded what I observed as well as how I experienced the events (Krathwohl). I was careful to differentiate documentation of my observation from how I

have experienced these events. Also, I documented how students were invited to participate in activities and the language register used in their responses. It must be noted that teachers' availability resulted in variations in the number of observations.

Anna. Anna was observed 13 times Monday through Wednesday, but due to a schedule conflict we did not have debriefing interviews. She was observed between 12:30 and 1:00 p.m. when her group of afternoon pre-K students came in for the day. These sessions were organized to heighten students' awareness to environmental print, social graces, and weather, etc.

Nancy. All 10 observations and four debriefing interviews were related to Nancy's RTI first grade group that met in the hallway. Sessions were held 8:15-8:45 daily, and Nancy was observed Monday through Wednesday. She structured sessions to practice word lists to improve reading speed.

Sue. Sue was observed five times from 9:30-10:00 a.m. Monday through Wednesday with a group of five first graders. Three debriefing interviews were conducted when it was convenient for her. The goal of these sessions was to reinforce skills that classroom teachers were focusing on in order to get students on grade level. Initially, she had a student teacher, and her observation started later than the others.

Katie. I observed Katie 12 times and had five debriefing interviews. I observed nine reading sessions and three writing sessions with her fifth graders. The reading sessions I observed were scheduled from 1:00-1:30 p.m. daily, Monday through Wednesday, and the writing sessions were Tuesdays, 10:50-11:35 a.m.

In the final interviews (see appendix L) at the end of the study, my focus was on the successes, challenges, and tensions that were associated with teaching the English language arts to students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. I asked teachers to share with

me their thoughts and meanings assigned to classroom experiences. Taking into account that societal norms, to a large extent, play an integral role in the way classrooms are structured and the experiences that students are afforded, I also tried to find out how other societal factors influence teachers' views (societal factors include ideas about what constitutes a prestigious language, stereotypes of language minority students, etc.). Teachers were asked to discuss with me the tensions they experienced in their teaching of students who were from non-mainstream backgrounds. I audio taped all interviews and transcribed them shortly afterward. In summary, centering my attention on the beliefs and practices of these teachers shed light on how students' language needs were met.

Data Analysis

I began data analysis as soon as I started collecting data and consistently analyzed throughout the data collection process. Using a constant comparative method (Patton, 1990), I did an analysis of the surveys and interviews, to “group answers . . . to common questions [and] analyze different perspectives on central issues” (p. 376). Comparison is a central tenet of investigation (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011). My analysis also followed guidelines as espoused by Goetz and LeCompte (1981) who relay that this method “combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all social incidents observed,” (p. 58). I combined my interview and observation data in order to categorize my responses. As the interviews were recorded and classified, I compared them across categories. Furthermore, as data collection proceeded, including interviews and observations, I continuously refined and analyzed as I coded my data. I compared series of events and previous events with current ones.

Phase 1. Preliminary data analysis was done at this stage to determine teachers' educational background, years of teaching experience, motivation for teaching, experience teaching language minority students etc. This preliminary analysis enabled me to select four teachers who expressed knowledge of working with culturally diverse students in addition to having these students in their classes. I read through all the surveys multiple times, while searching for emerging patterns and categories relevant to answering the first research question, "What are teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism?" Teachers' real names and identities were maintained until after phase 3 (of the study) in order to track participants; thereafter, pseudonyms were used.

I selected teachers for phase two with divergent views regarding the teaching of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Criteria for selecting teachers included their responses to the following: experiences with language minority students, lesson adaptation to meet language needs of dialect speakers and speakers of other languages, how their own backgrounds affected them teaching students from other backgrounds, and their views on the role of the native language or dialect in literacy acquisition. Their responses answered the first research question "What are teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism?"

Phase 2. During phase two, I read through all the interview data sources to find the recurrent patterns and themes. I then developed categories based on these patterns. According to Dyson and Genishi (2005) some categories may be broad as well as redundant in the initial stage of data coding or open coding. Therefore, I revisited the data sources several times in order to find recurrent patterns. By doing so, I got the opportunity to refine/revise the categories already established and identified emerging ones. In addition, I looked for recurrent patterns for a single participant as well as across participants due to the fact that I collected data from multiple

participants (Merriam, 2001). An analysis enabled me to examine variations across teachers' perceptions and the effect on language arts pedagogy, and gave me the opportunity to understand the individual cases. Furthermore, I revisited the research questions to ensure that categories that were established were aligned with the research questions.

In order to select four teachers for phase three, I chose individuals with divergent views. Although access and openness in participation and supplying information relevant to the study were important criteria (Krathwohl, 1998), other criteria included responses to the following: preparation in working with diverse students; perception of school programs implemented for ELLs; perceived successes and challenges working with these students; reasons cited for possible underperformance of these students; and approaches, methods and strategies they employed to develop language proficiency. Based on their responses I selected four teachers with divergent views in order to account for stances such as "English only instruction," "dual language approach" as well as teachers who believed that language minority students have experiences that should be harnessed in the teaching/learning process.

Phase 3. To answer the second and third research questions I gave attention to how literacy events occurred and the meanings that teachers assigned to these literacy events. These literacy events were unraveled for me to recognize the participation structures or "ways of arranging verbal interaction," (Philips, 1972, p. 377) in the classes. Philips argues that verbal participation may include the teacher interacting with the students as a whole, in small groups, or allowing them to work independently. Mainly, I investigated how the literacy events that occurred in different participation structures were influenced by teachers' perceptions of language learning and the role of the native language in language acquisition. I examined how these perceptions supported and/or hindered literacy learning. Therefore, as I detangled the

events, not only in my observations, but also the interviews, I looked for recurrent patterns to develop coding categories.

In writing up the cases, I used an ascending grade level order starting with Anna followed by Nancy, Sue, and Katie. For each teacher, I examined the general classroom context, curricular context (goals and objectives), teaching strategies/routines, teaching materials/resources, and significance of case. Analytic narrative vignettes were developed and chosen to introduce each case because these were generally representative of lessons observed and captured the physical classroom arrangements and learning aids. In essence, I summarized information pertaining to each teacher based on these categories and used vignettes to portray strategies used in teaching the language arts and student engagement.

The next level of analysis was to identify categories to demonstrate similarities and differences among teachers. For this analysis, I looked at how the teachers organized their classrooms, the students they worked with, materials used, and whether they accommodated for language minority students. Examples of categories are (a) emphasis on speaking and writing in English, (b) promotion of skills-based approach in the language arts, (c) reinforcement of reading and writing strategies, and (d) support of oral language development through exposure to both English and Spanish.

Having refined the recurrent patterns into categories and subcategories that answered my research questions and were in alignment with the theoretical orientation that underpinned this study, I expanded the categories into themes and assertions. To ensure that the themes represented the data, I triangulated the themes by revisiting the data, looking for confirming and disconfirming evidence across the sources (field notes, interviews, curricular documents) as well as within individual sources (for e.g., interviews; Erickson, 1987). Wide-spread evidence on a

particular theme across multiple sources, and within a single source, suggested that my assertions fairly represented the data collected. Moreover, construction of analytic narrative vignettes was done after thoroughly triangulating the themes.

One theme that emerged across survey and interview data from all participants was: Framing English language learners as Hispanic/Latino while virtually excluding the Amish. Two themes that emerged across the four case studies were (a) developing oral language for English language learners; and (b) reinforcing reading skills and strategies for English language learners. The next two themes emerged across only two teachers: (a) drilling and repetition to improve reading for English language learners; and (b) structuring response to intervention (RTI) for English language learners was important for two teachers.

In conclusion, an in-depth qualitative approach enabled me to unravel the connections between teachers' perceptions and pedagogy. The data generated shed some light on the extent to which perceptions affected classroom experiences. An underlying assumption of the analysis is that is imperative that teachers reflect on how their perceptions can influence how they interact with students who are from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Reflective teachers can support the language learning of these diverse students and improve teaching as a practice.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present findings and analysis related to the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism?
2. How do teachers' practices address the needs of bilinguals and bidialectals in language arts pedagogy?
3. How do social, cultural and political factors influence teachers' perceptions and practices?

Findings are organized in the following way: First, using survey and interview data, the findings to the first research questions are organized thematically across all teachers. Second, cases of four teachers are presented to answer questions two and three. Finally, themes across cases are highlighted.

Teachers' Perceptions of Bilingualism and Bidialectalism

Framing English language learners as Latino/Hispanic while virtually excluding the Amish. In this section the terms Latino and Hispanic will be used interchangeably because both terms were used by teachers and were almost evenly split across all participants. Most teachers spoke at length about the Latino students and used the word Latino or Hispanic as a synonym for ELLs. Barbara explained how students were assessed for language competence by stating that "Assessment for Hispanic students is done through the ELL program. They have to take a test and pass with mastery. If they can do that they do not get put into the ELL program because they are showing competence." Her use of the term Hispanic in response to assessment for ELLs suggests that she assumes that Hispanic students are ELLs and therefore need testing, and regards only Hispanic students as ELLs. English language learners can come from any language group, including the Amish students who attended this school. In addition, many students of

Spanish descent are native English speakers. Mahon (2006) explains that “the Hispanic category includes both ELLs and English-only Hispanics” (p. 481); therefore, it is erroneous to use the terms Hispanic and Latino in defining ELLs.

Nancy also conflated race/ethnicity and language in describing her experience teaching students who are non-native English speakers. Although she included on her classroom demographic sheet that “I have had children of the Amish faith who speak an ‘Old German,’” she confused race/ethnicity with language in explaining how she tried to accommodate for linguistically diverse students. She stated:

I do not adapt (instruction) but I do explain the meanings of words more than I would to a white population. Even the smallest vocabulary words should not be taken for granted they know the meaning . . . most of the time they do not know the meaning and they do not ask for clarification.

Her statement implies that even though she identified Amish students as language minority students, she did not need to accommodate for them as much as she would “non white” students. For Nancy, Hispanics might automatically be perceived as needing intervention while white ELLs did not receive any help. In this scenario, she made a concerted effort to teach vocabulary words that Hispanic students would find challenging to understand, but Amish students who are also ELLs might be overlooked in the process. It seemed she was mistakenly categorizing students based on markers other than language or academic competence.

Additionally, Nancy explained that she was not sure how her background has affected her interaction with students from linguistically diverse backgrounds. She was raised in Winifred and attended this elementary school. She recounted “I was in third grade when our first Hispanic family moved to town and one of their five children was in my class.” She used this example to talk about meeting students and people who are from different backgrounds. She elaborated that “Our Spanish community has been here for awhile and some students are second generation and

have grown up with dual language.” What she failed to highlight is the constant presence of the Amish predating the Spanish-speaking community and that Winifred is considered an entrance to Amish country.

Currently, the German ancestry in the town is reported at 17.3% as of January 2011 (Onboard Informatics, 2011) and Rose, the principal, indicated that Spanish, Indian (Hindi), Dutch and German were languages spoken by students at her school. However, due to the race- and language-based categories on the school report card, it would appear that the Amish students were only accounted for in terms of language on the principal’s demographic data sheet and not their cultural identity. The principal also pointed out that having being raised in this community, she had several friends who spoke Spanish and transitioned into English, and in high school and college she learned Spanish as a second language. She had also been an educator in this district for 20 years but has recently learned more about the standards for ELLs.

This complication in naming and identity for the Amish was also illustrated by Lori and Kelly. Lori, a classroom teacher for 32 years, described her classroom demographics as “40% Hispanic, 5% Amish, 5% Asian, and 50% white” and explained that she assessed her students through speaking and reading their written work. She made accommodations automatically and believed that having a firm foundation in the native language would enhance students’ ability to excel academically. Kelly, having taught for 12 years, had Asians, African Americans, White and Latinos and explained that the languages represented were English, Spanish, and German. Articulating the challenge in teaching ELLs she mentioned “It can be challenging (teaching ELLs) but the students help with translating” and she also had Spanish translators come in to facilitate the process.

Therefore, even though the language, and culture of the Amish were categorized by some teachers, other than being identified by teachers and the principal, the lack of attention to their language needs was consistent with a 2004 report by a teacher on staff who was enrolled at a nearby university, revealing that even though there was “Improving knowledge of Hispanic and Amish cultures . . . no one on staff speaks Dutch to help communicate with in-coming Amish kindergarteners who at times speak little English” (School Profile Report, 2004).

Katie’s experience with non-native English speakers came about when her mother taught English to Mexican workers in the 1960s and she explained that her family has been immersed in the Mexican culture. She recounted that in the 1960s her family had close ties with many Mexican workers who migrated to the area. In the initial stage these were only males, and after they were settled they sent for their families to join them. Her mother was instrumental in teaching them English and in the process of interacting with the families, she learned Spanish while the children learned English. As with the case of Nancy, Katie was also raised in Winifred and the needs of Latinos dominated the conversation about ELLs.

In summary, the Amish students were sidelined in the conversation about language minority students. Even though teachers and the principal indicated that there were Amish students at the school, the conversation about the needs of ELLs was based on Latinos. Hispanic/Latino students were categorized as ELLs, and the Amish students who are white but also ELLs were mainly excluded from the conversation. To a certain extent, teachers associated ELLs with Spanish speaking students, and this association had implications for both Latinos and Amish students.

Practices That Address the Needs of Bilinguals and Bidialectals in Language Arts Pedagogy and Influence of Social, Cultural, and Political Factors on Teachers' Perceptions and Practices

Four cases. This section describes the four teachers who were case studies (Anna, Nancy, Sue, and Katie).

Rationale for organization of teacher cases. Teachers are organized by grade level beginning with the pre-K special education teacher, followed by one of the RTI teachers who worked with first grade students who were performing below grade level. The special education resource, K-3 teacher, who was also the RTI coordinator, is next, followed by a fifth grade teacher who taught both English speaking students and language minority students. The cases could have been arranged in several ways but I have used an ascending grade level order of Anna, Nancy, Sue, and Katie. The grade level arrangement is meant to give readers a sense of the type of intervention that was put in place, starting at the lower level, for ELLs who were performing below grade level. I then present the fifth grade teacher in order for readers to understand the type of language teaching and support students received at the fifth grade level. Demonstrating teachers' practices, each case begins with a vignette of classroom instruction followed by the classroom context, curricular context, and significance of the case.

Anna: Developing oral language for special education pre-K English language learners.

Upon entering the special education pre-K class, there is a chart with class rules. The rules state that students play kindly; talk kindly; work and play safely; do what teachers ask; and are found where they were told to be. Situated in the front of Anna's class is a large notice board. On this board hangs a calendar and weather bear (weather chart). There are also colors and the names of the colors on this notice board. Next to the weather bear is a chart that says "Manners matter." A computer with Internet access is beside the notice board as well as a Smart board.

In close proximity to the computer and notice board, there is a large rug (rug has 20 squares of different colors [red, orange, green, blue, purple]). Almost centering the

room are two sets of small tables and chairs for younger children. These are used for table top activities such as sorting puzzles, painting, and manipulation of blocks. At the back of the class is a chalkboard with nothing written on it. Above this chalkboard are upper and lower case letters of the alphabet from A-Z and there are also numerals from 0-9 written at the top of this board.

At 12:32 the students and teacher file into the class. All the students are present except Jordan. Anna tells them to sit on the carpet. Elena asks why. Anna says they are going to be doing things differently. She tells them that they will start with a story and then flip things around. She tells them to be quiet. Students are still fidgeting. Pedro's rocks fall from his pocket onto the floor. Bryan helps him to pick them up.

It is now 12:37 and Anna tells them to have a seat on the floor. She tells them to find a square on the rug. Pedro says that he saw Elena at the park. Anna tells students to take some deep breaths. She says "We are going to be doing things a bit differently today." Pilar asks why. Anna does not respond.

Anna shows a bunny (stuffed toy) to the class at 12:40. She says that this bunny will go with the book they are about to read. She points to the title of the book and reads "Tucker's best school." She questions students about what they think the book is about. Anna begins to read aloud at 12:41. She reads "Where's Tucker? asked Tucker's father." Students move closer to Anna as she reads. She flips the page and continues to read "Tucker peeked out of hiding. 'I don't want to go to school,' he said." Anna points on pictures as she reads and students look on the pictures.

"'Hey, I remember the first time I went to school,' father said. 'I was scared!' 'You were?' 'Yes, but I did it and you can, too!'" Anna reads further and stops periodically for students to call words and talk briefly about the pictures. She tells the students to pronounce the word "hug." She makes the sound the letter "h" makes. Students then chime in and say, "h-h-hug." As Anna reads about objects she shows them to the students. She reads about Tucker painting and shows her students a bottle of paint. Anna then reads that Tucker participates in music and she uses a shaker to make sounds. At 12:46 Anna wraps up the story and says, "Now they (characters in the story) are probably singing let's pack up like we do when we pack up." (At the end of each activity Anna and the students would sing a jingle as they put away materials they were using, for example, paint, blocks, etc.). She reads the last page and they all look at the pictures.

