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by

Jacquelyn Cooper-Edwards

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A NARRATIVE EXPLORATION OF PROVIDING EFFECTIVE READING
STRATEGIES TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

A Dissertation Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

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December 2017

This dissertation is dedicated to the
innovative educators struggling to unleash their passion and power
and in memory of my beloved father
Mr. Phillip R. Cooper, Sr.

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This journey I've traveled has been a story turned movie in itself and I have been assigned the leading role. Yet, without my supporting cast members, my story would not come to fruition. This acknowledgement represents only a small fraction of my gratitude to all individuals who played a role in my educational journey. Each cast mate contributed so many blessings to me and I am so thankful for the love and support. .

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Isaiah 40:31

“but those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.”

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe effective reading strategies to assist English Language Learners embedded in research-based instructional methods that instills high levels of self-esteem and ameliorate the chance of success in secondary school and beyond. I have learned through my pedagogical experience that educators must employ a systematic change to occur in classrooms-one that implements passion in the classroom and establishes emotional connections for all students regardless of their ethnic background and implementing curriculum standards which require more analysis of text and deeper context to classroom discussions.

There is a need for all students to become problems solvers and innovators and not just repeaters of information. It is crucial that their learning experiences are linked to their cultural backgrounds and make connections to their personal lives.

If middle school curriculum includes or is embedded in the power of story and research-based instructional methods , then English Language Learner students could achieve the basic literacy skills to grasp reading developmental skills and ameliorate the chance of academic success in middle/high school and beyond and instilling in them high levels of self-confidence in a nurturing and safe environment.

Catherine Snow (2002) points out that the motivation of adolescents to read and their engagement in subject matter depends upon a number of factors. "Chief among these," she says, "is the adolescent's perception of how competent he or she is as a reader. It is the belief in the self (or lack of such belief) that makes a difference in how

competent the individual feels.” (p. 87)

Many educators who teach students identified as English language learners (ELLs) often time dodge the use of strategic reading concepts in the classroom. This is a result of delusions that second language learners do not have the ability to uphold high-order thinking skills such as problem solving, analyzing thought-provoking texts, and constructing critical meanings and interpretations of reading passages. These misconceptions frequently lead, even well intentioned teachers, to believe that ELLs will never possess the developed learning skills to master the grammar and conventions of a complex language, such as English. Particularly in the public educational sector, these instructors grow apprehensive when their ELL students are administered state mandated exams which assess their abilities of critical and high-order thinking skills.

Despite the high percentage of students who speak English as a second language that encounter a myriad of educational challenges, this research can be used as a source to utilize written reflections which illustrate a range of growth; connecting teacher competence and self-confidence to student competence and self-confidence. Identifying best instructional practices should incorporate the Second Dragon’s notion stated in acclaimed University of Houston Professor Dr. Cheryl Craig’s (2004) article:

Classroom instruction should take a more authentic approach. It ‘respects’ the curriculum and does not allow the accountability process to drive the instruction available to youth nor to eat up increasing amounts of instructional time. It opens up horizons of knowing by exposing students to higher order thinking skills, causing them to engage in deep philosophical discussions, and to apply knowledge to new practical situations. It is a product and a process within the

instructional loop but does not consume or subsume instruction. It expands the possibilities of the mind rather than narrowing focus and the opportunities and experiences to which students are exposed. (p. 27)

This narrative exploration can be used as a starting point for educational discussions to prepare ELLs for high levels of academic success and exposing them to a rigorous reading and language arts curriculum. This narrative can also serve as a guide to shape pedagogical practices that supports authentic teaching and modeling, implementing a variety of strategies to promote cultural awareness, and involving confident students as partners in a community of life-long learners.

Craig, C. (2004). The dragon in school backyards: The influence of mandated testing on school contexts and educators' narrative knowing. *Teachers College Record*, 106 (6).

Snow, C. (2002). *Reading for understanding: Toward an R & D program in reading comprehension*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation.

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Part I: The Researcher's Story

“Oh, helllllllllll No! I do not want *that* class. They can't speak a lick of English. I won't get my bonus that Principal Smith promised the teachers whose class passed the TAKS test with a 90% average or above. I'm getting my money but it won't be with those knuckleheads. I bet they've never even picked up a book before. Forget it! I won't be accosted by those illiterate hoodlums!” (Ms. Jones, 2004)

During a staff meeting of 6 teachers and principal in September of 2004 to discuss who would be placed in the still vacant 6th grade reading teacher position of a class identified as “6E”. Each teacher was given the opportunity to accept or deny the responsibility but the principal wanted to hear feedback on the decision. It was quietly understood that the students comprised of five homerooms (ranging from 6A-6E) were grouped homogeneously by the school administration according to their standardized reading test scores taken the previous year.

The students in the homeroom assigned higher letters such as “6A” were considered the gifted, talented, intellectuals, and high achievers. Naturally, the students in the homeroom assigned the lower letter such as “6E” were considered underperformers, academically inferior, undesirables, and the bottom of the totem pole. I couldn't comprehend the justification for determining a child's ability based solely on one standardized test score but I was new to this charter middle school family and I realized I had much to learn.

As I sat in this room of diverse educators, Ms. Jones, the haughty and self-proclaimed reading and drama instructor, quietly fueled an anger and indignation that continues to endure with me personally. As I sat in utter frustration and confusion, I

honestly did not grasp the reason Ms. Jones was so adamant about not teaching these particular students. As I looked at the roster, it dawned on me that I knew some of the students in 6E-I taught many of their siblings and even two uncles and an aunt! Then I did notice something on the roster-6E students had so many letters of the alphabet behind their name, I thought I was looking at a game of wheel of fortune! Some of the acronyms that stood out were ELL, LEP, and ESL. Consumed with a little anxiety and uncertainty, I raised my hand and said, "I'll do it." All that sat in the meeting looked at me as if I had flour poured all over my face.

Over the course of the school year, the comment Ms. Jones shouted that day continued to take center stage in my heart with the biggest spotlight that has yet to take its exit. That particular moment in time took me back to the beginning of the professional career at the age of four when I self-appointed myself to give instruction to a diverse group of dolls-there were brown dolls, white dolls, female dolls, some with fur, slanted eyes, and interestingly enough there was one that wore a poncho to class. At the time, I didn't realize that my student population was quite in fact diverse and I learned at an early age to appreciate the similarities and uniqueness amongst all. I believe if Ms. Jones had the opportunity to observe my classrooms (as a toddler and an adult) and see the value of what each student had to bring regardless of their cultural background, he would have learned as I did that each student has the ability to learn. Not only did I provide my students with a sense of academic achievement, I built their self-esteem instilling in them high levels of self-confidence and in a nurturing and safe environment. I wanted to learn each student on an individual basis; I wanted to learn their personal narrative. I wanted them to feel secure in whom they were as unique individuals and be

emotionally sound upon entering my classroom, especially those who acquired English as a second language.

Understanding my decision to teach English and Reading meant that I needed to unravel the ambiguities that can “unfold” the process and experience of learning and teaching of English language learners. This would lead me to being appreciative of how students learn *school* in a recently acquired second language (piece of cake, right?!)

Consequently, I want to disprove that English Language Learners (ELLs) are underperformers and academically inferior; I want to impose my passion for English on my ELL students and teachers; why do we have so many morally bankrupt teachers?

This narrative exploration was intended to shed light on my own passion and connection to reading and language arts education in a qualitative world, the review of literature that supports my research, and justification to involve more educators in extending their reading instruction and educational philosophies. It was my hope that this study would tell the “story” behind quantitative data in order to examine critical issues—one being the needs of students as expressed in the interviews. It gave me the opportunity to give a voice to those who usually go unheard through narratives of shared experiences of English Language Learners.

The accounts that are documented in this study illustrate voices but also serve as a proclamation and an inspiration to foster and assert the valuable role educators play in society and the educational arena.

Chapter I:

Reflections of an Early Passion For Storying

Somehow, I always knew that I wanted to be a teacher. I actually started this career as a little girl when I would “teach” my dolls and stuffed animals. Although my classroom was not in a formal setting (it was actually the hallway outside of my bedroom), I provided hours of enrichment and active learning experiences to Barbie, Teddy, and about ten other favorite characters. All were seated neatly in rows, and I, as the teacher, would read what I considered interesting stories to them, and share some of the world’s most important facts that a young mind of four or five could fathom-something I still believe in. Some may believe that this was unusual behavior for someone my age; however, it was quite normal for me as I come from a legacy of educators. My mother, aunt, grandmother, and literally everyone that I came into contact with were educators. I had visited as many schools and classrooms by the time that I was four as many do in their academic careers. Each visit ingrained in me the magical aura of what happened inside these edifices of learning, and left me with the impressions that teaching and learning was a magical, wondrous process worthy of my rapt attention and future endeavors. Believe it or not, I had a structured discipline management plan at four years of age; no doll or animal was allowed to act out and if in my imagination they misbehaved, there were immediate and strong consequences. I will not elaborate on what these consequences were, but they were terrible enough to extinguish any misbehavior that this teacher encountered.

From these imaginary, yet concrete beginnings, my “real” academic experiences were infused with numerous excellent teachers that motivated and inspired me to become

a member of their profession. My preschool was one that taught phonics from the time that you were able to sit up and verbalize. Mrs. Rubye Session, famed Houston Director of Bunny Land A-Cat-A-Me, used flash cards that I can still see. I will never forget the day when I was maybe three, the look on my mother's face as we approached the business institution with the "golden arch" and I shouted, "mmmmmmmmmm, that's the 'M' sound." She told me quite confidently, that I could read. I believed her and from that day forward, I was reading every sign that we passed. At the A-Cat-A-Me, the French teacher became one of my favorites as he told stories about people that speak French around the world.

In elementary school, I was sent to a small Catholic school where I felt loved and nurtured. Everyone there seemed like family, and we were gently nudged to conquer the basics as well as some of the more rare concepts in religion and ethics. At this school, every child was considered an "achiever" and nothing but the best results were attained in every class. You simply were not allowed to under-perform. The teachers were like extended family as they kept a continuous line of chatter going with my parents by calling every week regarding how I was doing in school. I will always remember and cherish my sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. O'Rourke. She was so passionate about teaching that she made it exciting. She made each academic activity parallel it to real life situations. She showed how we used our academics on a daily basis. Mrs. O'Rourke made her classroom a place of creativity, safety and worship. I felt comfortable asking questions in her classroom and expressing my true feelings. Although I was exposed to many other professionals during this period of my life, I felt that there was no more noble profession than teaching, because my teachers made me feel safe, important, and skilled.

In reflecting on my early experiences, I have concluded that the person that influenced my career choice most was my mother. She was a classroom teacher when I was born, and I am told that she read to me frequently before birth. Once in this world, she continued this daily routine of reading until I was fixated with it. At ages one and two, I had a collection of books that was parallel to a classroom library and needed to hear at least two stories before closing my eyes for the night. Although I asked her to read *The Bear's Water Picnic* at least four or five times a day, she never grew impatient. Rather, she used an authentic pedagogical technique when after she had read the story four or five times; she tape recorded the book and let me read along with the tape. She never tired of the exasperating questions that I asked, always answered them, and I believed that she was the smartest person in the world.

Part of my mother's intellect was passed to me as I entered motherhood two years ago. In fact, the reading behaviors my mother modeled to me as a small child have greatly impacted the relationship and connection my son and I have now. I must mention that being a mother of a blossoming and inquisitive two-year old, I have served not only as "mommy" but as his classroom teacher since the day I learned of my pregnancy. I read *Starry Safari* and *Giraffes Can't Dance* to him as he developed in my stomach and even as a newborn in the hospital. As my mother did for me, I made certain his collection of books were placed in his home library before coming home from St. Luke's Hospital. Following a consistent routine, I read to him throughout the day and at bed time. Naturally, I completely understand the patience needed when your child demands the same book being read every night. This daily practice has sharpened his oral and language skills and his love for reading.

I hope my son experiences the similar encounters that I had throughout my growing-up years. I can remember being in the grocery store and various public arenas with my mother frequently meeting students that she previously taught. They were always so happy to see her and many told her how she had influenced their lives. I was always impressed that she had touched and had an impact on people outside of our immediate family. With this much power to influence people, I had to be a teacher!

Now that I have been a member of the educational arena for more than fifteen years, I know that undoubtedly, one of my most significant accomplishments has been touching the lives of students, making them believe in themselves and giving them self-confidence and a sense of hope. Many of the students I taught come from diverse populations including Mexico and South America. Some of the students feel intimidated because English is not their native language. I began to realize that education went beyond the curriculum; it was a social phenomenon. For the majority of my students, learning to fit in is of greater importance than learning academics. Those who were immigrants felt ill at ease with their more “Americanized” peers when they reached mastery levels of the English language. Few had role models to emulate as most of the parents lack formal education and life-satisfying careers.

I have used numerous methods of positive reinforcement, to build the esteem and confidence that my students needed to grow academically and socially. For individuals who learn best with visuals, consider the process to resemble a circle in shape. Many may feel that the process is simple, but in reality, putting it to work is difficult. It’s important to know that self-esteem is built upon the experience of success. When my students experienced success, they grew in self-confidence. As a result, they felt

empowered to face new academic challenges. As they succeed in confronting each challenge, they developed the capacity to cope with any challenge I gave. That feeling led to further growth of self-confidence, self-reliance and self-esteem until they were eager to learn and achieve.

As an English Language Arts and Reading teacher turned specialist in the middle school arena, I have worked with countless diverse students and teachers. My goal was to impose on students the belief that they can perform as well as students anywhere in the world. With small doses of success, they believed in themselves, the way that I believed in them.

The Importance of Reflective Intellect

When I reflect on my early years in education, I realize that many of the teachers I worked with and including myself had no earthly concept of what encompassed teaching diverse learners for academic achievement. I couldn't imagine a world where children had not read the classic tales such as *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* or not know the capitals of the United States or even had never experienced playing volleyball or going to the Nutcracker at Jones Hall. Many educators have never realized or discovered that ELLs own a rich cultural background that can be utilized in their learning environments. In fact, learning happens in various contexts and often outside the classroom. I illustrate this point through a few profound narratives I often recall:

No Man Is An "I" Lund"

I can remember it as if it were yesterday. 1979. As we were headed home on a Friday afternoon after being picked up, we chatted about my school day experience. My mother noticed the automotive reminder that she needed to replenish the gasoline in her car. A determined youth, on the hunt for literary adventure at any given time, I saw

opportunity at the Shell gas station on Cartwright Road and Murphy. I saw the letters I-S-L-A-N-D posted next to the Self-Serve Island and the Full-Service Island gas pumps.

“Oh that’s easy!!” I thought to myself. I proudly exclaimed, “Is....Land!” of course-I recognized the words. My mother chuckled a bit because she knew I certainly was giving it my best effort. However, I was swiftly corrected when my mother informed that the word was pronounced “I” “lund” much differently compared to its spelling. I thought to myself, “Maybe, she didn’t see the word clearly.” I instructed her to look closely at the spelling and she would see that I was correct!

I came into a sharp bite of reality when she assured me for the second time that the word was in fact pronounced “I” “lund.” What a strange phenomenon to learn that some words in the English language system are not pronounced as they are spelled. I actually found that to be quite fascinating. As we pulled away from Shell, my memory started serving me quite well. Maybe, my mother was right. I had been exposed to the word before, but it was used in different contexts. For example, the television show, “Fantasy Island”, where individuals from all walks of life could travel to a mysterious island and live out fantasies. Tattoo, the pint-sized sidekick, would run up the main bell tower to ring the bell and shout, "The plane! The plane!" He actually pronounced it, "De plane! De plane!" to announce the arrival of the new guests at the beginning of each episode.

Going further, I would often hear my mother say she wanted an island in her kitchen. I couldn’t imagine palm trees, coconuts, and an oasis in the middle of an area placed adjacent to the refrigerator in our kitchen. (This didn’t truly make sense until I started watching HGTV). With this profound knowledge, I couldn’t wait to get home and

race to my “classroom” (situated in the hallway between my bedroom and my parents) and share another word with my “students.” I find myself recalling this experience from time to time when I interact with ELL students.

Houston Chronicle

I can also recall seeing my mother and father read the newspaper every morning as a small child. I thought that it had to be such a difficult task because there were so many words! Never would I have imagined in my wildest dreams that I would comb through sections of a newspaper. However, one particular Sunday morning, leaving church, my family decided to stop at Shipley Donuts. Grabbing the best treats, with some chocolate milk of course, we headed home. After tearing into our forbidden delights, my dad began perusing the newspaper and found one of interest. Shortly thereafter, I heard him laughing so hard with the newspaper in both his hands covering his entire face. “What could possibly be so darn funny?” I questioned myself. He managed to place the paper down and I noticed the caption “Comic Strips” at the top left hand corner with countless cartoon images placed below such as Charlie Brown. I told myself I can read the same comic strip and experience the humor.

I took on this challenge by starting with one word at a time and what I thought to be pure fun proved to be arduous in the beginning. It was evident that I was going to form a close bond with the Merriam Webster’s Dictionary. I had no other choice but to hunt for every other word in the dictionary. It was unclear of the words I stumbled over and it evolved into such a frustrating activity. At that moment, the light bulb went off! I began to look at the pictures and headings and made some connections to a variety of fairytales and legends I had read or listened to at home or at school. Over time with

much practice, my understanding of the passages improved and my reading became more proficient. Without realizing, I suppose I formed a collection of reading strategies which further led to my epiphany of becoming an educator (some twenty years later).

Professionally, these experiences demonstrated the value of learning and acknowledging the role of literacy in a student's culture. When this happens, an educator can open so many closed doors and begin to understand and address the academic needs of multicultural students. In turn, teachers can deepen their pedagogical beliefs and practices to integrate diversity and celebrate students' multicultural background into his or her daily instruction through discussion, reading, and the availability of curricular materials. Furthermore, teachers can build their own awareness that assessment of various literacy skills is necessary, and that there can be flexibility in the ways in which these skills are assessed such as:

- 1) Capturing the human interaction that not only tells a story but shows the knowledge people gain along the way as stated in my pronouncing the word "island" correctly and learning that the English language is complex system which leads to being able to raise questions from new knowledge;
- 2) Embedding stories in socially contextual settings such as the Shell gas station and understanding that learning happens outside the classroom using a variety of differentiated instruction and situating learning in different contexts;
- 3) Drawing others into the context as my mother often did when I was learning about the complexities of language;
- 4) Using exemplars to implicate people's identity to develop as illustrated in my assertive identity began its emergence at that Shell gas station over thirty-three

years ago. I knew subconsciously that I wanted to teach English and reading which stemmed from my fascination by the complexity of the English language; and

- 5) Focusing on interpretation of my personal practical knowledge often including different points of view.

These strategies are connected to my early years of teaching at the age of four when I had a classroom of multicultural dolls. Using this methodology, my ELL students were engaged in learning from experience using non-traditional teaching strategies.

It's important for all educators to understand that reading comprehension and ability is a critical factor and essential skill that determines a student's potential to reach academic achievement. Reading in English can be overwhelmingly challenging for any learner, but in particular for English language learners. Since many ELLs remain in developmental stages of learning a second language, they often times will struggle to gain academic proficiency that plays a pivotal role in school achievement. Unfortunately, countless educators are not afforded the proper training or awareness that would allow them to adapt to teaching styles that yield to multicultural students learning a second language. Not having this preparation often results in the misconception that ELLs are academically inferior, unmotivated, and unwilling to learn.

The Need for the Study

As a teacher of middle school language arts and reading, I have spent countless hours reading for my own pleasure, searching for the most appropriate books for my students, and for academic purposes. I would consider myself an avid and life-long reader because of the joy and knowledge it brings. Through my professional experience

as a classroom instructor and instructional supervisor, I have discovered much to my disappointment, that not all teachers, specifically ELA and Reading teachers that I have worked with/interviewed, do not share my passion for reading; many don't even make an attempt (on a daily basis) to teach ELLs.

This study has been conducted with mainstream classroom teachers in mind, who begin optimistically, and as the school year progresses, their level of frustration increases and the critical role they play in developing reading skills in their learners. In fact, these teachers are experiencing a rapid increase in the number of English language learners (ELLs) in today's classroom. Faced with ever changing school demographics, the percentage of students whose first language is not English being taught by ill prepared educators, will continue to increase over time.

Unfortunately, without the essential knowledge about the process creates a situation of disaster. Many of these well intentioned professionals often feel perplexed and anxious in the face of the awesome duty that teaching students they do not understand, linguistically or culturally, represents. (Ariza, 2006) The teaching and learning of ELLs transforms into a less than desired, chaotic and disorganized process of hit or miss, trial and error, and a prescription of ineffective strategies placing already disadvantaged students in danger of failing academically. Many just assume these students are simply lazy.

In the current U.S. public school systems, many educators face a daunting reality that authentic teaching has been reduced to the quantitative ranking of scores students reach on standardized tests and high-stakes exams. In some cases, some teachers may even question the validity of these assessments in response effective measure of the

teaching and learning of diverse student populations. In other instances, many educators rely on their blind faith of these assessments, engaging in misinterpretations or faulty conclusions of their students' academic strengths and weaknesses further diminishing the foundations for substantial teaching and learning.

The educational picture for some ELLs is even of poorer quality and it is more complicated. The current emphasis on standardized curriculums and assessment indiscriminately exchanges good teaching for test preparation further divorced from the students' realities, experiences and needs.

Teaching any group of students involves complex choices about difficult problems that, if left unaddressed, often escalate. A different type of thinking is needed to address such choices. Tough choices call for teachers to engage in sophisticated reflection—including self-reflection.

I believe that there is a need to unearth valuable knowledge of teaching literacy and an understanding of human learning. This study will potentially maximize the benefits of teachers and their diverse learners.

Researchers use processes to identify a problem and explore how to address the problem in authentic contexts—they can provide valid, reliable, and systematic protocols for classroom inquiry. (Mertler & Charles, 2008; Mills, 2003)

The literature and research on teacher knowledge suggests four approaches utilizing, “the scholarship of teaching, action research and teacher research, narrative inquiry, and critical-cultural teacher research” (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005, p. 422). The self-study framework has emerged as a methodology in educational research to help teachers engage in inquiry.

