

Teacher perceptions of English learners acquisition of academic English: Impacts on long term English learner classification

Catalina Olvera
California State University, Fullerton
Rowland Unified School District
catalina.olvera@csu.fullerton.edu
535 Dora Guzman, La Puente, CA 91744

Abstract

This article examines how teacher's perceptions of students classified as English learners (ELs) can impact the reclassification of these students as long-term English Language Learners (LTEL). Understanding teachers' perceptions will empower them to understand the needs of students struggling with English proficiency and how their perceptions impact student achievement. The conceptual framework for this paper consists of three concepts: (a) historical, political and social influences on ELs, (b) programs for ELs, and (c) teacher expectations. This article study sought to examine classroom level factors impacting some students' ability to become proficient in English. Overall, the findings support that teachers' perceptions are grounded in deficit thinking. Educators may find it useful to interview their own students as a form of self-review process in order to become more aware of their teaching methods and how students internalize the instruction.

Keywords: *English learners, long-term English Learners, language acquisition*

Introduction

The reclassification of students from English learners (ELs) to English proficient in the United States is a persistent problem not addressed at the levels required for these students to be academically successful in today's society (Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Olsen, 2010). The term "reclassification" refers to a student who is a former EL and demonstrates sufficient acquisition of the English language to be classified as English proficient. The limited number of ELs who are reclassified is of special concern to educators in the state of California (Olsen, 2010). This is due mainly to the large population of limited English proficient students in the state.

There are various linguistic groups represented in California, and over 100 different languages spoken (CDE, 2012). Of these, over 80% are Spanish speaking. Thus, this makes Latinos the largest group of students affected by the reclassification process. Many districts with high concentration of ELs are currently grappling with

the dilemma of reclassification. However, because student progress and teacher accountability are measured by standardized tests, few teachers spend time providing EL students with English language Development (ELD) instruction (Ravitch, 2010). Thus, the lack of adequate and appropriate ELD instruction has a direct correlation to the reclassification or rather nonreclassification of our state's ELs.

During the 2008-2009 school year there were 6.3 million students enrolled in public schools across California. During this same year, 1.6 million students, approximately 25% of the student population, were identified as ELs (CDE, 2012). According to the California Department of Education (2012) the biggest concentration of ELs are at the elementary school level i.e., the majority of English learners (71%) are enrolled in the elementary grades, kindergarten through grade six. The rest (29%) are enrolled in the secondary grades, seven through twelve. (para. 3) While these students are learning English, they must also have access to grade-level curriculum if they are to keep pace with their English-speaking cohorts (Rumberger & Gándara, 2000). According to the California Department of Education (2012), an English proficient student should be able to succeed academically in an English-only classroom setting. The challenge is how to give students both English-language development instruction and content area instruction for academic success.

The California Department of Education (2012), states that the largest concentration of English learners (71%) are enrolled in the elementary grades, kindergarten through grade six. In order for ELs to be reclassified, they must meet minimum standards established by the state of California. Consequently, the reclassification of EL students becomes more vital as they approach high school. An EL who is not reclassified as English proficient by grade nine will not graduate with the necessary courses to be eligible for enrollment at a California State University or a University of California campus (CDE, 2012). Despite this reality, and due to state and federal accountability measures, schools continue to focus on standardized scores to demonstrate "academic" progress, which emphasizes language arts and mathematics rather than the development of academic English (Olsen, 2010).

Reclassification requires that ELs earn a score of 4 or 5 on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) and a score of basic, proficient, or advanced on the California Standards Test (CST). Teacher and parent input are also valid indicators of English proficiency (CDE, 2012), but neither is widely used as a tool to determine a student's level of English proficiency.

Schools continue to feel pressure to meet the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, which mandates all students be proficient in math and language arts. This pressure has caused schools to provide underperforming students with intense math and language arts instruction throughout the instructional day. The mandates of NCLB specifically target subgroups identified as academically underperforming. One specific subgroup is the Spanish-speaking EL. This particular subgroup

warrants focus because Spanish-speaking ELs now compose 85% of the EL student population in California (EdSource, 2009).