Anna transitions to signs at 12:48. She tells students "Let's do our signs before we press the bunny. She shows the sign with the word "slow" written on it. Pilar explains that it means "kids are walking to school." She then shows the sign of the skull and cross bones. Pedro says that means "Don't eat or drink." Anna shows several other signs, for example, the exit sign, stop sign, and railroad crossing signs are shown and Bryan, Elena and Pilar identify them.

After two minutes of doing the signs, Anna moves on to pictures for students to identify. She shows a picture of President Obama and students say "Obama." She stops

the picture activity and lines students up for a bathroom break. Students return after approximately four minutes. Bryan reminds Anna that they still need to “do” the bunny. Anna had promised before reading the story that they would “do” the bunny. She presses the bunny and the music plays. Students dance and hop around like a bunny.

Pilar leaves with the speech pathologist at 12:57. The students do the pledge of allegiance with Pedro as the flag boy. They then transition into the “Where o where?” song.

Students sing “Where o where is my friend, Pedro?” They sing this line three times. Pedro says, “Here I am!” They continue to sing and ask for Bryan. Bryan says “Here I am!” Elena is next and she answers and says she is there.

This vignette brings to light the routines that were followed between 12:30 and 1:00 p.m. Wednesday, April 13, 2011. Anna settled the students on the carpet as they regularly did during my observations. She then read *Tucker’s Best School Day* (Winget, 2006). For this read aloud, Anna started by asking questions about the title of the story to activate students’ background knowledge. She asked the students what they thought the story was about. Throughout the read aloud, Anna brought students’ attention to the illustrations and the conversation Tucker and his father were having about Tucker going to school. She wrapped up the read aloud by having students look at the pictures.

Moving on to environmental signs, Anna evaluated their knowledge of these and each student was able to correctly identify all the signs and tell what they signified. Next, she showed pictures and students in a chorus named the individuals on each. For example, students were able to establish the identity of President Obama when shown his picture. Students then sang a jingle that they used as a roll call and students answered to indicate they were present. Although for this session, for the most part, they followed typical routines, Anna slightly rearranged her session and started with a read aloud. She explained that they were doing things differently and students were curious and asked the reason but she did not explain.

Anna was interested in literacy issues pertaining to ELLs and using a dual language approach in teaching these students. Seven students were in her afternoon session and were from diverse backgrounds including White, Hispanic, Black, and Asian; three students were beginning to learn English. Working alongside a bilingual aide, she organized instruction in both Spanish and English. For her, it was important to engage students in activities such as drama, songs, jingles etc. that would promote language development.

Her experience learning a new language was in high school when she completed the Spanish as a second language requirement but she was not fluent in Spanish. However, she explained that she was very comfortable interacting with her Spanish-speaking students. It made her nervous though to communicate with parents as she stated that “my parent communication may not be as smooth as I would like it to be.” Therefore, her aide facilitated the home-school communication with Spanish-speaking parents.

Classroom context. Anna worked with two groups of students; seven in the morning and seven in the afternoon and both groups of students had ELLs. Anna had White, Hispanic, Black, and Asian students; students spoke English and Spanish. Of the seven students she taught when I observed her afternoon sessions, three were beginning to learn English; throughout my observations her Spanish-speaking aide would intervene to clarify communication. The only Black student, in the afternoon session, moved away from the school district during data collection.

Students tested and qualified for special needs services and these special needs students were sometimes also ELLs. Special needs could also range from autism to a child who might only need an extra boost to learn. Daily sessions for Anna’s preschool (preschool for students with special needs), lasted two and a half hours for both morning and afternoon.

Two students enrolled in her morning sessions were ELLs and two of the three ELLs in the afternoon had not heard too much English based on the teacher's evaluation. These students had gone through the preschool screening process and were referred to as case studies because they exhibited signs of having learning needs. They were further tested by the school psychologist, in English, to ensure that the initial test was relatively accurate and then students were referred for special education preschool. After this referral an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) was developed and parents were asked if they were willing to have their children make use of this service. If parents did not want to take up this offer they had the option to sign a refusal form indicating that they were offered help but did not want it. Anna explained that this was the regular procedure for referring students.

Curricular context. Anna wanted her students to work on vocabulary words and letter recognition (including some initial sounds). On a typical day, she worked with students who had language needs and others with special needs; she ensured that she had a number of activities to keep the schedule moving. A number of pictures were used and on her classroom schedule she used pictures to depict tasks students were required to complete. Many real objects or pictures of the objects were also used for students to actually see because she believed it would be hard for students to connect meaning if they had never seen the objects. Her goal was to make her sessions interactive with a lot of songs and jingles. Learning centers were set up such as sensory center, listening etc. to engage her students and all the senses were involved in the learning process. At the sensory center, she created the space for students to make letters in shaving cream or make words in sand.

In addition to the sensory center, Anna had several other centers, including housekeeping, blocks and book center. At the book center students got the opportunity to peruse books and talk

about pictures. Although students were not yet reading some already knew their letters and could retell stories. Students even had their favorite stories that they wanted to go to several times. In essence, she tried to engage students in a variety of activities in an interactive way.

With NCLB, Anna stated that the administration realized that they needed to organize instruction to meet the needs of all subgroups. Teachers were now required to go to workshops that will prepare them to meet the needs of language minority students. The administration had been very supportive, she mentioned, in terms of sensitizing teaching staff to the needs of language minority students.

At the end of the previous semester, Anna attended a workshop, sponsored by the state that emphasized strategies that may be used with language minority students and their families. This workshop was out of town and lasted for two days. There were several activities geared toward informing teachers about how to involve parents, which she thought was beneficial because of her low level of comfort working with non-English speaking parents. She explained that in a lot of cases, parents of her students sat in meetings, and they were the only non-native English speakers in the meeting with an interpreter and she felt they (parents) needed encouragement.

At this workshop she attended, several suggestions were made to get these parents involved in the school community. The facilitators at the workshop recommended that teachers collaborate with parents on projects for them to feel a part of the school community. A suggestion was for teachers to make a class recipe book and have every parent come and treat the class to their child's favorite recipe. She said that although the cooking may or may not be done at school this might be an unthreatening way to get some reluctant parents to participate in classroom activities.

Exposure to both languages was Anna's firm belief, and this was evident during data collection. She would count in English and then allow the aide to count in Spanish for students to make the connection. The aide regularly pitched in to facilitate this dual language exposure. She tried to be as concise as possible so that students were not confused when given directions that required them (students) to respond in some way; she wanted to get a sense of whether they understood or not. If there were failed communication, the aide would then intervene.

According to Anna, ELLs may underperform for various reasons similar to students who speak English. She asserted that a student might not be interested or might be having trouble, and then having to deal with two languages made learning difficult. She wanted her students to feel comfortable talking because, "If they're unwilling to talk they will not talk in any language or do anything." She further said, "Your key is for them (students) to feel safe and comfortable enough to talk."

Teaching strategies/routines. At the preschool level, Anna explicated that she used several strategies to develop students' language proficiency. Songs, file folder games, play centers among other activities were used to promote language development, and she capitalized on spontaneous opportunities that happened in play during center time to enhance literacy development. For example, she mentioned that she used drama to get students to learn various aspects of the language. Sometimes she allowed students to cut a shape in play dough or play a bingo game in order to develop their language proficiency.

In summary, Anna used a variety of activities to develop students' language competence. She used play centers, games, jingles, and drama for students to engage in the learning process. Visuals and hands-on activities bring meaning to learning language she articulated. There was bilingual and ESL support and that helped Anna meet her goals. At the time of the study her

Spanish speaking bilingual aide communicated with students in Spanish and helped with translating and sending home notes to Spanish-speaking parents. Anna pointed out that it was important for language minority students to hear both languages and she emphasized that her students had that opportunity.

Teaching materials/resources. Anna believed that it was imperative for teachers to model language and use manipulatives in their instruction. She reported that students responded positively to her materials, strategies, and methods of instruction. They had become more comfortable with her and were talking more than earlier in the year. Parents even shared that students were talking more at home or even with people in the stores when they went shopping. Anna used this scenario to explain that students' oral language was being developed.

Teachers should not assume that students know symbols and understand gestures, Anna pointed out. For example, she said in regards to ELLs, "Don't assume that they've seen a train before or don't assume that what was a part of your childhood that may be they've had that same experience." She used this illustration to highlight the importance of using visual aids during instruction. Teachers should ensure that students are asked to "Repeat ideas in some way so that you (teacher) can see when they're not getting it," she further explained.

Therefore, a variety of materials were used to capture and maintain students' interests during her lessons. Audio tapes of children's songs were used to start lessons as well as to transition from one activity to the next. Objects and all types of regalia were also used in explaining concepts; throughout my observation, she made a concerted effort for students to match real life objects with whatever idea they were discussing. For example, in the vignette above, when Anna read the story to the class, she not only gave students the opportunity to view pictures as she read, but she had objects for students to see. When she read about the main

character painting she showed students a jar of paint. Also, for students to understand the concept of music read in the book, Anna used the shaker to demonstrate.

Significance of Anna's case. Anna's pre-K was structured to meet the needs of students who had special needs including language needs or a disability. Lessons were orchestrated for students to develop oral language in both languages. Although she was only fluent in English, with the help of a bilingual Spanish-speaking aide she was able to facilitate the language development of her ELLs who were developing both languages simultaneously. In a number of cases, during my observation, her aide communicated with students, made telephone calls to parents, and sent home notes in Spanish. Even though Anna could not speak Spanish, she displayed an understanding of how to meet the needs of these students and their parents by facilitating the use of students' native language.

Feeling comfortable with her students, Anna used a variety of strategies to get them to develop English language proficiency. She understood the importance of using real objects and pictures in order for students to make connections with what they were learning in alignment with recommendations for working with ELLs (Vogt, Echevarria, & Short, 2010). The lessons observed and interviews also confirmed her ability to collaborate with her Spanish-speaking aide in meeting the needs of her students, some of whom were just acquiring English.

The language her students brought to her classroom was valued and this was evident when she consistently allowed them to go back and forth with both languages with the help of the aide. She explained that she often gave the aide the opportunity to get students to say the Spanish version of what they were working on. During my observation, she would also allow the aide to clarify issues that were confusing for students in Spanish. This is consistent with her view espoused in one of the interviews about promoting both languages.

Anna's case contrasts with the next case, one of the RTI teachers who worked with ELLs to bring them on grade level.

Nancy: Drilling and repetition to improve reading speed for English language learners.

Nancy works with her group of students near an exit door in the hallway on the northern end of the building. To the left of the door is a bulletin board but nothing is posted on it. A wooden handcrafted piece of art work is next to the bulletin board. In this space, nineteen daffodils created by students on chart paper are posted on the wall with a poem about daffodils affixed in the middle of these. The poem describes the shape and color of the daffodil (A little yellow star, A little yellow frill, A little yellow cup, And that's a daffodil). A desk and two chairs are located in this area. Numerals are randomly taped on the wall.

At 8:05 a.m. the principal comes on the intercom and gives the morning welcome. We leave Nancy's class to go to the hallway for her session. Nancy's RTI group with eight first graders meets in the hallway because her room is used at the same time for another RTI session with another teacher. It takes us approximately two minutes to walk to the northeastern section of the building.

We are settled in the hallway by 8:08. Nancy is on the floor, and I am seated on a chair she has given me. The students have not arrived yet. She explains that she gives students one book per day for students to take home and read and that the students in this group are all reading below grade level.

Three students gather at 8:12. They come and sit on the floor with Nancy. Nancy hands them their book bag (books that they are reading). By 8:15 another three come to the session. Rufina says, "I don't want to come to RTI." Nancy asks, "Did you hear that?" The other two students now join the group.

*It is now 8:16 and Nancy starts with a game of Simon says. She tells them different things that Simon wants them to do and ends with "Simon says listen." She holds the book *Are you big?* and tells the students to sit in a circle on the floor. Nancy and the students read the title on the cover "*Are you big?*" She tells students to use their asking voice. The cover of the book has a big question mark centered on the page with the question written below. Underneath the question is a line for students to write their names and the word "name" written next to the line.*

The students and Nancy continue to read. Students read "No, I am small." The students say small but the word is little. Nancy tells students to look at the letter at the beginning of the word. Students eventually say little. At 8:20 Nancy gives each student a copy of the book and asks them to read the story together.

Nancy then tells students that they have two choices now that they have finished reading as a class. She tells them that they can read and color or work on their drill. She makes available boxes of crayons for students to color. She also has the Great leap K-2 booklet with high-frequency word lists.

At 8:23 Nancy asks Maria if she would like to be first to start on her drill. Maria moves closer to Nancy. Nancy points on words for her to identify. She gets the first word “sat” correct but cannot identify the second word “net.” Nancy asks her to make the sound for each letter in the word. She says the sound for the letters “n,” then “e” and “t.” She gets the pronunciation but cannot define the word. Nancy describes a net as something that can be used to catch fish.

Maria continues to identify words (rat, let, mat, met). Nancy asks her to make a sentence with the word “met.” She continues to read and cannot identify the word “hug.” Nancy prompts her. She says “map” instead of “mop” and Nancy tells her to look at the letter “o.” She then gets the word. Next, she substitutes the letter “u” in the word “but” and calls it “bit” and again Nancy prompts her. Nancy tells her that she has done a good job at sounding out. The drill ends at 8:30.

Emily is then called. Nancy asks Emily, “How was Mexico?” Emily’s response is barely above a mumble. She starts Emily on a different word list than Maria’s. (Nancy marks the booklet to indicate where each student stops and should continue). Emily begins to read “the, of, was . . .” Emily calls words more quickly than Maria. She takes two minutes to call all the words and Nancy then calls Juanita.

The other students are coloring and at 8:32 Juanita goes to Nancy to start her list. Juanita struggles to identify the word “you.” She also struggles with the words “with” and “people.” Nancy helps her to break the words a part. After five minutes, Nancy then moves on to Aaron.

Nancy asks Aaron if he wants to be timed and he says yes. The timer is put on. Aaron reads the words “it’s, did, just . . .” He reads until 8:39 when the timer ends and Nancy says he has done well. Isabel then reads the list but is not timed. Nancy settles the other students who are becoming restless. Nancy tells Rufina that she should get her paper and sit with her (Nancy) to complete her coloring.

At 8:40 Nancy goes back to Isabel. Isabel reads the words. Nancy helps her to break the word “these” apart. Nancy also brings her attention to the “w” in “when” because she calls the word “then.” She gets the word “about” correct the first time she sees it on the list and then says it incorrectly the next time it appears on the word list. She calls the word “said” “the” and Nancy points on it and she eventually gets it.

Students are told at 8:43 that they will continue tomorrow. She tells them to get back to class. Students leave at 8:44 for their class.

The above vignette showcases one of the RTI sessions that I observed on April 18, 2011 in the hallway. Nancy explained in the debriefing interview at the end of this lesson that her main objective was to introduce the concepts from the book, *Are you big?* (from the Fearon Teacher Aids Series, undated). She wanted to see how many words students could identify. The *Great leap* program was used to monitor where students were in terms of reading ability, and the goal was for students to practice their word lists with the intention of improving their reading speed.

Nancy and her students read the title, and she told them to use their asking voice because of the question mark at the end of the sentence. When students also confused the word “little” with “small,” she brought their attention to the letter at the beginning of the word. After the read aloud, students were then allowed to sit and read together and color pictures, and they also had the option of working on their word drill. Attention was brought to several concepts about print as students and teacher interacted with this text. They not only decoded words but they also read for meaning and focused on skills used by proficient readers in reading for meaning.

The only Title 1 teacher at the school, Nancy had an aide who helped with the operation of the room. Assigned to this room were six small groups of students for additional reading instruction and three small groups involved in RTI. Eight first graders were in the group that I observed: Five were bilingual in both Spanish and English, although seven of the eight were from Spanish descent. Nancy has taught many grade levels over the years and has had students who have come from Mexico with no English and some from Texas with limited English. She has had students of the Amish faith who spoke an Old German, but at the time of the study she did not have any. Primarily, there were two languages represented in her class, English and Spanish, but she had an East Indian student with whom she interacted on Fridays who was also an ELL.

Nancy made clear that she only spoke English but had used common sense along with her teaching experience in meeting the needs of ELLs. She was not sure how her own background affected her teaching of students from other racial and language backgrounds, but she attended this same elementary school and was in the third grade when the first Hispanic family moved into town. One of their five children (Hispanic family) was in her class and she recalled her parents were very open and accepting of another culture. Currently, she highlighted, there were still a few families that did not embrace differences, but she enjoyed teaching all students and loved to watch the interaction between English and non-English speaking students.

Classroom context. At the time of the study, Nancy serviced 41 students and, of these, 12 were native Spanish speakers. There were at least five other students who had one parent who spoke Spanish. Some of her Spanish speaking students were second generation and have grown up as dual language learners. She believed that the classroom atmosphere must be one of acceptance and other students should be open to helping or assisting ELLs. “If acceptance is there,” she said, “educating will go much easier.”