Statement of the Problem

Some advocates for English-language learners consider the implementation of the common-core academic standards, adopted by almost every state, as promising for raising achievement for English-language learners. But experts in the field and advocates of ELLs also have expressed concerns that not enough attention has been paid to including ELLs appropriately in implementation of the standards; it is important to pay more attention to contextual features such as the cultural background of learners and the learning environments to gain an appreciation of the complexity of learning and mastering a second language and varied conditions. Having this qualitative knowledge can assist policymakers and educational experts in their work and educational reform; the information also appeals to those individuals working closely and directly with the students.

For many students who have been identified as English language learners are born into families that have immigrated to the United States in search of enhanced opportunities and a better life. Teaching these students presents a challenge to committed educators who are not aware of the intricacies of teaching a second language for academic achievement in the United States. “Teaching through English to native speakers of the language has no relation to teaching through English to those who are learning English. We cannot compare ELLs with native English speakers” (Ariza, 2006, p. xiii).

As the number of bilingual learners in mainstream classes increases, it becomes even more important for mainstream teachers to use effective practices to engage these students so that they can acquire the academic English and the content-area knowledge

they need for school success. Teachers need continued support and professional development to enable all their students, including their bilingual students, to succeed.

Contribution of the Study to Research in Education

It is important for a systematic change to occur in classrooms-a change that implements passion in the classroom and establishes emotional connections for all students regardless of their ethnic background. There is a need for ELLs to become problems solvers and innovators and not just repeaters of information. It is crucial that their learning experiences are linked to meaningful knowledge and making connections to real life situations. As Piaget stated, “A constructivist theory of learning postulates that students are active builders of their learning, not passive receptacles into which information is deposited.”

Research Questions

Through the collection and exploration of qualitative research, observations, face-to-face interviews and quantitative survey data, I hope to make meaning of the following research questions:

- Do English Language Learners taught with research-based reading strategies achieve higher academic success?
- If middle school curriculum includes or is embedded in the power of story and research-based instructional methods, can English Language Learner students achieve literacy skills to grasp reading developmental skills and ameliorate the chance of academic success in secondary education and beyond?
- How does culture and self –esteem play a role in addressing the academic needs of English Language Learners?

- What are the most effective teaching methods that ignite achievement in English language learners?
- What are the major obstacles for English Language Learners in middle school to become proficient in reading?
- How does implementing narrative inquiry shape social significance for teachers and students and deepen reflective intellect?

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature

“Reading without reflecting is like eating without digesting.”

- Edmund Burke

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of related literature by beginning with the value of reflective intellect, historical accounts of reading, in social and educational settings, and move to research that supports the consideration of education professionals complying with imposed pedagogical, administrative, and accountability demands and still engage students with a rich, relevant, meaningful, and culturally responsive curriculum. Moreover, the literature will relate how education can afford English Language Learners the opportunity to overcome a disadvantaged status and gain an equitable education. How do we walk the talk instead of just talk the talk?

I hope my study can serve as a catalyst for not only having open and candid educational dialogues and discussions, but an inspiration for educators, parents, policymakers, etc. to implement change and action in our educational arenas.

Significance of Teacher Reflective Intellect: Inspirational Voices

Reflective thinking in teaching is associated with the work of Dewey (1933, 1938), who suggested that reflection begins with a dilemma. Effective teachers suspend making conclusions about a dilemma in order to gather information, study the problem, gain new knowledge, and come to a sound decision. This deliberate contemplation brings about new learning. Researchers use processes to identify a problem and explore how to address the problem in authentic contexts—it can provide valid, reliable, and systematic protocols for classroom inquiry. (Mertler & Charles, 2008; Mills, 2003)

In the 1970s, Lortie (1975) described how failing to reflect on teaching decisions leads to teaching by imitation rather than intentionality. People who enter the profession have already gone through multiple years of "apprenticeship of observation" as students themselves and have developed preconceived ideas of what teaching is through having watched others do it. They may sense *what* teachers do but have no grasp of *why* they do it. Other researchers (Clift, Houston, & Pugach, 1990; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992) have reinforced how important it is for teachers to examine their own beliefs about their classroom practices.

Research suggests four approaches utilizing, "the scholarship of teaching, action research and teacher research, narrative inquiry, and critical-cultural teacher research" (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005, p. 422). The self-study framework has emerged as a methodology in educational research to help teachers engage in inquiry.

Using narratives to support my topic began its development as I journeyed through the University of Houston doctoral program. In particular, my Experience-Based Research class, under the leadership of Dr. Cheryl Craig at the University of Houston, was the inspiration for my decision to focus on the power of story and using my experiences and the experience of my subjects.

Dr. Craig assigned her scholars with very meaningful and thought provoking assignments that heightened our awareness of the value of educative experience. After reading countless articles and other scholarly resources that were aligned with my topic, I found Angela Lopez Pedrana's *Teachers of English Language Learners: Tracking Personal Practical Knowledge, Reflection, and Narrative Authority* article to be revitalizing.

As I read Padrana's article of teacher candidates pursuing certification as bilingual educators "storying" their lived experiences in which they reflected on past experiences to foreshadow future practices, I found her notion of "experiences directly influence who we are and what we do as teachers" (175) quite intriguing. It compelled me to wonder if teachers and educators truly understand how to make meaning of their practice and their experiences? How do schools make meaning of their assimilation, especially in the underserved populations with high populations of multicultural students? The article turns a spotlight on how, Latino teachers particularly, find equilibrium in bilingual education in a high stakes testing environment and are juxtaposed between two languages and two cultures—personally and professionally. It raises such questions as: How do these teachers navigate between the languages and cultures they traverse as Latino teachers working with Latino English language learners? Realizing that their respective groups of students (and therefore their teachers) can influence how the school is rated annually (Valenzuela, 1999, 2004), especially in a high-stakes testing environment, the experiences teachers bring into the classroom profoundly influence the ways they teach, which impact what their students learn and how they learn.

I share Pedrana's belief that all educators, need to learn about sharing common ground that nurture deep-seated relationships and the need to become cognizant of how our practice as educators is highly critical for development. Furthermore, personal experiences become the moral fibers woven into our teaching philosophies. As Brunner (1994) suggests, a classroom teacher who "recognize[s] what one believes in is important [and] how those beliefs impinge on future practices is another matter and may depend on how we approach teacher education" (p. 235).

In this case, Pedrana found that the narrative inquiry method (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), is a human experience method (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) and it guides, as well as frames, this study. But it is necessary to note that there are risks imposed when using the narrative inquiry. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) agree that narrative inquiry inherently poses “certain risks, dangers, and abuses” (p. 2). To be sure, they point out that “the language and criteria for narrative inquiry [with respect to validity, reliability, and generalizability] are under development” (p. 7).

Pedrana developed this particular narrative inquiry during the fall of 2007, where she served as a professor of a required Foundations of Bilingual/ESL Education course for bilingual education teacher candidates. The class provided opportunities for reflection, instructional conversations (Goldberg, 1992), and modeling of teaching strategies. These are driven by what Lyons and LaBoskey suggest “[to] interrogate their teaching ... to construct meaning, interpretation, and knowledge of some aspect of teaching or learning through the creation of narrative(s)” (p. 6). As such, the class curriculum fostered the cultivation of connecting experiences which identified a problem, followed by discussions that engaged students’ perspectives and analyses.

By reflecting on prior experiences, the students found meaning of experiences they will eventually live as teachers. For example, she would ask the students to think about dates or events that surfaced in their own lives. This would be followed by a demonstration of a literacy-based strategy “think-aloud.” As Dr. Pedrana provided time for students to converse with one another, she closed with individually written guided reflections. I somewhat felt like I was a member of Dr. Pedrana’s class as my classmates and I practiced similar storytelling discussions in Dr. Craig’s class. It served as an on-

going method for students to investigate their own personal experiences and make meaning of them, while living through the personal and pedagogical encounters of their cohorts.

One of Dr. Pedrana's students, Carlos, pulled at my heartstrings when he said, "I was looking for a process of how to relate to people ... I was trying to be rational about it. As a result, my experience has shown me that my work faces 'constraints of convention'" (p. 53). Similarly, I model strategies and cajole students to feel safe in our classroom. I reflect on what I am doing, what I have done, and what I plan to do as a teacher educator. Consequently, I often find myself scrambling to find material or texts that address the issues, questions, and concerns that typically surface during class discussions.

In his narrative, Carlos wrote further about himself that perhaps explained his shyness and his decision to become a teacher. He stated:

I was involved in a house explosion while on vacation in Mexico ... I thought I was going to die ... and went through several surgeries ... during that time was ... thinking what kind of career ... teaching replaced my becoming a doctor. I started getting flashbacks ... I saw myself struggling while reading in the second grade ... I wanted to make sure that every student who comes from other countries and English is not their primary language receives a fair opportunity of getting an education ... I want to make student learning fun and not painful because I remember it was painful for me. (12/6/2007)

These reflections provided keen awareness of their memories and the roles they played in their abilities to impact their teacher preparation program. The past transforms

into a pair of lens, traditionally used to find clarity, allowing students to retrieve their cultural, linguistic, or school experiences from memory, by which future prospects as classroom teachers evolve.

Furthermore, the memories served a guide to comprehend the manner in which former teachers or school settings lowered or increased their self-esteem and their ability to confidently navigate their native language and culture. This in turn, permits the connection between the learner and the teacher to become explicit. It becomes evident that how a student feels and learns is directly connected to the teaching environment and the teacher.

Naturally, I thought about my personal background and the teachers who were responsible for educating me. When I recall the most positive memories, my mind always reverts to my sixth grade ELA teacher, Ms. O'Rourke. She moved beyond the formal curriculum of state, district, and local standards and operating as simply an instructor of a content area; Ms. O'Rourke understood the value of making connections and building relationships with each student on an individual basis. She not only instilled in me great confidence to pursue lifetime goals, but she made me realize that being unique is quite a special trait to possess.

Connelly and Clandinin (1999) posit that teachers, such as Ms. O'Rourke, use knowledge gained from personal and professional experiences and these inform their roles as curriculum makers. Connelly and Clandinin suggest an iceberg metaphor "making the curriculum ... is only the tip ... how much more [they ask] lies hidden beneath the surface of these individual's lives on the professional knowledge landscape" (p. 84).

Over time, Dr. Pedrana's students related to being placed in bilingual education, and they realized that the teacher, who has a tremendous amount of influence of what is taught, has to determine the most effective and practical methods to teach English so students, who are challenged with being juxtaposed between English and Spanish, won't feel that they have "lost" Spanish when learning English. I believe that the feeling of being "lost" leads to decreased levels of self-esteem, resulting in lower academic abilities and performance. It's difficult to move forward if you don't know where you come from.

Some of the students expressed feelings about having "lost" Spanish when learning English. In particular, Vilma Correa, wrote:

The idea that as you learn a new language you will lose the original is not new to me. This is exactly what I feel happened to me, I'm glad to finally have a name for it: "subtractive approach"... how we need to have competence in the native language in order to be successful in the second language I believe this to be true. This is why you have students who in essence don't know either language. (9/20/2007)

The testimony above and others expressed in Dr. Pedrana's class certainly echoes Elaine Chan's belief that teachers must go beyond the surface of the metaphorical iceberg and knowing that, "It is necessary to understand in some depth the particular narrative histories of each child in order to identify both his or her cultural group *and* his or her specific history" (Pedrana, 8). A teacher not knowing how to unpack their multicultural students' history creates an isolated learning environment, where they feel somewhat set apart from their non-ethnic minority counterparts.

I feel all educators should be aware of going beyond the surface and knowing their students personal histories. With this in mind, I came across a very touching segment of Pedrana's article. She facilitated a discussion on the experience of bilingual education implementing segregated practices because in some contexts, bilingual children and regular education students often have little to no interaction. "The personal practical knowledge of the students that surfaced during this session included remnants from the previous two sessions that addressed methodological and sociopolitical perspectives about the bilingual/ESL curriculum currently in place" (Pedrana, 10). Because the dialogue impacted and resonated all members of the class, Dr. Pedrana asked the teacher candidates to express their thoughts on the matter. Carlos Jaramillo wrote:

I believe that bilingual education is a form of segregation because it separates monolingual students from the bilingual education ones. As a child you can notice when you are not part of a group and they feel left out. Even though being in bilingual classes is a good way to learn English, we as future bilingual teachers have to find a way to make sure nobody feels left out. (9/6/2007)

The reflections after this class led Pedrana to believe that the teacher candidates perhaps needed a way of unpacking closely held personal practical knowledge about effective teaching practices they had experienced as students and as young adults.

Furthermore, Pedrana also focuses on Dewey's (1938) "experiential continuum" (p. 33). He states that in education "the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time. Collateral learning ... may be and is often more important than the spelling lesson ... that is learned" (p. 48). It is vital that teacher candidates and educators share experiences, best practices and

strategies, and perspectives because it enhances their pedagogical performances. This belief, Pedrana states is based on work that researchers Craig and Olson have completed with respect to narrative authority:

The choices teachers and pre-service teachers make and the actions they take necessarily continue to come from their individual narrative authority, however un-examined it may be. Unless there are spaces for stories to be brought out into the open and shared with others, they become the unreflective bases for professional practice and decision making (p. 116).

Pedrana's philosophy of when teachers find personal and professional balance between the languages they speak and the cultures they navigate, they are better able to negotiate a prescriptive curriculum that many school districts have adopted that tend to not be culturally sensitive and unable to validate student experiences from multi-cultures. She continues to endure the responsibility of learning and mentoring teacher candidates to evolve into well informed educators who can implement effective strategies in the classroom as models and as supporters to Latino children in bilingual education contexts.

Understanding the cognitive examination of experience is one of the many benefits of self-reflection. As many researchers of reading methodologies and language acquisition have discovered, reflective intellect provides essential components of continuous learning while exposing and challenges assumptions, facilitates a transfer of knowledge, provides new insights into self, encourages personal adaptability, and allows individuals to learn from experience.

Historical Accounts of Reading Instruction

Academicians have been concerned about the best way to teach reading since the late 1800s. Historically, methods for teaching reading have alternated between whole-word approaches and phonics instruction.

In colonial times, reading instruction was simple and straightforward: teach children the code and then let them read. In the mid-1800s educators, in particular Horace Mann, began to advocate changes in reading instructional methods. He observed that instruction needed to engage children's interest in the reading material by teaching them to read whole words. Beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, reading programs became very focused on comprehension and taught children to read whole words by sight. Government-funded scientific research on reading and reading instruction began in the U.S. in the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, researchers began publishing findings based on converging evidence from multiple studies. In the 1970's, an instructional philosophy called whole language (which explicitly de-emphasizes teaching phonics) was introduced, and it became the primary method of reading instruction in the 1980s and 1990s. Through the years, there have been a number of changes made in the systems for teaching reading in an attempt to make learning to read easier. This report focuses on some of the educators and researchers that have greatly impacted how reading is taught in schools of the 21st century. Three key figures that helped set apart reading instruction as a distinct professional area: Arthur Gates, William Gray, and Ernest Horn.

By 1920, the sight-word method was being utilized in new wave progressive schools. In 1927, Arthur Gates laid the foundation for his own personal fortune by writing a book entitled *The Improvement of Reading*, which purported to assemble thirty-one experimental studies demonstrating that sight reading was superior to phonics.

Shortly after the book's publication, Arthur Gates was given the task of authoring MacMillan's basal reader series, a giant leap into the whole-word method.

In 1930-31, William S. Gray and Arthur Gates introduced and authored Houghton McMillan's basal reader series which incorporated the methods used to teach the deaf to read. Today's basal reading books, still used by a high percentage of American school children, are essentially the same as the 1930-31 Gates and Gray books. This method is limited by rigidly controlled vocabulary, and an emphasis on memorizing whole words before the letter sounds are learned.

With "whole language," the controlled vocabulary of earlier "basal readers" was abandoned. Under this method, children are required to read words like "forsythia" before they have been taught how to sound out the word. In some children, this method causes frustration, poor spelling, and hostility towards reading. On occasion, similar to systematic procedures that happen in today's educational arena, it has been found that very bright children, who can't memorize long lists of words and retain their meaning, are placed in special education, when all they need is to be taught the 26 letters of the alphabet, the 44 sounds they make, and the 70 common ways to spell those sounds. Some researchers theorize that dyslexia and the symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder may be caused by this reversal of the normal learning sequence.

Children trained to read by whole language are made almost deaf to print if they are unable to sound out a printed new word like "gate" or "frog" by the beginning of second grade. In fact, they are almost as deaf to the sounds of the printed words as a deaf person is to the sounds of spoken words.

In 1931, Gates contributed to the growth of a new reading industry by writing an

article for *Parents* magazine entitled, “New Ways of Teaching Reading.” He strongly encouraged parents to abandon any residual allegiance they may have to the empty, formal method and embrace the new as methods of teaching reading that did not incorporate memorization and simple word recognition. A later article by a Gates associate was expressly tailored for those parents concerned because children did not know their letters. It explained that the modern approach to reading eliminated the boredom of code-cracking.

In 1976, A. Sterl Artley noted that phonics and knowledge skill was the primary approach to word identification. He believed in the usefulness of phonics in word identification to be a supplement to other approaches. He felt that phonics had become a revered set skill in word perception and was evidenced by the frequently heard comment by both teachers and parents. “*Tommy is having trouble with his reading because he doesn’t know his phonics.*” Educators have taught the consonant-symbol sound relationships, the long-vowel and short-vowel principles, syllabication, syllabic division, and sound blending. Artley’s theory is the same one that Rudolph Flesch made in his *Why Johnnie Can’t Read*; written language is alphabetic with letters designating the phonemes or sounds of spoken language.

Though the work of many researchers has been dedicated to the best methods for teaching reading, Chall (1967/1982) provided information on the influence of basals on the teaching of reading and how they are created. Her analysis revealed an emphasis on the word method, with less than adequate attention paid to alphabetic/phonics-based approaches. Hiebert (1998) examined the “opportunities provided by several types of texts for beginning readers to learn about aspects of written English: (a) consistent,

common letter-sound patterns; (b) the most frequent words; and (c) the contexts of sentences and texts.” Hiebert’s analysis indicated that texts based on high-frequency words might impede use of letter-sound knowledge because of the irregular patterns of many of the words used. She noted that texts chosen based on literary merit or predictable sentence and text patterns may compensate for these problems by providing natural language, a close text-picture match, and other benefits. Hiebert maintained that beginning readers need texts that allow them to become proficient with all three aspects of written English (e.g. Dr. Seuss texts). Hoffman examined the first-grade materials in five new basal programs submitted for the 1993 Texas state adoption and compared them to 1986 and 1987 materials used in Texas classroom. They focused on features of pupil and teacher editions. Their findings indicated substantial changes, and these changes were attributed to the influence of literature-based and whole-language movements. These findings were interpreted in terms of historical trends. Martinez & McGee (2000), Smith (1934/1986), and Venezky (1987) also provided historical perspectives on the shifts in American reading instruction. These analyses addressed political and research roots. Martinez and McGee, however, focused on the use of literature in reading instruction, while Smith focused more extensively on basals. Venezky focused on five areas of importance: theoretical frameworks, control of reader content, reading curriculum, instructional technology, and instructional outcomes. He found that the linkage between reading instruction and reading achievement is “elusive at best...Reading is rarely taught in a vacuum; instead it has been integrally tied to changing educational and cultural conditions.”

Finally, after years of disagreement about how to teach reading, it appears that researchers have reached by finding a common ground. A 1998 article published by the Council for Basic Education entitled, *Preventing Reading Failure by Ensuring Effective Reading Instruction*, authors Barbara R. Foorman et.al argue that good phonics programs may simply create good decoders or "word callers" as opposed to balanced "comprehenders" if programs focus solely on phonics. These authors suggest a combination of phonics lessons "taught in decodable text" and teachers that enable students to develop capable word recognition strategies so that memory resources can be directed towards comprehension skills. This method has stimulated a multitude of debate over what constitutes "the balanced approach." Consequently, I would recommend that this is the time for educators to be cautious, to review the research closely, and to make decisions judiciously about the best method to teach reading.

Table 1 A Chronology of Reading Instruction Methodologies

Time Period	1910-1925 "Initial Period of Emphasis Upon Scientific Investigation in Reading"
Political/Religious Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No strong nationalistic aim for reading education • Effects of World War I - found that many soldiers could not read well enough to follow printed directions • Thorndike publishes "<u>The Teacher's Word Book</u>," a list of the most common 10,000 words in the English language
Innovative Ideas/Research Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth of the scientific movement in education • Instruments of measurement about the effectiveness of methods and materials were created • Increased attention to meaning in all aspects of education (influenced by Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel, Parker, and Huey) • Change over from oral to silent reading • Rapid expansion of reading research • Remedial reading techniques were developed • Initial use of experience charts in reading instruction • Introduction of individual instruction in reading • Growing concern about the improvement of the teaching of reading • Rate is singled out as an important reading skill
Types/Emphasis of Instructional Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content of readers began to reflect what researchers had come to understand about the nature of text (emphasis switched from the educational roles of society to supporting reading instruction) • Methods texts move away from emphasis on literature, even in supplemental materials • Supplemental materials featured factual material, patriotic material, informational text, and various student-response exercises • Emphasis on teaching effective silent reading in order to enable individuals to meet the practical needs of life

Time Period	1910-1925 "Initial Period of Emphasis Upon Scientific Investigation in Reading"
Description of Text Examples/Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contained exercises requiring a child to make some reaction which could provide a check of his/her comprehension • Featured minimal "fanciful" stories • Realistic subject matter dominant • Biblical stories • Historical stories • Tales • Reading exercises (opposites, mixed sentences, true or false, etc.) • Example: <i>The Lincoln Readers</i> contained a primer and eight readers. Their subject matter was primarily informational and testable. They included silent reading checks, such as yes or no exercises, directions for making things, finding answers to questions, dramatizing stories, and organizing materials.