Long-Term English Learners

The state of California recognizes that there are many ELs who are not reclassified after attending U.S schools for more than 6 years. In August 2012, a definition for long-term English learners (LTEL) was adopted by the state of California. The definition of LTELs refers to English learners who have not been reclassified after being in a school in the United States for more than 6 years (Olsen, 2010). Therefore, ELs who have not been reclassified by their 5th or 6th year in a public school are identified as long-term English learners (LTELs).

There is also a perception that English learners are individuals who are newly arrived immigrants; however, as many as 56% of English learners are born in the U.S. This mis-perception leads educators to believe that ELs who have become adept at social English, and have developed native-like fluency (Olsen, 2010) are also English proficient. LTELs often appear proficiently bilingual because they have developed their social language in school settings and they sound akin to native English speakers. Cummins (1977) states that these are Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). While ELs who are at risk of becoming LTELs, do well in the BICS phase, they typically have not become proficient in English. The lack of English proficiency of ELs impacts their overall academic achievement. ELs need to acquire cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) to be academically successful (Cummins, 1977).

Unaware of the difference between BICS and CALP, teachers often assume that LTELs should perform academically well in school because of their native-like speech in English. This creates a common misconception about ELs (Menken & Kleyn, 2009) i.e., lack of motivation to learn, and thus are viewed as students that do not care about doing well in school.

According to Olsen (2010), there are many factors that impede an EL's acquisition of academic English. These factors include (a) limited comprehension of academic language, (b) difficulty understanding various language registers, (c) poor adjustment to mainstream culture, and (d) low motivation. Students with limited English proficiency often experience limited academic achievement and experience frustration as they continue to struggle with the acquisition of the academic English skills necessary to succeed in school (Olsen, 2010).

Reclassification

In California, when a child is first registered for school, the Home Language Survey is given to parents to determine a child's language proficiency. Based on the responses to the survey, students are identified as English-only (EO) or English learner (EL). More specifically, a student is identified as EO when the home survey indicates it is the only language spoken in the home. A student is identified as an EL when a parent indicates a language other than English is spoken in the home.

In California, students' English proficiency is initially measured by the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) for students initially identified as an English learner. The purpose of this assessment is to identify language level needs. The CELDT is also given annually to assess ELs' English proficiency progress (celdt.org). ELs take the CELDT each year until a score of "advanced" is achieved. The advanced score demonstrates that the EL is proficient in English. Many ELs have difficulty scoring beyond the intermediate level; some ELs scoring intermediate for more than three years (Menken, Kley, & Chae, 2007).

Schools and school districts were under immense pressure to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, which mandated that all students be proficient in math and language arts by the year 2014. ELs, specifically Spanish-speaking ELs, were adversely affected by these mandates. Intensive interventions were designed to enhance language arts in the belief that so-called English language development (ELD). Despite this passed mandate, the level of underperformance among ELs continues.

Many ELs are failing academically by their sixth- or seventh-year in public schools because they have not become proficient in English. Failure puts them at risk of becoming long-term English learners (LTELs) in substantial numbers. The implications for this failure are numerous and run the gamut of academic, social, and economic complications well into the future of the LTEL student. Although, much attention is given to ELs in the media and through policies and legislation, we know little about the actual teaching and learning from the perspective of the teacher.

Teacher Perception

In classrooms across the United States, teachers tend to be White and female (Ladson-Billings, 2005). According to Picower (2009), 90% of teachers in the K-12 educational system are White. Many teachers, regardless of race, may perceive themselves as race neutral, or colorblind, and do not acknowledge the differences in privileges that have been allotted to them and not to their students of color. Being race-neutral can justify teachers' biases and expectations they have for their students of color because students can be identified as lazy when they have academic difficulties.

This perception is especially true of ELs. Some mainstream teachers believe students who have not been reclassified after five years of schooling and their parents must not value education because schools and education are just and fair (Bartolome, 2004; Valenzuela, 2005) for everyone who wants to learn.