Isabel, one of the students in the group I observed, was in her second year at the first grade level, and she was a native Spanish speaker. In fact, Isabel, Emily, Maria, Juanita, and Aaron, were all bilingual. Even though seven of the eight students who met in this group were of Hispanic backgrounds, two, Jose, and Rufina were not considered bilingual. Rufina’s dad, she pointed out, is a second generation Spanish speaker who also speaks English. Jose went to speech because he had language developmental problems, and his father is Spanish but speaks only English; however, his step-mother speaks both Spanish and English. Emily, she stated, rarely spoke in kindergarten but had a Spanish teacher at that level; this year, according to Nancy, she was talking a lot more in English and seems to be “catching on.”

For this particular group, the emphasis was on beginning reading skills and the reinforcement of skill areas that individual students struggled with (Nancy had more than one group and each had a different focus). For instance, for Maria, she helped her with basic word families. She believed students were “drowning in the regular classrooms” and this was her way of getting them on grade level. Basically, Nancy worked with a number of ELLs and tried to promote an environment of acceptance to facilitate the teaching /learning process.

Curricular context. Nancy’s goals for language arts were to provide additional reading practice, reinforce classroom objectives and to promote reading in students’ homes. She was not greatly influenced by the Illinois standards because she thought these were already covered in the materials she used. The standards for ELLs were not implemented because she felt that the ESL teacher was familiar with those standards.

The role of the native language in learning a new language was dependent on age and grade level, Nancy argued; it was important for students to be allowed to use their native language when there is something they do not understand. Hoping to make a difference in the lives of her students by improving their reading skills, she encouraged them to love reading. She relayed that many of her students do not have parents who spend time reading to them, and she believed that reading to one’s child is the single most important thing one can do to improve reading skills.

There were several factors, she believed, that contributed to the underperformance of ELLs. She had noticed that even when a student can read the words, he or she often did not comprehend because of the vocabulary and/or their background experience. “Students will often read, but understanding the material is more difficult” she stated. A teacher should never assume an ELL knows the meaning of even the simplest of words, and she believed that explicit

instruction is necessary for ELLs along with reduced assignments, think alouds, leveled reading, and vocabulary instruction.

In essence, Nancy noticed that even when students could pronounce words, they could not understand the words because of the unfamiliar vocabulary and insufficient background experience. Therefore, she argued that teachers should never make assumptions about ELLs' knowledge of words.

Teaching strategies/routines. Nancy used a number of activities to promote language development. Interacting with students, reading, reading aloud, and games (educational or not), she thought, were important in developing language proficiency. Adapting her materials for language minority students was not always at the forefront but she tried to accommodate ELLs; she was aware that they needed more scaffolding than an English-speaking population for meanings of words. She recommended that teachers working with ELLs should ensure that they introduce vocabulary words that even native English speakers would take for granted. In her experience ELLs were sometimes timid in asking for clarifications if they did not know the meanings of words.

Drill and repetition were used to improve students' reading speed and build stamina. The students were also timed as they read word lists, and the goal was to improve reading fluency. Daily, students read from a word list and were timed to check if they had improved in speed. Students also read decodable books, and Nancy scaffolded and helped them break words a part when they had difficulty.

In summary, Nancy felt that interacting with students through read alouds, games etc. were important in developing language proficiency. She did not always adapt instruction but

believed that teachers should introduce vocabulary words. Much drill was also used for students to improve their reading speed.

Teaching materials/resources. According to Nancy, she used research-based intervention, for example, *Great leap* along with other books to support learning. Teachers used other programs for intervention but she was the only one on staff who used this, and she believed that *Great leap* was effective. This was used to get students to be aware of sounds, to recognize letters, and focus on high frequency words. One of her objectives when they read these books was to discuss the concepts highlighted as well as get a sense of the number of words that students can identify. She also used the *Great leap* program to monitor where students were in terms of reading ability.

The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) were also used to monitor her students. Some of her students had been in this group for a long time, but Rufina had only been with her for a few weeks; Maria and Emily had great difficulty with English comprehension. They could identify words but did not understand what they read. Hence, her goal for them was to develop comprehension strategies. Although she mentioned this as one of her goals, during my observation, emphasis was not placed on teaching comprehension strategies. In fact, students mostly were timed as they read words from a list. Isabel, on the other hand, needed to develop reading fluency and she gave her the opportunity to practice basic sight words from the Dolch list. Nancy said that she expected students to read 48 words in a minute. According to Tompkins (2010) “to read fluently, students need to orally read at least 100 words per minute [and] most students reach this reading speed by third grade, and their reading rate continues to grow.” The author further maintains that “by the time they’re [students] sixth graders, they’ll read 150 words per minute, and adults typically read 250 words per minute or

more,” (p. 208). Nancy might have had low expectations especially for students repeating first grade.

Overall, for the most part, Nancy’s focus with this group was word recall and basic sight words, even though some students had difficulty with reading comprehension. She mostly used the *Great leap* program and her intention was to get students to develop their repository of words and thereby build reading fluency. The *Great leap* program, she felt, should be adding to what students were already learning.

Significance of Nancy’s case. The main goal for Nancy’s RTI sessions was to get students reading on grade level. Practice sessions were provided each day for her students to improve their reading speed. Students got the opportunity to read and reread simple books that had repetitive patterns and call lists of words to improve their recognition of sight words while being timed. Even though she mentioned that she was not focused on comprehension, improvement in reading speed can ultimately lead to reading comprehension when students have more cognitive resources to critically engage with texts (Tompkins, 2010).

Nancy’s approach was consistent with her belief that even though teachers should be sensitive to the needs of ELLs, instruction should be in English. She was very skills-based in her approach and a deficit view of students’ competence informed her instruction. Nancy viewed students as performing below grade level (and they were) and in order to address this deficit, she facilitated practice sessions to reinforce skills that students were lacking.

Unlike Anna, Nancy’s approach was more teacher-centered and the underlying assumption was that students were not knowledgeable. This deficit view caused her to ignore the knowledge that these students brought to the teaching/learning process and focus on basic skills. Scholars argue that in a number of cases ELLs get relegated to these types of experiences in

which programs are designed to use inauthentic methods in improving their literacy levels (for example, Jimenez & Teague, 2009).

The next case highlights the other RTI special education resource K-3 teacher who worked with ELLs to bring them on grade level.

Sue: Structuring response to intervention for English language learners.

Sue's K-3 RTI resource classroom has several posters and crates with books and activity sheets for students. On the front wall, above the white chalkboard, the letters of the alphabet from a-z are posted. Both upper and lower case letters, with pictures representing the letters are displayed. For example, the letter b has both the upper and lower case letters, with the picture of a ball underneath, and the lowercase b below. Letters and letter combinations are written on the left column of the chalkboard that the students practice at the beginning of each lesson. To the left of the board, there is a bulletin board with five words on sentence strips (watch, pleasant, talent, treasure, impossible). Situated to the right of the board is another bulletin board with words (nutritious, plentiful, blossom, cultivate, stubborn). At the bottom of the board, there are numerals from 0-80, with stars underneath indicating the numeric progression and by the base of the chalkboard are ten trays, with workbooks and practice work sheets.

A book shelf, trays, and computers are also in this class. The book shelf has 12 basal readers, worksheets stacked in 7 trays, a tape player on top of the shelf, and assorted blocks in a container. Situated to the right of the shelf is a file cabinet with magnetic letters and numerals in different colors. There are also three relatively new Dell computers and an old Gateway desktop situated in the back right of the class, along with a Sony television.

Posted in the back of the room are posters with 6 traits of writing (the conventions song, the ideas song, the organization song, the voice song, the word choice song, the sentence fluency song). The conventions song had reminders about inserting periods, checking spelling, and putting capital letters where necessary to make one's paper conventional. The lyrics for the conventions song were arranged to the Okie Pokie song. There is also a poster with "The Writing Process" posted in the classroom. On this poster are questions to consider during the stages of the writing process to develop coherent writing pieces.

Near to the door is a hoisted flag of the U.S. and a shelf with boxes of games including Rhyming puzzles, Outburst, Twister, Subtraction bingo, Family feud, Candy land and others.

At 9:35 five students are present. Antonio is talking. Sue asks him to share the exciting news but he does not respond. She asks him if he is shy and wants her to share. Sue tells the students that Antonio has a new baby sister. She asks Antonio the baby's

name and he says Selena. Marla says that Selena is like soap. Sue says that Selena starts with the same letter as soap. She tells the students that she has a cousin with that name.

Three minutes elapse and Sue moves on to reviewing the weekly calendar on the chalkboard. They talk about the activities they will do for each day of the week. Sue then reviews the letters and letter combinations listed on the side of the board. Sue and the students then repeated the phonics generalization “When two vowels go walking, the first does the talking” as they make sounds from vowel combinations.

Sue then writes the letters “ow” on the board and asks what sound that combination makes. Students all make the sound together. One student, Marla says that she wants to say the sound by herself. Sue says that she will get the chance to do that. Next, they review the sounds of “or,” “ur,” “ir,” and “oo.” Sue then calls on students individually to point on letters and tell what sounds they make (Antonio goes, then Marla, followed by Dulce). Juan says that everyone hates him because he is not called to the board. Teacher looks at him. Sofia then goes to the board followed by Juan.

Then Sue points on the letter “b” and asks what sound that letter makes. In a chorus the students make the “b” sound. Sue then put the letter “r” next to the letter “b” and asks what sound the “br” combination makes. She then writes the letters “oo” and asks students what sound they hear with the combination of letters she has on the board. She next adds an “s” and writes “broos” on the board. She asks if that is how the word broom is spelled. Students say no. She then writes an “m” and asks what sound it makes.

“If I don’t have an “s” how many do I have?” Sue asks. Antonio answers and says “Zero.” Sue says “One.” Sue explains that the “s” is used to show more than one. Next, she writes the word “pool” on the board. She questions students for them to explain what a pool is. Dulce does not know what a pool is. Marla explains “A pool is somewhere you swim.” Sue says “Yes.”

Sue asks “What can you wear at the pool?” Dulce says “Swimsuit.” Sofia says “Bikini.” Marla answers and says “Bikini.” Sofia states that’s what she just said.

Sue asks if she adds an “s” to it what it means. Before the students answer, Sue tells them that it is the plural form. She then writes the word cool on the board for students to identify. She then adds the word “moons.” Students start to talk about planets. Sue says the moon is not a planet. She draws a sketch of the solar system on the board. Dulce says the planet (drawn on the board by the teacher) is an alien. Sue says “Sometimes people say there are aliens out there.”

Juan is asked if he has read a word yet. Sue writes the word “soon” on the board. Juan says he wants a harder word. Next, she writes the word “room” and asks Sofia to identify it. She adds an “s” to the word “room.” Marla repeats aloud the words room and broom.

“Good ear. What about these words?” asks Sue. Juan says “They rhyme.” Sue says “Good.” Sue hands out markers. Students want other markers instead of the ones they are getting. Sue says “We get what we get and we don’t throw a fit.” Juan joins in and says “and we don’t throw a fit.”

Students are then given a sheet with words. She tells them to find the spelling words and highlight them. The words moon, soon, main, and Jake are on the list. Students complete this activity in less than a minute. Sue tells them to put their worksheets in a pile. Antonio says “Can we go home? I’m tired!” Sue responds and asks “Everyone is tired after a weekend?” Sue then reads from the basal. She sets the timer for two minutes for them to leave her class after the timer.

For this particular lesson, Sue brought students’ attention to several aspects of the English conventions. First, Sue had students review letter sounds. She then proceeded to discuss how to pluralize words and what that means. She told students that when the letter “s” is added to words it shows more than one. She started out with two examples (broom and pool). Although she discussed plural forms she also checked if students knew the correct spelling of words. She questioned students for them to define a pool. She then incorporated the word “cool” which follows the double “o” pattern she was working with and then moved onto the word moon. Next, their discussion moved on to planets as students asked about the solar system.

This lesson was typical of the lessons that I observed. Generally, Sue reviewed a number of concepts that students needed to practice based on what they were doing in their regular class. She believed repetition and small group instruction were critical in the teaching/learning process. She stated that she explicitly teaches reading strategies, for example, think alouds, questioning, and context clues in order to give extra reading support to students who were struggling readers. Furthermore, accommodations that are made are dependent on each student.

Sue tried to get students to understand that words have multiple meanings. She used the word “sound” to explain that she would explain to students that sound can mean what one hears or to make sound judgment. She also relied on the dictionary for students to understand words. In

addition, she used pictures and allowed students to match pictures with words, for example, matching the picture of a bat with the word. In summary, she believed that it was important to make lessons concrete with visuals. Therefore, she made available cards for students to pick out and put together, making lessons more hands-on and concrete.

In her resource room, she had an aide who helped to coordinate activities for the groups of students who used the room. Of the 23 students she assisted, six received ESL services and she wanted her students to demonstrate mastery in basic skill areas. Spanish and German were languages other than English represented. Getting students to perform on grade level was her major concern, and with her new familiarity with the standards for ELLs she was now applying more strategies to meet their needs.

Sue emphasized the frustrations she has had teaching ELLs and felt she had not been effective. Wondering if there were other measures to measure ELLs' progress, she articulated that she believed that language was assessed at a level beyond ELLs' readiness, and that they were not assessing skills using the appropriate language levels. At a recent conference, she had learned other ways to assess ELLs including using rubrics and she felt more was being done at the school to cater to their needs.

Classroom context. Six of the 23 students on her roster received ESL services, and she explained that 11 of the 23 have a bilingual background. When asked what language her students speak, she stated "My students speak Spanish and English. I have one student who has told me that she can speak German (she [the student] calls it Amish). I have about 11 students who can speak another language." Essentially, Sue had both Spanish and English speaking students who needed remediation in the English language arts.

Curricular context. The goals and objectives for language arts were aligned with the Illinois standards. One of Sue's goals included students being able to demonstrate mastery in phonemic awareness with a least 80% accuracy. Another goal was for students to read words that follow a phonetic pattern, on grade level, K-3. She wanted students to learn and apply reading strategies in order for them to comprehend a reading passage read together and or independently and demonstrate mastery by answering comprehension questions or complete cloze procedures.

Other goals included increasing reading rate and developing their writing skills using English conventions. A major goal was for students to read a grade level passage with 90% accuracy at a specified rate, although she did not say what this rate was. Additionally, Sue wanted students to develop writing proficiency/fluency, and write with correct grammar, spelling, capitalization, and grade appropriate punctuation. Furthermore, she wanted students to write paragraphs with at least two "tell me more" details and spell words for tests and within writing samples.

Despite these goals, a major challenge Sue encountered was meeting the specific needs of ELLs. Although she was cognizant of the fact that ELLs had special needs, she found it challenging to make the distinction between learning difficulty and lack of English proficiency. For instance, she expressed that they (teachers) were not prepared to make this type of distinction in order to cater to some of the needs of these students. She stated:

In kindergarten and first grade it's determined if students have special needs or language needs. [However], ability testing is not done anymore and I find it challenging to make the distinction between learning disability and language proficiency or lack thereof.

Fundamentally, Sue wondered if it was safe to say because students are ELLs they have special needs, because in her experience she found it hard to determine. She explained "developmental

delay and language delay are hard to determine”; she questioned how to determine eligibility for RTI when students are ELLs.

In summary, Sue wanted her students to perform at grade level and apply a variety of strategies during the reading process. She was greatly influenced by the Illinois standards, although she had just become a little more familiar with the standards for ELLs. With this new familiarity, she was now using more strategies that were effective with ELLs. She mentioned, “I am just starting to look at the “academic language” that is used/taught in the reading lessons.” However, her major struggle was distinguishing students with learning disabilities and ones with language needs.

Teaching strategies/routines. Routines were generally established, and Sue ensured that students were in routine all the time. This routine was usually evident during her lessons. During my observations, once students arrived, Sue would repeat letter sounds (letters were written on the board) and phonics generalizations. After reviewing sounds, they would then talk about the new letter or letter combination to be addressed for that particular day.

However, there were challenges associated with teaching ELLs and maintaining a routine. Sue expressed that some weeks she was able to balance everything well and others not, but her main goal was for students to be engaged with strategies. She believed that ELLs have short attention spans, but for the most part they were engaged. It took her a while to get beginning ELLs to get into higher level thinking but now it was her favorite thing to teach. She made clear that she varied her instruction and used, for example, United Streaming to get students to talk (United Streaming is an online service provided by Discovery Education which provides access for educators to thousands of full-length videos, video clips, clip art, lesson plans, etc.). She said there was one particular ELL who struggled to develop a sentence even

though she can write individual words. She said, “this student is on the lower level of the WIDA ACCESS scale” (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment [by the University of Wisconsin System]). The acronym ACCESS means Assessing Comprehension Communication in English State to State for English Language Learners). In addition to being at the lower end of both scales, Sue said based on her observations of this student “she is a struggling student.”