Time Period	1925-1935 "First Period of Intensive Research and Application"
Political/Religious Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No strong nationalistic aim for reading education at this time
Innovative Ideas/Research Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two highly specialized research areas appear to have emerged (Martinez & McGee, 2000): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on reading instruction 2. Focus on children's literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division in philosophy in regard to the teaching of reading: Group 1: Believed that children should be given practice on sequential skills carefully planned by an adult. They continued to use basal readers. Group 2 (the Activity Movement): Believed learning best took place when the child was permitted to carry out his own purposes, meeting and solving attendant problems within the context of his own experiences and needs and through the growing medium of his own activities. They discarded basal readers and used materials prepared by the children themselves, a wide variety of reference books, and story books which the children chose as a result of their own interests (Smith, 1986). • Experience charts came into wide use • Individual instruction continued with decreasing interest • Silent reading continued

Types/Emphasis of Instructional Texts	<p>According to the Twenty-Fourth Yearbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on reading to extend experiences and enable the reader to participate intelligently in real life • Develop strong motives for, and permanent interests in, reading that will inspire and provide a wholesome leisure time activity • Develop the attitudes, habits, and skills that are essential in the various types of reading activities for both children and adults: important habits common to most reading situations (e.g. recognition of words and groups of words, such matters as holding a book correctly, etc.); habits of intelligent interpretation; effective oral interpretation of selections to others; skillful use of books, libraries, and sources of information.
Description of Text Examples/Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplemental materials were abundant • Quality of writing ranged from excellent to poor • New trend: publication of sets of small books (result of broadened objectives) • Pre-primer was an innovation of this period • Used standard word lists as a basis for selecting vocabulary • Primer vocabularies were reduced • Repetition was provided • Material varied greatly, but there was a preponderance of realistic stories • Silent reading exercises were common • Some old folk tales and poetry occur, but not very many • Modern fanciful tales appear quite frequently • <u>Dick and Jane</u> enter the reading scene. Thorndike's word list allows controlled vocabulary readers in upper grades as well, unlike earlier whole word methods where new words eventually had to be taught through diacritical markings or the teaching of phonics in upper grades through spelling. • Example: <i>Work-Play Books</i> developed by A. I. Gates. The series featured a primer, six readers, and a workbook for each reader. The idea behind the series is that it is to be split into two sections, one with the hard work of acquiring skills and the other featuring the enjoyment of "natural" reading. The content tended to be realistic.

Time Period	1935-1950 "Period of International Conflict"
Political/Religious Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The atomic age brought about questions about how prepared the United States was to deal with the threat of war • Reading became linked to international conflict in the sense that it was believed that the U.S. could not cope with future destructive forces if its citizenry did not have adequate reading skills • According to Smith (1986), "While the explosion of the atomic bomb had a delayed reaction on reading, international problems and World War II had some immediate effects." • This period was marked by national and international unrest • It was again discovered that thousands of young men could not read well, but this time it was also learned that many of these young men could be taught to read very quickly
Innovative Ideas/Research Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a vast decrease in the amount of published reading research during this time • The tension and strife caused a few thinkers to state anew that reading might make a contribution to the American democracy (critical reading) • New emphasis on social values in reading • After the war there was professional criticism of reading instruction and a general "tightening" of reading instruction in public education after the war • Criticism of literary diet of previous eras and called for factual materials for every-day reading (Smith, 1986) • Pre-primers and readiness materials emerged Pre-primer and primer vocabularies were reduced • Increase in the repetition of vocabulary • Most, but not all (McKee, 1934; Russell, 1949), researchers recommend literature only as a supplemental enjoyable activity
Types/Emphasis of Instructional Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic instruction became quite popular • The number of basal readers published was drastically reduced • The Twenty-Sixth Yearbook, Part I, set out the following reading objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad - to enrich experience, to broaden interests, develop appreciation, and cultivate ideal and appropriate attitudes • Specific - to broaden the visions of those who read, make their lives richer and more meaningful, and enable them to meet practical needs of life more effectively; to develop social understanding and the ability to use reading in the intelligent search for truth; to promote a broad common culture and a growing appreciation of the finer elements in contemporary life; and to stimulate interests in reading. • As commercial ventures, readers were limited in what they

Time Period	1935-1950 "Period of International Conflict"
	offered (Venezky, 1987)
Description of Text Examples/Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readiness books were introduced: the material provided for activities which would give children language experiences and practice in matching pictures, geometric figures, and sometimes selecting letters and words; selecting an appropriate item from several other items; following sequenced picture stories; and an acquaintance with the pre-primer's characters • More pre-primers per series • Two books per grade level • Content of readers drew upon literature to a greater extent than in the past • Still predominantly realistic in nature • Old tales were used and poetry was returning • More artwork - full page illustrations more common • Reduced and scientifically selected vocabulary lists were the norm • Repetition of new words was much better controlled • Example: <i>The Reading for Interest</i> series was prepared by reading specialists and story writers. It contained a readiness book, two primers, a first grade reader and one reader each for grades two-six. Practice books and word cards were provided.

Time Period	1950-1965 "Period of Expanding Knowledge and Technical Revolution"
Political/Religious Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep concern for the survival of the democracy in the face of Communist agendas • U.S. recognized need for leadership role • Education is often proposed as a solution to the problems plaguing humanity • The launch of Sputnik in 1957 caused Americans to realize that effort must be put into education if their way of life was to be preserved or improved • After the launch of Sputnik, American reading instruction underwent harsh criticism • Government support greatly increased for mass education

Time Period	1950-1965 "Period of Expanding Knowledge and Technical Revolution"
Innovative Ideas/Research Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With explosion of knowledge, people must be able to read well and with discriminating understanding (e.g. critically) • Technology required that people are educated for them to hold on to their jobs • Safeguards needed to prevent neglect of personal development • Recognition that careful selection and use of reading material gave students an advantage • Realization that many were "culturally deprived" and needed to overcome this deficit • Realization that juvenile delinquency was increasing and it was essential to cultivate positive societal roles and moral sensitivity • Looked into technology as a way to increase literacy skills • 1965: The Hanna Study of the most common 17,000 words reveals that English is more phonetically regular than commonly assumed. • 1967: <u>Jeanne S. Chall publishes "Learning to Read: The Great Debate,"</u> a comprehensive look at hundreds of studies of reading methods. She found that phonics was more effective than whole word methods.
Types/Emphasis of Instructional Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns over communism caused changes in text content • Interest in social effects and values of reading increased steadily during the beginning part of this period • Emphasis on accelerating learning • More information on individualized instruction

Time Period	1965-Late-1980s "Period of a Quest for Universal Literacy"
Political/Religious Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Societal and technological changes led to a changed role of print • Communication of information became a major task • Literacy considered essential to the economic structure of society • Nationwide quest for universal literacy • The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) - provided tremendous amount of money for different "titles" (e.g. Title I) • National Right to Read effort (1969) • Influence of reader content (Venezky, 1987)
Innovative Ideas/Research Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading from cognitive and psycholinguistic perspectives (Gee, 1986) Researchers acknowledged the importance of literature as a <i>supplemental component</i> of basal reading programs (Durkin, 1970) • There were challengers to the basal approach: • Lee and Allen (1963) and Stauffer (1970) advocated for the language experience approach • Veatch (1968) argued for individualized instruction with literature. Overall, however, the basal approach prevailed. • Schema Theory-Comprehension (Anderson & Pearson, 1984) • Phonics (Chall, 1967/1982) • 1983: <u>Jeanne S. Chall</u> republishes "Learning to Read: The Great Debate," with new research findings strengthening the case for phonics. • 1985: Margaret Bishop publishes "The ABC's and All Their Tricks," arranging the results of the Hanna study in a user friendly format. • Transactional Theory (Rosenblatt, 1978) • Morris (1998): "Like 'Old Man River' it [basal readers] simply widened its banks a little-incorporating suggestions for more intensive phonics-and kept on rolling." • New stance
Types/Emphasis of Instructional Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on developing informed thinking citizens capable of participation in both domestic and world affairs • Interdependence of skills and content • Emphasis on language • Emphasis on symbol systems • Emphasis on social systems

Time Period	1965-Late-1980s "Period of a Quest for Universal Literacy"
Description of Text Examples/Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basals continued to dominate the market • Emphasis on narrative, though there was some informational text • Language of stories became more natural • Contained instruction on word attack skills (phonics), comprehension, study skills, and vocabulary • Most supplemental materials were in the form of workbooks • Reading rates received only minor emphasis • Educational software accompanied many basal series • More trade and library books available than ever before

Time Period	Late-1980s-Present "Period of the Quest for Balanced Literacy"
Political/Religious Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California State Department of Education's Reading Initiative (1986) • Texas Education Agency's Proclamation 68 (1990) called for the inclusion of quality children's literature • <i>Every Child a Reader</i> blamed low test scores on literature-based reading instruction (California Department of Education, 1995)
Innovative Ideas/Research Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of 1986 Texas-approved textbooks by Hoffman et al (1994) showed that the texts on the lists of approval programs consisted almost entirely of literature. • Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, & Duffy-Hester's (1998) replication of research by Austin & Morrison in <i>The First R</i> (Austin & Morrison, 1963) revealed that there is much more emphasis on literature in the form of trade books in reading instruction. • Most teachers struck a balance between use of basals and trade books. • Only 2% of teachers relied exclusively on basals. • 16% reported exclusive trade book usage. • Typically teachers reported using basals supplemented by trade books (56%) or trade books supplemented by basals (27%). • Research today is calling for decodable materials (Meta, 1998; Lyon, 1994; Moats, 1994) • Response Theory and Genre Theory • Teacher-led initiatives: reading-workshop approach to instruction; shared reading of predictable books; Whole Language • 1985: Flesch publishes "Why Johnny Can't Read and What You Can Do about It."

Time Period	Late-1980s-Present "Period of the Quest for Balanced Literacy"
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1990's: Brain research using functional MRI (fMRI) shows that the brain reads sound by sound. • 1993: 40 Professors of Linguistics in Massachusetts write a letter to the State Commissioner of Education to protest the attempted introduction of Whole Language. • 1999: Dr. Reid Lyon of the National Institute of Health (NIH) reports to Congress on the findings of research on over 34,000 children —findings include the importance of phonics and phonemic awareness for teaching reading.
Types/Emphasis of Instructional Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative predictable and easy picture and chapter books are dominant • Well-researched historical fiction • Increase in amount of non-fiction trade books (Donahue, 1990; Elleman, 1995) • Early 2000's: Brain research shows changes in the brain and reading improvement when phonics is taught to poor readers. • 2001: No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation passed. The Reading First portion of NCLB mandates phonics instruction. • 2006: A study found that dyslexics that were taught spelling in a phonetic manner improved their spelling. The study also found that this type of teaching "can actually change their brains' activity patterns to better resemble the brains of normal spellers."
Description of Text Examples/Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large increase in the number of individualized predictable books • Many predictable stories published in Big Book format (Temple et al., 1998) • Easy picture books with literary merit written by well-known authors (Cullinan&Galdon, 1998)

History of ESL and Bilingual Education

An English language learner (ELL) is defined by federal provisions as someone who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is in English. State definitions for an ELL vary substantially, but many are modeled after the federal definition (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). Other terms often identified and/or used interchangeably with ELLs are *Limited English Proficient* (LEP) and *English as a Second Language* (ESL) student. I refer to the preferred term ELL in most of the dissertation because of the negative connotation associated with the term LEP and the fact that ESL more accurately expresses a type of program that ELLs can be placed in.

English language learners (ELLs) are a diverse and growing constituency in schools across the nation. ELL enrollment in the nation's public schools between the years 1990 and 2000 grew by 105 percent, compared to a 12 percent overall growth rate among the general school population (Kindler, 2002). In fact, it is projected that by the year 2030, 40% of the school population will speak English as a second language (U.S. DOE & NICHHD, 2003). In schools, Spanish is the most frequent language spoken by English language learners (79%), followed by Vietnamese (1.95%) and Hmong (1.55%; Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010).

This ever-growing diversity makes it critical that English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual education programs are aligned with goals of increased and enhanced academic success for students who are learning English as an additional language while simultaneously acquiring content knowledge in English.

What is Title VII, the Bilingual Education Act?

Though there are many theories on the premise of the Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Congress passed it in 1968 under the leadership of Senator Yarborough of Texas. During this time period, many Texans referred to the Senator as the “People’s Senator” because he fought many political battles for the “small fries.” He played a foundational role in Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs in the areas of environmental preservation, health care, and education for the underserved and impoverished. Indicatively, his political work greatly influenced the social, economic, and racial transformations of Texas. Because he hugely supported Civil Rights legislation, many regarded this act as an anti-poverty program for Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans to endorse better suited economic opportunities. However, this was the first Bilingual Education law passed in Congress to address the unique needs of students of limited English proficiency. There were several recommendations in the bill that included school and educational programs to teach Spanish as a primary language and English as a secondary language. Conceptually, if a student learns and masters his or her primary language, he or she can transition into a second language. Furthermore, it offered grants to school districts for "new and imaginative elementary and secondary school programs" to meet the needs of limited English proficient children. With Title VII still in existence, it can be found to financially support professional development, instructional programs, research, evaluation, and other supportive services for local programs serving LEP students. The Department of Education defines bilingual education as:

The use of two languages, one of which is English, as mediums of instruction for the same pupil population in a well-organized program which encompasses part or all of the curriculum and includes the study of history and culture associated with the mother tongue. A complete program develops and maintains the children's self-esteem and a legitimate pride in both cultures.

Many may not be familiar or even recall the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 because it has changed names numerous times over the last thirty years. To date, this bill has evolved into the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).

In fact, the purpose and history of the ESL concept can be traced back three hundred years from the colonial era when the British Empire began worldwide expansion of their trade routes and English became the primary language spoken for business transactions. It was necessary for The British to have the ability to connect and communicate with businessmen in American societies, and learning English was a growing demand. Tutors were appointed to a small selection of upper-class government officials to teach English, using techniques of rote learning and the drill and practice method. Serving a dual purpose, the English classes focused on British politics, theory and religious beliefs integrating the presumed superior British education into other cultures.

However, during the first few decades of the twentieth century, immigrants- particularly in large urban areas-were taught to assimilate and interchange their own ethnic customs and heritage and conform to American traditions. It's believed that this integration was a trend commonly attributed to the changing political winds of WWI. To further illustrate the influential legislation in regards to bilingual education, it's important

to mention the Naturalization Act of 1906. This bill established the need for ESL teaching by mandating all immigrants be able to speak English in order to become naturalized United States citizens. Engaged in much controversy, this legitimized the use of language as a method of segregation and exclusion. In the workforce, immigrants had to comply with the process of speaking English. In 1914, the Ford Motor Company started an ESL learning program for its employees. In order for them to earn their entire \$5 daily wage, employees were required to learn and communicate in English. If not, they would endure loss in pay.

Need for Change

As the United States entered the twentieth century, technology and innovation gained momentum and foreigners began to immigrate to the United States. This led to the country having an influential role in English acquisition. Countless immigrants journeyed to the United States to take advantage of the workforce opportunities. However, many settled in large urban areas and cities and had no purpose or need to learn English. School-aged children attended schools that integrated bilingual classroom instruction that was taught in foreign languages such as French and Spanish.

Ultimately, in the mid-1920s, most states instituted exclusive language programs that only implemented English-language instructional methods in schools. In turn, there was a much higher need for ESL teaching methods. Upon entrance of school, children were expected to speak English and those who did not possess the skills to communicate in English had to be taught to do so.

During this time, many of the educational programs led instruction in the students' native language. However, a shift began in the mid 1920's and frequently the

non-English speakers were immersed in the English only classrooms and offered no support in second language instruction. Even though many immigrant families embraced a new American culture, most bilingual educational programs were disassembled throughout the United States. Most bilingual schools maintained English-only instruction until the federal government became involved and reauthorized bilingual education in the 1960's.

Following the War World II era, new educational philosophies began emerging as language experts began to understand the value of foreign language acquisition and the need for education and learning be a positive experience, as opposed to implementing fear as a motivation for language acquisition. Prior to this, language acquisition was often considered a dreadful and time-consuming procedure.

The Letter of the Law

The public educational arena has posited many legal obligations related to ESL and Bilingual education. However, in many cases, the growth of ELL populations has been categorized in homogenous communities, which in turn warrants a closer examination of the legal mandates for educators and school administrators serving ELLs.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 serves as the legal basis for bilingual education which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin. Over the years, the court systems have attempted to supply direction for schools in terms of defining adequate instruction. Furthermore, the judicial system has set policies in place to afford more opportunities for second language learners to have equitable education in comparison to their mainstream peers. There are many illustrations of case law that examine the ways educational programs should culturally and linguistically engage

second language learners. These case laws also address the equality in the assessment and instructional practices for language minority students.

For instance, the petitioners in the *Keyes v. School District No. 1, Denver, Colorado* (1973) Supreme Court case declared that the Denver Independent School District intentionally operated a segregated school system for nearly ten years. The court ruled that the school board had participated in deliberate racial exclusion of Denver's northeast area schools, and the segregated schools were educationally inferior to the predominately white schools. This case prompted the entire school district to adopt a plan to desegregate and implement equal educational opportunities for minority students.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the 1974 case of *Lau vs. Nichols* that approximately 1,800 Chinese students in San Francisco were being denied access to equal educational opportunities because they had not mastered the language of instruction. During this time, many referred to the school's ELL program as "sink or swim." Under this principle, school districts were required to implement valuable and meaningful ESL programs to ensure that language minority students are afforded equal access to mainstreamed curriculum.

Furthermore, the pivotal *Lau v. Nichols* case made meaning for English language learner students who are often placed classrooms with teachers who lack the expertise, ability, and most importantly professional development to provide meaningful instruction for linguistically diverse learners. Ironically, the case demonstrates how some mainstream teachers of ELLs experience the same injustice and fear that ELLs endure in mainstream classrooms of being plagued with the task of "sink or swim." For non-English speaking students, this case played a role in securing meaningful education and

requiring educational programs implement a comprehensive approach to address the unique learning needs of language minority students.

Another pivotal case in the bilingual education reform was *Rios v. Read* (1978). The plaintiffs argued that the Puerto Rican students were denied an equal education opportunity when classroom instruction was not offered in their native language of Spanish. In the ruling of this particular case, there were many factors examined which include knowledge of effective ESL teaching methods, bilingual program language assessment and evaluation, student placement, and the implementation of culturally diverse curriculum materials. This case made meaning for programs that serve ELL populations being held accountable for second language acquisition development and acquisition of content knowledge strategies.

One of the most noteworthy cases was in the bilingual education movement was *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981), in which the plaintiff, Roy Castañeda argued that his two children's educational rights were violated under the Equal Education Opportunities Act (EEOA) of 1974 when the Raymondville (Texas) Independent School District implemented a biased tracking system that unfairly placed students in groups according to their learning "ability" placing all Mexican students in one exclusive group. As a result of this case, the Fifth Circuit Federal Court of Appeals constructed a three-part procedure to validate a school district's language program ability to meet the standards of the EEOA, which is identified as the Castañeda Test. The case was helpful in requiring schools to uphold three criteria of the Castañeda Test: theory, practice, and results. With the Castañeda Test set in place, Texas schools are mandated to implement effective

program policies are based on educational sound theories that help ELL students overcome language barriers.

Upon reviewing these cornerstone cases, it's important to know that public schools are required by federal law to provide a high-quality education to ELLs at no charge, even if they are undocumented students. This point is illustrated in the Supreme Court case *Plyer v. Doe* (1982). Immigrant parents (plaintiff) alleged that they were forced to pay tuition for their children to attend a Texas (Tyler ISD) public school. Because school districts are not agents for enforcing immigration laws, the school did not have the right to deny a free public education to undocumented immigrant students or declare the legal status of a student. This case made meaning under the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution because school-aged youth, even if undocumented, have the right to a free and suitable public education without the fear of being deported.

A more recent case involving a Dallas, Texas school district reiterated the fact that intentional exclusion and isolation of second language learners and minorities is considered unfair and unconstitutional. This point is illustrated in *Santamari et al. v. Dallas Independent School District et al.* (2006) court case. An elementary school in an upper-middle class area in Dallas allegedly segregated African-American and Latino students from their Caucasian counterparts. The school principal deliberately kept these students isolated and placed into ESL classrooms in separate physical buildings and hallways in order for the white students to be kept together in the same class. However, most of these minority students were tested and identified as English proficient and gifted and talented. It was clear that the principal's discriminatory practices violated the minority students' civil rights.

Prior to 1960, few educational services were available for ELLs in schools. In most cases, they were kept isolated from their mainstream peers, overrepresented in special education settings, given inadequate instruction, and inappropriately assessed (Texas Education Agency Bilingual/ESL Unit, 2004). From the 1960s until the 1990s, educational policy focused on what type of program was best suited for ELLs. Policies frequently shifted between favoring bilingual education or English-only instruction. Currently, these policies place more emphasis on accountability and establishing appropriate educational standards for ELLs than on specific programs.

Modern ESL Methods

From the 1950s to the 1980s, linguists began researching English language acquisition and discovered many other methods of teaching English, rather than the traditional drills, translations and learning from rote memory as classical languages, such as Latin and Greek, were taught. Different ESL methods, like the Direct Method and the Audio-lingual Method, are the results of this research. In the Direct Method, the student is immersed in the language and grammar is taught inductively. The Audio-lingual Method involves auditory, visual and grammar-type learning activities. Modern ESL methods and their combinations result in faster and more productive language acquisition than traditional grammar-translation methods. Students learning with one of these modern methods, or a combination of them, can learn the language in as little as a year's time.

In 1963, the first modern Bilingual Education program was developed for Spanish-speaking Cuban immigrants fleeing the 1959 communist revolution and Anglos at Coral Way Elementary School in Dade County, Miami, Florida. Believing they'd

eventually return to Cuba, many families wanted to ensure their children retained their Spanish language. Although many of the families elected to remain in Florida and not return to the island, the dual-language program remained and the school has consistently been assigned a high-ranking "A" by the state's report card. The school adopted a bilingual program for all students, regardless of language proficiency. Fortunately, The Ford Foundation provided a grant to the school to support the efforts of the program as many bilingual programs across the country continue to lose resources and funding for sustainability.