Teachers' perspectives are often based on their own upbringing, having themselves been taught that if you work hard you will get ahead. These teachers do not do is acknowledge their own background assumptions, perceptions, and beliefs about the challenges faced by persons of color (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Tyler, Boykin, Miller, & Hurley, 2006). This article examines the impact of teacher perceptions as it relates to the challenges of English proficiency for LTEL students.

Purpose of the Research

Equitable access to quality schooling is the cornerstone of the educational system in the United States (Noddings, 2007). Equitable access runs parallel to the belief that the educational needs of each student is unique and requires prescriptive instructional methods. If the English language acquisition needs of ELs are to be addressed, it is imperative that educators understand why EL students do not become English proficient (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007).

Conceptual Framework

Educators have been aware of the struggles students experience in order to become proficient in English, but due to the lack of research, long-term English learners have remained invisible in research and practice nationally (Menken et al., 2007). Due to the lack of research, there is a misperception among educators that ELs are a monolithic group whose needs can be addressed with a one-size-fits-all program (Menken & Kleyn, 2009). Yet, LTELs have differing instructional needs from ELs who are recent arrivals to the United States. Although there are competing theories regarding the best practices to teach ELs, there is a growing body of research that defines the characteristics of such learners, the implications of California language development legislation, the core elements in ELD programs, and the possible reasons why some students are not successful in their academic setting (Conchas, 2001).

Many research studies have focused on English language development achievement data to determine reclassification rates. These studies use the number of years a student has been at the same English acquisition level through CELDT scores and student grades (Olsen, 2010). The perceptions of teachers of ELs regarding the challenges of second language acquisition are rarely discussed, despite the fact that teachers are key figures in their students' acquisition of the English language (Menken et al., 2007; Olsen, 2010). These studies have not analyzed perceptions of teachers of ELs regarding the challenges ELs face with respect to reclassification at the middle-school level.

The lack of research regarding the perceptions of teachers of EL students has left a gap in understanding the reasons for the low reclassification rates among middle school students. Gaining an understanding of the perceptions teachers of ELs hold regarding their students' second language status, prior to their LTELs status, can empower these same teachers to become proactive in the approaches and strategies used to meet the diverse needs of ELs. The conceptual framework provides insight on how societal "norms" impact teacher views on ELs.

The conceptual framework is grounded in the following concepts: (a) historical, political, and social influences on ELs; (b) programs for ELs; and (c) teacher expectations and the curriculum taught. Figure 1 represents the overall conceptual framework for the study.

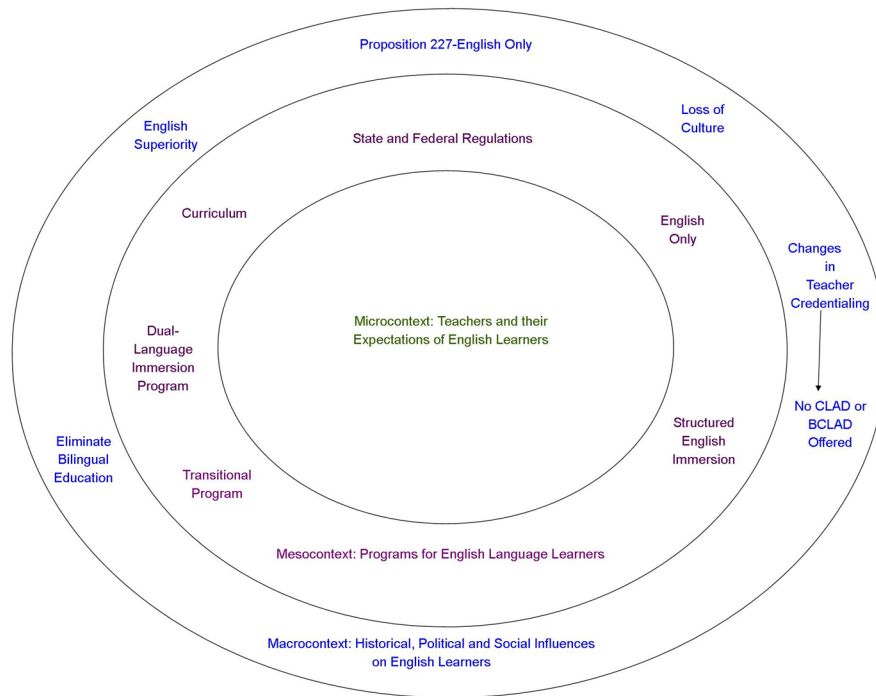


Figure 1. The conceptual framework outlined in the current study of the factors that affect some EL students in their pursuit of acquiring academic English.