Up until the time of the study (when I interviewed her), Sue had relied on the ACCESS testing scores and the W-APT screening scores (WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test is a screener for incoming students) as her assessment for ELLs. However, at a recent conference she learned of a rubric she could use as a resource to assess ELLs. A few years ago she had a student who had a bilingual aide, and instruction was given in English and Spanish to her, with the translator being there to clarify as needed. In the other segment, the student spent time reading books in Spanish to the bilingual aide, and the aide did lessons (Sue) designed with her. She mentioned, though, that currently, “I have a small group who are non-native speakers, and I do a lot of things such as using visual models, drawing pictures, etc” which are some strategies recommended for working with ELLs (Vogt, Echevarria, & Short, 2010).

In addition, Sue believed that it is important for ELLs to not only maintain their native language but to improve on it as well. She explained, “They need to be strong in their native language. The stronger they are in their native language, the easier it will be to transfer knowledge/make connections when learning the new language.” She further expounded that “students should be allowed to use their native language when needed. We cannot forsake content knowledge and higher level thinking skills while teaching a student English.” In summary, Sue highlighted the necessity to maintain students’ native language in order for them to transfer skills in learning a second language.

Nonetheless, “it has been frustrating teaching students who are non-native English speakers,” Sue explained. She said, “I haven’t felt like I have been effective.” She further relayed that it might be that she has not been assessing the right things; at a recent conference she had just learned that she could use the WIDA rubrics to assess students where they were and growing academically. She stated:

Often I see that some assessments won’t show growth for my students with learning disabilities even though there has been growth, due to the fact that the assessment is so far over their head. This same thing might be happening with some of my non-native speakers in that more of the language is being assessed at a level beyond their readiness instead of assessing skills using appropriate language levels and finding other ways to measure their language acquisition progress.

Fundamentally, Sue established routines and made sure that students were always in routine. Students were afforded the opportunity to repeat phonics generalizations and rules as well as talk about word patterns. A number of visuals and models were also incorporated in lessons, she explained. She also highlighted some of the challenges of working with ELLs but mentioned that she has been attending conferences to learn more about the unique needs of ELLs.

Teaching materials/resources. Lessons were built from the plans used by the regular classroom teachers and Sue argued that she was able to reinforce strategies that were taught in these classrooms. Leveled readers were used to assess whether students were meeting grade-level standards. She also emphasized the use of research-based theories while using the curriculum as a resource. In essence, she tried to ensure that she was balancing research-based strategies while using the school-enacted curriculum.

Sue had a plethora of activities in her resource room ranging from table top activities to books in different genres. She had a print rich classroom with several posters highlighting how to go through the writing process and ways to incorporate the writing traits. In addition to print,

students had four computers and they were allowed to use these for activities that Sue thought would further develop language.

When asked about the support she has received from the administration for working with ELLs, Sue pointed out that this year, probably more so than any other years, “I’ve heard more discussion, maybe some more strategies. I’ve learned a lot more.” She explained that over the summer (2010), a team went to an ESL conference for a week, and that team returned and shared information about working with ELLs. She mentioned that this was when she was exposed to the WIDA standards for the first time.

At the beginning of school year, being the RTI coordinator, Sue was conscious of trying to meet those standards. She pointed out that:

We got into the school year and maybe, being the RTI coordinator I knew I needed to take those things [needs of ELLs] into consideration in trying to think or problem solve how can we measure appropriate growth and is [it] even appropriate for me to say [we should measure] language acquisition.

She emphasized that the conference referred to above (attended by a team of teachers) made them aware of some of the ways to take the needs of ELLs into account. Basically, as the RTI team started the 2010-2011 academic school year, she hinted that teachers were more aware of the unique needs of ELLs.

One of the benefits of the conference was broadening Sue’s understanding of working with ELLs. She explicated, “I think within my own mind, we had a lot of more thought towards teaching students who have English as a second language.” She further revealed, “This was also the first time we had such a large population [of ELLs].” Using the RTI group that she was working with at the time, as an example, she explained that the number of ELLs had grown at this school. “I mean this whole group [has several ELLs], and it was the first time that I taught to a large [group] of that population.”

Additionally, the principal coordinated after school meetings and in some of those meetings, teachers shared strategies for working with ELLs. As a staff they had even practiced some of those strategies using the “think-pair-share” reading strategy. With these examples, she argued that more attention was being paid to ELLs. She stated, “As RTI is here, you need to be showing 75%-85% of your students in each sub-group are being successful. So of course, we’re looking at that.” As a staff they were thinking about “What can we do to get the majority of our students meeting the standards as they should be, so I think our focus is toward that direction.” Primarily, at Winifred, more attention was now being paid to the unique needs of ELLs, and teachers were now more aware of strategies that would be beneficial for that student population.

Significance of Sue’s case. As the RTI coordinator, Sue organized sessions to accommodate special education students K-3 in need of RTI for them to meet grade level standards. For RTI, the students who were not meeting grade level were instructed on strategies that were intended to prepare them with the requisite skills to develop reading and writing proficiency. What Sue did for RTI was aligned with what classroom teachers were doing because the goal of her sessions was to reinforce skills taught in the mainstream classrooms similar to Nancy.

For the sessions that I observed, Sue worked with a group of students who were performing below grade level, and she worked with them for 30 minutes daily to reinforce reading and writing strategies that were taught in their class. Her practice was skills-based, similar to Nancy’s, in the sense that concepts were taught in isolation and students did not get the opportunity to critically engage in the process. For example, at the beginning of each lesson Sue had the students repeat letter sounds and phonics generalizations that go with the patterns they

recited. This repetition of sounds and generalizations was done for review, and then they would proceed to the letter or letter combination for the particular session.

Since these students were performing below grade level and were not familiar with these sounds, Sue saw it fit to teach these sounds and generalizations for students to learn basic phonological awareness. While phonological awareness is important, I believe that when done in isolation, can be meaningless for students, especially for non native English-speaking students who may not see the direct link with these skills and the reading process. Several studies have suggested what constitutes quality experience for ELLs as teachers strive to get them on grade level (Bielenberg & Wong Fillmore, 2005; Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Garcia & Bauer, 2009; Jimenez & Teague, 2009; McCarthy, 2008; Valenzuela, 2005). For example, Jimenez and Teague found that many programs for ELLs were not successful and inadvertently led to further underachievement. Therefore, although Sue was well-intentioned, students might not benefit much from these exercises.

Sue has always done remediation and based on my observations of her lessons, techniques were geared toward improving students' language proficiency, but a deficit model was the undergirding theory informing instruction. There was not much innovation and authenticity in her practice because of her perception, deeply embedded in her approach, of the need to get students on grade level. According to Valenzuela (1999), the deficit approach is manifested in multiple forms. One of the manifestations is the overrepresentation of language minority students in special education and less academically rigorous programs (Conchas, 2006; Coutinho & Oswald, 2000; Noguera, 2001; Oakes, 2005; Patton, 1998; Russo & Talbert-Johnson, 1997).

The traditional teacher centered Initiation Response Evaluation (IRE) format was mostly used by Sue to reinforce skills classroom teachers wanted the students to practice. Although she believed that students should maintain their native language, there was no evidence in her lessons that she was encouraging a bilingual approach. Furthermore, she was trained as a special education teacher and had only participated in a few workshops close to the time of the study to sensitize her to the unique needs of ELLs; therefore, she was not prepared to accommodate these students, she explained in one of the interviews.

In theory she was espousing the idea that students should learn both languages, but her strategies were geared toward developing English at the expense of students' native language. Furthermore, she was not prepared to facilitate dual language development. Sue mentioned that "It is very important for students to maintain and improve the native language . . . the stronger the native language the easier to transfer knowledge/make connections when learning the new language." Although she felt strongly about maintaining two languages, her lessons did not show any attention to the particular needs of ELLs.

Katie: Reinforcing reading and writing skills and strategies for English language learners.

Katie's fifth grade classroom has numerous materials that students use on a daily basis. There is a chalkboard, centered on the wall at the front of the class, and letters of the alphabet in cursive from A-Z are immediately above the chalkboard followed by the numerals 1-10. To the top left of the chalkboard are pictures of Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King Jr. In addition, situated at the front of the class is a television with a podium in front. A large map of the United States is also painted on the wall to the left (takes up almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of that side wall) but the states are not identified and labeled, and a U.S. flag is affixed to this map.

There are three desktop computers at the rear of the class and a lounge chair that students often sit on to complete assignments. Behind these computers, to the right, are lockers where students keep their personal belongings. On entering the classroom, to the right, are cupboards, decorated with curtains and a desk that I sit on to wait for lessons to begin. The teacher's desk is front and center, but mostly to the right of the room. Books

representing several genres are also on bookshelves in the back of the room and there are charts on “10 ways to be a great student,” and “10 great ways to treat others.”

It is 1:08 in the afternoon. The students have spent the first eight minutes of class reading independently Under the Blood-Red Sun (Salisbury, 1994). Katie tells students that they’ll read a new chapter, “Thunder on the moon.” She tells students that they will talk about figurative language and poetic devices. She writes a list of figurative devices on the board (simile, metaphor, alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme, personification).

Katie asks if anyone remembers what is an alliteration. Robert and Miguel give examples. She then points on the word “onomatopoeia” and asks Sharon to define it. Sharon explains but does not identify the word. Katie asks Sharon again, what word it is and Sharon says “onomatopoeia” and then defines it.

At 1:11 Katie asks David to explain the term rhyme. David says he does not remember. Katie says a rhyme is two words that sound alike. She then calls on Howard to define the term “personification.” Howard defines personification and gives “The dog speaks” as his example. Katie then asks the class how they might see personification in literature. Paris says that in Sponge Bob the sponge talks. Katie says personification is giving human characteristics to inanimate objects. Robert gives another example, “The moon smiles.” Katie says “You can find personification in literature.”

Katie tells the class to write down these devices (listed on the board) that they have found in the book they are reading. Five boys go to their lockers for paper and she tells them to listen to the instruction before they get their things. She writes the instruction on the board “Write all devices you have found and put yes/no and write the example you have found.”

It is now 1:16 and Katie talks about rhymes again. She asks students how they can spot a rhyme. She tells them to please write down these six literary devices she has written on the board. Danielle asks if she should write entire sentences or just the literary device found in the chapter. Katie explains that students can write the literary device example and not the entire sentence. Ashley wants to know if she should stop when she has found one for each device. Katie explains that they should write all the literary devices they have found in the chapter and there is no limit. At 1:18 students are now silently reading.

Students are seated and reading and others are writing devices. At 1:20 Paris and David are still reading and have not written any device. Paris has not written anything on her paper and David does not have any paper yet for writing. Michelle has her name on her paper and has written her version of the instruction. Andrew writes on his paper “Write all similes that you find” but he is still reading. Amber has her name on her page and the list of figurative devices with space left after each to write her examples. For metaphor, she has written an example, “Giving us the worst stink eye.” She puts yes beside the word metaphor and then continues to read. Miguel Valencia is at the teacher’s table talking with her and has written on his paper the teacher’s instruction from the

board and an example of personification. Miguel writes as his example of personification, "When we got there we saw a brand new car, a blue Cadillac, waiting to turn out onto the main road."

At 1:27 students ask when this assignment is due. Katie tells them Wednesday. Veronica has the devices written on her page but no examples yet. Michael has written an example of personification, "The car spit dust and little rocks out when it took off." Katie then tells students that it's officially study hall and you can do what you wish.

The above vignette highlights one of the reading sessions that I observed in Katie's class on May 2, 2011. In this particular session, she wanted students to continue reading the novel *Under the Blood-Red Sun* (Salisbury, 1994) and identify literary devices. She reviewed figurative language and poetic devices with students and wrote a list of devices on the board. Students were questioned about the devices and asked to give definitions and examples. After reviewing the list of devices, students were prompted to talk about how devices are used in literature. The students then read the next assigned chapter and took note of the figurative devices they had found. This scenario brings to the forefront the type of pedagogy employed by this fifth grade teacher as she taught both native English speaking students and ELLs.

For the most part, Katie's students were correctly identifying the devices. Identifying figurative devices was a good start for students to demonstrate their understanding of literary techniques but no follow-up activity was done to extend responses. Moreover, no extension activity was completed for students to develop a piece of writing incorporating these devices. Essentially, it was limiting in the sense that students were not provided the opportunity to connect reading and writing.

Back in the 1960s, when Katie was in fourth grade, she had her first interaction with the Mexicans when they first arrived in town. Her mother spoke Spanish and taught these students and was also instrumental in helping them settle into their new environment by preparing meals. Recounting that the men were not talkative because of the language barrier, she also pointed out

that these men were family men who migrated without their families and lived together in the same apartment and sent home money for their families to join them. They eventually learned English, and when their families relocated and joined them, Katie learned Spanish as the children learned English. Even though she has forgotten much of the vocabulary she can communicate with her Spanish speaking students but still needed a translator at parent teacher conferences because “it goes so fast I’m not used to it,” she explains of talking in Spanish.

Classroom context. Nineteen mainstream and four special education students were in Katie’s class. In addition to the language arts, she taught both her class and the class next door social studies and the number of students fluctuated depending on the subject. Nine of her students spoke Spanish and English with varying abilities, and some students were just beginning to learn the English language; 10 students spoke only English. During one of the interviews, March 22, 2011, Katie mentioned that she had one student who had been there for only 6-8 weeks, with no English language proficiency. Four students were identified as special education but were mainstreamed, three of whom were Spanish speaking ELLs. One of the special education students, came from Mexico the week before this interview but had been at Winifred before and spoke English, but Katie could not specify the student’s level. The ELL who was also identified as having special education needs, went to Mexico for a year or maybe two, she was not quite sure.

Katie said that the expectations were too high for students who are learning a second language. She stated:

We are expecting a great deal quickly and that’s not going to happen. We’ve got to give these kids 6-10 years to pick up. By that time they’re gone. You know. It’s not an impossible situation in my opinion but it’s difficult and you can’t point fingers. That’s ridiculous. You do the best you can.

Moreover, the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) was a sore point for Katie (she did not particularly like the ISAT). She mentioned that after the tests were taken the atmosphere in the school was different. They felt more relaxed and she stated, “We all do. I think we all do.” She articulated that the testing is fine and she did not have issues with the standards. She pointed out:

As a matter of fact I welcome them. However, I think that teaching is changing so much it’s like cookie cutter teaching. You teach it this way. You have to teach it this way (emphasis). Well, no you don’t cause some kid might need it taught a different way. Let us do our job.

Katie further mentioned that not every child will make the 100% mark, although “That’s all well and good” to expect that. She said that not every child is perfect; however, she believed teachers should be held accountable. She said “I’m not saying leave us alone, let us do what we want. I’m just saying, not every child is going to make that 100% mark.”

Essentially, Katie taught both mainstream and special education students, both ELLs and English monolinguals, and three of the ELLs also had special needs. She believed that students needed at least 6 to 10 years to learn English, somewhat consistent with the literature on language acquisition for ELLs in which scholars espouse that it takes 5 to 7 years (Escamilla & Coady, 2005). She felt pressured by testing and thought that it detracted from teaching. She explained that teachers were forced to do a lot of test preparation and although she embraced the fact that there are standards and appreciated them, the political nature of testing made her uncomfortable.

Curricular context. Katie had several goals for her students, including ELLs. She made clear that some of her goals were to teach correct English communication, functions, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. She was greatly influenced by the Illinois standards and felt that the materials and instruction should be adapted for ELLs. The native language should be

maintained and respected and a dual language program would be ideal for ELLs. Making a difference in the lives of her students was also an important goal for her. She said, “I hope to make a positive one (difference)” and that students will say of her class that “I learned a lot, I had fun, and teacher loves me, and I am important.” Mainly, Katie wanted her students to learn the forms and function of the English language but ideally would like her students to maintain their native language.

Teaching strategies/routines. At the onset of the study Katie explained that I would see a number of practice sessions where students would be given the opportunity to revise reading and writing strategies that they had learned throughout the school year. She mentioned that after the ISAT students would mainly be working on projects to reinforce what they had been learning throughout the year and not much “teaching” would be done.

Similar to the strategies used by Nancy and Sue, Katie was mostly skills-based in her approach. Although she regularly taught vocabulary before they embarked on reading or writing exercises, her lessons mainly required students to use vocabulary correctly in sentences. In several activities, Katie asked students to identify figurative devices in novels they had discussed prior to reading, and write them in their journals.

She was generally more lenient with ELLs when she was grading, because as she mentioned, “Speaking the language is one thing but writing it is another.” She stated, “I’m more lenient when it comes to writing, language arts, spelling, and reading comprehension.” On occasion she allowed students to use Spanish when presenting or she coordinated for native English speakers to be paired with Spanish speaking students to lessen the intimidation that they (Spanish speakers) would feel presenting to the whole class. Katie was able to facilitate the use

of Spanish; however, during my observations, instruction was in English and only in a few sessions did she occasionally use Spanish.