Research suggests that "learning languages at earlier ages and over longer periods of time supports second-language acquisition" (Tochon, 2009). According to a meta-analysis of 63 studies, "bilingualism produces a range of benefits, including increased ability to control attention and keep information in memory, better awareness of language structure and vocabulary, and improved skills in creative thinking and problem solving" (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, and Ungerleider, 2010). Bilingual students also attain higher levels of achievement on standardized tests in reading, writing, social studies, and math, and report higher levels of self-confidence (Tochon, 2009). Students in "50-50" language-immersion schools, in which students spend half of their day learning in a non-native language, perform as well as, or better than, students in monolingual schools on standardized tests, and these benefits extend to English-language learners as well as native English speakers (Gómez, Freeman, and Freeman, 2005; Palmer, 2009; Thomas and Collier, 2002).

Many districts continue to separate English learners for special instruction, teaching them primarily in English. There are examples around the country that show

that approach can be successful, though critics say it isolates students from their peers. Regardless of the approach, resources remain limited. Schools with few English learners may get no money at all, and federal help is heavily tied to census figures, which are believed to significantly under-represent the number of students in need of services.

In that respect, Virginia Collier and Wayne Thomas from George Mason University in Virginia studied more than 6 million student records and found that full-immersion bilingual programs in which native and non-native students are given instruction in both languages are the most effective. They studied bilingual programs in the Houston Independent School District and found that native-Spanish speakers were at or above grade level in English and Spanish in first grade through fifth grade. They found that in some of the programs, students are taught half their subjects in English and the other half in Spanish, or they start with more time in the dominant language until becoming equally fluent in both. However, not all bilingual education is deemed worthier because not all encompass quality of instruction, material and support for the community.

Facing the Realities

Nationwide, non-whites are expected to become a majority of the population within a generation, and schools are at the cutting edge of that historic shift. School-age children, who speak a language other than English at home, are one of the fastest growing populations. Their numbers doubled between 1980 and 2009, and they now make up 21 percent of school-age kids. There were 4.7 million students classified as English language learners, those who have not yet achieved proficiency in English, in the 2009-

10 school year, or about 10 percent of children enrolled, according to the most recent figures available from the U.S. Department of Education.

There are a myriad of steep challenges facing students learning a second language and English learners are arguably the most disadvantaged. Starting with a public sentiment against teaching ELLs in their native language, to a failure to offer a sufficient amount of time to become proficient in English before language support is withdrawn. Finding and retaining highly qualified teachers who attribute excellence in their pedagogy to educate ELLs is another obstacle to overcome, especially in bilingual programs where inconsistency is used as an educational tool.

The controversy on the most effective ways to educate English language learners with bilingual programs continues to gather steam. English learner students are more likely to be in underprivileged, overcrowded schools and in many places represent an added cost to already cash-strapped school districts.

An English learner's entrance into the public school system typically starts with a home language survey indicating whether another language is used at home and which language the child speaks most frequently. The questions can vary significantly from state to state, and many school districts face criticism for including questions that inaccurately identify children as being in need of language services. Referrals to special education programs represent a major obstacle to academic achievement of ELLs.

It's imperative to realize that when students who have been identified as being limited in their English language proficiency score poorly on high-stakes exams or fall below grade level, some teachers may assume they are special need students who have learning disabilities. Like all students, they need teachers who can assess their strengths

and needs and differentiate instruction to address varying cultural backgrounds and languages. Often time, educators don't have a clear understanding of the second language acquisition process. Consequently, English language learners often are being placed in low ability groups, retained or referred to special education classes. Sadly, the referrals are made erroneously because the students are assumed to have a learning disability when it's primarily a matter of their not understanding the teacher's language and the instructional materials. This situation would be comparable to an American student placed in a Japanese class, taught in Japanese all day, and not understanding any of the Japanese language.

Many general education teachers aren't provided trained in distinguishing the differences between two groups-English language learners and students who have learning disabilities. Similar to an individual with a learning disability, an English language learner being taught in English may demonstrate extreme levels of agitation from poor comprehension and low academic performance. Although these traits in ELLs reflect their limited knowledge of English as opposed to a disability, distinguishing the two categories is a complex task for educators who lack the knowledge and expertise in the education of English language learners.

The fundamental misconceptions, societal attitudes and significant bias against languages other than English and support of bilingual education in this country steadily create barriers in educators and the general public fully comprehending what a student who is acquiring a second language needs for academic success. In reality, much of what English language learners need is, essentially, the same as what all children require if they are to receive a first-class education.

New Visions

One of the common misconceptions about bilingual education is that it's merely about quickly learning English. According to some, English language learners don't have the ability to learn a second language effortlessly enough. However, it's crucial to consider how native English speakers, in particular professional adults that have taken foreign language courses for several years and never actually learned to speak it. Research has shown when bilingual programs offer children sufficient time to both maintain their first language and become proficient in a second language, students reach higher levels of success.

In this increasingly global age, bilingualism should be considered to be a valuable asset. All students, including English-dominant students, should be afforded the opportunity to learn to read, write, and speak in two languages. Furthermore, successful bilingual programs regard their curricular approaches as going beyond learning a language. They should produce and cultivate learning environments that acknowledge and respect diversity and multiculturalism, and foster partnerships with parents, community, and civic leaders. Above all, bilingual programs must ensure that all the students are performing at high academic levels and take an aggressive approach to building a curriculum and preparing future teachers for linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms.

Background Knowledge of English Language Learners

There has been a phenomenal growth in the number of English-language learners in the United States over the first decade of the 21st century, resulting in the overwhelming need for schools to provide special language instruction. More than five

million children in the United States enter school each year speaking a language other than English. That amount is expected to grow to 25% by the year 2025, “representing the fastest-growing segment of the student population” (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2005). Given these trends, our challenge that will continue to endure as educators “is to provide English learners with the type of instruction that will lead them to become educated, productive citizens” (Echevaria, 3).

It’s important to understand certain acronyms when referring to this rapid change in students who speak a second language. The term ELL refers to a heterogeneous group of students who speak one or more languages other than English and are in the process of developing English proficiency. Because the first language of these students may vary, ELL students enter our schools with different language needs and experiences.

By far, the majority of ELLs—80 percent—are Spanish speakers. This is an important fact to bear in mind, since Spanish speakers in the U.S. tend to come from lower economic and educational backgrounds than either the general population or other immigrants and language minority populations. Fewer than 40 percent of immigrants from Mexico and Central America have the equivalent of a high school diploma, in contrast to between 80 and 90 percent of other immigrants (and 87.5 percent of U.S.-born residents). Consequently, most ELLs are at risk for poor school outcomes not only because of language, but also because of socioeconomic factors (Goldenberg, 3).

There is an ever-growing demand for research on how to assist the various learning needs of these populations and the most effective approaches to address these needs remain largely unknown for many educators throughout the country. It’s important

for all educators to understand that reading comprehension and ability is a critical factor and essential skill that determines a student's potential to reach academic achievement. Reading in English can be overwhelmingly challenging for English language learners.

Given that ELLs are still in the process of acquiring academic language skills in English, they often struggle to master content that is vital to their success. Many well-intended professionals fail to unravel the mysteries behind the process of learning and teaching a second language and how ELL students learn in a recently acquired second language. Not understanding the process often results in the misconception that ELLs are academically inferior, unmotivated, and unwilling to learn.

For several reasons, the majority of ELLs find themselves in mainstream classrooms taught by teachers with little or no formal professional development in teaching such students (Barron & Menken, 2002; Kindler, 2002). Less than 10% of teachers in many states those with growing and large ELL populations have received more than 8 hours of professional development and training (US Department of Education) so it comes as no surprise that educators and policy makers are in search of the most effective and efficient practices.

“Learning a second language can be exciting and productive ... or painful and useless; the difference often lies in how one goes about learning the new language and how a teacher goes about teaching it” (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982, p. 3). The role of an empowered educator is to ensure the process is not one of hopelessness and distress.

Studies have demonstrated that assisting ELLs with their reading comprehension and providing quality intervention not only improves students' academic achievement, but also improves their emotional well-being and their quality of life. With competent

instruction from their classroom teacher, ELLs are able to reach the highest levels of literacy which is essential to their educational achievement and decreases their chances for participating in delinquent and criminal behavior, school dropout, and teenage pregnancy.

While ELL children from immigrant families bring with them unique assets, they also face distinct challenges in and outside the classroom that can result in academic deficiencies. Children from this group are more likely than their peers to live in poverty, have less educated parents, confront issues of racism and discrimination, and grapple with language barriers (Haskins, Greenberg & Fremstad, 2004; Shields & Behrman, 2004). Compared with native English speakers, ELLs—of which the largest group is Hispanic—have higher dropout rates and demonstrate significant achievement gaps on state and national assessments (Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2000; Waxman & Tellez, 2002).

In the United States, effective teaching has been downgraded to the ranking of scores students attain in numerous standardized tests. These assessments are generally not responsive to the dimensions that affect the teaching and learning of diverse students. As a result of blind faith on these assessments, educators engage on the faulty reading of their students' academic strengths and weaknesses further eroding the foundations for consequential teaching and learning.

Unfortunately, without the essential knowledge about the process creates a situation of disaster. Many of these well intentioned professionals often feel perplexed and anxious in the face of the awesome duty that teaching students they do not understand, linguistically or culturally, represents (Ariza, 2006). The teaching and

learning of ELLs transforms into a less than desired, chaotic and disorganized process of hit or miss, trial and error and a prescription of ineffective strategies placing already disadvantaged students in danger of failing academically. Many just assume these students are simply lazy.

Many reviews and research have simply prescribed generalized best practices for ELLs without considering individual and contextual variables that represent the diversity of conditions and risk factors these students encounter. Since there is no standard or typical ELL student, there should not be a “one-size fit all” curriculum for ELL students. Implementing a “one-size fits all” approach for English Language Learners (or native English speaking learners for that matter) will not afford the appropriate learning opportunities they need to progress academically and meet high academic of local, state, and national standards. Schools that serve ELL student populations must place high quality instruction as one their top priorities because these students face the demands of learning both content and English simultaneously.

English Language Learners often referred to bilingual students, differ in their abilities of English proficiency (oral and written) and in their heritage language. They also come from many cultural backgrounds including Hispanic, African, Japanese, Chinese, etc. It is important to understand the variation of cultural and educational backgrounds of English language learners.

ELL students in the U.S. come from over 400 different language backgrounds. What may come as a surprise to many readers is that most ELLs were born in the United States. Among elementary-age ELLs, 76 percent were born in the U.S. Among middle- and high school students, 56 percent were born

in this country. However, about 80 percent of ELLs' parents were born outside of the U.S. (Goldenberg, 3).

Most often, these students, born in the United States, develop conversational and informal language abilities in English but lack academic language proficiency.

Conversely, newcomers need to develop both conversational and academic English previous to entering U.S. schools.

Knowing this information helps determine students' literacy levels in their native language. Some learners may have age-/grade-level skills, while others have limited or no literacy because of the quality of previous schooling, interrupted schooling due to wars or migration, and other circumstances (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). For these reasons, educators should build background for content lessons as opposed to assuming that all ELLs walk into the classroom with the same background knowledge as the mainstream students.

Given the wide range of English language learners and their backgrounds, it is important that all teachers take the time to learn about their students, particularly in terms of their literacy histories. "It is necessary to understand in some depth the particular narrative histories of each child in order to identify both his or her cultural group *and* his or her specific history" (Chan, 3). In fact, Goldenberg states alarming points in his article *Teaching English Language Learners*:

English learners—approximately 60 percent—are in essentially all-English instruction: one-fifth of these students—about 12 percent of all ELLs—apparently receive no services or support at all related to their limited English

proficiency; the other four fifths— early 50 percent of all ELLs—receive all-English instruction, but with some amount of LEP services.

In past years, ELLs were formerly called “LEP” or limited English proficient; the term is sometimes still used. “LEP services” can include aides or resource teachers specifically for ELLs, instruction in English as a second language (ESL), and/or content instruction specially designed for students with limited English proficiency. “The remaining ELLs—about 40 percent—are in programs that make some use of their home language, but it is impossible to say what is typical” (Goldenberg, 3).

In determining the individual needs aligned with a rich curriculum for ELLs, it’s important to understand that their instruction should be based on reliable and research-based resources and knowledge, as opposed to argumentative rhetoric, venting sessions, and personal predispositions overhead in the teacher’s lounge; truly understanding myths as compared to realities.

Myth V. Reality

English language learners to read and write fluently can be a daunting responsibility for a classroom teacher, and the task should not be limited to simply the ESL teacher or the bilingual specialist. All teachers must assume the responsibility for teaching literacy skills to ELLs without time restrictions or using an isolated curriculum. Many best-practices require sustained implementation for genuine results and benefits to become apparent. In order to enhance the quality of classrooms for ELLs, it is imperative that the myths that surround the educational and academic levels of ELLs be dispelled. These myths impair educators to move in a progressive manner that will enhance the

scholarly ability of their ELL students.

- **Myth #1**: ELLs are illiterate and do not have the ability to read and/or write in a second language.

However, the reality is that second language learners benefit from the same research-based instructional strategies as main-stream learners. Consequently, placing ELLs in low-performing groups can result in delaying their academic progression into fluid English performers. Teachers should create engaging instructional activities in nurturing classrooms settings ELLs without isolating them or taking instructional time away from other students. Content instructors should focus on incorporating explicit instruction, adapted patterns of speech, modeling, and authentic reading to convey meaning to increase ELLs' comprehension and ability.

In determining ELLs' literacy ability and placement, it is important that educators employ assessments that focus on the academic and individual needs of each student instead of their race or ethnic background. The evaluations and assessments utilized should be ongoing and linked with instruction (Teale 2009), and should occur frequently to ensure that instruction is and remains effective and that students receive specific interventions as needed (Huebner 2009).

When determining the most effective assessment tools, educators should extend ELLs the opportunity to verbalize answers to comprehension questions, rather than writing the responses; this allows the teacher to assess comprehension at a more basic level, whereas a written answer may place undue attention on the student's writing skills and not accurately reflect what has been learned. Informal verbal assessment can provide a format in which many students feel safe and are encouraged to converse with other

members of the class so that the ELL is not singled out. For further monitoring, one-on-one conversations with the teacher should take place; this gives students individualized attention in a setting that does not present competition from classmates that may be more proficient speakers of English.

- **Myth #2**: When ELLs take a long time to read and write, there is an assumption that a learning disability and/or language impairment has taken place. The Education Alliance at Brown University conducted a study with diverse learners and the research (2006) noted that, in the beginning, it is from the use of oral language that ELLs gain the majority of their understanding. ELLs learn English primarily by listening to language in use around them, and using context to determine the meaning of the spoken words. From this research, I understand that in early stages of language acquisition, there are multiple performances taking place. Therefore, ELLs may utilize additional time listening intently to the teacher in order to digest presented material and content. Normally, the students will withhold responding orally or volunteering information spontaneously as they build their confidence. As cited from researcher Goldenberg, he states additional reasons for beginning ELLs taking longer to gain full proficiency compared to their intermediate counterparts.

First, the vocabulary and sentence patterns required to be an intermediate speaker of English are simpler than those required for advanced proficiency levels. Second, intermediate speakers can rely on the immediate context of a conversation where gestures, pointing, intonation, and other nonlinguistic cues assist communication. Intermediate proficiency likely means that the student has

sufficient command of the language to engage effectively in familiar situations, such as play, daily activities, and normal conversations with friends. Such language situations are highly contextualized, fairly recurrent and familiar, and supported by gestures, intonation, and shared references. Furthermore, research findings state that children can acquire two languages simultaneously in essentially the same time and manner as students who learn only one language, if they are provided an enriching and meaningful learning environment. Although there is an over-representation of ELLs in special-education programs in the United States, it is not bilingualism that leads to academic difficulties. Rather, the problem lies in assessment procedures, the use of a medical model of special needs, and the use of categorical funding in the school system (Cummins, 2000; Genesee, Paradis, & Crago 2004; Hayaman et al 2007). Teachers should embrace the use of various assessment and progress-monitoring tools with ELLs that promote oral questioning and response as well as critical thinking skills.

- **Myth #3:** Teachers will struggle and fail to meet the literacy needs of all ELLs in their classroom, so they shouldn't spend any time engaging these students on a personal basis.

ELLs are often less engaged and less vocal in class, posing a challenge for teachers, especially less experienced ones (Laosa, 1977; Penfield, 1987; Schinke-Llano, 1983). Novice teachers often ask low-level questions to quickly get to a simple, right answer. However, more effort on the part of the teacher to challenge students with open-ended and exploratory questions can yield richer instructional communications.

Teachers that invest quality time to explore the interests and cultural backgrounds of ELLs are better equipped to pose reflective, thought-provoking questions that highlight areas of interest to the student. As a result, this technique fosters a critical connection between the academic standards they are expected to meet and the background and cultural knowledge they possess. Making this connection is necessary for the academic success of all students, but educators must keep in mind that this process may be more difficult for ELLs than for native English speakers. They are charged with multiple duties simultaneously of grasping a new language successfully, while utilizing practically and functionally to demonstrate understanding and to develop their own cognate and critical thinking skills.

From this, teachers should be aware they model good language use for students every time they use oral language. Using clear and concise speech can help ELLs decipher important parts of what is being said. Teachers can adapt their speaking in a way that help those who struggle to keep up with meanings, without specifically singling students out or taking away instructional time from others. Methods for speech adaptation include paraphrasing and repeating words, sentences, and directions in different ways to allow every type of learner to succeed in comprehension. The use of hand gestures, pictures, and props may also help make meaning more clear (Teale, 2009).

According to Goldenberg, he states:

Other types of instruction that the National Literacy Panel (NLP) review found to be promising with ELLs, especially for increasing their reading comprehension, include cooperative learning (students working interdependently on group instructional tasks and learning goals), encouraging reading in English,

discussions to promote comprehension (instructional conversations), and mastery learning (which involves precise behavioral objectives permitting students to reach a “mastery” criterion before moving to new learning). (p. 5)

Combating these educational myths and identifying best instructional practices should incorporate the Second Dragon’s notion stated in University of Houston professor Dr. Craig’s (2004) article:

Classroom instruction should, takes a more authentic approach. It ‘respects’ the curriculum and does not allow the accountability process to drive the instruction available to youth nor to eat up increasing amounts of instructional time. It opens up horizons of knowing by exposing students to higher order thinking skills, causing them to engage in deep philosophical discussions, and to apply knowledge to new practical situations. It is a product and a process within the instructional loop but does not consume or subsume instruction. It expands the possibilities of the mind rather than narrowing focus and the opportunities and experiences to which students are exposed (p. 5)

Pedagogy Relevancy

Ambrosio (2003) referred to Freire's (1970) premise that “rather than seeing students as empty vessels, to be filled with the expert knowledge of teachers ... students must make their own meanings; they must be producers of knowledge themselves” (p. 31). Moreover, he advised that teachers consider “students as creators rather than consumers of knowledge, as makers of meaning rather than passive recipients of socially sanctioned truths” (p.34). Ambrosio advocated a “pedagogy that uses the personal

knowledge and experiences of students to reflect critically on issues presented from a variety of perspectives” (p. 34), advising that teachers should commit themselves to developing classrooms based on a “cultural democracy, to creating learning experiences and opportunities that allow students from diverse cultural groups to see themselves in ... curriculum, instructional practices, and classroom climate” (p. 34).

Consequently, huge efforts are made on many levels to educate diverse learners in the English language so that these students can achieve success in a manner that will afford them the same opportunities as those students for whom English is their primary language. It is important for teachers to remember that a need for instruction in the English language is not an indicator that a student is incapable of acquiring the literacy skills that will allow him or her to succeed academically, or to achieve a level of educational success comparable to his or her native English-speaking peers. Educators of ELLs may have to implement differentiated methods of instruction and assessment; many professionals ponder on how they will put this into practice and balance gingerly without taking time from other learners in their classroom or singling out ELLs.

According to Goldenberg, “on average, ELLs’ academic achievement tends to be low. On the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), fourth-grade ELLs scored 36 points below non-ELLs in reading and 25 points below non-ELLs in math. The gaps among eighth-graders were even larger—42 points in reading and 37 points in math. Those are very large gaps. In fact, the gaps between ELLs and non-ELLs are 3 to 18 points larger than the gaps between students who are and are not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.”

The role of the teacher in language acquisition for ELLs is an integral one. For new teachers, the task may seem very daunting and intimidating; research conducted by Sara R. Helfrich indicates that beginning teachers do not perceive themselves as being adequately prepared to instruct ELLs in the area of literacy (Helfrich and Bean, 2011).

“Teachers of ELLs are thus under tremendous pressure. It is imperative that they, as well as administrators and other school staff, understand the state of our knowledge regarding how to improve the achievement of these students. Unfortunately, the state of our knowledge is modest.” (Goldenberg, 4) Diverse learners may require somewhat differentiated methods of instruction and on-going assessment; being able to meet this challenge, without taking time from other learners or singling out ELLs, is both a difficult task and a delicate balance. Professional developments and in-service training for teachers do not distribute the “secret recipe” of how to educate each student in their classroom to his or her highest potential, especially for the learners who have preliminary challenges such as English language acquisition. It’s a matter of knowing that effective, equitable, and enthusiastic teachers seek to integrate ELLs as fully as possible (Banks 2004; Cohen and Lotan 2004). According to Banks (2004, 5), “an equity pedagogy exists when teachers use techniques and methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups.”

(Bosh and Helfrich 2011) pointed out that educators must consider the concept of language learning from a whole-child perspective; one that not only respects the expectations placed on educators, but also accounts for the needs and developmental levels of the individual student. As part of successful intervention and second language instruction, educators should not seek out to mold or assimilate their ELLs into one of his

or her native-language counterparts linguistically or culturally, instead permit their ELLs to acculturate while mastering the English language and sustaining their home language and attitude toward literacy.

Unfortunately, the mindsets and the educational experiences of some educators do not properly prepare them to actively participate in the building and maintaining of a school's culture or resources to create culturally relevant materials intended for an increasingly heterogeneous learning environment. The story provided below is such an example of this ability to connect with students that come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. This tale, often told to Nigerian children, goes something like this:

A white female elementary school teacher in the United States posed a math problem to her class one day. "Suppose there are four blackbirds sitting in a tree. You take a slingshot and shoot one of them. How many are left?"

A white student answered quickly, "That's easy, one subtracted from four is three."

An African immigrant youth then answered with equal confidence, "Zero."