The conceptual framework is presented using three contexts: macro, meso, and micro. These are the factors that affect some ELs in their pursuit to acquire academic English. The macrocontext focuses on broad societal forces influencing English language instruction and the reclassification of students; it includes the historical, political, and social influences on ELs. The mesocontext focuses on the programs for ELs. Finally, the microcontext focuses on a description of teacher expectations of ELs. It should be noted that current research in this area focuses on a deficit framework to understand ELs, leaving little room for understanding how to support these students.

Macrocontext: Historical, Political, and Social Influences on ELs

Macrocontext highlights a number of external factors that go beyond teachers' control, but influence practices and policies. These factors include the history of language instruction in California, the politics of teaching and learning English, and finally, broad social influences. The teaching of English in the United States, in general, and in California, specifically, has not been a neutral topic. Historically, the United States has experienced tension among different groups with respect to the restrictions of languages other than English (Lessow-Hurley, 2003). English is considered superior in terms of international usage (Bailey, 1991), which has

allowed an English speaking dominant group to flourish while language-minority speakers continue to struggle.

The struggle of language-minority speakers continues today because of legislation, such as Proposition 227 in California. Languages other than English are marginalized and often perceived as inferior to English (Hamann, Wortham, & Murillo, 2002). Many immigrants who come to the United States find restrictive language attitudes and schooling (Valenzuela, 2005).

The birth of the official English-only Movement (Tollefson 2000) and decreased governmental support for bilingual education implies that newcomers replace their native language with English. This English language-centric mindset shapes ELs self-perception, their language, and their home culture (Tollefson 2000). Due to this phenomenon, ELs believe they must learn English first, at the expense of losing their native language. Amongst the dominant culture, there is also the myth that there is resistance from non-English speakers to learn English (Unz, 1997).

Many scholars argue this is not the case. They recognize and report the importance of the oppressive conditions ELs experience (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Olsen, 2010; Valenzuela, 2005). Long term research studies suggest that the grandchildren of immigrants have lost their native language (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009; Menken & Kleyn, 2010); hence, *social decapitalization* occurs (Valenzuela, 2005). Social decapitalization (SD) refers to the loss of personal linguistic capital. SD affects how ELs view themselves, their interaction with family who speak the native language, their inability to engage in the culture, and their loss of identity.

Students who enter school, and who speak a language other than English, are perceived as entering school with a deficit. The lack of English proficiency is perceived as an educational deficit. Even when ELs are enrolled in bilingual programs, school policies do not promote native language maintenance. Instead, bilingual programs provide students with instruction in their primary language designed to provide core instruction to ELs (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Genesee, 1991; Krashen, 1982, 1993; Lessow-Hurley, 2003). The goal is for these students to enter English-only classroom settings as soon as they have learned sufficient English to understand the content given in English (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Genesee, 1991; Krashen, 1982, 1993; Lessow-Hurley, 2003). Promoting bilingualism/biculturalism in ELs is not the intent of bilingual programs.

Proposition 227, which passed in 1997, required all students to receive academic instruction overwhelmingly in English. Due to its ambiguity, Proposition 227 is an example of a policy implemented in California schools that can either contribute to the academic success or failure of language-minority students (Conchas, 2001). Pro bilingual advocates argue that such policies not only deny students their native language and culture, they also set up ELs for academic failure (Darder & Uriarte, 2013). These researchers state that ELs will do better academically when provided with educational programs that include the development of their native language (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Genesee, 1991; Krashen, 1982; Olsen, 2010). One can

argue that language statutes, as with California's Proposition 227, require that students, in practice, replace their native language with English. Many school districts have varying interpretations of this legislation. It is suggested (Darder, Uriarte 2013) that the total elimination of bilingual education and other such policies and practices are aimed at continuing the domination of the nonEnglish-speaking community. Due to this, ELs believe that their native language is not worthy of learning. Darder and Uriarte (2013) state