For the new academic year, Katie would like to change her teaching approach. She explained that for this school year (study was conducted), she did mostly whole group instruction but would like to do more small group in the future. The learning centers she had at the time of the study were implemented to align with themes or books they were reading, but these were put up only for approximately one week. In the future, she would like to keep centers for two or three weeks or maybe even longer following the principal's recommendation (principal facilitated a workshop where she encouraged teachers to use more learning centers in their classrooms). In summary, she wanted to incorporate more small group instruction with the use of centers to engage her students. However, there was no evidence of small group work during my observations.

Teaching materials/resources. Throughout my observations of the reading sessions, the students and Katie took turns reading passages from class novels or basal readers. For example, if as a class they were reading a chapter from a novel, Katie would start reading the first paragraph and then ask a student to pick up from where she had stopped. Vocabulary was discussed before or after the reading with students called on individually to give word meanings. For most discussions during reading, she asked a question and students responded. Similarly, in the writing session, vocabulary was reviewed and sometimes was the focus of lessons. The class reviewed literary devices, comprehension strategies, shared reading exercises, and work sheets for students to practice reading and writing strategies.

Significance of Katie's case. Katie was reflective about her role as a teacher. She described the centers she had during my observations as "dry" and would like to revamp them to

meet the individual needs of her students. Her vision for the next academic year was to work with a small group of students while other students worked at centers in pairs.

Writing was a major challenge for her students, and she would like to address this by modeling and teaching grammar rules and writing. Although Katie pointed out that all the students, including ELLs, struggled with concepts such as subject-verb agreement, plural nouns and verbs, etc., she did not explicitly state how or if she would make a connection between authentic writing opportunities and grammar rules. Her goal for the next academic year was to use the first semester to teach grammar in order for students to get a grasp of grammatical structures before Christmas. She would use the following semester for students to utilize what they learned in their writing. However, she did not clearly articulate how she would get students to apply grammar rules.

In essence, she did not convey how she would facilitate the development of writing strategies for students to develop fluency. Her focus was on the mechanical aspect of writing without clear descriptions of how students would transfer their knowledge of grammar rules to writing fluid pieces. The process approach to writing that is prevalent in schools today was not at the forefront of her vision for writing instruction. Rather, mechanics seemed to be the area of emphasis.

Thematic Analysis Across Cases

A dominant theme was evident for each case but in some instances this theme went across all four cases or only two cases. For example, two themes that emerged across the four case studies were (a) developing oral language for English language learners, and (b) reinforcing reading skills and strategies for English language learners. The next two themes emerged across

only two teachers: (a) drilling and repetition to improve reading for English language learners, and (b) structuring response to intervention (RTI) for English language learners.

Developing Oral Language for English Language Learners

All the teachers facilitated the development of students' oral language through a variety of activities. Teachers used read alouds, discussion of environmental events, word lists, rules for English conventions among others for students to develop oral language proficiency in the English language arts. Anna, the pre-K special education teacher engaged students in activities that provided the space for them to talk about the weather, calendar, environmental signs, how they were feeling for that particular day, and read alouds of stories. Through these activities, students engaged in conversations, and the ELLs were facilitated by the bilingual aide when expressing ideas they did not have the vocabulary to explain. Anna explained that her main goal was to keep the schedule moving with a number of activities to keep students engaged, both students with language needs and special education needs.

Nancy also emphasized the oral component of language development. She read aloud to her students and made sure that students paid attention to punctuation marks to determine whether they should use their asking voice for question marks or to show excitement for exclamation marks etc. Students also got the opportunity to identify words and practice reading from word lists. By doing so, Nancy hoped that students would develop reading speed and ultimately oral language competence. During my observations, Nancy helped students to use word attack skills in breaking words apart. For example, when Maria could not pronounce the word "net," Nancy brought her attention to each letter and the sound that each makes. Maria was then instructed to combine the letter sounds to call the word.

In addition to Anna and Nancy, Sue, the RTI coordinator, orchestrated instruction for students to talk about phonics rules and words that apply or do not apply to these rules. Sessions generally started with a repetition of common rules, for example, “when two vowels go walking the first does the talking.” This she did for students to talk about the words that follow this pattern and their pronunciation. A list of words was written on the board, and Sue would add words for each session. Discussion would ensue about the letters and the sounds made based on position in the word.

As a fifth grade teacher, Katie involved her students in reading aloud novels. For some sessions, students took turns to read chapters from class novels and at other times they read silently and discussed elements of the text. For instance, in the vignette, Katie told her students she wanted them to read a new chapter. Before reading the chapter, Katie reviewed figurative and poetic devices with them. She wrote a list of figurative devices on the board (simile, metaphor, alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme, personification). Students were asked if they remembered the definition for the term alliteration. Robert and Miguel gave examples. The discussion moves on to the word onomatopoeia. They talked about the other figurative devices and then Katie asked students to then read and document examples found in the chapter.

According to Bruner (1983) oral language competence enables students to think, and if oral language is not fluent and structured, the thought process is challenging. The English language arts encompass reading, writing, speaking, listening, talking, and viewing. With this in mind, it is imperative for teachers to incorporate all components in order for students to develop language proficiency. Although somewhat limiting, all the teachers created the opportunity for students to discuss different elements of the English language from topical issues (Anna’s discussion about environmental signs), to prosody (use of pitch, rhythm etc. to convey meaning

in an utterance), as was the case for Nancy. Sue focused her discussion mostly on phonics rules and generalizations and attention was given to how words sounded based on the juxtaposition of letters. Finally, Katie centered her classroom discussion on novels read and key vocabulary whether figurative devices or words students would need to know to comprehend what they read.

Reinforcing Reading Skills and Strategies for English Language Learners

Another theme that emerged across all four cases was the focus on the development of reading fluency. All teachers observed modeled reading skills and strategies and gave the students the opportunity to practice these skills and strategies. By demonstrating techniques used by skilled readers, Anna, Nancy, Sue, and Katie showcase a repertoire of skills and strategies necessary in reading comprehension. The art of reading is complex due to the many skills and strategies that readers must master to become proficient. Tompkins (2010) defines reading skills as “automatic behaviors that do not require any thought” (p. 50). On the other hand, strategies require deliberate thinking.

At the pre-K level, Anna exposed students to printed text and comprehension strategies. When she read, for example, *Tucker’s Best School Day* (Winget, 2006), she modeled several comprehension strategies. The read aloud began with her reading the title and asking students what they thought the book was about. Students are also directed to look at the pictures as they listen. Students were given the opportunity to call words and discuss pictures as she read the story. In addition to calling words, Anna segmented words and asked students to make individual sounds of letters throughout the process. As she read, they also made connections and she ended the story with a text to self connection and told students “Now they (characters in the story) are probably singing let’s pack up like we do when we pack up.”

In contrast, Nancy mostly focused on decoding skills and word-learning skills to improve reading speed. Students examined sound-symbol correspondences to decode words. They were also timed by Nancy to determine their reading speed and develop automaticity. The underlying assumption is that with this automaticity and familiarity with high-frequency words, students will then have the cognitive resources to read and comprehend text. Although, it was not evident that students were explicitly taught reading strategies, basic skills were targeted.

Somewhat similar to Nancy, Sue reinforced grade level skills with her students. Based on the classroom teachers' expectations, Sue structured her lessons to bring students to grade-level standards. Using mostly a phonics approach, Sue emphasized decoding skills and phonics rules. As a group they looked at phonics rules and words patterns to decipher the pronunciation of words. This systematic way of teaching phonics is consistent with the National Reading Panel (2000) research review on phonics instruction. The National Reading Panel found that programs that were effective were systematic. However, Tompkins (2010) recommends that students should have authentic venues to apply these rules.

Finally, Katie's activities were geared toward study strategies, comprehension skills and strategies, and word learning strategies. Students regularly read novels and took notes based on the focus for the given session. When students reviewed figurative devices, they then read a chapter in the novel they were reading at the time and wrote down the devices found and examples. Both ELLs and native speakers were able to identify and write examples they had found. In the process students were recognizing details and connecting these to main ideas which are important comprehension skills. They were also using various comprehension strategies such as drawing inferences as they read and identified literary devices.

Drilling and Repetition to Improve Reading for English Language Learners

The lessons described in the vignettes showcase how Nancy and Sue typically organized activities. Across these lessons, were examples of the teachers focusing on different aspects necessary to develop proficiency in English. Students were in routine for the sessions observed and the teachers focused on developing skill areas they thought necessary in promoting competence. Skills that were essential in developing reading fluency were reinforced and students had practice opportunities to fine tune these.

The goal for Nancy and Sue was to get students on grade level by reinforcing skills, a view that is critiqued by many contemporary educators (Garcia & Bauer, 2009; Jimenez & Teague, 2009). This acquisition of reading skills through repetition is an ineffective way to teach the English language arts (Au, 2006; Baker, 2001). At the surface level, students might learn a repertoire of sight words, but it was not clear if students will be able to read and comprehend text without being explicitly taught comprehension strategies. This is problematic because many students can decode exceptionally well but cannot comprehend (Pikulski & Chard, 2005).

Both Sue and Nancy explained that they wanted to improve reading speed, which is important in building fluency (Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Tompkins, 2010). However, building fluency is only one component of developing reading proficiency. Even though Sue tried to incorporate other components, for example, teaching phonics generalizations and word patterns, a balanced approach as advocated by many scholars (for example, Cooper & Kiger, 2005; Tompkins, 2010; Vacca, Vacca, Gove, Burkey, Lenhart, & McKeon, 2011) might be more effective particularly due to the fact that these students were learning English as a second language.

Sue and Nancy were more skills-based in the sense that they focused on skill and drill methods to develop language competence and get students on grade level without students being critically engaged in the process. Katie was not as skills-based, even though she reinforced reading and writing skills and strategies with her students. Although Sue and Katie held contemporary views about facilitating a dual language approach, this was not evident in their lessons. While Sue was not prepared to make this type of language accommodation, Katie knew Spanish but only occasionally would she use snippets of the language in her lessons. Nancy, on the other hand, expressed that although she believed it was important to nurture students' native language, English should be the focus. This was evident in her lessons where students mostly read predictable decodable books and practiced sight words.

Nonetheless, a number of factors could be influencing the way lessons were organized. All four teachers expressed a desire to meet the needs of language minority students. However, in meeting students' needs, their emphasis was mostly on using a skills-based approach to teach reading. This suggests that even though these teachers had an understanding that language minority students have special needs, the need to get students on grade level forced them to focus on basic skills that, inadvertently, may negatively affect learning (Harper, Platt, Naranjo, & Boyton, 2007). Moreover the teachers all mentioned that they were recently learning strategies to teach ELLs. Hence, even though they knew that they needed language support this was a relatively new area of focus. Therefore, although the type of skills-based learning observed is unlikely to facilitate mastery of the complexity of the English language, teachers were using the method they thought would be effective. The goal of getting students on grade level superseded even the idea of promoting the use of students' native language; thus, the students did not have

the advantage of using their native language which would be the ideal scenario for language minority students (Escamilla & Coady, 2005; Garcia, 2000; Mahon, 2006).

For the most part, all the teachers knew their students' backgrounds but the pressure of not making AYP may also have impacted their teaching strategies. Not making AYP came up in several interviews, and, at the time of the study, the principal tried to put plans in place to prepare teachers to work with the subgroups who were underperforming. However, as highlighted by Katie, the diversity of the population at Winifred was an issue that also needed to be addressed. As Katie emphasized it was not only the ELLs who were underperforming, but poor white students were also not performing on grade level, resulting in even more challenges.

All four teachers were experienced, but expressed that they were not fully prepared to work with diverse students. They explained that even though the administration was paying more attention to the needs of language minority students, they felt that they only had a vague understanding of how to work with diverse students. They were not prepared to meet the needs of ELLs, and Sue found it challenging to make the distinction between learning difficulties and lack of language proficiency. While they expressed that they were becoming aware of the needs of ELLs, there were few examples of how they were actually meeting students' needs. Teachers expressed the importance of maintaining the native language, but could not facilitate this process.

Structuring Response to Intervention for English Language Learners

According to Mellard and Johnson (2008) Response to Intervention is a worthwhile venture to swiftly discover struggling students, enhance instruction, deliver interventions, and boost the chance of student success. There are three tiers: screening and intervention (tier 1),

early intervention (tier 2), and intensive intervention (tier 3). Initially, students are screened and identified as being at risk, and if through monitoring they do not make progress in meeting grade-level standards, move on to the second tier. At the second tier, students' specific difficulties are addressed. If there is improvement, they return to the first tier; however, if extra support is still needed they remain in the second tier. Having not shown improvement they move to the intensive intervention where special education teachers work on strategies on a frequent basis.

Nancy worked with several groups of students. However, the group that I observed had students who were repeating first grade, and she specifically addressed students' weaknesses. Her students were tier three, and for her sessions, she drilled students on high-frequency words and other decoding skills and strategies. Although she explained that students had individual weaknesses, it was not apparent how she met those individual needs because all the students participated in the same activities in which they were timed when they read from the word lists. When decodable books were read, the emphasis was not necessarily on comprehension strategies but rather decoding skills. Her approach was similar to Sue's, although for Sue, the focus was more on word patterns.

For Sue, RTI was intensive and activities were mainly segmenting, blending, substituting letters in words, and spelling. Students assessed word patterns and segmented words into their beginning, middle, and ending sounds. They also blended individual sounds to form words. In addition to blending and segmenting, students were instructed on substituting sounds to make new words. Words were examined phonemically and manipulated orally, and occasionally students would write letter-sound correspondence. Another area of emphasis was spelling, and teacher and students mostly used the white board for whole group spelling exercises. Words

were called by the teacher and students wrote and these were checked after each word was called.

Essentially, both Nancy and Sue focused their attention to the unique needs of these students, but the emphasis was on basic skills and did not create an authentic learning environment; a more holistic approach was not evident. Student engagement was repeating isolated letters and sounds, which although important, when not embedded within context might not be beneficial for students and particularly ELLs.

Summary of Findings

One theme that emerged across survey and interview data from all participants was: Framing English language learners as Hispanic/Latino while virtually excluding the Amish. Two themes that emerged across the four case studies were (a) developing oral language for English language learners, and (b) reinforcing reading skills and strategies for English language learners. The next two themes emerged across only two teachers: (a) drilling and repetition to improve reading for English language learners, and (b) structuring response to intervention (RTI) for English language learners was important for two teachers. Teachers perceived ELLs to be Latinos, even though the school served Amish students and is situated in an entrance to Amish country. The cases demonstrate that a skills-based approach was mostly used, although Anna used a more holistic approach with her pre-K special education students and Katie created the opportunity for students to peruse literature for figurative devices.

In conclusion, participants across the board were mostly skills-based in their approach. Most of the lessons that I observed showed teachers reinforcing skills with the goal of getting students on grade level. They were all experienced teachers, but felt the pressures of the school

not making AYP two years in a row. The effect of not making AYP at Winifred was at the forefront of their discussion; the atmosphere, these teachers explained, was one of anxiety.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study was designed to address these issues: (a) teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism; (b) how teachers' practices address the needs of bilinguals and bidialectals in language arts pedagogy; and (c) how social, cultural, and political factors influence teachers' perceptions and practices. In this chapter, a summary of the major findings is provided along with a discussion of how these findings are aligned with the current research on teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Limitations are also delineated, in addition to implications for research and practice in language and literacy studies.

Not many studies explore teachers' perceptions of linguistic diversity and the impact on language arts pedagogy for culturally and linguistically diverse students. In fact, among the perception studies found, few explicitly linked teachers' perceptions with language minority students (for example, Dantas-Whitney & Waldschmidt, 2009). Dantas-Whitney and Waldschmidt, in a qualitative study of two preservice teachers' perceptions of teaching ELLs, found that these preservice teachers viewed teaching as a neutral act and offered a surface level acknowledgement of the unique needs of these students. Other research (for example, Dooley & Assaf, 2009), though not directly related to ELLs, has implications for language minority students. Dooley and Assaf, in a retrospective cross-case analysis, compared two fourth-grade language arts teachers' beliefs and practices in an urban and suburban setting in this test taking climate. The authors found that instruction in the urban setting was skills-based as opposed to the social constructivist approach in the suburban setting.

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Discussion of Major Findings

The first research question investigated teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism. A major theme that emerged from the survey data revealed that teachers mostly thought of students from a Latino or Hispanic background as ELLs.

Teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism. Winifred Elementary is located in a district that is considered an entrance to Amish country and served a number of Amish students, but although teachers and the principal included them in their demographic data, most teachers spoke at length about the unique needs of Latino or Hispanic students. Both terms were used and almost evenly split across participants. Even though demographic data from the principal did not include the percentage of Amish students (they were included in the percentage for whites), she indicated that the languages other than English represented at her school were Spanish, Dutch, German, and one of Indian origin (Hindi).

Teachers used Latinos or Hispanics as synonyms for ELLs in response to questions about language minority students with the implication that the Amish students were not. For example, when asked on the initial survey about how students were assessed for language competence, Barbara explained, "the procedures that Hispanics go through in order to get into the ELL program include taking a test and passing with mastery." In this statement she uses the term

Hispanic to discuss how ELLs are screened to determine if they need support. Her use of the term implies that a student who needs language intervention is synonymous with being Hispanic.