The teacher chuckled at the latter response and stated that the first student was right and that, perhaps, the second student should study more math. From that day forth, the African student seemed to withdraw from class activities and seldom spoke to other students or the teacher.

This anecdote addresses central issues attacking the multicultural programs in the United States and serves as an example of how many educators struggle with interacting

with students from various ethnic backgrounds. This story has also served as an illustration to illuminate differences in cultural beliefs and world views between the United States and African countries. It also demonstrates that many individuals don't even realize that their perspective is biased just as the teacher instinctively assumed her Nigerian student was wrong about the mathematics problem.

As an alternative, the teacher should have followed the African student's answer of "zero" by communicating and unfolding how he arrived at such answer. By doing this, she would have understood that if one bird is shot, the others will fly away because birds share a unique relationship with one another. The student simply analyzed the story differently, not necessarily incorrectly. It would have helped for the teacher to know that in the Nigerian culture, the group is considered to be more important than the individual and that survival is based on interrelationships among the parts. In the literal sense, the white child arrived at a different answer because he used simple mathematics procedure but the African child, with a different cultural perspective, was able to seek a distinctive solution based on his experience in the real world. According to Derlad Wing Sue who speaks to the challenges of multiculturalism, research suggests that a world view or belief is based on the psychosocial unit of operation in the individual's cultural experience, rugged individualism should be valued, and autonomy of the parts and independence of action are more significant than group conformance.

From the perspective of countless teachers in the United States, most would consider the white student to be correct and the African student to be wrong. In the traditional sense, the problem posed by the teacher represents a hypothetical situation that equires only one correct and literal answer. Unfortunately, many teachers don't use a

scaffolding educational approach that links the academically challenging and inclusive curriculum to the cultural wealth that students bring to classroom and school. Educators should not feel intimidated to utilize curriculum that encompasses real world and experiences and holistic relationships. Furthermore, multicultural education should include a curriculum that acknowledges the contributions and perspectives of the diverse ethnic groups that represent our modern-day society and classrooms.

Often time, children at early age are taught to adopt only the principles, social norms, and values of either mainstream society or his or her own ethnic or cultural group which results in individuals only to gain nothing more than stereotypes about cultural groups other than their own. Unfortunately, many individuals are inclined to consider different ethnic groups and lifestyles as anomalous or even malevolent which lend to individuals adopting misconceptions, ill feelings, or hatred for outside cultures.

According to Banister and Maher, teachers need to engage multiculturalism by teaching students to think critically and not "separately" about how to develop communities that interact in meaningful ways, not to dominate each other, risk resolving conflicts, and work together to survive on this planet. Both authors feel that multicultural education should include reform in philosophical systems, restructuring school-wide daily practices, and transformations of domination patterns.

What then, can educators in the 21st century do to bring equity into our classrooms so that all students can achieve success? (Zeichner, 1993) identifies the following key elements for teaching ethnic- and language-minority students:

- High expectations for the success of all students (and a belief that all students can succeed) are communicated to students.

- Teachers are personally committed to achieving equity for all students and believe that they are capable of making a difference in their students' learning.
- Teachers have developed a personal bond with their students and cease seeing their students as 'the other.'
- Students are provided with an academically challenging curriculum that includes attention to the development of higher level cognitive skills.
- Instruction focuses on the creation of meaning about content by students in an interactive and collaborative learning environment.
- Learning tasks are often seen as meaningful by students.
- Teachers explicitly teach students the culture of the school and seek to maintain students' sense of ethno-cultural pride and identity.
- Parents and community members are encouraged to become involved in students' education and are given a significant voice in making important school decisions in relation to program (i.e., sources and staffing).
- Teachers are involved in political struggles outside of the classroom aimed at achieving a more just and humane society.

By working in a school as a classroom teacher, instructional supervisor, and school leader populated by a large Hispanic population, I have tried (some successes and some failures) to adopt a multicultural curriculum that addresses the life experiences and cultural values of my students. I have come to realize that no one particular style of teaching is appropriate for all situations. I hope that my past, present and future endeavors inspire students and educators to identify any misconceptions that they may have about different groups of people and realize that in order to be successful in academia and in life, one must become a critical thinker and base judgments on sound evidence and facts, rather than generalizations. Overcoming these obstacles may be a difficult, but not impossible task.

With that said, culturally relevant pedagogy aims to ensure that educators

acknowledge and honor the diverse viewpoints of their student population and refrain from promoting homogeneous perspectives as universal beliefs.

It is critical that educators use their knowledge of students' background and incorporate what they know about these learners into quality learning experiences. Culturally responsive teaching involves incorporating into learning experiences components of what is known about students' knowledge of their cultures, their prior experiences both in their countries of origin and their current living situations, as well as the learning styles of diverse students, to make learning more appropriate and effective for them (Gay, 2000).

“Culture is central to learning. It plays a role not only in communicating and receiving information, but also in shaping the thinking process of groups and individuals. A pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures offers full, equitable access to education for students from all cultures” (Culturally Responsive Teaching, 1994).

Key Research Findings-Content Teaching and Reading Instructions

Are You Smarter Than a Western 5th Grader?

Adequately addressing ELL's needs in content reading requires teachers to recognize the degree and scope of struggle that ELLs encounter. It is imperative for educators to comprehend that the students' background knowledge must be considered when building a culturally-sensitive curriculum in order to find connections to their personal histories and backgrounds.

I discovered a true example of the complexities and difficulties of content reading excerpt taken from a fifth-grade social studies textbook. This demonstrated that countless

barriers exist when ELLs read a text, such as presented below, related to Western Expansion in fifth-grade social studies because of their cultural disconnection. This excerpt is used as an example.

Runaway horses, stampeded cattle, prairie fire, blizzards, heat, sunstroke, Indians, lice, snakes and the pure loneliness of the open plains -all of these and more faced the western pioneers of the 1800s. Certainly there were those who gave up, moving back to the security of the East, but many more stayed and helped build and shape the West one sod shack at a time, one small farm at a time and eventually one town at a time. They traveled forth on horseback, in Conestoga wagons...some even walked. For them it wasn't a question of how long it would take; only that it had to be done. And they did it.

Many ELLs and mainstream learners might encounter difficulty connecting to this excerpt because of the vocabulary (open plains, sod shack, Conestoga wagons, etc.) and the time period attached. Countless studies have confirmed the fact that background knowledge facilitates reading comprehension (Dochy, Segers, & Buehl, 1999; Krashen, 2004; Peregoy & Boyle, 2004). In order to successfully read, comprehend, and analyze the excerpt from the textbook above, what information would the student have to know? What background knowledge would one must possess? Clearly, the textbook writer readily assumes that all readers of the example above share similar cultural experiences and possess the necessary background knowledge to comprehend the text.

For that reason, conducting teacher-led pre-reading activities, in-depth discussions, explicit instruction of academic vocabulary, and opportunities to examine visual aids would be necessary to build on their prior knowledge and construct a new

awareness of facts and historical data. There should be a maintenance of drawing upon the students' background experiences and encourage connections between academic concepts and students' own lives.

While ELLs may benefit from teacher led pre-reading and specified vocabulary instruction, these types of activities should be used in addition to, not in place of, peer-focused activities. If the classroom is viewed as a social system, in an equitable classroom, the teacher delegates authority to groups of students and holds them accountable for their learning; the students then work together to acquire knowledge (Cohen and Lotan,2004).

In educational settings, there is a likely chance that the mainstream students have prior knowledge about cowboys and Indians by way of oral or written traditions; however the same expectation or assumption of knowledge cannot be necessarily applied to all ELLs. Therefore, ELLs who have no familiarity or awareness of the Western Expansion, prior to reading the excerpt presented above, will suffer an extreme challenge finding any logic in the reading. Consequently, those students must decipher the text based on their limited knowledge of the language and the conventions of writing alone. Unfortunately, when the ELLs lack the ability to comprehend and analyze various and unfamiliar texts, they are inclined to not master the subject matter or the academic language at hand.

English language learners must pay attention to these cognitive tasks while also acquiring the vocabulary, sentence structure, and academic discourse patterns that correspond to each cognitive task in all academic areas. Keeping this thought in mind, what are the best methods to implement in the classroom to assist the English language

learners? How can instruction be improved so that all students have equal access to learning? Understanding language acquisition is a start. ELLs' prior educational experiences may have been substandard or interrupted, so reading texts that assume certain prior knowledge becomes difficult. Even for students with solid educational backgrounds, cultural differences and culturally based assumptions can result in a lack of background knowledge and thus loss of comprehension.

Regardless of the reasons for a lack of necessary background knowledge, before asking ELLs to read a particular text, teachers must identify information that is prerequisite for understanding the text, evaluate students' prior knowledge of these prerequisites, and fill any gaps that are found.

Lev Vygotsky, a past researcher of psychiatry and psychology, reminds us that learning is a social process. Language learning, similarly, develops through highly contextualized social interaction. Through negotiating meaning with others we learn to use language appropriately and successfully. Vygotsky's work, as interpreted by educators, fosters students' construction of knowledge, rather than simple acceptance or reception of transferred information. Accordingly, the teacher serves as a mediator, using language to support and scaffold student learning within a social relationship. An essential tenet of Vygotsky's theory is that who we are and how we think are functions of the social interactions in which we participate (Diaz & Flores, 2001). When students work in their zone of proximal development, they are challenged to make connections just beyond their comfort level. These connections extend knowledge and create new learning. As students interact to solve problems or learn by discovery in highly contextualized and collaborative settings, they develop language, academic skills, and

cognition together (Thomas and Collier). Language learners can also increase their proficiency as they understand material at a level slightly beyond their current competence (Krashen). The material must, however, be presented as meaningful, comprehensible input with visual and multiple linguistic clues to provide the connections and scaffolding between daily language and more rigorous academic language.

As García (2001) put it, "teaching, in this theoretical view, is perceived as assisted performance. Learning is performance achieved through assistance" (p. 232). If learning is assisted or well scaffolded (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), students can accomplish tasks and achieve learning that they would not be able to do on their own. Thus, according to this theory, the role of the teacher is integral to student learning. It is the teacher who facilitates the active transformation of knowledge — or what Cazden (2001) referred to as appropriation — and who supports the students' construction of new skills and competencies.

An important distinction made by Cazden (2001) is that teachers are responsible for both the affective and academic aspects of effective classrooms and classroom talk. Teachers can direct classroom discourse so that both these goals are targeted and supported. For example, teachers can accept, deny, recast, expand, or encourage elaboration of students' responses. "Success for students in culturally diverse classrooms depends on the degree to which there are strategies that encourage all students to talk and work together" (DeVillar & Faltis, 1991). One strategy (among many) promoted by Echevarria and Graves (2003) is the use of direct, rather than indirect, questions to promote clarity. So while instructional talk should be engaging, there is a place to use direct questions of students and then facilitate the elaboration of their responses as a

means to develop academic language use and motivate them as learners.

Students succeed when academic tasks include themes representative of their own culture (Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005). Ironically, practices that give students choices about what they learn and how they learn are misaligned with standards-based curriculum and accountability through testing.



Figure 1 The Negative Impact of Teaching

Standardized tests can be seen as one way in which a meritocratic society reorders a widely disparate populace into hierarchies of abilities, achievement, and opportunity. In fact, the power of tests to translate difference into disadvantage is felt at many points in the world of education, most notably in the decision to place low-income and language-minority students into compensatory or bilingual education classes, where a watered-down, fragmented, and rote curriculum reinforces the disadvantages presumably diagnosed by the tests.

More than ever before, it would seem, multiple-choice tests are being used inappropriately as the ultimate measure of students' learning and capabilities—despite a wealth of evidence that undermines the wisdom of using them in this manner. Decisions that significantly affect students' academic destinies are often made on the basis of a single test score. Moreover, norm-referenced tests reinforce the attitude that some students should be expected to do poorly. To be fair to all students, assessments should

be primarily criterion-referenced and, as far as possible, based on actual performances. Perhaps most important, a variety of measures should be used to assess student learning.

S.T.A.A.R.s Don't Always Shine

Education has experienced huge shifts in last 10 years. The ever increasing number of diverse students in U.S. schools, along with the demand for end of year high-stakes testing, standardized learning and on-going assessments, has created a range of challenges for educators.

Teachers have been enveloped in school environments of diversity and despite inequality, and they are expected to provide instruction that meets the needs of second language learners so they have the ability to successfully move on to postsecondary education and secure gainful employment opportunities. With so many changes in the student population in the United States, one will never find a “one-size fits all” student where following a single standard and unilateral methodology is feasible.

Education, in its deepest philosophical sense is, John Dewey (1938) remarked on “the other side of the coin to life” (p. 25). He firmly believed that education and learning and should be active and reflect genuinely how people live. Furthermore, as a past philosopher of education, Dewey felt educational experiences should fostered students’ capacity to contribute to society. Because he helped forward the “progressive education” movement, he contended that life is education; education is life. In practice, of course, education and life may seem far apart. In fact, when school accountability and achievement testing have a dominating power, life and education seem to be further separated. When life and education stray apart, or collide, Dewey wrote that the effect

would be “miseducative” (Dewey, 1938, p. 25). In considering how to connect life and education, one must ask:

Do teachers ever consider the milieu of their English language learner students?
Can a standardized test score determine a student’s intellectual value? When teacher performance is based on standardized testing, why do most consider ELLs to be intellectually inferior, especially on formative assessments?

Considering these questions in enhancing an ELL’s learning experience, the use of differentiated instruction should come into play because it can enable teachers to bring more creativity to the learning processes. With so much attention placed on standardized testing in the educational arena, many educators are finding the quality of education is declining. Consequently, the loss of social intellect reduces higher-order and creative abilities. It’s important for educators to understand that social education implemented in a systematic process potentially will lead to an increased level of critical thinking skills and the awareness that teaching is a performative act that supports ELL’s active participation in their learning.

Education Is a Humanistic Enterprise

ELLs endure academic hardships in school for a mixture of reasons. Primarily, ELLs may be academically unsuccessful because they do not have access to the language and content instruction that would better suit their intellectual and emotional needs. For ELLs from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, instruction that takes for granted middleclass values becomes insurmountable and meaningless. Still, some other ELLs may find themselves in a quagmire learning English and content due to native linguistic or cultural divergence. Furthermore, a number of ELLs may have difficulties learning

English and content due to prior schooling incompatible with the basics necessary for success within the mainstream curriculum or ELLs simply may have had limited prior schooling (Ariza, 2006).

Currently, there is strong support for socially constructed learning, which is based on Vygotsky's theory of sociocultural learning (1978). Vygotsky's work, as interpreted by educators, fosters students' construction of knowledge, rather than simple acceptance or reception of transferred information. It's important to note that when frustration sets in for students, teachers need to identify what the students *are* getting and help them to experience some form of success, while determining the next best step. Planning instruction at students' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) is crucial in student performance. It will supplement what they are expected to do is just beyond what they can do independently; this helps to reduce the chance of frustration. Accordingly, the teacher serves as a mediator, using language to support and scaffold student learning within a social relationship. An essential tenet of Vygotsky's theory is that who we are and how we think are functions of the social interactions in which we participate (Diaz & Flores, 2001).

For this social construction of knowledge to take place, it is important for a systematic change to occur in classrooms that implements passion in the classroom that further establishes emotional and humanistic connections for all students regardless of their ethnic background. There is a need for ELLs to become problems solvers and innovators and not just regurgitators of information. It is crucial that their learning experiences are linked to real-life tasks, challenges, and situations.

Dewey (1916) argued that no real thinking occurs when topics and ideas are isolated from experience. Although teachers may attribute an ELL student's struggles with schoolwork to cognitive ability, the problem may actually be related to background knowledge rather than intellectual ability or curiosity (Short and Echevarria, 2005). Philosophically, acknowledging the role of thinking requires a full understanding of what is teaching; it's important for educators to know what is learning and what is knowledge. In the 1930's, Dewey stated that learning must occur as a result of teaching when some believed that "teaching does not imply learning" (Noddings, 1995, p.46). According to Noddings, *teaching implies learning*, and compares the teaching process to selling. "No one can sell unless someone is buying" (Noddings, 1995, p.49). In this sense, teaching would consist of guiding students through inquiries of their own choosing, to awareness of possibilities in relation to their prior knowledge. Despite having the best intentions in some cases, it would be evident that the teacher would have *tried* to teach at the conclusion of the inquiry.

Questions about the teaching act and concerns about the connections between teaching and learning are at the roots of philosophical considerations that try to respond to the question: "If your students do not learn when you are teaching, are you really teaching?" (Noddings, 1998, p. 45)

For me, this study and the stories documented in this research study indicate that teaching *only* occurs when students learn. This learning may be defined as becoming skilled at the curriculum, or learning something worthwhile that allows students access to their humanity more fully. This learning must be evidenced through their academic

achievement in a variety of assessment measures or through other deeds in the search for social justice.

In recent years, many research reviews used to improve the reading achievement of English language learners (for example, August & Hakuta, 1997; Christian & Genessee, 2001) have concluded that *methods* of instruction may be more important than *language* of instruction for English language learners. The methods must incorporate the component of socially and culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (Summer, 1995) commented about this concept: “But that's just good teaching! Instead of some ‘magic bullet’ or intricate formula and steps for instruction, some members of my audience are shocked to hear what seems to them like some routine teaching strategies that are a part of good teaching” (p. 159).

These “routine strategies for good teaching” are the criteria for effective teaching and learning. It is with this repertoire of theories, skills, and practices that effective teachers are able to create environments conducive to achieving the goal of education. That goal is to facilitate the development of intelligent, life-long learners who possess the strategies and metacognitive processes to make meaningful connections with their knowledge basis and transfer their skills to (and beyond) the challenges they encounter in their daily life. Teachers are obligated to “prepare students to become effective and critical participants in the world” (Nieto, 1999, p. 143).

Passionate educators are aware of the components necessary for meaningful and relevant learning to occur and are able to refer into their educational “toolbox” of theories and practices, strategies and perceptions, to ensure that all of their students will succeed. Provided below are five “tools” that assist students in developing their reading skills,

while promoting culturally relevant pedagogy, strengthening humanistic enterprises, and infusing the power of narratives.

A) Promoting Cultural Awareness

It's important to be aware of the cultural differences across classrooms worldwide. A large number of classrooms in the United States incorporate informal settings (e.g., teachers sitting on the floor, students working in groups) compared to the formal educational environments where many immigrant students learn. Many immigrant students identified as ELLs may come from cultures that do not expect students to ask or answer questions during classroom discussions. These students often perceive the teacher to have elevated status and have theorized, as students, they should respectfully listen — as opposed to talking or engaging active dialogue — in the presence of teachers. With this in mind, immigrant students sometimes take time to adapt to the typical question-answer sequence that is common in the United States.

Furthermore, language acquisition theory hypothesizes that language learners experience an initial silent period, which is time spent receiving the language as input, prior to developing language-production skills (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Saville-Troike, 1988). Some teachers are cognizant of these stages and respect the language-acquisition process by not calling on their ELLs in order to not embarrass or intimidate them; however, teachers need to consider the length of these exemptions when it comes to responding in class and construct a variety of method for the reluctant students to do so. I have observed and discovered that many students new to U.S. culture and its educational system, and students who are timid or reluctant for any reason, often do not participate

readily in class discussions and thereby assume a more passive role in classroom interactions.

Honoring silence has limited value in such a context and unfortunately can perpetuate teachers' and students' notions that ELLs should not be fully integrated into classroom activities. When ELLs say, "I don't know," in reality they may have the ability or "don't know how" to express their knowledge in English. Teachers can facilitate these students' need for communicative competence by asking students to demonstrate or draw their responses, as well as giving them options for participating in the discussion.

Students may not elect to participate in classroom discussions or activities if the teacher expects them simply to recite low-level knowledge or if the teacher sets low expectations for the students. Clarity, wait time, higher order thinking, and higher expectations are factors that influence the quality of teacher interactions with all students, but some factors pertain more specifically to the participation of ELLs.

It is ELLs who are more likely to become passive learners because language and cultural differences can disconnect them from mainstream schooling. Cultural knowledge of the students is vital to effective teaching. Because teachers relate to students both as learners and as children or adolescents, teachers must establish how they will address these two types of relationships, what they need to know about their students, and how they will acquire this knowledge. The teacher-learner relationship implies involvement between teachers and students around subject matter and language and literacy proficiency in both languages. Furthermore, teacher-learner relationships are more personal and should include the family. Focusing on both types of relationships bridges the gap between school and the world outside it, a gap that is especially important

for many bilingual students whose world differs greatly from school.

It is always important for teachers to teach to their students' learning styles but this becomes crucial when teaching English language learners. ELLs may be highly literate in their own language but experience difficulties when acquiring English because they are accustomed to learning through a different style.

Cultural differences can be a source of misunderstanding for teachers and their ELL students. Each culture expresses itself in both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. Cultural cues in one culture may represent something entirely different in another. Consequently, educators must invest time in learning the cultural background of their students and communicate the value their heritage. Promoting this cultural awareness will connect academic content to a student's set of experiences and knowledge about the world. Ultimately, students whose native culture is valued have a greater sense of self-worth and higher academic achievement.

B) Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction refers to task-specific, teacher-led instruction that demonstrates how to complete a task. Elements of explicit teaching include setting and articulating goals, illustrating or modeling how to complete a task, and assessing student understanding and ability to complete the task independently (Tikunoff, 1983). The consistent language used in explicit teaching provides English language learners clear, specific, and easy-to-follow procedures as they learn not only a new skill or strategy but also the language associated with it (Calderon, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Slavin, 1996; Edelsky et al., 1993; Saunders et al., 1996).

Topics and contents are broken down into small parts and taught individually. It involves explanation, demonstrations and practice. Children are provided with guidance and structured frameworks. Topics are taught in a logical order and directed by the teacher. ELLs lack many of the basic words that native speakers know, so just teaching the vocabulary words that are suggested in the reading materials you are using will not be sufficient. Here are some of the many types of words that need to be explicitly taught:

- words that are crucial for understanding a text;
- words that are encountered in a wide variety of contexts;
- frequently used words that contain word parts (roots, prefixes, suffixes) that can help students analyze other unknown words;
- words with multiple meanings, whether spelled differently (homophones such as *to*, *two*, and *too*) or spelled the same (such as a dining room *table* and a multiplication *table*);
- figurative language and idiomatic expressions; and
- academic words that indicate relationships among other words (such as *because*, *therefore*, and *since* to indicate cause and effect).