Even in the light of research that specifically speaks to the cognitive advantages of bilingualism in sharpening intelligence and the capacity to engage more expansively with the world, education in the U.S. has been and continues to be firmly grounded upon chauvinistic traditions of linguistic domination upheld by the colonizers "who culturally invaded," to use Paulo Freire's (1971) words, the Western Hemisphere. (p. 2)

Some scholars further argue that policies that support English as the official language contribute to the myth that other languages are inferior to English (Bailey, 1991; Pennycook, 2001).

This inferiority complex is internalized when minority-language students begin school in the U.S. Students are told they must learn English with no discussion of the benefits of learning the language they speak at home. Many schools do not offer ELs programs that provide instruction in students' native language; students are, instead, placed in a structured English immersion (SEI) program. In a SEI setting, students are discouraged from learning their native language; and many times are discouraged from using their native language in school. Scholars maintain that this devalues their language and culture (Darder & Uriarte, 2012; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). Students who are placed in an alternative program, a waiver requested by parents, are placed in bilingual programs. Most bilingual programs are designed to support students in their native language until they have achieved proficiency in English.

Mesocontext: Programs for ELs

Mesocontexts are the programs that impact the EL student at the school site level. These programs vary across school districts and are not standardized. EL programs can be different at schools within school districts. There are three instructional program options available for the English language learners in California: 1) alternative programs parents must sign a waiver for, such as bilingual programs, 2) SEI, and 3) English-only (EO) programs. These programs vary in the level of support provided in students' native language. All programs must provide English language development (ELD) instruction for a period of 45-60 minutes a day. The purpose of providing a description of the available programs offered to ELs demonstrates the mesocontext in which EL students are educated.

Bilingual education

Within the published bilingual education literature there are various models of program instruction that discuss structures and methods of delivery to ELs including how best to instruct these students (Freeman & Freeman, 2004; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Krashen, 1982). Research supports development of primary language; however, few schools in California provide programs for students that include instruction in their primary language. Of those schools that do provide students with core subject instruction in the students' native tongue, some place the students in transitional bilingual programs and others in dual-language immersion programs.

Many bilingual programs provide services in the primary language to basic English proficiency—until the student has adequate English skills to be placed into a SEI program. These transitional bilingual programs are designed to provide primary language instruction while ELs learn sufficient English to function in an EO setting. Dual-language immersion programs' purpose are to produce bilingual/biliterate students. Instruction occurs in both the native language and English. Dual-language immersion programs are open to ELs and nonELs.

Structured English immersion (SEI) and English-only (EO)

Currently, EL students are predominantly placed in SEI programs. Students are grouped according to their English language development level to enable teachers to effectively design language lessons based on their English proficiency. According to Clark (2009), the purpose of the SEI program model is to provide students with English instruction, "academic content is secondary" (p. 3).

Darder (1991) believes SEI and EO program models are systems set by the schools to promote English only through the loss of the primary language and strip away the home language through "values and beliefs that support its inferiority to Standard English" (p. 36). Some scholars also view the SEI program model as subtractive educational experience (Valdés, 2001) that promotes loss of language and culture for ELs. The difference between SEI programs and EO programs is SEI provide ELs with a block of time for English language development instruction, EO programs do not.

Microcontext: Teacher Perceptions

Microcontexts are the specific perceptions and expectations that teachers hold regarding the reclassification process. These perceptions are the foundation that educators should use to guide changes in practice and program development in order to increase the number of students being reclassified: ELs that have become English proficient.