In describing the experience she had teaching non-native English speakers, Nancy, one of the RTI teachers, stated that she generally explained the meanings of words to non-white students more than she would to a white population. Although she indicated on her demographic sheet that she has had Amish students in the past, she still confused race and language in talking about the accommodations she made for language minority students. She spoke at length about her first interaction with the first Hispanic family when she was a third grader at this elementary school. Her conversation about ELLs focused on Hispanic students, even though she mentioned that she has had Amish students. Additionally, Katie emphasized that she had both formal and informal interaction with Latinos and is bilingual in both Spanish and English. She recounted that in the 1960s her family had close ties with many Mexican workers who migrated to the area. Both Nancy's and Katie's references to the Spanish community highlight the emphasis that teachers were placing on Latinos in the discourse about ELLs.

However, Mahon (2006) emphasized that Hispanics is a larger term that refers to students of Spanish descent and include ELLs as well as English-only speakers. Therefore, it is important to note that there can be a distinction between Hispanics and ELLs and that ethnicity was being conflated with language. Mahon's distinction helps unravel some of the complexities associated with naming and identity. It is imperative that educators understand that races and ethnic groups are not monolithic. Hence, a generic term may not be representative of all students from the same racial or ethnic background. Mahon's distinction has implications for the type of pedagogical experience that students should participate in. Nancy's perception of being more explicit with

non white populations also suggests that the Amish students could be overlooked based on their race.

Hall (1996) and Hamilton (2001) highlight the complex nature of naming and identity. Hall argues that identification is the means by which symbolic boundaries are set for the regulation and even the withdrawal of resources for individuals. What is revealed in this data set is the conceptualization of what it means to be an ELL and the racial and ethnic group that is considered to be ELLs. Language minority students who do not fall within this racial group may be overlooked, as many teachers did the Amish students at Winifred, and students who are Hispanic but not ELL may not be receiving adequate education because of the perception that they lack language proficiency.

Therefore, this study situates teaching and learning within the intersection of race, ethnicity, social class, identity, power and language. Critics of the sociocultural framework argue that some of these issues are not explicitly explored when this approach is used (Lewis, Enciso & Moje, 2009). My argument is that teachers' perceptions of students are entangled with race, ethnicity, identity, language etc., and students' perceived abilities are sometimes measured by these categories. Identities and languages are inextricably connected, and attitudes regarding certain languages and racial groups can affect the teaching/learning process. The impact that these can have on the teaching of linguistically and culturally diverse students is evident in this data set where teachers highlighted the attention they were giving to Latinos while sidelining the Amish. Even though it is important to take into account students' background, preconceived notions of students' competence or language needs can affect classroom pedagogy. Although the Amish students were language minority students because they spoke a language other than English, they were not considered in the discussion about language minority students.

It is imperative for teachers to understand that cultural, social, and other contexts play integral roles in literacy learning. Cultures are heterogeneous and no one description can encapsulate any given culture. Given the complex juxtaposition of ethnicity, class, and culture in the U.S. the onus is on teachers to critically reflect on their pedagogical approach and how race, class, and culture affect their teaching. According to Weiss and Wodak (2003) “Language is not powerful on its own—it gains power by the use powerful people make of it” (p. 14). Therefore, given the social and political context within which language is taught and learned, it is evident why the Amish students, though white and native speakers of a language other than English, were not readily identified by the teachers whereas students from a Spanish descent were generally considered ELLs. The finding highlights the importance that race plays in how students are perceived and the labels and status ascribed to students based on race and ethnicity.

Weis and Wodak (2003) argue that social inequality is expressed, constituted, and legitimized by language use, and at Winifred teachers made a concerted effort to provide the support that language minority students needed, but the emphasis was placed on Latinos. With the current focus that has been placed on minority students it is interesting to note that minority is confined to race and ethnicity in a number of cases. However, the term minority extends beyond race and ethnicity and may incorporate ability/disability, sexual orientation among others.

In summary, teachers focused on the Hispanic/Latino students as needing language intervention and mostly overlooked the Amish students who spoke a language other than English. This has several implications for both groups. Language minority students who are white might be overlooked, and English speaking Latinos may not be academically challenged given these circumstances.

The following section highlights issues related to the second and third research questions. The questions examined how teachers' practices address the needs of bilinguals and bidialectals in language arts pedagogy and how social, cultural, and political factors influence teachers' perceptions and practices. Following is a discussion of the themes that emerged from the cases: developing oral language for special education pre-K English language learners; drilling and repetition to improve reading speed for English language learners; structuring response to intervention for English language learners; and reinforcing reading skills and strategies for English language learners.

Practices that address the needs of bilinguals and bidialectals in language arts pedagogy and influence of social, cultural and political factors on teachers' perceptions and practices. Anna's pre-K was designed to meet the needs of students with special needs defined as having a language or learning disability. Her main goal was for students to develop vocabulary and letter recognition, and she regularly used pictures to make lessons engaging. She generally followed routines with her students that were geared toward improving their language abilities and knowledge of environmental print. Anna's lessons were holistic and not as segmented as the other teachers, which may be due in part to her being a pre-K teacher. She also had a bilingual aide who would occasionally facilitate usage of students' native language.

As opposed to Anna's holistic approach, Nancy used skills-based methods to get students on grade level. As one of the RTI teachers and title one reading teacher, she worked with a group of eight first graders for 30 minutes daily to teach basic sight words and to improve their reading speed. She regularly used drills and timed students when they read their word lists. Students read from decodable books from the *Great leap* program, although the focus was not comprehension. Nancy's main goal was for students to repeatedly identify words and build fluency.

Similar to Nancy, Sue used skills-based methods to get students on grade level. Being the RTI coordinator, Sue had a resource room for K-3 with a number of books, posters, activity sheets, games, computers and a television. In her print rich environment, posters listed reminders about writing conventions, traits of writing, and the writing process. Even though these were posted in the classroom, during my observations, Sue reinforced reading skills and did not incorporate writing in her lessons. She had routines that students followed for her lessons; for example, students repeated phonics generalizations for the vowel combination pattern that was the focus for that particular session.

Katie was not as skills-based as Nancy and Sue, with her fifth graders, even though she focused on reinforcing the English conventions. For several sessions that I observed, she had students discuss figurative devices, and then search for examples in the novel they were reading at the time. For instance, when students read *Under the Blood-Red Sun* (Salisbury, 1994), she wrote a list of figurative devices on the board that they revised as a class, and students then documented examples of these that they had found while they read a new chapter. For the next academic year she would like to revamp her language arts program because writing was particularly challenging for her students. She would like to model and teach grammar rules and writing during the first semester, with the intention that students would apply these during writing in the spring semester. It was not clear how she would get students to apply/transfer grammar rules in composing essays. Portalupi found that as a fourth grade teacher, when she focused on the mechanics of language and did not embed them in a writing workshop format, students could not apply skills they had learned in isolation to their writing (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). Essentially, although Katie was not as skills-based as Sue and Nancy, she reinforced rudimentary skills for students to learn English conventions.

Discussion

Educators grapple with meeting the needs of language minority students due to the rapidly growing number in U.S. classrooms; therefore, what it means to be ELL and the strategies used come into question. At Winifred, the conceptualization of what it means to be an ELL was confined to Latinos, for the most part. Teachers spoke at length about students from a Spanish descent as needing language intervention and mostly ignored the Amish students. In a 2004 school report, a teacher on staff highlighted the predicament they faced as a staff when the Amish kindergarteners start school with no one able to communicate with them. In this report, the teacher pointed out that nothing was being done to address this concern: “no one on staff speaks Dutch to help communicate with in-coming Amish kindergarteners who at times speak little English.” It was highlighted in the report that even though the number of Spanish speaking teachers was growing, and there was improving knowledge of both the Hispanic and Amish cultures, the emphasis was on the Hispanic population.

This is consistent with the 2010 Chicago Public School (CPS) report that premium is given to Spanish and Polish due to the city’s large Latino and Polish populations but there is a need for more language opportunities for other language speakers (Chicago Public School Bilingual Education and World Language Commission, 2010). The commission (comprised of teachers; principals, area instructional officers, parents, language education experts from local universities and from city and state government, and the wider community) assembled to strategize on closing the achievement gap between ELLs and other students. On examination of its policies, the CPS system found that although the policy stipulated meeting the needs of different language speakers, Spanish was treated as the most important language for bilingual

education, and even with this attention, the Spanish-speaking students were still underserved and more so speakers of other languages.

In addition to the attention given to Latinos at Winifred, the skills-based approach that was prevalent in these classrooms, for example, in Sue's and Nancy's, is arguably ineffective with students from diverse backgrounds (Au, 2006; Baker, 2001; Garcia & Bauer, 2009; Jimenez & Teague, 2009). Operating from a deficit paradigm, the undergirding theory informing this type of instruction requires a focus on ensuring that students have certain requisite skills. What the skills-based approach ignores is creating authentic opportunities for literacy enrichment and development.

The teachers observed did not build on students' lived experiences. One of the recommendations of the CPS report is the Chicago Council on Global Affairs urging of Chicago teachers to capitalize on the linguistic assets that students bring to the teaching/learning process, particularly immigrant students. However, such a statement might explain why the Amish students at Winifred were not considered ELLs because they were not identified as immigrant or even non-white. On Winifred's report card students were categorized based on race, language, and income level, and the Amish students were in a unique category in that they are white but speakers of a language other than English. Hence, even though they were accounted for in terms of language, they might have been overlooked by virtue of the fact that they are white. The complexity of categorization was evident with Lori describing her classroom demographics as "40% Hispanic, 5% Amish, 5% Asian, and 50% white." In this sense, Lori did not label them as white but Amish because she had a separate category for whites. Kelly also indicated that she interacted with German speakers, but she only had support from Spanish translators in

facilitating the teaching/learning process. The Amish being a cultural or religious group, needing language support was not viewed as needing language support.

Although they were experienced teachers, they were all test-driven. Participants said they were becoming aware of the needs of ELLs, but there were few examples of how they were meeting these students' needs. They also expressed the importance of maintaining the native language, but could not facilitate this process. Even teachers who knew Spanish did not engage students beyond occasional surface level conversations in Spanish. The participants also mentioned that they were not prepared to meet the needs of ELLs and found it challenging to distinguish between learning difficulties and lack of language proficiency. Essentially, teachers mostly employed strategies they believed would get students on grade level, which may be described as a deficit approach to teaching.

The deficit approach to teaching language minority students is refuted by scholars of culturally relevant pedagogy. Scholars (for example, Delpit, 1995; Pohan, 1999; Valencia, 1997) have extensively explored this ideology. Delpit argues that daily interactions are filled with assumptions made by educators and mainstream society about the abilities of low-income students and students of color. She brings to the forefront the notion that the power disparity within classrooms occur at a broader societal level that "nurtures and maintains" stereotypes (p. xii). The resistance of people with power and privilege to "perceive those different from themselves except through their culturally clouded vision" is detrimental (p. xiv). This is especially detrimental in classrooms where educators view low-income and minority students as other.

Garcia and Guerra (2004) describe a staff development workshop they facilitated in the United States Southwest in response to superintendents' call for sensitizing the predominantly

white female teaching staff to the unique needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Garcia and Guerra convey that superintendents felt teacher education institutions were not sufficiently preparing these middle class teachers to meet the needs of these students which resulted in the achievement gap between middle class students and poor and culturally and linguistically diverse students in urban public schools.

Over two years, in a professional development program totaling 33 hours, Garcia and Guerra (2004) explored topics of diversity and equity with 69 teachers. Drawing on scholarship by Sleeter (1992) and Sparks and Hirsch (1997), the authors incorporated elements relevant to effective intercultural communication and multicultural education. Using this model, they discuss five assumptions: deficit thinking permeates society; schools and teachers mirror these beliefs; professional development in diversity is not just for White educators; intercultural communication permeates every aspect of schooling; cultural sensitivity and awareness does not automatically result in equity practices; and professional development activities must explicitly link equity knowledge to classroom practice.

Refuting the deficit model traditionally assigned to language minority students, the funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005) and the cultural modeling framework (Lee, 2006) subscribe to the notion that classroom activities should be connected to students' lived experiences. Both frameworks take into account that students bring to the learning experience skills and practices they have learned in the communities from television shows, games they play, and family activities. Promoting the view that the social, historical, political, and economic contexts of communities are crucial in teaching and learning, the funds of knowledge phenomenon encourages an understanding of students' everyday experiences. Therefore, the undergirding theory is using teaching techniques that draw on students'

background knowledge. A counterpoint is the cultural modeling framework that is situated in the history of African Americans and advances usage of the African American Vernacular English and youth culture in learning the academic disciplines. This framework transcends the traditional discourse about the mismatch between students' lived experiences and classroom pedagogy and focuses on connecting teaching to students' lives. Essentially, both models subscribe to the idea that language minority students have lived experiences that should be harnessed by educators.

Using a Bakhtinian notion, as students engage in dialogue in this social milieu, they appropriate voices (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986) and the onus is on teachers to engage students in ways that will build on their experiential backgrounds. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers take into account the lived experiences of their students. This was not evident in the cases observed, with the exception of Anna, who built on environmental print and familiarized students with real life symbols and signs. Using culturally relevant strategies (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009) can facilitate language learning for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Classic studies on language minority students (for example, Au & Jordan, 1981) also recommend capitalizing on students' lived experiences. Similar to Ladson-Billings's (1994, 2009) culturally responsive pedagogy, the Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) embedded students' cultural experiences in the teaching/learning process and positively impacted the learning process. Heath's (1983/2002) ethnography, another classic study that highlighted the importance of understanding students' lived experiences, brings to the forefront the mismatch that can occur between teachers and students. Heath underscores the impact of race and class on the teaching/learning process and how a middle class status can positively impact academic achievement.

Additionally, studies that frame language minority students as knowledgeable (for example, Smitherman, 1997, 2006; Alim & Baugh, 2007; Weinstein, 2007) are all aligned with the funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005) and cultural modeling framework (Lee, 2006). These studies have in common the call for affirming students' lived experiences and incorporating students' home/community cultures in classroom pedagogy. Smitherman maintains that it is essential for teachers to incorporate students' home language and cultures as a springboard for learning. By recognizing that students acquire language/knowledge from the community in which they are raised, teachers will be better able to meet the diverse needs of students. Having this understanding is critical for working with language minority students. Additionally, Alim and Baugh argue that students of color generally encounter challenges when their home cultures are viewed as deficient. Alim and Baugh maintain that educators should not only use students' native vernacular as a means for teaching Standard American English but should affirm usage as a legitimate language.

Weinstein (2007), in a case study of four students, revealed that students demonstrated a high level of written language in their rap lyrics. In her study, Weinstein detangled the relationship between rapping and other "non-school" activities on school practices and teachers' perceptions of these activities and the implications for classroom success. She recommends that teachers should capitalize on students' out-of-school activities in the teaching/learning process and critically evaluate how their (teachers') perceptions of students' capabilities affect the caliber work produced by students.

However, the complexity revealed at Winifred goes beyond the traditional debate regarding the teaching of language minority students. Showcased are the complex factors associated with meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Effectively

meeting the needs of language minority students requires an overhaul of the ELL program that will take into account the needs of the Amish as well as Latino ELLs. The manner in which intervention was organized catered to the rapidly increasing Latino population while undermining the needs of the Amish.

Nonetheless, the current test-taking climate in the U.S. also has negative ramifications for language minority students. Teachers described the anxiety they felt when not making AYP and this might have influenced their pedagogical approach. Several scholars (Bielenberg & Wong Fillmore, 2005; Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Garcia & Bauer, 2009; Gopaul-McNicol, Reid, & Wisdom, 1998; McCarthey, 2008; Valenzuela, 2005) accentuate the consequences of federal mandates on the classroom experiences of language minority students. Bielenberg and Wong Fillmore argue that “By holding schools accountable for the academic progress of all categories of students, NCLB has the potential to create greater education equity,” (p. 45). However, the authors argue that these tests may lead to greater inequities for ELLs with the punitive measures that are meted out to schools where students do not excel on these tests. Winifred, not making AYP for the last two years, was under pressure to bring all subgroups on grade level. Many students, including poor white students, were underperforming and the onus was on these teachers to improve test scores. The question that surfaces repeatedly in the discourse about testing and culturally and linguistically diverse students is “How do we move beyond a deficit view of language minority students within this testing regime?”