At times, it may be appropriate to implement differentiated instruction for ELLs to teach vocabulary as opposed to their native-speaking peers. Therefore, simply using traditional measures such as handing out a list of definitions or asking students to put the words into sentences won't benefit ELLs in learning the meanings of the words. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- ELLs who are literate in a language that has many words that are similar in meaning and form to English words should be taught to recognize these cognates and use them to create meaning.
- The meanings of words are acquired through multiple opportunities to hear, say, read, and write the words in slightly different meaningful contexts. Teachers will have to create these contexts in the classroom, since incidental learning of vocabulary cannot be relied on for ELLs.
- Explicit explanations of unknown words and figurative language should include contextual support through real objects, pictures or drawings, gestures, examples, demonstrations, or experiments that accompany the verbal explanations.
- The use of context clues to infer meaning is not always successful with ELLs because they may not understand the context well enough to infer an accurate meaning.
- Having to explain what a word means to other students helps develop comprehension of the full meaning of the word.

Another important characteristic of explicit teaching involves modeling skills and behaviors and modeling thinking. The teaching practice of explicit instruction has been available to classroom teachers since the late 1960s. Substantial research has been conducted on components and the complete instructional "package." As with many teaching practices, there are varying degrees of adaptation and acceptance. The effective teaching practices research identified most—if not all—of the components of explicit instruction as essential for positive student outcomes (e.g., Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986; Ellis & Worthington, 1995).

Explicit instruction is a sequence of supports that:

1. set a purpose for learning;
2. tells students what to do;
3. shows them how to do it; and
4. guides their hands-on application of the new learning.

C) Building Background Knowledge and Making Personal Connections

Giving students the opportunity to interact with a reading, in a variety of forms, enables them to develop a greater understanding of the text and content (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Building background knowledge incorporates work from strengths of the students and their previous knowledge. Drawing insightful discussions and activities on their background experiences promotes connections between academic concepts and students' own lives. Engaging students by bringing them into initial dialogues in lessons when they are asked about their personal knowledge of a topic and what they want to know validates their insight and increases self-esteem. Writing down their personal questions and using them as a guide for a topic will heighten their investment in conducting research and further inquiries.

ELLs' prior educational experiences may have been substandard or interrupted, so reading texts that assume certain prior knowledge becomes difficult. Even for students with solid educational backgrounds, cultural differences and culturally based assumptions can result in a lack of background knowledge and thus loss of comprehension.

As a former classroom teacher, I gave my students opportunities to talk about their background knowledge and shared learning experiences as well as engage in hands-on, experiential learning experiences that developed their understanding. I can recall a

time I was preparing for a unit on reading and writing expository texts with (at the time) my 7th grade students. In doing so, I shared a brief story a personal experience I encountered with written instructions. I lamented a time I purchased (it was actually grandma's idea) a small life-size BatMan Mobile that came with terrible assembly and operating instructions. Through my narrative, they sensed the anguish and emotional trauma I experienced trying to desperately read directions in order to assemble this monster (at 11:42 p.m. on Christmas Eve) that seemed to be written in a foreign language that I couldn't comprehend. My students were so tickled, one of them asked if the directions had any pictures! (Yeah, right.) In fact, I allowed them to share and discuss similar experiences and used their contributions a gateway into a class "lecture" about some of the core elements of reading and writing different forms of expository texts. Many of my students acknowledged that the connections afforded them the value of being able to communicate in multiple languages. They connected words with meaning by using nonverbal clues and nonlinguistic representation of ideas, including multimedia, manipulatives, simulations, and modeling.

D) Modeling

Modeling offers children the opportunity to watch the process unfold before their eyes. Modeling means that the teacher takes on a performing role, and engaging students in the learning task *exactly* as students will be expected to execute the task. Modeling enables teachers to furnish appropriate cues and reminders that help students apply particular problem-solving processes or complete specific tasks—in storytelling, for instance, or inquiry, or evaluation. It is so important that the model adheres to the steps delineated in the explanation and maps directly onto the learning task.

One example of modeling that should frequently be incorporated in learning a task, in particular for students who acquiring a second language, is the “read-aloud” method.

Reading aloud frequently to allow students to become familiar with and appreciate the sounds and structures of written language; as a classroom instructor, I would read out loud to my middle school students so they could grasp, hear, and understand the dialect of characters (especially who they weren’t familiar with), the tone of the reading selection, and the written language. As I read aloud, I would turn into a character or image always providing students the ability to “play a movie” with their imagination and have access to the text to facilitate connecting oral and written modalities.

It’s so essential to model in the classroom because once the students exit the classroom, they should feel confident in completing any given assignment or task. Modeling is also known as the "Show Me" strategy. When explaining classroom or homework activities, show the students a finished product or physically demonstrate, step by step, what is expected. Students should hear the teacher “think aloud” and give insight to inner thoughts. Teachers who share thoughts on how they have completed a certain task or arrived at a particular conclusion help students become aware of and sharpen their own thinking strategies. When students use small phrases and partial answers to respond to questions and dialogues, the teacher should find comforting opportunities to model responding in complete sentences. Helping students elaborate their ideas into full sentences with academic structures and terms will help them to write their ideas down in standard English.

With that in mind, modeling standard pronunciation and grammar of the English language is imperative, however slowing down, oversimplifying, or speaking more loudly are not necessary. When modeling spoken language, refrain from embarrassing ELL students with verbal correction in front of others. Rephrasing and gesturing to help convey meaning are more helpful. Remember to amplify, not simplify (Gibbons, 2002).

Furthermore, the teacher can model academic language functions, such as seeking information, comparing, problem solving, and evaluating, and then use classroom interactions to guide students' use of academic talk. The opportunity to speak academic language before using it in written work is important for English language learners. It should not be assumed that being able to understand academic language as input is equal to being able to produce it. Teachers can provide the support that students need to acquire this more formal register via their own modeling or think-alouds (Gibbons, 2002; Weber & Longhi-Chirlin, 2001) and then foster the use of similar structures via interactive discussions, allowing students to use academic language in context.

If teachers model the use of feedback that extends student responses, students may likely follow the teacher's example in their small-group discussion with peers as has happened among students trained in reciprocal teaching. Thus, the patterns that are established during teacher-directed interaction may be used in conversations between students. It is important that supportive protocols become naturalized ways of talking about learning (Johnston, 2004) and pivotal platforms for critical thinking.

E) Building and Increasing Student Social Capital, Self Esteem, and Empowerment

Students must believe that they can achieve before they will risk trying, and young people are astute at sensing whether their teachers believe they can succeed.

Gibson and Bejinez examined how one school staff "facilitated student engagement by creating caring relationships with students, providing them with access to institutional support, and implementing activities that build from and serve to validate students' home cultures" (Gibson & Bejinez, 2002, p. 155). At this particular school, the teachers who came from migrant backgrounds and were college educated served as role models for the migrant students and explicitly assisted them with tutoring and the college application process. They established an office where students could socialize as well as find information and support. They were given opportunities to discuss home-life situations that impacted their current and potential academic and educational opportunities.

Just as the teachers were playing a role in building the self-esteem and social capital in their respective students, effective educators incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy to ensure that all students succeed. Sroka (2006) summarized the essential qualities of effective teachers in the criteria that teachers be nonjudgmental—that students' opinions are welcomed and respected and that teachers have a passion for the content they teach.

I certainly believe I imposed my passion on my students, not only for reading and storying, but the power of the humanistic enterprise. The students in my classroom were made aware that I truly cared about them! I am a firm believer in capturing their heart and moving forward. Just as Noddings stated, "The ultimate goal of an effective teacher preparation program is to develop and hone the skills educators require to create learning environments that acknowledge, respect and are representative of the social world of all students" (Noddings, 1992). I wanted to serve as a role model to all of my students, regardless of their cultural background, encouraging them to become risk-takers in their

pursuit of academic excellence. It is imperative that teachers demonstrate ambitious and appropriate expectations and exhibit support for students in their efforts toward academic achievement. This can be done through attribution retraining, providing resources and personal assistance, modeling positive self-efficacy beliefs, and celebrating individual and collective accomplishments (Gay, 2000).

When teachers create an environment which is based on caring and concern, and in which each student is valued, the result is that students become more motivated and learn more (Stipek, 2002). Shor (1992) characterizes empowering education as:

A critical-democratic pedagogy for self and social change. It is a student-centered program for multicultural democracy in school and society. It approaches individual growth as an active, cooperative, and social process, because the self and society create each other. The goals of this pedagogy are to relate personal growth to public life, to develop strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry, and critical curiosity about society, power, inequality, and change. . .

The learning process is negotiated, requiring leadership by the teacher, and mutual teacher-student authority. In addition, the empowering class does not teach students to seek self-centered gain while ignoring public welfare. (pp. 15-16)

When students become play a role in a collective effort designed to encourage academic and cultural excellence, maintain high expectations, build upon skills taught, and exhibit interpersonal relations, they behave as members of an extended family-assisting, supporting, and inspiring each other.

Implications

Diversity in the classroom encompasses many categories, among them ethnicity, culture, learning needs, and other issues. For all of these, educators have to hone their pedagogical skills to differentiate instructional practices to meet the varying needs of the population in the general classroom. The significant shift in the balance of diverse students—the multicultural panorama of 21st-century school environment—is no longer an exception to the world outside of the classroom, but a direct reflection of it.

Ginott (1995) made a powerful statement when he described the overpowering influence the teacher has in the classroom:

I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized. (p.302)

Part II-The Story of a Teacher's Passion

As stated in Chapter I, my passion for teaching began its evolution in September of 2004 when Ms. Jones emphatically denied and degraded the opportunity to teach the 6E students based on her mythical knowledge and personal predispositions. I knew that imposing my passion for English on my ELL students and teachers was a task that required thoughtful planning through a personal approach that would create an environment of humanity, joy, and inspiration; I knew I'd have to employ special strategies to help my wondrous students in 6E, many of whom were English language

learners. They needed lively teaching to become actively involved in schoolwork. I had to increase their level of critical thinking skills. After careful deliberation, I chose to focus on five engaging methods strategies that worked collectively at time. I had to enhance 6E's learning environment by promoting cultural awareness, knowing students individually, incorporating explicit instruction, modeling, activating background knowledge, and building social capital/self-esteem. I chose to read *Giraffes Can't Dance* as a starting point to address and implement the reading strategies. From my experience, I have discovered that reading aloud and thinking aloud to students and sharing various points of view is beneficial to their learning environment. This story became a source for all to gain worldly perspectives and served as a segway into higher-level novels. I illustrate the connection of these methods with the continuation of my research story.

Cultural Awareness

“Buenos Dias, Mucho inteligente y guapo -- I am so ELATED you are here. Please give me the opportunity to **walk in your shoes!**” I repeated my greeting as each student paraded into the classroom. I extended my hand to all for a firm shake and some accepted and some rejected, accompanied with no eye contact. The silent language of my students was so profound that I told myself to not take it personally.

There was an exception -- Carlos Rodriguez! (pseudonym) Not only did Carlos shake my hand but he also gave me a high-five. “What’s up, Miss? What’s that about walking in my shoes?”

I detected confusion from the group. Shortly thereafter, I heard the murmuring and some giggling: “Did she say she wants to walk in our shoes? Is she coo-coo? How can she walk in my shoes?”

I responded, “My young scholars, please lend me your ears. I do not want to *literally* walk in your shoes, but I do want to get to know each one of you personally, so lend me your ears.” The dubious looks confirmed that Ms. Cooper was coo-coo! “Now she wants our ears . ”

“Are you serious?” Carlos bravely asked.

I smiled. “Some of you look as if I were speaking Japanese, but I can assure you will catch on very quickly! With that said, I want to give you the directions for our first activity. You are going to listen to me read aloud one of my favorite stories, *Giraffes Can’t Dance*.

“I want you to pay close attention to the different actions and emotions of the characters. On your desk, I have provided you some discussion questions that we will share later. Does anyone have any questions before we get started?” 6E took on a very silent and reserved response; nobody raised a hand and a few students intentionally avoided eye contact with me. No worries, Jackie! I told myself as opened the cover of the book.

I chose this book for various reasons -- the colorful illustrations, the universal themes imbedded in the story, and the rich language. My goal was for my students to identify the animal characters in the story as having diverse backgrounds. Moreover, I wanted to hear their opinions on values and beliefs that can be interpreted from the experience of Gerald, and his ability to embrace his differences from the other jungle animals.

Giraffes Can’t Dance is about a giraffe in Africa named Gerald. He attends the annual Jungle Dance and is teased by all the other animals because of his awkward dance

moves. Gerald feels alienated and alone because he cannot dance as well as the other animals. Consequently, he leaves the dance and comes across a wise cricket who offers him some advice: “Sometimes when you’re different, you just need a different song” (15). Gerald listened to the swaying grass and the trees. When the cricket played his violin, Gerald felt inspiration in the music and suddenly began to dance so gracefully that the other animals became silent in complete amazement. In the end, the jungle citizens cheered loudly and wanted to know Gerald's dancing secrets!

Capturing their attention of my 6E scholars was vital, and I felt I reached that point because they looked so engaged in the story. I heard an array of laughter, “Awww,” and I even had request for an encore!

This was the perfect bridge into our discussion questions: Have you ever felt isolated, ostracized, or simply bullied because you were different? Have you ever felt that you wanted someone to simply “walk in your shoes” and realize what’s it like to be you? Have you ever felt like Gerald? Have you ever teased a classmate or friend because of his/her difference-similar to one of the character in the story?

After a meaningful class discussion, I began to recognize how the home backgrounds of my 6E students affected their personal values. They started sharing personal anecdotes about being immigrant children, their feelings of not fitting in with peers, and consequently experiencing low self-esteem. They truly were able to connect with the fictional story and share some of Gerald’s feelings.

Explicit Instruction

Let me back up for a moment since I started my explicit instruction *before* I started reading aloud. Prior to opening the book, I said, “Okay, 6E scholars, I want to

you to make a prediction of what this story will be about by simply looking at the cover of the book and its title. But first, I want to show you a strategy I use called the “think-aloud” to help make the best prediction ever.”

As I hold the book high for all to see, I start, “Hmmm...On the cover there’s a giraffe flipping in the air...he looks as if he could touch the moon and stars. I also see a monkey looking up at the giraffe. The giraffe looks happy and at peace. The title of the book is *Giraffes Can’t Dance*...what is that all about?” Some of the students smiled and started jotting down notes.

“Maybe this book is about the giraffe learning how to dance or somehow not dancing like anyone in the world. What do I know about giraffes? They are exceptionally beautiful and unique creatures because of their physical attributes...remarkably long neck and legs, the color of the coat, distinct splendor ...”

Explicit instruction refers to task-specific, teacher-led instruction that demonstrates how to complete a task. Elements of explicit teaching include setting and articulating goals, illustrating or modeling how to complete a task, and assessing student understanding and ability to complete the task independently (Tikunoff, 1983). The consistent language used in explicit teaching provides English language learners clear, specific, and easy-to-follow procedures as they learn not only a new skill or strategy but also the language associated with it (Calderon, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Slavin, 1996; Edelsky et al., 1993; Saunders et al., 1996).

As a part of my explicit teaching during reading instruction, I wanted to focus on the meaning of particular vocabulary words in a different context and provide additional meanings of multiple-meaning words such as “froze.” So I asked everyone to revisit a

quote from the storybook (this was written on the board as well):

“Hey, look at clumsy Gerald,” the animals all sneered. “Giraffes can’t dance, you silly fool! Oh, Gerald, you’re so weird.” Gerald simply froze up. He was rooted to the spot. *They’re right*, he thought. *I’m useless. Oh, I feel like such a clod.*

Teachers who teach explicitly also make relationships obvious among concepts, words, or ideas to help students see the link between prior learning and new learning. What is the meaning of “froze” in the passage about Gerald’s feelings? By looking at the picture and the surrounding words, how can you determine the meaning of “sneer”?

I decided to extend the activity by addressing the use of idioms, so I posed the question, “How do you think it feels to *walk in the shoes* of Gerald?” You could see the light bulbs click on in their minds as they pondered the question.

Of course, Carlos was the first to raise his hand. “I get it! So, Miss, you didn’t really mean walk in our real shoes (as he gestured the Nikes on his feet). It’s like, um...you wanted us to understand the way Gerald felt.” I observed other students nodding their heads in agreement, and some even began to share their ideas in small groups.

Background Knowledge

In order to successfully read, understand, and analyze the story of Gerald, what information would the students have to know? What background knowledge must they possess? Writers assume that all their readers share similar cultural experiences and possess the necessary background knowledge to comprehend their text.

As I tapped into my students' prior knowledge, I recognized that the most

effective means of learning is discovery. Reading the expressions on the faces of 6E students was such a pleasure because their initial silence and reluctance to participate evolved into in lively, in-depth discussions with more and more hands being raised. Carlos added some intriguing thoughts to our classroom chat. “Hey Miss, where I’m from, my abuelo (grandfather) has a huge farm, and when I go to see him, he lets me feed the chickens, the cows, and sheep. He used to have a llama! They’re kind of weird looking too...You can see all kinds of animals and it’s illegal to do bad things to them. I wonder if you can like...get in trouble if you tease them. Kind of like Gerald, I mean I know he is in the book. He is different but he is still the same as the others at the Jungle Dance.”

One of his peers questioned why the cricket, and not any of the other jungle animals, came to Gerald’s defense. “He was probably one of the tiniest things in the story, but he did such a big thing for Gerald.” I was absolutely amazed at their comments. I knew they were on the right track.

The remarks that were shared encouraged the class to conduct further investigation in the behavior of these animals and insects. Even those students who did not give me eye contact walking into the classroom offered further personal insights on the role of customs and cultural traditions in our society. Just as Gerald was not expected to dance with grace and endured taunting from his counterparts, 6E students found their ethnic backgrounds posed similar problems for them.

It became apparent that allowing the students’ voices to be heard, validating their personal experiences, and using their background knowledge ignited their ability to think critically and make connections outside the text -- something for which they would be

held accountable on their high-stakes tests.

There were breakthroughs about the culture of animals and their kingdoms, and how their societies are mirrored in human society. Gerald's awkwardness and clumsiness were part of his make-up and he initially saw these characteristics as flaws. But he later realized they simply made him unique, as each member of my 6E class was unique. Connecting new knowledge to previous learning builds a strong foundation for future learning.

Lasting Thoughts of Walking in My Shoes

My volunteering to teach 6E turned out to be one of the best moves of my teaching career. Those English language learners in 6E encouraged me to find ways to turn my reluctant sixth-graders into scholars. I did walk in their shoes. They did lend me their ears.

Conclusion

Providing quality literacy instruction for all students is a teacher's top priority; some students, ELLs included, may require specialized instruction from the teacher to ensure their academic success. For beginning teachers, this may be especially challenging, as they are just starting to use their skills in the classroom and may perceive inadequacies in teaching students whose needs may be different from their own experiences. By acknowledging the differences among students and their varying individual needs, beginning and veteran teachers can develop and adopt strong instructional skills that will enhance ELL students' understanding of necessary academic concepts and skills.

As the number of bilingual learners in mainstream classes increases, it becomes

even more important for mainstream teachers to use effective practices to engage these students so that they can acquire the academic English and the content-area they need for school success. The guidelines offered here are designed as initial suggestions for teachers to follow. However, we recognize that all teachers need much more. Teachers need continued support and professional development to enable all their students, including their bilingual students, to succeed.

By acknowledging the role of literacy in a student's culture, the teacher can begin to understand the student's perspectives and academic needs. Teachers can work to integrate different aspects of a student's culture into his or her daily instruction through discussion, reading, and the availability of curricular materials that focus on diversity.

Finally, teachers can build their own awareness that assessment of various literacy skills is necessary, but that there can be flexibility in the ways in which these skills are assessed. When individual student differences are identified and acknowledged and the barriers to delivering appropriate instruction identified and discussed, teachers and students benefit. Schulz (2009, 59) stated it best:

English Language Learners are not a homogenous group. Their academic abilities can range from emergent readers, writers, and speakers of English to proficient readers, writers, and speakers of English. The most effective teachers of [ELLs] understand the vast differences amongst individual students' academic performance and they focus on what each individual student is capable of achieving instead of what the student cannot do.

Chapter III-Review of Methodology

Narrative Inquiry

My encounter with Ms. Jones in September of 2004 fueled a silent outrage and continues to take center stage in my heart. I knew I had to empower those young scholars who shuffled into my classroom.

Reflective pedagogy helps teachers closely examine current practice and spearhead changes as teacher leaders (Reason & Reason, 2007). In other words, self-study means studying one's own practice in its simple term, but its definition varies according to role, practice, and purpose (Smaras & Freese, 2006)—a process that lends itself to qualitative inquiry which uses narrative, descriptive approaches to data collection and analysis.

Research has demonstrated that the narrative inquiry amidst the growth of qualitative inquiry has given rise to abstract boundaries (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and many educators can greatly benefit from the narrative inquiry as a powerful tool for understanding personal and collective educational experiences within school contexts. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) The narrative is a fundamental part of teaching; our human mind spills out connective and narrative acts-telling a story embedded in another story.

Critically linking the stories of my life that helped shape my education and that of my students within my educational philosophy provides a theoretical framework and methodology for my research. From my personal observations, in some cases it appears that many teachers are implementing the haphazard trial-and-error initiatives that have become prevalent in schools today opposed to teaching and learning for ELLs as informed decision makers.

Qualitative studies that address effective instruction for English Language Learners have steadily increased and have encouraged the growth of second language

acquisition in a variety of contexts. Researchers of the qualitative projects are inclined to focus on the experiences of the participants as they develop academically.

If educators sharpened the learning method of storytelling, many literacy deficiencies that lend itself to under-achievement and under-performance would be eliminated. Through classroom observations and interviews, I feel that educators, in particular those who teach English Language Learners, possess a strong ability to use this narrative approach with their students but incessantly battle with a sense of empowerment not just for students but for themselves as a result of being forced to deal with abbreviated texts and isolated curriculum unable to produce a unified whole. Many classroom instructors don't identify with narrative threads to pull together the past, present, and future of their respective students. The stories we tell about the past become the past, and through them, we claim identities and compose lives. (Reissman, 1994, p.68)

The power of the story has helped me evolve into a passionate educator of ELLs and a doctoral student at the University of Houston. My story has become an integral part of my research because I am not only the researcher, I am also a participant. I often reflect on my own reading experiences and how they have shaped my life.