Teachers and Their Expectations

Many teachers, regardless of race, may perceive themselves as race neutral, or colorblind, and do not acknowledge the differences in privileges that have been allotted to them and not to their students of color or ELs (Sleeter, 2001). Being

race-neutral justifies teachers' biases and expectations for their ELs because ELs can be identified as lazy when they have academic difficulties (Sleeter, 2001). Some mainstream teachers believe students who have not been reclassified after five years of schooling must not value education because schools and education are just and fair (Bartolome, 2004; Valenzuela, 2005) for everyone who wants to learn. Teachers' perspectives are often based on their own upbringing, having been taught that if you work hard you will get ahead (Sleeter, 2001). These teachers do not acknowledge their own privileges, background assumptions, perceptions, and beliefs about the challenges faced by persons of color (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Tyler, Boykin, Miller, & Hurley, 2006).

Even when teachers are aware of the research supporting students' native language, they may be unable to fully address the instructional needs of learners from diverse backgrounds because of the demands of inclusive mainstream classrooms (Barnard, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Instead, these same teachers emphasize the need for ELs to learn English quickly so they can access grade-level curriculum. Each school's accountability is based on standardized test scores—in English—to determine how much students have learned throughout the school year (Ravitch, 2010). This reliance on test scores hurts students who are not receiving the support they need to become proficient in academic English. It also makes it difficult for teachers to encourage bilingualism or implement required ELD instruction (Gersten & Baker, 2000) because of the belief that students' learning of their native language hinders their progress in English proficiency. Language policies are not wholly to blame for the lack of reclassification amongst ELs. Because the demographics are rapidly changing, it becomes difficult for teachers to receive the proper training to work with students with diverse backgrounds or diverse needs (Olsen, 2010).

Another issue, is the lack of training teachers receive to adequately work with ELs (Picower, 2009; Sleeter, 2001). With limited understanding of how to work with diverse students—specifically students who are struggling in their classrooms—teachers begin to blame the students. This is a *deficit construction*, the negative views of the students' background and knowledge, which goes beyond the students in the classroom due to teachers' being unaware of their own privileges. These negative expectations are extended to the parents of these students (Sleeter, 2001). This deficit view of students clouds and impedes the use of effective strategies that could remedy the academic deficits.

Curriculum and the Role of the Teacher

Research has shown that an educational environment that values students' ethnic backgrounds and home languages will support their academic success at higher rates than those of students who do not receive the same sensitivities in their instructional program (Torres-Guzman, 2007). For ELs, the obstacles multiply when the traditional expectations of schools prevent active participation by students because of linguistic, cultural, racial, and class barriers (Darder, 1991).

When mainstream teachers teach the curriculum without question, they are, in fact, teaching a curriculum that grants power and privilege to a certain group of students. With the changing demographics, this curriculum usually disempowers the students in their classrooms. When students have difficulty with the curriculum that is taught in the classroom, teachers [subtly] blame them for not wanting to learn or believe their students cannot learn (Conchas, 2001). When teachers do not understand why their students of color are not doing well, they begin to have low expectations of them. This is more predominant when students speak a language other than English at home. Teachers may contribute to negative stereotypes of their students whose culture and ethnicity may be different from their own and/or when they lack cultural awareness of their students' backgrounds. By adhering to the common perceptions about race and ethnic groups, teachers reinforce an ethnic divide (Conchas, 2001).

Gándara and Hopkins (2010) and Darder and Uriarte (2012) argue that when students are discouraged from learning their native language, they do not learn about their culture. This devalues their language and culture. This devaluing contributes to the social marginalization of the students themselves because of their inability to function academically in their native languages as well as in English (Darder & Uriarte, 2012; Gándara, 2002).

The research supported the concept that when culturally sensitive teachers build strong relationships with their students, students show strong achievement results. Other factors that would help EL students, culturally and academically, would include a curriculum that promotes pride through the teaching of ethnic history. This is more likely to result in higher rates of academic success (Gándara, 2002). Not offering this type of curriculum (Valenzuela, 2005) denies students' heritage and reinforces class-based hierarchies that provide American born ELs a subtractive schooling experience.

Students will become increasingly successful academically when schools offer additive bilingual programs (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Krashen & Hopkins, 2005; Menken & Kley, 2009; Olsen, 2010). Further, standardized test scores will be higher if teachers are critical of the curriculum they teach and provide opportunities where they "explicitly acknowledge community and student contexts and seek to affirm the identities, social, and cultural resources of Latino/a students" (Antrop-González & De Jesús, 2006, p.413), than those of monolingual students.