Evans and Hornberger (2005) assert that planning and policy decisions regarding ELLs are made at multiple levels which affect how practitioners try to meet the needs of their students. Drawing on Ricento and Hornberger’s (1996) onion metaphor, the authors argue that there are various outer and inner layers of language policies that are enacted in classrooms based on how

policies are interpreted and operationalized. General language policies are legislated nationally which are then turned into guidelines that are further regulated and interpreted by institutions in varied settings. Interpretations of these guidelines in these different settings, at each level, (whether national, institutional or interpersonal), are constructed by different ideologies. Essentially, the authors maintain that politics affects interpretation and enactment of policies/guidelines at all levels—nationally, institutionally, and interpersonally. At Winifred, the administration was making a concerted effort to sensitize teachers to meet the needs of language minority students. Teachers attended workshops facilitated by the principal and traveled to conferences to learn about strategies that may be effective with ELLs. For the teachers observed, they mostly interpreted meeting the needs of ELLs as getting them on grade level, and they employed a number of drilling exercises to teach vocabulary and reinforce skills they thought important in improving students' command of English.

Garcia and Bauer (2009) interrogate whether NCLB resulted in high-quality instruction for diverse students. The authors argue that the gap that NCLB intended to eliminate still exists between low-income and high-income students. Garcia and Bauer maintain that “standards do not tell us how to instruct students from diverse backgrounds so that the literacy gap can be resolved” (p. 249), which is one of the problems with standards-based tests. They question whether NCLB produced high-quality instruction for diverse students. McCarthy (2008) states that NCLB has negatively impacted the experiences of students and especially language minority students. In her qualitative study, McCarthy interviewed and observed teachers from both low- and high-income schools to garner an understanding of their attitudes about writing within the NCLB mandates. She found that school contexts in addition to NCLB played a major role in teachers' attitude and writing instruction. The negative repercussion of testing was evident in the

strategies used by the teachers observed. Teachers also highlighted the impact of not making AYP on their methodology. For example, Katie explained that she felt more relaxed after the students had completed the ISAT. She explained that teachers should be held accountable but this type of accountable was negatively affecting pedagogy.

Consistent with Katie's argument, Valenzuela (2005) contends that other measures should be used to hold teachers accountable while not forcing them to teach to the test. Having conducted a qualitative study in understanding the impact of NCLB on language minority students, the author found that testing and student performance had a direct impact on teaching strategies. She recommends a new approach in teacher accountability that will not negatively affect instructional methods.

In a case study that focused on an African American 8th grader, who speaks both Ebonics and Standard English, Gopaul-McNicol, Reid, and Wisdom (1998) found that alternative, non-language-based assessments gave a better understanding of the student's true academic potential than traditional assessments. The authors found that in a non academic setting, family and friends thought the student was smart and on par with peers. Using ecological assessments, they also found that the student's language ability was borderline rather than deficient and that the student used words in her natural setting that she was unable to define on the written IQ test. Gopaul-McNicol, Reid, and Wisdom recommend the need for alternative assessment for language minority students and for educators to not assume all test takers have the same background.

The question that pervades both micro and macro level discussion on equitable teaching and learning for all students is, "How can the diverse needs of students be met in closing the achievement gap?" The achievement gap that is no longer restricted to a racial binary but which now incorporates income levels, geographic location (urban versus rural), etc. Ovando, Combs,

and Collier (2006) and Reyes (1992) call for school policies to shift from a one size fits all paradigm to cater to students' individual needs. They articulate that the idea that a generic set of skills will get students on grade level is flawed. Students have different learning styles and needs and classroom experiences must be connected to the lived experiences of students to be successful. This one-size-fits-all model focuses on rudimentary skills that are essential but not enough for students' holistic development. Teachers should capitalize on what students bring to the learning process, and, in order to do so, must understand the backgrounds of their students. However, having an understanding of students' backgrounds is not enough; making a conscious effort to facilitate learning is mandatory. The teachers observed mostly used a skills-based approach, and it was not readily apparent that they were building on students' lived experiences. In fact, a deficit approach was used in order for students to meet grade level standards.

Studies specifically related to understanding the unique needs of language minority students convey that there is a significant relationship between English language proficiency and academic achievement (Carlisle & Beeman, 2000; Escamilla & Coady, 2005; Garcia, 2000; Harklau, 2002; Mahon, 2006). These authors all recommend accommodating language minority students and the important role the native language plays in learning a second language. Carlisle and Beeman found that Spanish-speaking students who were taught in Spanish before English instruction developed more complex sentences than their counterparts who did not get this type of instruction. Escamilla and Coady also investigated students' transfer of knowledge from their first language to the second. They argue that educators should understand the implications of teaching second language learners.

Escamilla and Coady (2005) found in their study that students were tested in a foreign language they were only exposed to for seven months and were labeled as deficient. They assert

that cognitive and academic strengths in a first language will aid in the development of a second, and it is imperative that teachers understand that it takes 5 to 7 years to gain proficiency in a new language. Moreover, Garcia (2000) articulates that in developing literacy in a second language, students are more successful when they have a strong foundation in their first language. Nonetheless, there was hardly any effort made to facilitate a dual language approach by the teachers I observed. With the exception of Anna, who, with the assistance of a bilingual aide created an atmosphere where the native language was supported, the other teachers focused on developing English proficiency in an English-only medium. Although Katie was bilingual in both Spanish and English, she did not facilitate both languages, although she maintained that this (dual language) was important.

My current study contributes to the literature-base by being the first to focus on teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism and the effect on language arts pedagogy. To date, while numerous studies have explored the teaching of diverse students and the negative effects of standardized tests on the quality instruction these students receive (Bielenberg & Wong Fillmore, 2005; Evan & Hornberger, 2005; Garcia & Bauer, 2009; Jimenez & Teague, 2009; McCarthy, 2008; Valenzuela, 2005), none of these studies have examined teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism and the impact on teaching the English language arts. In fact, of the limited number of perception studies that were found, Dantas-Whitney and Waldschmidt (2009) and Garcia and Guerra (2004) investigated teachers' views of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Dooley and Assaf (2009), although a perception study, is not specifically related to ELLs. However, similar to what was evident in this study, Dooley and Assaf found in their retrospective cross-case analysis that instruction in an urban classroom was

skills-based as opposed to the social constructivist approach in the suburban classroom; the authors contend these differences led to inequitable scholastic achievement.

Dantas-Whitney and Waldschmidt (2009) found that two preservice teachers who engaged in a reflective exercise on teaching ELLs believed teaching to be a neutral act and offered a surface level recognition of the needs of these students. Dantas-Whitney and Waldschmidt reviewed portfolios students compiled for a class on teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The main objective of the class was for students to critically interrogate their biases and perceptions, as preservice teachers, to promote learning for ELLs. Such an exercise at Winifred might enable teachers to reflect on how they view the world and the impact of their views on their practice.

Working with inservice teachers, Garcia and Guerra (2004) examined teachers' deficit thinking as it pertains to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Using a sociocultural framework, the authors challenged teachers' and administrators' deficit view of students from diverse backgrounds. Hollins (1996) argue that for the most part, teachers are caring and well-intentioned but are not cognizant of the underlying aspects of culture, and this can greatly affect their identities, roles as educators, and the teaching/learning process. Subsequently, Garcia and Guerra postulate that teachers should not be seen as problems because this can diminish the focus from a crucial investigation of systemic variables that propagate deficit ideologies and the reproduction of unequal opportunities for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Rather, I would argue that teachers should be given the space to examine how their worldviews affect pedagogy. At Winifred, the forum had recently been created for teachers to critically reflect on meeting the needs of diverse students (data were collected spring, 2011). During the interviews, Sue, the RTI coordinator explained that there was

now an emphasis on meeting the needs of all subgroups and therefore, teachers were now required to pay special attention the needs of language minority students.

According to Sleeter (1992), the knowledge domain of multicultural education is extensive and showcases several perspectives about the education of diverse students, and these perspectives are often situated in different philosophical and theoretical orientations. However, as articulated by Artiles and Trent (1997) very limited empirical research is available to link these perspectives to successful practitioner-based practices or teacher preparation in multicultural education.

Therefore, my study brings awareness to the different ways perception can affect the teaching of the English language arts to language minority students. It highlights the group of students teachers perceived to be in need of language support and how they organized instruction to meet students' needs. Findings from this study can be used to influence practice and policy with the creation of forums for both inservice and preservice teachers to interrogate the perceptions they have of students and how these consciously or unconsciously can affect language teaching.

Summary

The data set revealed several themes that have implications for teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students. The first theme highlighted the teachers' focus on Latinos as ELLs with the exclusion of the Amish. Even though Winifred is located at an entrance to Amish country and served these students, they were virtually excluded from the conversation about ELLs. The second theme showcased the strategies that teachers used to develop oral language. Several strategies were used to develop students' oral language, including read alouds, use of

visuals, scaffolding etc. At the pre-K level, students even had support from a bilingual aide who communicated with students in Spanish. The use of drill and repetition emerged as another theme. This was evident especially for Nancy who, even though she articulated that students, had difficulty comprehending text; focus was mainly on improving reading speed and not the teaching of comprehension strategies. Therefore, it was not clear how she would facilitate students' understanding of text by focusing only on reading speed, even though fluency is an essential component in reading comprehension.

RTI was mainly the reinforcement of basic skills. Sue, the RTI coordinator, mostly stressed phonics rules and word patterns in her bid to get students on grade level. She modeled her lessons based on what classroom teachers were focusing on. In her resource room, she had a plethora of activities, charts, and games, but students mostly worked on repeating phonics rules and applying these when she reviewed word families. Nancy also focused for RTI on decoding and reading speed. Finally, the data set revealed that through the activities, reading skills and strategies were reinforced. This was mostly evident in Katie's fifth grade class, where she ensured that students got the opportunity to discuss literary devices and find examples of these in literature they read as a class.

Limitations

A number of limitations are to be noted for this study. First of all, the data set was small, and therefore caution should be taken in generalizing these findings. The purposeful and selective design of this qualitative study reduces generalization to a wider population. Data were generated from nine teachers and the principal in phase one of the study, and four teachers in phases two and three. Therefore, analysis was limited to this number of participants in one

school, and although Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that it is feasible and even warranted to develop general statements based on particular case studies, precaution must be taken in generalizing these teachers' perceptions and how they organized for instruction across settings. Also, the study does not account for other teachers at the school, so whether they had the same views or employed the similar teaching strategies should not be assumed.

Second, the selection of participants was limited to mostly support teachers (RTI and Special Education Pre-k teachers) with the exception of the fifth grade teacher. Although for phase one there was an almost even balance of support staff service teachers and regular classroom teachers, phases two and three were mainly support staff. Hence, while the data gave an understanding of the support language minority students received, care must be taken in interpreting and generalizing the results across the board at this school or other settings.

Thirdly, a perception study is limited by its volatility. Perceptions can be changed based on who the researcher is and what respondents believe researchers want to hear. As a result, it remains unknown if the participants would have had the same perceptions with another researcher. Furthermore, in light of the fact that there are not many studies that examine teachers' perceptions with regard to culturally and linguistically diverse students, exploring this area on a wider scale will provide a better understanding of the impact of perceptions on language arts pedagogy.

Finally, I relied on open-ended surveys, interviews, observations, and classroom materials to draw conclusions that were subjective to my experiences both as a graduate student and a teacher. Hence, the conclusions that I have drawn and what I have focused on were influenced by my lived experiences.

Implications for Practice

Meeting the needs of English language learners is a necessity in narrowing the achievement gap between language minority students and mainstream students. According to Berman, Chambliss, and Geiser (1999) the achievement gap between middle class White students and culturally and linguistically diverse students persists even after 30 years of school reform. The authors further express that practitioners are inclined to place low achievement on students, their families, and schools without taking into account the connection between their (teachers') classroom activities and student performance. Therefore, there is a need for educators to be reflexive about how their own perceptions can affect the teaching/learning process.

Findings from my dissertation reveal that the participants framed the discourse about ELLs around Latinos at the expense of the Amish. For the most part, the teachers thought that nurturing both the native language and English would be important in developing language proficiency, but findings revealed that only the pre-K teacher who had a bilingual aide facilitated this process, and even teachers who could speak Spanish did not make possible this dual language approach. Teachers also knew that ELLs had unique needs but did not feel adequately prepared to meet those needs. Some participants explained that they found it difficult to make the distinction between identifying students with special needs and limited English proficiency. Lastly, a skills-based approach was mostly used to get students on grade level. Teachers felt the need to reinforce reading skills to get students on grade level which undermined an authentic learning experience.

There are several implications of this study. The type of instruction that language minority students receive demonstrate the need for teachers to rethink the strategies they use. Many language minority students perform poorly in school because they lack English language

competence. Based on the findings from this study, the teachers tried to get students on grade level by reinforcing skills that classroom teachers were focused on. However, many researchers argue that the skill and drill that language minority students are relegated to (Au, 2006; Baker, 2001; Jimenez & Teague, 2009) is ineffective. These findings imply that more attention should be given to make both preservice and practicing teachers aware of some of the unique needs of ELLs and practical ways to address these.

Implications for Research

This study contributes to the existing research on teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. It demonstrated that language minority students at Winifred were engaged in skill reinforcement, for the most part. Several findings and concerns presented warrant future research. For example, although there were Amish students at the school, the teachers mainly referred to Hispanics as ELLs. What this suggests is that some teachers subconsciously associated the term ELL with native Spanish speaking students or students from a Spanish background.

Moreover, with limited perception studies, the current study is one of the few studies to investigate teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism and the effect on language arts pedagogy. More research with a larger sample can contribute more to the knowledge base in this regard and add to generalizability. Research could also focus on teachers from different racial and ethnic backgrounds using quantitative measures to cover broader geographic areas. Essentially, both quantitative and qualitative methods would be useful to gather more information.

Conclusion

In conclusion, findings from this study extend existing research pertaining to language minority students. Given the limited number of perception studies related to the teaching of diverse students, it contributes to the literature base by being the first to focus on teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism and the effect on language arts pedagogy. It provides educators with relevant information on how perceptions can impact the teaching/learning process, particularly for language minority students.

Literacy in sociocultural terms emphasizes the social worlds and cultural identities of students and views the act of meaning-making as always embedded within a social context (Moll, Saez, Dworin, 2001; Reyes & Costanzo, 2002; Reyes & Azura, 2008). The study highlights the complexity associated with race and language and the lack of preparation in meeting the diverse needs of students. It also brings to the forefront the fact that groups are not monolithic, even though in a number of cases students are labeled and identified based on physical features such as race. According to Souto-Manning (2010) "By paying close attention to children's speech events and learning from their cultural and linguistic resources, teachers can open doors to the opportunities provided by multiple languages and cultural practices" (p. 258). By doing so, the classroom space is created that validates students' lived experiences.

With the increasingly diverse student population in U. S. classrooms, the onus is on practitioners to question the perceptions they have of these students and the types of classroom experiences that they provide. Many studies on language minority students explore the methods of instruction used with these students and the impact of legislation on the types of experiences they are afforded, but not many students investigate how perceptions about language groups can

impact language arts pedagogy. Therefore, this study can inform decisions on meeting the needs of diverse learners.

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Appendix A

Initial Electronic-mail

My name is Lavern Byfield and I am a former elementary teacher (taught for five years). I am currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

During my tenure as a classroom teacher I found that many language-minority students had difficulty in schools due to the mismatch between the home and school language. My interest was further piqued in graduate school when I found that there were not many studies on teachers' perceptions of issues such as bilingualism and bidialectalism and the implications for language arts pedagogy. Therefore, I would like to invite you and your staff to participate in a research study that seeks to garner an understanding of teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism.

Participation in this study will involve 3 phases during the spring semester of 2011. In the first phase, all teachers will be invited to complete a survey to ascertain their views about bilinguals and dialect speakers. For the next step, I will interview a subset of teachers who have indicated, on the initial survey, an interest in this study (4 in total). The final phase will be in-depth case studies of 4 teachers in which I will conduct interviews and observe language arts activities. This project will be completed under the supervision of Professor Sarah McCarthey for my dissertation.

I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you either via telephone or in person regarding the possibility of conducting this study at your school. I may be contacted via telephone at 217-819-7062 or via email at byfield2@illinois.edu. My advisor may be contacted via telephone at 217- 244-8286 or via email at mccarthe@illinois.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lavern Byfield, Graduate Teaching Assistant

Appendix B

Telephone Correspondence

Hello _____,

My name is Lavern Byfield, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study regarding linguistic diversity/language minority students. I will conduct this project for my dissertation under the supervision of Professor Sarah McCarthey.

Did you receive my letter/email regarding this study? May I take this opportunity to explain this further?

This study will run from February 1-May 26, 2011. It will be done in phases and participants (all teachers on staff) are first invited to complete a survey. Based on the survey information, 4 participants will be selected for in-depth interviews (in the second phase). In the final phase, 4 teachers will be in-depth case studies and they will also be observed in their classrooms.

Please be assured that information obtained during the research project will be kept strictly confidential. Any sharing or publication of the research results will not identify any of the participants or the school.

If you have further questions about this project, please contact me at (217) 819-7062 or email me at byfield2@illinois.edu. My advisor may be contacted via telephone at 217- 244-8286 or via email at mccarthe@illinois.edu. For questions concerning your rights as a participant in research involving human subjects, please feel free to contact Anne Robertson, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-333-3023, or via email at arobrtsn@illinois.edu.