The power of the “story” behind the quantitative data has helped in my professional and personal life. It has given me the ability to evolve into a more empathetic individual and understand the value of personal histories. Those reflections and collection of stories have become the basis for my study. As part of my educational philosophy, I firmly believe that all students bring unique cultural background knowledge to the learning environment that creates profound educational experiences.

The purpose of the present study was to obtain a deeper understanding of ELL reading skills at the middle school level. Through this qualitative method, I wanted to gain an understanding of how the identities of the participating young adults have been shaped by their second language and literacy learning experiences. As I conducted my research, I wanted to explore the connection of reading and the humanistic enterprise by interviewing five young adults who are my former students.

Narratives, as they have come to be called, are important to researchers because they allow for the construction and expression of meaning (Reissman, 1994, p.68) Olson writes, "Narrative knowledge is constructed from the contextual contingencies and complexities of our individual biographies in interaction with the socio-cultural and historical contexts in which we live," (2000, p. 109)

As a research methodology, narrative inquiry--grounded in the epistemological assumption that we as human beings make sense of random experience by the imposition of story structures and is a vehicle for interpretation and reinterpretation of experience (Bell, 2002; Craig, 2000) has been infused in many social science disciplines. Educational researchers began to use narrative inquiry as a medium of data representation and as a guide in the development of methodologies, if they did not want to lose the temporal quality and contextual detail of what they are studying (Conle, 2000, p. 50).

Participants

All participants attended Central Middle School, a charter middle school in Houston, Texas. At the time of their enrollment, Central Middle had a diverse population of approximately 200 students. The racial/ethnic distribution of Central's students was 87% Hispanic (majority of Mexican descent), and 12% African American, and 1%

White. It is clear from this distribution that the majority of ELL students at the school were from Hispanic backgrounds. Additionally, approximately 90% of Central's students received free or reduced price lunch.

To serve the needs of its second language learners, Central had one ESL class for the sixth grade ELL students and another class that combined the seventh and eighth grade ELL students. Each class met daily for two periods of 50 minutes each. Although, as noted, Spanish speakers comprised the majority of the ELL population at Central, the participants' ESL classmates included children from countries in Guatemala and the Honduras.

Narratives as Meaning-Making Structures

The participants were invited to a one hour interview so that I could identify personal yet foundational information about their literacy histories, reading traits and their individual theories in regards to reading instruction and strategies. The interview was developed to provide insight into the qualitative research questions that inquired about how previous and current language and literacy learning experiences and practices influenced the participants' identities as young adult readers and educators

A Reflection on the Observation of a Novice Teacher and the Experience of Teaching English Language Learners

I can recall a time in my professional career when I was given the opportunity to serve as an instructional specialist, not realizing initially that I would gain further insight beneficial to my research. When I accepted the position, my role in supporting ELA/Reading teachers on the campus extended itself to me become an observer, participant, and researcher. Traveling from classroom to classroom, meeting new teachers and greeting seasoned instructors, I purposely entered the room with no tablets,

folders or writing utensils. Starting before the first official day of school, I communicated to the teachers that I would be visiting their classrooms on a weekly basis as a supporter. My observations were to capture the essence of the learning environment and determine the connections, if any, were made between the teacher and his/her respective students.

I began reflection on my personal transition-progressing from an educational novice to an experienced expert. On the second day of school, there was one teacher in particular that I encountered and felt so drawn to her. The excitement of a new school-year was pervasive throughout the building, however her facial expressions and demeanor told a story that I began to notice so often in the classroom. Ms. Terry Lewis, a teacher new to the educational arena after functioning in corporate America for ten years. She stated she made the professional change because she wanted to make a difference in the lives of youth. Coming from a legacy of educators, Ms. Lewis wanted to pass her knowledge and become an inspiration for students. She was assigned as a sixth grade reading teacher and many of her students were identified as LEP/ELL and were grouped according to their previous standardized test scores. Most of her students were not successful in passing the Reading TAKS test the previous year, and she felt a great deal of pressure to ensure that they were able to pass their standardized test under her leadership.

I began to see a part of me in Ms. Lewis. She struggled with meeting the standardized testing demand. During my observations, she seemed overwhelmingly eager to focus on test preparation to determine how she would construct suitable lessons. She started and finished her classroom instruction with little dialogue or interactions with

her students and she supplied tons of worksheets and practice test that addressed the objective identified on the state of Texas high stakes exam STAAR. I don't own any psychic powers, but I detected that she wanted her classroom to have more meaning and purpose. Her students didn't voice any objections, but I could sense these young individuals knew something was missing.

More importantly, one of the struggles that I noticed that Ms. Lewis faced was experience and her disconnection with her students. Specifically, how well she knew and understood her professional world and the cross-cultural issues that plagued her students. In order to properly address the richness of meaning associated with the term experience and to discuss possibilities and consequences for qualitative and narrative inquiry, it's necessary to comprehend John Dewey's philosophy of experience. He noted that "the beginning of instruction shall be made with experiences learners already have." (1938:74) Unfortunately, Ms. Lewis was so overwhelmed with meeting the demands of her administrative team, her time seemed limited (or even non-existent) for making personal connections with her students and the ability to tell and share stories of experience.

One morning during the second week of school, I asked her if I could join her for lunch. She had a very perplexed look and responded, "Mrs. Edwards, I don't think you want to do that today. I have cafeteria duty and I was told that we will have to eat lunch with our kids....IN THE CAFETERIA!!." I told her I wouldn't have it any other way.

A few hours later, I walked into the crowded and thunderous cafeteria, smelled the questionable food that was being served, and spotted Ms. Lewis and her students. Strangely, the cafeteria imparted my heart with nostalgia because I recalled the same

setting where I made connections with my former students as a classroom teacher. I can remember my students and me discussing a wide variety of topics that ranged from favorite foods to our most embarrassing moments in life. Focusing on the task at hand, I sat between a group of giggling girls and a group of boys discussing soccer games, I passed a note to Ms. Lewis and the inside read,

“Ms. Lewis, thank you for allowing me to eat with your students and you. I find such pleasure in getting to know you and your scholars. Just curious, have you considered some of the questions as part of your instruction/interaction?

- What flavor ice-cream do your students enjoy best?
- Have any of your students been bullied?
- What do you know about their cultural heritage?
- What is their most treasured item in their locker, purse, or pocket?
- What social justice/injustices have they encountered in life and/or literature?
- Have they made real world connections between reading materials/sources and their lives/community/school contexts?

P.S. A little birdie once told me that you must capture their heart before their brain. ”

This was the beginning of showing Ms. Lewis that learning shouldn't be limited to her curriculum that sat on her desk. I believe my interaction in her classroom as researcher and participant and suggesting that she conduct the beginning of her class with a warm-up, game, assignment, or open-ended question that would promote cultural identity gave her the inspiration to appreciate her students. I proposed she conduct

activities such as students bringing a memory box and sharing the meaning of its content. I also recommended her students sharing dialogues about the cultural heritage and describing one or two traditions that their family celebrates every year and even conducting interview with classmates.

Ms. Lewis was excited about starting with a new outlook with her sixth graders. Still consumed with concerns about preparing her students with their high stakes exams, she soon realized that these activities stimulated an exploration of her students' preconceived notions about current and past events, and the type of activities that impel them to share in a safe classroom environment. Further, the activities enhanced her development of her personal practical knowledge and her experience with her English Language Learners. A teacher's practical knowledge is based on his/her general knowledge, belief system and cognition which can be traced in teachers' practices (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) and shaped by various background experiences. For Connelly & Clandinin (1988), "A teacher's personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher's practice. It is, for any teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation." (p.25)

I understand personal practical knowledge to be in a person's past experience, in the person's present mind and body and in the person's actions. It is knowledge that reflects the individual's prior knowledge and acknowledges the contextual nature of that teacher's knowledge. It is a kind of knowledge, carved out of, and shaped by, situations; knowledge that is constructed and reconstructed as we live out our stories and retell and relive them through processes of reflection.

(Clandinin 1992, p.125)

For Ms. Lewis, her personal practical knowledge took a turn for the better and she realized that the emotional connection that was beginning to blossom was simply priceless.

Through her now sharpened educational lens and practical knowledge, Ms. Lewis has become aware of Dewey's (1916) argument that no real thinking occurs when topics and ideas are isolated from experience. Regrettably, at one point in time, she attributed her ELL student's struggles with schoolwork to cognitive ability and her personal misconception that her ELL students were academically inferior because they were unsuccessful on their prior standardized examinations. As it turned out, her small-group and classroom discussions, tutoring sessions, and opening activities, gave her the awareness that their struggles may actually be linked to cultural and background knowledge rather than intellectual ability or curiosity.

Over time, Ms. Lewis began to feel that state-mandated assessments and prescribed models of reading and writing have dominated her classroom instruction, limited her ability to teach from a more holistic approach and use her personal and practical knowledge, and caused her to lose her identity as a productive classroom instructor.

She felt this on-going "need to appease the dragon or face the consequences when it rears its fire-breathing head" (Craig, 2004). I reflected on the first dragon described in the article "The Dragon in School Backyards" in Ms. Lewis' context. As explained in the article of the "daily drip", this measure does not lend itself to any storytelling or activation of prior knowledge for student or teacher. The first dragon is:

Daily drip, meaning it hangs like a prescribed intravenous bag attached to school programs, making testing/practice testing a central part of curriculum, consuming a minimum of 6 weeks of instruction. In this scenario, the curricular experiences to which youth legally are entitled may become crowded out as testing and 'what people do in service of testing practice testing overtakes learning as "the main thing." And when student learning becomes subservient to testing, curriculum becomes bounded by what is testable, instruction wrapped around bubble-in worksheets, and human worth (that of teachers, students, and institutions) determined by the rankings and ratings produced in the accountability marketplace. And some things fall in perilous danger of becoming lost altogether: the arts and other non-tested subject areas, dialogue about critical issues, and vital human interactions necessary for sustaining the life of the mind and human development in community. (Craig, 2004)

She didn't realize that many of her ELL students had not been afforded experiences to travel abroad, attend operas/ theater plays, or even play a game of chess yet they still had the capabilities to excel academically. She learned that these students did come with valuable experiences in their homeland. Research suggests that it is worthwhile to consider a close and deep investigation of children in the multiple contexts of classroom, school, and community which can provide teachers with a repertoire of knowledge to draw on to better support children's learning.

In regards to Ms. Lewis' approach to her methods of engaging instruction, it was crucial for her to understand the role of prior knowledge and the value of its activation. Many of her ELL students possessed limited background knowledge surrounded by

particular contexts which results in reduced performance on standardized test questions that require use of an activated background knowledge-heavily impacting their sense of vocabulary and literary interpretations.

As I progressed further into my inquiry of Ms. Lewis and her sixth grade ELL students, I realized that that research to be discovered couldn't be reduced to quantitative measures-pie charts, graphs, numerical figures, etc. because the subjects are human beings who come from diverse backgrounds with different background knowledge. There is a lot of gray area because external factors tend to rise and play a role in a child's level of success.

According to Xu and Connelly,(2010) "ongoing practical, school-based work, researchers more often rub up against 'reductionistic boundaries,' where research may be viewed in more traditional, numerical term. That reductionism creates boundary conditions for research at the school level is demonstrated in the academic, public and professional debate over evidence and accountability in school reform."

I believe it is important to know that "As we go about the process of school-based research the primary boundary and sources of tension are the conditions that prevail in practical settings. Formalistic matters are mostly in the background. In effect our research experience mostly occurs at this boundary and only occasionally, during publication or public presentations, at formalistic boundaries. This boundary, of course, applies to much practice oriented qualitative inquiry and is not peculiar to narrative inquiry for school-based research." (Xu and Connelly, 2010)

As the school year progressed, Ms. Lewis continued to improve the quality of her instruction and the academic achievements of her students without the presence of the “dragon.” As stated in the article, *The Dragon in the School Backyard*, Henry Richards's dragon metaphor sharply reminds us that accountability systems, like mythological dragons, are humanly constructed, but can become detached from humans and can, in the extreme case, affect people, especially those least powerful, in inhuman ways (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

Strategy of Inquiry: Passionate Pursuit of Reading Instruction

My methodology consisted of a scheduled one-hour group interview of five educators in which I make interpretations and draw parallels between theory and experience using a narrative approach. I collected data from the reflective essays that were written during a professional development workshop as part of their contractual agreement for employment. The essays were used as a guide for interview questions and identify common ideas and themes that were used to capture the experience of teaching and learning a second language.

I chose to use a culmination of reflective essays and narrative reflection because I wanted to tell the stories behind the quantitative data as my participants, and many educators alike, come across so often in their daily operations. Our collective stories motivated me to become a researcher and theorizer who is an “interested and subjective actor” (Lichtman, 2006, p.25). My interest was and still is in the synthesis of theory, experience and practice of the reading instructional process of English language learners to increase perceptual awareness of the process. I became a researcher and a learner of the ideas that evolve from my reading, thinking, investigation, interactions and synthesis.

Choosing to incorporate narrative reflection for my research gave me an opportunity to provide a more in-depth investigation and detailed account of a phenomenon. Maxwell et al (2006) stated there are reasons to choose case study over qualitative methods. Some of the reasons include enabling us to learn different points of view, helping us solve indistinct problems, and helping us identify our own assumptions on a topic and analyze them.

Admittedly, fulfilling the requirements of the dissertation, beginning with the proposal, produced some challenges because I struggled with the notion of incorporating quantitative methodology. Finding the most appropriate instrument to deliver quantitative data for my research was hard to capture because my research gives insight to deeper meanings of reading instruction and how it impacts the emotional and humanistic growth. Using the narrative approach gave my participants a voice, a real pedagogical identity.

Data Collection

The Interview

The primary data-gathering medium was the face-to-face interview using open-ended questions to stimulate initial dialogue and follow-up questions by the interviewer. I expressed to the students that I wanted candid answers and not replies that might satisfy a professional study. Utilizing open-ended interview questions such as:

1. Did your parents encourage you to read?
2. Do you remember being read to as a child (mom, dad, grandparent, sibling)? Describe the experience.
3. Do you remember being read to in school? Describe the experience.
4. Did/Has reading helped you resolve any personal problems/conflict you

experienced?

5. What additional thoughts do you have about your reading experience that can has shaped you into a young adult reader?
6. Do you consider yourself a problem-solver?
7. What reading strategies do you use?
8. Do you feel that teachers should be evaluated solely on the state-mandated test results? What were some of your best experiences/challenges in your reading classes?
9. How do you feel teachers and students should be assessed in order to determine that high levels of teaching and learning exist in their classrooms?
10. Can individuals who have been labeled ELL/at-risk be considered resilient based on their personal outlook?

Chapter IV

Results and Discussion

When I entered the educational arena as a classroom teacher, I had no earthly concept or interest in research. The term alone echoed an overload of fright and boredom. I believed that research only constituted the typical quantitative data such as pie charts, graphs, statistics, and robotic language. In fact, my lack of knowledge evolved into a suspicion of research. In my mind, individuals that identified themselves as researchers had the power to manipulate their studies and come out any way they wanted. However, as experience and knowledge set in, I realized that I conducted research on a daily basis because I reflected on my own teaching. I gained more profound knowledge on effective pedagogy with my students than any researcher did because I incorporated humanistic and reflective approaches. Later, as a doctoral student at the University of Houston, I learned the value of research, and the challenges that came with experimental research in a field such as education, where it is impossible to control all the variables.

My original intention of this study was to provide specific pedagogical reading strategies to meet the needs of English language learners. Because of the paucity of research studies, however, the discoveries were not extensive enough to help teachers build appropriate reading programs for ELLs. I therefore looked beyond the findings and included theory and experience as well as research.

I hope that readers will take this synthesis of research, theory, and experience and integrate it into their ongoing examination and learn what they do in their classrooms, what happens as a result of their leadership, and why it happens has a massive impact

their academic and socio-emotional growth. As noted in chapter II, research can identify effective and meaningful practices in general, but ultimately only individual teachers can determine what is most valuable and successful for them and their respective group of learners who shuffle in their classroom.

The participants I interviewed indicated they were learning English as a second language as when they entered public school arena, and school at times for them represented a formidable daily task, both socially and academically. In addition to the pressures that all adolescents experience, they also experienced a myriad of other strains:

- loss of identity, friends, and culture
- an inability to express ideas or communicate in the community at large
- high familial expectations for academic success
- un-familiar learning environments and teaching styles.

Core themes emerged during my research that allowed me to conclude that before we can better serve the needs of the students, we need to seek the struggles and strengths of all. Ben, Wendy, Jocelyn, Edwin, and Lydia are the voices that allowed me to come to this conclusion.

Research Question One:

What are some obstacles for English Language Learners in becoming to become proficient in reading?

Education Starts At Home

Lydia reflected upon her life growing up and experiencing not being read to as a child. She realized that it played a critical role in developing her language/reading skills.

Lydia commented that being read to as a young child would have attracted her to reading for pleasure early on versus finding the joy later in life as a middle school student. In a conversation with Lydia she stated, “I don’t blame my parents for not reading to me when I was small child because they were doing their best to provide basic things like food, and a house for me and my brothers and sisters.” Similarly, twin siblings Ben and Wendy weren’t read to as small children and also wish that they were introduced to literature early on. They recalled an experience, when they were about six years old, being in the grocery store with their mother.

“We were passing the toy section in Wal-Mart and of course, we asked our mother if we could buy some toys. We knew the answer would be ‘no’ but we were trying our luck. But, before we reached the register to check out, I (Ben) saw a book that had a fire truck on the cover. I nudged Wendy with so much excitement because the day before our school had arranged for a fire truck and fire fighters to come for a visit. Our class was able to tour the fire truck and talk to the fire fighters about community helpers and safety measures. I really just wanted to know a little bit more about fire trucks! I convinced Wendy to ask our mother if we could buy the book and she said no. Not because she was concerned about the cost-she didn’t know who could read the book to us.”

From that moment, the twin siblings realized that their parents were not literate in English and understood why there such a push for education in their household.

Family Focus

Four of the participants mentioned that their parents were not U.S. Born and did not come from a formally educated family, and did not have profound knowledge of the

United States K-12 educational system. Even with lack of knowledge, they understood the value and power of education and its ability to open up doors of opportunities. Edwin acknowledged:

“My mom had a 10th grade education and my dad had a 5th grade education but they always encouraged my sister and me to pursue higher education. My dad always worked 3 or 4 jobs just to feed us and to have the very basics in life, so education was always in our conversations at home. My parents always told me that education opens up all kinds of doors of opportunities” (November, 2012).

As our discussion progressed, Jocelyn felt strongly about the value of reading and the role of implementing literacy in the home early on for academic and social purposes. She states,

“It is never too early to begin learning and preparing for school. Parents play a major role in their children’s development. As a little toddler, I believe all parents should expose their children to books and read to them which help the toddler develop their listening skills as well as comprehension skills. I say this because while I was growing up my parents didn’t read me books but I tried to read on my own. Language was somewhat a barrier as I was growing up. Spanish was the primary language spoken in my home so going to school for the first time was such a new experience. I remember in Kindergarten how I was put into an English class and I was terrified. I wasn’t able to communicate with anyone. I felt like a major outsider. However, as time passed and I learned my alphabet and how to say words. I caught on really fast and was able to say words and speak English and best of all, make friends” (November 2012).

Variability in Students' Literacy Levels and Linguistic Abilities

At Central Middle School, it is quietly understood that the students comprised of five homerooms (ranging from 6A-6E) are grouped homogenously by the school administration according to their standardized reading test scores taken the previous year. The students in the homeroom assigned higher letters such as "6A" are considered the gifted, talented, intellectuals, and high achievers. Unfortunately by some staff members, the students in the homeroom assigned the lower letter such as "6E" are considered underperformers, academically inferior, the undesirables and most are identified as English Language Learners. With this silent knowledge, Jocelyn stated, "I don't understand the justification for determining a child's ability based solely on one standardized test score." The group felt strongly that for many educators, the current emphasis on standardized curriculums and assessment indiscriminately exchanges good teaching for test preparation further divorces from the students' realities, experiences and needs.

In addition to the heavy focus on high-stakes examination preparation, All of the participants agree that one of the biggest roadblocks to student learning and improving their reading skills is their seldom interaction with complex texts. Although students who struggle with literacy need time to read relatively manageable texts so they can experience success, they can benefit from opportunities to read text that is more difficult. Interest and background knowledge are two factors that enable students to read beyond what is considered their normal reading level (Sweet, 1997). Lydia stated, "How do you motivate your struggling students to read challenging texts when they are still floating between Spanish and English without putting a spotlight on them or making them feel

intimidated?” Unmediated, poor test outcomes can contribute to low self-esteem, diminished engagement, and/or a sense that the teacher or strategy of measurement is unfair.

Teacher knowledge is critical to the students’ success: Teachers must know their students’ interests and know (or know how to find) books on those topics. Librarians and book reviews in journals like *Book Links* or *The Horn Book Magazine* provide resources for identifying appropriate and engaging books for the classroom library, and interest inventories provide a quick and easy way to discover students’ areas of expertise and curiosity. Instructional formats like literature circles can also aid students’ comprehension. When the texts used build on students’ interests and knowledge, the combination of knowing a lot about the topic and being able to discuss the text with stronger readers makes it possible for those who struggle to handle material that would otherwise be too difficult.

The language experience approach (LEA) is yet another way to provide struggling readers with age-appropriate reading material. Although often associated with readers in the primary grades, this technique can benefit many older novice readers—English-language learners and special-needs students—particularly those who are deaf, hearing impaired, or learning disabled (Padak & Rasinski, 1996). Because LEA relies on children’s own language and experiences, word identification is facilitated and reading motivation is encouraged. Students dictate a common experience to the teacher, who writes it down, changing language only when necessary for clarity; this shared piece of writing then becomes the children’s reading material.