Bartolome (2004) and Valenzuela (2005) maintain that well-intentioned teachers believe that EL students who had not been redesignated as English proficient after 5 years of schooling must not value education because of the teachers' own beliefs that those students who want to learn, will. Teachers do not acknowledge their own background assumptions, perceptions, and beliefs or the structure of schools and educational policies, which directly impacted EL students' learning (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Tyler et al., 2006). They also do not acknowledge the challenges their EL students faced, such as language and cultural barriers (Conchas, 2001; Gándara, 2000; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Valenzuela,

2000). It is clear that teachers base their thoughts and perceptions on their own upbringing (Sleeter, 2001).

While there are some constraints such as policies set by the state and their district's interpretations of those policies, there are ways for teachers to provide students with instruction that will meet their needs. Differentiation, instruction that is based on the diverse needs of all students, is an example of what teachers can do.

Recommendations

Public Policy

Despite public opinion, the majority of LTEL students prefer English over their native language. LTEL students believe they are doing well in school despite their limited English proficiency, and many want to go to college (Olsen, 2010). Public policy should consider the multifaceted nature surrounding LTEL students' educational experiences while navigating the public school system. These experiences have limited their access to a basic education. Public policy should seek to enhance the language learning experience of ELs in order to prevent progression to becoming an LTEL student.

These public policies should begin at the macrocontext level with teacher training programs. Teacher programs should require that they learn a second language should they want to instruct second language learners. Proficiency is not required in these programs but a minimal level of understanding would assist teachers in understanding the needs of their second language learners. Teacher programs should include instruction regarding ESL teaching strategies and theory so teachers are highly qualified to address the language needs of ELs. Teacher programs should also provide instruction on second language acquisition and language and literacy development. This would ensure that teacher's instruction was research based and targeted towards the specific needs of their ELs.

Public policies, at the mesocontext level, should include policies that address the languages other than English and the people that speak them. Currently, California has established the Seal of Biliteracy program which recognizes students who are fluent in English and fluent in at least one other language. Individual school districts determine if they would like to participate in this program. School districts, who participate, provide rigorous courses and testing for students to demonstrate their proficiency in a second language and thus receive recognition for being biliterate. If a district decides to opt out of this program, students lose. This impacts ELs greatly, since they already have basic communication skills in a second language and enhancing this skill would only increase their access to a basic education. Every district should recognize multilingual students' linguistic skills. All students should learn more than one language, which gives importance to students' linguistic background, their ability to engage in their culture, their self-identity.

The implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is proving to be challenging in many classrooms across the state. Classrooms with ELs have further challenges in addressing their needs along with the CCSS. Teachers need to be able to provide the rigor demanded by the CCSS while students are not proficient in English. Curriculum that is adopted should align with ELD standards and the CCSS and should be based on students' language needs. Another component that appears to be missing from students' curriculum is the specific instruction of academic language. This is the key factor that impedes the achievement of EL students. Curriculum should include key academic vocabulary, beyond the vocabulary necessary for the reading. This will scaffold access to the curriculum.

At the microcontext level, teachers should ensure that diversity is represented within the curriculum. Policy should include professional development for teachers on how to supplement the curriculum with material, narratives, and other readings with authors and stories students can linguistically and culturally identify with (Gándara, 2002). It should be noted that teachers teach to the standards, not to the curriculum.

For Future Research

The responsibility for the academic success of EL students lies in part with the teachers who are in the classroom providing this population with the instruction that supports their acquisition of English. Responsibility also lies with EL parents, school policies, and practices. ELs must be reclassified to ensure their academic success. Future research should focus on a longitudinal study, following a cohort of ELs, to better understand factors that could lead to students' becoming LTELs.

Trickle down has proven to be ineffective in distributing wealth, yet in the area of educating second language learners it has shaped how teachers perceive those who do not acquire English proficiency within the expected time frame. Ultimately, this structure, if not changed, will perpetuate the development of LTELs.

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