May we set up a time to meet at your earliest convenience? I look forward to working with you.

Thank you.

Appendix C

Participant Consent Letters

October 19, 2010

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research project that seeks to garner an understanding of teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism. My name is Lavern Byfield and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. I will conduct this project for my dissertation under the supervision of Professor Sarah McCarthey.

I will complete this project in three phases. In the first phase, I will survey all teachers on staff to understand their perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism. Completion of the survey will take approximately 30 minutes. Phase 2 of the study, February 28, 2011-March 11, 2011, I will conduct 2 in-depth interviews (1 interview each week) with 4 of these teachers based on the survey information and who have shown interest in further participation. Each interview will last for approximately 45 minutes.

For the final phase of the study, I will focus on these 4 teachers as in-depth case studies. During this stage, I will do classroom observations and an in-depth interview at the end of the study. For classroom observations, I will visit the classroom three times weekly for approximately 2 ½ months (March 28, 2011-May 26, 2011) and teachers will also be asked to participate in brief 10 minute reflective interviews at the end of the classroom observations. The final interview will last 45 minutes.

Before the interviews, I will ask your permission to audio tape the conversation. You will be asked to discuss your experience as a classroom teacher, your perceptions about linguistic diversity, your work, your students, the school in general, your English language learners, dialect speakers, and your English as a Second Language support. The audio recordings will be transcribed and coded to remove individual names.

I do not anticipate any risk to this study greater than normal life and we anticipate that the results will increase our understanding of the implications of teaching English language learners and dialect speakers. This will also provide feedback data that can be used to improve the teaching/learning process. I propose disseminating results of this study as a doctoral thesis and at a later date in journal publications and/or conference presentations. Please be assured that any sharing or publication of the research results will not identify any participant or the school. Pseudonyms will be substituted for any identifying information for publications or presentations.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty. Your choice to participate or not will not impact your

job or status as a classroom teacher. You are also free to refuse to answer questions you do not wish to answer. You will receive a copy of the consent form.

If you have questions about this research project, please contact me by telephone at 217-819-7062 or via email at byfield2@illinois.edu. You may also contact my supervisor Prof. Sarah McCarthy at 217-244-8286 or via email at mccarthe@illinois.edu.

For concerns with regard to your rights as a participant please contact Anne Robertson, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-333-3023, or via email at arobrtsn@illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Prof. Sarah McCarthy (Principal Investigator)

Telephone: 217-244-8286

Email: mccarthe@illinois.edu

Lavern Byfield (Secondary Investigator)

Telephone: 217-819-7062

Email: byfield2@illinois.edu

I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in the survey part of this research project described above. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____	_____	_____
(Print) Participant's name	Signature	Date

I agree to participate in the second phase of the research project described above.

_____	_____	_____
(Print) Participant's name	Signature	Date

I do agree to have the interview audio taped for the purposes of transcription.

_____ Yes

_____ No

Signature

Signature

I agree to participate in the third phase of the research project described above.

(Print) Participant's name

Signature

Date

I grant permission for the investigator to audiotape my lessons so that this data can be coded and analyzed at a later date. Audiotapes will not be disseminated for any other purpose.

_____ Yes

_____ No

Signature

Signature

I do agree to have the interview audio taped for the purposes of transcription.

_____ Yes

_____ No

Signature

Signature

Appendix D
Teacher Demographic Form

Name_____

Address_____

School_____

Grade Level_____

Email_____

Highest degree obtained_____

How many years teaching experience? _____

How many years teaching at this school? _____

Appendix E

Survey Questions for Teachers at the Beginning of the Study (Initial Interview Protocol)

Phase 1

1. Do you currently teach language minority students? How would you characterize your current classroom demographics? (Asian, African American, Latino, White)
2. What languages do the students in your class speak? Are there dialect speakers in your class? How many students in your class speak another language and/ or dialect?
3. What are your goals and objectives for language arts? How much are you influenced by the Illinois standards? If there are non-native speakers, how much are you influenced by the standards for English language learners?
4. How do you assess students' language competence? In what ways do you accommodate for non-native speakers?
5. What activities do you think promote language development?
6. Do you feel you need to adapt any materials or means of instruction to meet the needs of your linguistically diverse students?
7. Describe your experience teaching students who are non-native English speakers. How do you feel your own background affects your teaching of students who are not from your racial and language background?
8. As students are learning English, what do you see as the role of their native language (or dialect) in learning English (e.g., is it important to maintain it, allow students to use it when needed? Learn English as the most important aspect?)
9. How do you hope to make a difference in the lives of your students? What do you hope your students will remember after they have left your class?

Appendix F

In-Depth Interview Protocol # 1

Phase 2

1. Have you always taught at this level? Prior to this class, have you ever taught English Language Learners? Dialect speakers?
2. How many languages are represented in your class? What countries do they represent?
3. Tell me about the languages that you speak. Where did you learn these?
4. What types of preparation have you had to teach English Language Learners (ELLs)/dialect speakers? (at preservice level? Inservice? Experience?)
5. What types of tests do you use in your class? Do you make any accommodations for ELLs? How reliable are these tests for English Language Learners?
6. What is your overall perception of the program for ELLs at x school? Do you feel that the objectives are met?
7. What do you perceive as the challenges/successes you have experienced as a teacher of ELLs and dialect speakers?
8. What do you think are some of the reasons for some ELLs to be underperforming?
9. Is explicit instruction necessary or appropriate for language minority students? Why or why not?
10. What are some methods that are beneficial for language minority students?

Appendix G

In-Depth Interview Protocol # 2

Phase 2

1. Share with me your understanding of language teaching, particularly to students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.
2. You have been teaching this class since the beginning of the academic school year. Could you share with me your experiences of teaching language in this class? What aspects of language do you emphasize?

Prompting questions

- (a) Would you like to share with me the approaches, methods, and strategies you use to develop language competence?
- (b) Do you use similar approaches with linguistically and culturally diverse students?
- (c) How successful and/or unsuccessful have your methods been?
- (d) What do you think leads to success or failure?
3. Describe how you use students' native languages/dialects to support language learning.
4. How would you explain your students' response to your strategies?
5. Tell me your experiences concerning the materials, for example, basals, literature etc.

Prompting questions

- (a) How were these materials selected?
- (b) Were you a part of the selection process? If not, do you know how these were selected?
- (c) How effective and/or ineffective are these materials in enhancing students' learning of language?
6. Do you have ESL support for English language learners?
7. How do you structure your classroom for language instruction?
8. Are there theories that inform the methods that you employ?
9. What type of support do you get from the administration in meeting the needs of language minority students? Do you get support from the school district in meeting the needs of students from diverse backgrounds? If yes, what type of support? If no, how would you like to be supported?

Appendix H

Parent Consent Letter

October 19, 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Lavern Byfield and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I would like to include your child, along with his or her classmates, in a research project on how children learn the English language arts. For this project I will be supervised by Professor Sarah McCarthey.

In this project, I will observe your child's class, audio record and take notes, three times weekly, for approximately 2 ½ months, March 28, 2011-May 26, 2011. The aim of this project is to get an understanding of the methods of instruction employed by the teacher in preparing students to read and write in English. If your child participates in this project, he or she will not be required to do extra activities, than regularly asked of the teacher. However, his or her reception of the teacher's instructional methods will be documented

I do not anticipate any risk to this study greater than normal life and I anticipate that the results will increase my understanding of the issues that are associated with the teaching of English. Furthermore, your child's participation in this project is completely voluntary. In addition to your permission, your child will also be asked if he or she would like to take part in this project. Only those children who have parental permission and who want to participate will do so, and any child may stop taking part at any time. You are also free to withdraw your permission for your child's participation at any time and for any reason without penalty. These decisions will have no effect on your future relationship with the school or your child's status or grades there.

The information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly confidential and will not become a part of your child's school record. Any sharing or publication of the research results will not identify any of the participants by name.

In the space at the bottom of this letter, please indicate whether you **do or do not** want your child to participate in this project and return this note to your child's teacher before March 18, 2011. Please keep the second copy of this form for your records.

I look forward to working with your child and I think that this research can be used to improve the teaching/learning process.

If you have questions about this project, please contact us using the information below. If you have questions about your child's rights as a participant in research involving human subjects, please feel free to contact Anne Robertson, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-333-3023 (you

are welcome to call this number collect if you identify yourself as a research participant) or via email at arobrtsn@illinois.edu. Please keep the attached copy of this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Lavern Byfield

217-819-7062

byfield2@illinois.edu

Prof. Sarah McCarthy

217-244-8286

mccarthe@illinois.edu

I do/do not (circle one) give permission for my child _____ (name of child) to participate in the research project described above.

(Print) Parent's/Guardian's name

Parent's/Guardian's signature

Date

Appendix I

Student Consent Letter

October 19, 2010

Dear Student:

My name is Lavern Byfield and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I would like you and your classmates to take part in a study on the ways that your teacher helps you to learn the English language arts.

For this study, I will be in your class, three times weekly, for language arts, March 28, 2011-May 26, 2011. I will be taking notes and audio recording the activities in your class. If you take part in this project you will not have to do extra class work for your teacher. There are no risks in doing this study and I will be able to understand the ways you learn.

You can decide if you want to take part or not. Also, your parents/guardians will also be asked if they would like for you to take part in this study. Only students who have their parents'/guardians' permission and who want to take part will do so. Any student may stop taking part at any time and for any reason without penalty. Your decision will have no effect on your relationship with your teacher, or your grades. At the end of the study, I will have a pizza party for your class.

The information that I get during this project will be kept strictly confidential and will not become a part of your record. Any sharing of my notes will not identify your name. I look forward to working with your class and I think that my research will be enjoyable for you as I investigate how you learn.

If you have questions about this project, please contact us using the information below. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in research involving human subjects, please feel free to contact Anne Robertson, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-333-3023 (you are welcome to call this number collect if you identify yourself as a research participant) or via email at arobrtsn@illinois.edu.

Please keep the attached copy of this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Lavern Byfield

217-819-7062

byfield2@illinois.edu

Prof. Sarah McCarthy

217-244-8286

mccarthe@illinois.edu

I _____do/do not (circle one) give permission to participate in the research project described above.

(Print) Student's name

Student's signature

Date

Appendix J

Classroom Observation Protocol

Name:

Date:

Class:

Time:

Observe and note the following before and during lesson:

- Number of students in the class session
- Where each student sits
- Who sits next to whom
- What materials they each have
- Class physical arrangement

Observe and note the following during the lesson:

- Who is talking the most
- What is the teacher saying
- Class structure (reviews previous lesson, gives overview of current, objectives clearly developed throughout, summarizes at the end)
- Teaching methods (Do students get to participate in discussions, materials used, technology used, multicultural materials used, ELLs' native languages facilitated, students' lived experiences used)
- Which students talk least, most, or not at all
- Which students tend to dominate the discussions
- If ELLs talk specifically to other students or teacher
- If ELLs are able to follow classroom activities
- General classroom atmosphere and rapport between teacher and students including ELLs and among students and ELLs

Observe and note the following after the lesson:

- How class transitions to the next activity

Appendix K

Debriefing Interview Protocol

Phase 3

1. Describe your decision making process during this lesson.
2. Were the students actively engaged?
3. Did you alter your instructional plan as you taught the lesson? Why?
4. Did you accommodate for your language minority students? How so?
5. What additional assistance, support, and/or resources would have further enhanced this lesson?
6. If you were to teach this lesson again, would you do anything differently? What? Why?
7. How will you build on this lesson?

Appendix L

Final Interview Protocol

Phase 3

1. Reflecting on your experiences in teaching this class this academic year, how would you describe your experiences? How would you describe your experiences with language minority students?

Prompting questions

- (a) Can you talk about changes you would make regarding the approaches, methods, and strategies you used to teach the English language arts in this class? Explain why?
 - (b) How would you use the students' native languages/ dialects to enhance learning English?
 - (c) What changes and improvements would you recommend regarding teaching-learning materials to support learning the English language arts in this grade? Explain why?
2. Given your experiences in teaching these linguistically diverse students this year, what would you do differently to enhance learning the English language arts?
3. Think about the support you have received/or did not receive from the school district, principal, and parents; what would you suggest they do to foster better learning for linguistically diverse students?
4. What would you describe as the successes that you have had working with language minority students?
5. What tensions do you experience teaching language minority students?
6. Overall, can you describe to me what you would do differently to improve on your weaknesses in teaching diverse students the English language arts.
7. Do you believe that societal factors (including stereotypes of languages and dialects) influence your views on language minority students and subsequently the teaching strategies that you employ with these students?
8. What advice would you give a beginning language arts or elementary teacher?

Appendix M

Phases of Data Collection and Analysis

Table M1

Phase 1

Research questions	Participants	Data collection	Analysis	Date	Procedures
What are teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism?	Participants' real names were used until after phase 3 to track participants; thereafter, pseudonyms were used			February 1, 2011-February 4, 2011	Presented to staff the study goals and methods of data collection; distributed consent letters for teachers (all 36 teachers on staff were invited to complete survey and principal)
What are teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism?	1. <i>Anna Kirby</i> 2. <i>Nancy Roscoe</i> 3. <i>Sue Hill</i> 4. <i>Katie Hogan</i> 5. <i>Barbara Gove</i> 6. <i>Kay Coleman</i> 7. <i>Mary Parker</i> 8. <i>Kelly White</i> 9. <i>Lori Fields</i> 10. <i>Rose Stewart</i> (principal)	Survey (30 minutes)	Preliminary data analysis; constant comparative method (Patton, 1990); cross-case analysis of surveys (grouped answers to common questions); teachers were identified who had language minority students and displayed some knowledge of working with diverse students	February 7, 2011-February 11, 2011	30 minute survey completed by 9 teachers and the principal to understand teachers' perceptions of bilingualism and bidialectalism
	4 teachers 1. <i>Anna Kirby</i> 2. <i>Nancy Roscoe</i> 3. <i>Sue Hill</i> 4. <i>Katie Hogan</i>			February 14, 2011-February 18, 2011	4 teachers were selected who demonstrated (some sort of) knowledge of working with diverse students on surveys; teachers with divergent views were selected (for example, English only belief and dual language belief)
				February 18, 2011-February 25, 2011	4 teachers were contacted for in-depth interviews

Table M2

Phase 2

Research questions	Participants	Data collection	Analysis	Date	Procedures
How do teachers' practices address the needs of bilinguals and bidialectals?	4 teachers 1. <i>Anna Kirby</i> 2. <i>Nancy Roscoe</i> 3. <i>Sue Hill</i> 4. <i>Katie Hogan</i>	Two Interviews (45 minutes each)	Open coding; constant comparative method (Patton, 1990); cross-case analysis of interviews (grouped answers to common questions)	February 28, 2011- March 11, 2011	Four teachers participated in in-depth interviews about their understanding and experience of working with culturally and linguistically diverse students
How do social, cultural, and political factors influence teachers' perceptions and practices?	4 teachers 1. <i>Anna Kirby</i> 2. <i>Nancy Roscoe</i> 3. <i>Sue Hill</i> 4. <i>Katie Hogan</i>		Recurrent patterns were identified; categories developed based on these patterns; within and cross case analysis of interview data	March 14, 2011- March 18, 2011	Teachers were asked about the aspects of language emphasized in their teaching; how students' native languages/dialects were supported; approaches used with students (if differentiation occurred); materials used and selection of materials;
				March 18, 2011	Four teachers asked to participate in third phase for in-depth case studies; parents and students asked for permission
					Consent and assent letters distributed for phase 3

Table M3

Phase 3

Research questions	Participants	Data collection	Analysis	Date	Procedures	Observer comments
How do teachers' practices address the needs of bilinguals and bidialectals in language arts pedagogy? How do social, cultural, and political factors influence teachers' perceptions and practices?	4 teachers 1. <i>Anna Kirby</i> (7 students) 2. <i>Nancy Roscoe</i> (8 students) 3. <i>Sue Hill</i> (5 students) 4. <i>Katie Hogan</i> (19 students)	Observations	Constant comparative method (Patton, 1990); within and cross-case analysis of interviews and observations; inductive category coding comparing social incidents observed (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981); analysis for recurring patterns; expansion of categories into themes and assertions; triangulation by revisiting data sources, looked for confirming and disconfirming evidence (Erickson, 1987); analytic narrative vignettes were constructed; quotes from field notes, interviews etc. used to support arguments	March 28, 2011- May 26, 2011	Classroom observations 3 times weekly followed by debriefing interviews (when this was convenient)	I recorded events and my interpretations of these observations.
How do teachers' practices address the needs of bilinguals and bidialectals in language arts pedagogy? How do social, cultural, and political factors influence teachers' perceptions and practices?	4 teachers 1. <i>Anna Kirby</i> 2. <i>Nancy Roscoe</i> 3. <i>Sue Hill</i> 4. <i>Katie Hogan</i>	Final interview (45 minutes)	Constant comparative method and cross-case analysis	March 21, 2011- March 25, 2011	Four teachers were case studies	