Adequately Addressing the Needs of Students Who Struggle With Reading

If the students can read and write in their own language, the situation will likely be less

difficult because the literacy understandings they have acquired in their first language can help them achieve literacy in their second language (Graves, 1994; Snow et al., 1998).

To ease students' transition to the regular classroom, teachers should form a strong bridge of communication with the second-language teacher while they share responsibility for the students' learning.

These students need books that interest them at a variety of reading levels, time for reading, and opportunities to use language. Stories that reflect their culture and experience are likely to be appealing and will enable the students to use what they know to support their comprehension. (Such texts have the added benefit of broadening other class members' knowledge of the ELL student's culture.)

Research Question Two:

What are the most effective teaching methods that ignite achievement in English language Learners?

Building Background Knowledge

The prior knowledge of an ELL (English Language Learner), an essential element of learning, encapsulates past relative experiences and information that contribute to the ELLs' new experiences in constructing new meaning. English language learners need the opportunity to make intelligent predictions, establish a concept, and then culminate conceived ideas with new information. Edwin reiterated this by saying:

I think it's important, before you introduce anything to them, you have to make them think about what they already know about the topic and build on that. And by making connections to real life situations so they are able to reflect, think, understand, and own it. I have learned the hard way that if your lesson or topic is

relevant to them, they are more willing to learn. They will even do their own research to find out more about the topic. The last thing you want them to do is go about wondering and becoming disinterested. In my classroom, when I have a lot of visuals, and hands on stuff, they start making connections between their prior knowledge and new concepts. I learned the hard way as you tap into their background knowledge, the lesson be relevant with their daily life situations and things that they see out there.

Similarly, Jocelyn stated, “I can remember my seventh grade language arts teacher giving all students opportunities to talk about their background knowledge...it was fun sharing our experiences because I realized that we had so much in common.” Lydia recognized how student interests and background knowledge are two factors that enable students to read beyond what is considered their normal reading level (Sweet, 1997). Interest fosters persistence and a desire to understand, while topic knowledge supports children’s word identification and comprehension by enabling them to draw on what they know.

Ben firmly acknowledged that the background knowledge fosters their construction of their new knowledge and he feels that mainstream teachers should collaborate with ESL teachers in gaining background information about the children’s cultures that may assist with literacy teaching and learning. Many second-language learners come from a literate language culture and struggle with insufficient background knowledge with U.S. customs, slang and idioms, and history. This lack of knowledge may interfere with ELLs and bilingual students’ reading and comprehension. He chuckles to himself as he recalls an experience in his classroom:

One morning, as I was greeting my students at the door, one of my students (Jose), asked if I could help him with his science project after school. He was responsible for constructing a cell model. Since many of my students know that I have an excitement for science, naturally my response to Jose was ‘Sure!.Piece of cake!’” So around 4:15, Jose returns to my classroom and finds a seat near my desk. He ruffles through his backpack and pulls out the directions for his project and places them on top of my desk. As he looked around the room, I could tell by his facial expression that he was somewhat worried and a little confused. I asked if everything was ok and Jose said, “So Mr., where is the cake?”

It was clear that the idiom “piece of cake” I used was unclear to Jose because he comes from literate culture. He literally believed that somehow real cake was involved. At that moment, Ben was reminded that for students who are English language learners or who have other language differences, using differentiated instructional methods, vocabulary must be a focal point of the curriculum. Therefore, teachers should carefully plan instruction that provides many opportunities for their students to be immersed in the words being taught, using the words frequently, in multiple contexts, and over extensive amounts of time.

Modeling and Read Aloud

As an educator for ELL students or native English speaking students, it is important to model appropriate, standard pronunciation and grammar. Educators who slow down, oversimplify or speak more loudly than is necessary, only exaggerate language and do not model expectations of the real world. It is more practical and efficient long-term purposes to rephrase and gesture to convey meaningful assistance.

Jocelyn can recall the joy when her seventh-grade ELA/Reading teacher read out-loud regardless if it was a newspaper article, a novel, a short story, or a poem.

I personally enjoyed it because her voice took me inside whatever we were reading. To hear the words with such clarity, emotion, and passion....She would hold up the book like it was magic and somehow I viewed that book differently. She sort of performed it for the class and her voice, tone, diction, rhythm was flawless. She made me not only want to read that book...she gave me the confidence to read anything.

Teacher modeling through the “think-aloud” and “read-aloud” strategies can prepare students to maximize their learning with higher levels of success and confidence. It’s important for educators to understand that struggling readers must employ the practice of not only answering questions but also asking them. Jocelyn recalls her teacher understanding that many of her ELL students were still developing their reading proficiency skills in her point, “She had a natural way of engaging us. I remember her saying things like ‘I’m a little confused by that so let me read that over again or I’m picturing this little girl who wore dresses but really was a tomboy at heart or I wonder why Boo Radley never was understood.’” Jocelyn realized that raising questions not only aids comprehension but reveals awareness. Edwin added his thought on incorporating modeling strategies when he stated, “When teachers and student share in the read-aloud process, struggling readers, like myself, will come to understand that there are different types of thinking and this strategy helps the struggling reader create and maintain meaning of what they are reading.” By thinking aloud during a read-aloud, teachers can demonstrate the kind of self-questioning, reacting, and visualizing in which struggling

readers can develop their skills.

Building Confidence and Social Capital

All of the Central teachers interviewed discussed their pedagogy in terms of building student confidence through telling their own personal stories. The teachers felt it was imperative believe in the power of their own words and the ability to find their voice, as indicated by Jocelyn's philosophy, "Once my students know that I do care about them, they will share things about their personal lives. That's when I take off my teacher hat and just listen so they know I am not judging." On fostering high levels of self-esteem and confidence, Edwin explained:

I can remember reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* with my seventh-grade teacher reading teacher. Initially, I thought maybe she's crazy because this book is way too hard for *us* to read. You know we were the 'slow' class. But the way she slowly and carefully immersed us in the books, was pretty smart. Before we started reading, we had these intense discussions that were connected to the themes in the book. I noticed she would start asking questions and then we were encouraged to ask questions. She asked us if we ever experienced any type of social injustice or racism and this led to a three day discussion. Initially, I thought we were getting off topic. But it wasn't until later, I realized that we were sharing personal encounters that continue to impact us and connected us to the novel. And this is something I try to impart on my students-the confidence I felt with reading a high school book.

Wendy noted that she was in the same class with Edwin and recalls telling her older sibling of the particular novel she was reading in class. She stated that her sister

was in disbelief because the novel was “too advanced” for her and only smart, white kids read that book. As an adult that struggled with language abilities in grade school, she points in her statement:

One of my primary goals is for them to see that being identified as a second-language learner doesn't define their academic ability. It doesn't mean that they are in any way inferior to their counterparts in the mainstream classes. With so much emphasis on these state-mandated exams and standardized testing, it becomes difficult for these ELLs to discover who they really are and what makes them unique. This is the reason why we need more emphasis on reading novels like *To Kill a Mockingbird* and others that the students might choose instead of reading test packets all day. Because emotionally, when you tell a kid he or she didn't pass the test in order to be promoted, it hurts them so deeply. They feel as if they are stupid and discouraged to take on academic challenges. So, it's up to me to build their confidence and that it easier said than done.

For all participants, it became clear that becoming a teacher means discharging stereotypical misconceptions and biases and uncovering the hopes and fears of students.

Motivation

Verplaetse (1998) notes that mainstream teachers often fail to motivate and enable ELLs' full participation in the classroom and that they usually do so unwittingly, suggesting that consciously attending to the issue of ELLs' full participation would be part of solving the problem. Without eliciting maximum participation, teachers have no way of assessing what ELLs know and where they need instructional support.

Students who have repeatedly experienced difficulty with reading or writing may encounter apathetic, anxious, or ill-willed feelings when faced with these tasks. In order

for ELL students to become educative risk takers with language in reading and writing, it is essential for teachers to establish learning environments that include not only high expectations and challenging material but encourage success and engagement.

Ben and Edwin admittedly continue to struggle with finding books and reading material that “hook” and “fasten their seat belt” to maintain interest and engagement. Ben stated he feels staff members need better collaboration when it comes to selecting books. “I don’t want them to pick up the book and count the number of pages to determine if they are interested in the book or not. I want them focus on connecting with the book and developing their comprehension skills.” Lydia realizes that selecting appropriate reading materials for her ELL students can be a daunting task, but she has discovered that smiles and humor lighten the intensity of the learning experience. This “Ha-ha factor” is critical for language growth (Cary, 2000, p. 58). Value for improvement will only come with some degree of success. When students are encouraged to use language without fear of making mistakes, they grow motivated to learn from teacher modeling to communicate more effectively.

Being able to talk about books and choose their own reading material are factors students find motivating (Oldfather, 1995). Real discussions (as opposed to the traditional teacher-ask, student-respond format) can stimulate students’ interest and involvement and enhance their understanding, and choice can increase the likelihood that they will read. Because many of the books students opt to read have been either read or recommended by someone else (Palmer, Codling, & Gambrell, 1994), it is important that teachers (a) promote students’ reading interest through regularly scheduled read-alouds and book talks that tap into their interests and (b) ensure easy access to school and

classroom libraries and time for browsing, reading, and talking about books.

Research Question Three:

How does culture and self-esteem play a role in addressing the academic needs of English Language Learners?

In order to evolve into proficient and productive students, ELLs need many opportunities to interact in social and academic situations. Unfortunately, many educators often allow their less proficient students to remain silent or to participate less than their English-fluent peers. Effective teachers encourage their students' participation in classroom discussions, welcome their contributions, and motivate them by such practices. The subjects noted that building the social capital and self-esteem in all students is vital to high levels of success in the classroom.

Realizing that ELL students possess a great deal of competence that is not always evident because of their personal experience, they feel that educators should not assume that silence or one-word responses from ELLs are signs of lack of knowledge or inferior academic abilities. To maximize instructional interactions that can enhance social and academic developments, teachers should consider various response options and enlarge their repertoires to encourage students' participation in socially constructed learning. For example, one aspect of teacher-supported interaction is how to handle students' silence. Therefore, silence it's often misdiagnosed as students unable to comprehend the discussion or have something to contribute.

Teachers should assume that, like an iceberg that shows only a small percentage of its mass above the water, students have a great deal of competence that is not yet evident. Put simply, "teachers and researchers need to be careful not to interpret silence

or one-word answers as lack of knowledge" (Cazden, 2001, p. 86). Language learners certainly can understand more than they can produce, especially at the beginning stages.

Edwin supports this in his statement:

I believed I learned English through watching television. My mom watched soap operas as she completed her daily chores around the house. But her favorite was *As The World Turns*, and I remember watching television with her. So, by the time I came to school I understood English but my accent was so heavy that it caused me to be very shy and timid and have low self-confidence. I knew a lot and I could understand English but I wouldn't speak the language because I didn't want the other kids or even the teacher to ridicule me because of my heavy accent (November, 2013).

Edwin went on to further state recollections of the first day of school of second grade. He remembered entering the classroom and students were pointing and directing him several different directions all over the classroom. It was difficult to find his niche. He eventually just found a spot and sat in the back of the class waiting uncomfortably for class to be over. Looking back, it was his belief that ELL students were segregated. He observed that all of the students that looked like him were picked up by a different teacher at the same time every day; we were put into one classroom. "I was placed in ESL classes but it made me feel like such an outcast. My mainstream classmates would laugh at me as I exited the classroom and said I was going to the 'stupid' class." While in this classroom, he was not physically alone but he felt isolated and emotionally detached. He and his cohort would look at pictures and try to comprehend simplistic words such as

cat, dog, book, ball, and pen. During these interventions, he recalled it was difficult to comprehend what the teacher was saying and the tasks students were asked to complete.

He recalled, “I began picking up on certain math and science concepts because my dad made me do multiplication tables at home. English and reading, however, they were a different case.” It brought along anxiety, and it was not until the fifth grade, when the structure of the language began to make some sense for him.

Research Question Four:

Impact of sharing experiences and reflective practices

The dedication of each participant to their profession is a major contribution to their daily success in the classroom and their ability to working through catastrophes. The narratives and reflections they have shared speak on behalf of their growing professional identities and practices. The teachers commented that their commitment is a twenty four hour and seven days a week job. With no planning period afforded to them, they spend time outside the classroom planning lessons that inspire, motivate and have relevancy to their students’ personal lives and experiences.

There was a consensus that reflective practice provides an insightful glimpse of self-reflection, allowing them to focus on positive qualities they have implemented in their pedagogy. Sharpening their ability to reflect on their personal experiences increase their opportunities to employ passion and connect with the students on an individual basis. Edwin recalls personal experiences when he entered the educational arena as he began to see himself in his students:

I know how to spot that kid, an ELL, who doesn’t have the confidence to participate in classroom discussion because I was that kid. It’s so often times, a

teacher will allow them to sit quietly in the back of the classroom and not involve themselves in the lesson and activities. Because I have walked in those shoes, I make it a point to reach out to him or her and tell that kid I know what you are going through, or let me tell you about my experiences when I first came to America, I didn't know English either. When they realize that I was in the same shoes and experienced those same feelings and issues, it opens up a feeling of trust. (November, 2013)

The reflective practice served as an opportunity, as seen explicitly in this project, for the teachers to, as Jocelyn shared, “give this experience of sharing personal stories an entirely new meaning. The reflections helped each of us grow and think differently.” The narratives moved the teachers beyond the limitations of “just stories” or “another reflective journal” and toward a resonance (Conley, 1996) of experience with peers. For the students who enter their classrooms, it moved reflective practice (Schon, 1987) further toward collaboration and shared inquiry of knowledge.

Furthermore, their understanding as Edwin stated, “being ignored or neglected, as felt when I was in a mainstream classroom, slows the process of growth,” was an important lesson. As a second-grade student, Edwin was not encouraged to participate in classroom discussions and he recalls being asked low-level questions to quickly get to a simple answer. The limited oral interaction for students such as Edwin was addressed in the teacher interviews, and Jocelyn stated, “some teachers claim that allowing an extended silent period for new, ELL, or ESL students gives them [students] a chance to get comfortable.” However, their sharing of personal stories and not wanting their students to feel neglected or ignored has greatly impacted their effort to challenge students with

open-ended and exploratory questions which can yield richer instructional communications.

Reflective practice can also be an opportunity to serve as an evaluation of a lesson. This process empowered them to make meaning of their personal experiences and storied knowledge of their educational experiences while giving valuable insight to another's lived experience. It compelled each participant to communicate effectively about educative narratives, new learning experiences in safe environments enabling them to maneuver in their pedagogy.

This process reminded of the importance of the interface between students' social and cultural practices in the home and those that are dominant in schools. The voices of these teachers make it clear that for some second language students that there is a constant struggle to reach their full potential.

In Their Own Words: Core Themes That Emerged From the Reflective Essays

As the interview progressed, I wanted to address revelations that came from their reflective essays. The teachers experienced an epiphany because they started to feel as if they were in the same position as a teacher as some of their ELL students at the beginning of the school year. They discussed the gut-wrenching "sink or swim" feeling they experienced being on their own with little guidance. One teacher recalls:

It was a constant struggle for me with making decisions about what to teach, what was interesting to these students, and how to select content. My principal made it clear that all students would be taking benchmarks throughout the school year to monitor their progress and honestly, that made me very nervous. I had over 35

students in my classroom and 35 learning abilities! It became hard to create lesson plans that would address all the objectives for their standardized testing and make it fun, especially for my ELL students because I had to modify my instruction accordingly. I wish I could have paired with another teacher, (preferably one with some experience teaching ELLs) just so we could brainstorm. Two brains are supposed to be better than one. I felt isolated in that I little opportunity to join forces with anybody (Jocelyn, November 2012).

Mainstream Teachers' Knowledge of and Beliefs About ELLs

Another issue that emerged from the data was that of mainstream teachers' beliefs about linguistically diverse learners. The teachers communicated argumentative notions that content teachers shouldn't shoulder the responsibility to teach ELL students basic literacy skills. They felt they couldn't "fix" what was somehow "broken". In her entry, Lydia explores how the mainstream teachers she has been working with are less than eager to discuss the ELL students who they share, and feels their disregard for these students she feels is an outcome of the lower expectations these teachers have for them:

"I can't tell you how many times I have tried to reach out to them to discuss how we can better assist [ELL students]. Those kids hate going to those classes and have a lot of trouble but my attempts to help have been met with this patronizing tone...One of the mainstream teachers stated to me in the hallway in front of passing students that she didn't have time to teach these kids that don't know how to read and write. 'I pray that they just pass this test' " (Lydia, October 2012).

Wendy described an episode at a professional development workshop when the discussion topic dealt with ways to support ELLs in the mainstream English classroom:

The ESL people were talking about some ideas that could be used in the English class to help the ELLs with the reading. It became apparent within five minutes of our meeting, the ELA teachers weren't interested in helping the ELLs. They started coming up with busy work that the ELLs could do like computer programming, drawing, and copying sentences from the board. This made me angry because the ELLs are always assigned menial tasks like being a time keeper or material collector in cooperative settings while the English speakers are being challenged to complete real academic work. I know that they are under a great deal of pressure because of all this standardized testing, but being a time keeper in the group every time doesn't help those [ELLs] to take school seriously" (Wendy, November 2012).

Knowledge of Content

Alternatively, Ben focuses on the experiences students who are learning English bring to the classroom and how mainstream teachers can come to see their diversity as strength:

My students come to me academically underprepared skills, so I struggle with the decision that the beginners are placed in primarily mainstream classes. I feel bad for these kids because usually they are left to their own devices because their needs are not being accommodated. They [content teachers] need to find ways to motivate and engage these kids understand that these kids have a lot of experience in other ways. If they [content teachers] want to see real results,

find different ways to work with these kids and not water down the curriculum. Find out what's going to be beneficial to them and don't be afraid to ask what motivates them. And if every teacher had a clear understanding of what we are required to do, I think we can help each other and ultimately help the students. (Ben, November 2012)

Overall, the teachers concluded that their mainstream counterparts' negative or inaccurate beliefs' about ELLs stems from a lack of knowledge and expertise in the education of English language learners and being underprepared in teaching ELLs:

"I don't believe the English teachers don't want the best for the ESL kids. In fact, I know that they do. However, I personally feel they simply don't know what to do, not with their current skills. In our last staff meeting, some the [mainstream]teachers in my group stated that they weren't required to take any classes in college or in the teacher certification program that dealt with teaching ELLs. They probably need to take some type of class that can provide them with necessary information to teach ELLs." (Jocelyn, November 2012).

Lydia discussed how she is still in the learning process of what needs to be implemented in the ESL class to sharpen the necessary language skills in the context of the content. "My background is Early Childhood but the principal placed me in the ESL when he found out I finished half of my certification. It was so much confusion because I didn't really know the content stuff." She made further statements about the desire to collaborate with individuals that had the knowledge and expertise of working with second language learners to provide a meaningful learning experience for the students.

Barriers to Collaboration: Time and The Culture of Isolation

The Central Middle School teacher participants discussed barriers they experienced in their school settings. Time was a crucial factor in terms of their ability work with their team members across the disciplines. Jocelyn voiced her concern with the statement, “Sometimes, I feel like they don’t want to set aside time for us and it’s an “us” against “them” [mainstream teachers].”

She feels strongly that time has to set aside for purposeful collaboration. The teachers are not afforded a planning or conference period and have daily cafeteria duty which makes finding colleagues who are willing to engage in productive and welcomed collaboration very difficult. In turn, the issue of time grew compounded since the commitment needed would have to take place after school hours or on the weekend. Ben echoed feelings of isolation as a fairly new [ESL] teacher when he stated:

I feel like a minority when I only represent a small fraction of those who work here and my co-workers feel as if I don’t measure up to them. And that belief kind of spills into how they [mainstream] feel about the ELLs...like all them falling into one category needing remedial classes and they are a homogenous group of kids and it would be too hard to teach these kids because they are so far behind and don’t have any skills. That is so far from the truth. This is why so many educators don’t want to work with ELL students because they feel the ELLs don’t measure up to the mainstream kids. That’s why I feel if we had some type of workshop or time to collaborate to reverse these misconceptions, things would be better for the ELL students.

He also noted that the school environment encourages collaboration and exchanging of best practices however, the power struggle between the mainstream and ESL teachers seems to make collaboration a challenge.

Arkoudis (2006) discusses that the call for collaboration between ESL and mainstream teachers assumes an equitable relationship between the two. She argues that in fact, this relationship is usually not equitable and the ESL teacher usually has low status in the school. If ESL students and teachers are marginalized, meaningful collaboration across the disciplines becomes difficult, if not impossible.

Chapter V

Conclusions, Implications, Limitations, and Recommendations for Future Research

Introduction

My decision to use a narrative approach for my research was largely due to the nature of what I relate and those of my participants. The narratives emerge from my own experiences as an educator. As I completed this project, I could hear the voices of my former students who sat in my classes and I am reminded of some of the enchanting moments that we shared.

Brief Overview of Study

English language learners (ELLs) are a diverse and growing constituency in schools across the nation. ELL enrollment in the nation's public schools between the years 1990 and 2000 grew by 105 percent, compared to a 12 percent overall growth rate among the general school population (Kindler, 2002). In fact, it is projected that by the year 2030, 40% of the school population will speak English as a second language (U.S. DOE & NICHHD, 2003). In schools, Spanish is the most frequent language spoken by English language learners (79%), followed by Vietnamese (1.95%) and Hmong (1.55%; Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010).

This ever-growing diversity makes it critical that English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual education programs are aligned with goals of increased and enhanced academic success for students who are learning English as an additional language while simultaneously acquiring content knowledge in English.

The purpose of the study was to identify research findings that could inform educators of effective reading strategies in secondary classrooms with English Language

Learners and provide pedagogical guidance to manage differentiated instruction while seeking human connections with their respective students.

This narrative exploration can be used as a starting point for educational discussions and reinforce the importance of having high expectations for ELLs; exposing them to a rigorous reading and language arts curriculum; explicitly teaching, modeling and providing guided practice in a variety of strategies to promote cultural awareness, help students read and interpret challenging texts; and involving confident students as partners in a community of life-long learners.

To address the needs of second-language learners, moving beyond an approach that depicts ESL programs and bilingual education as a remedial program for learners who don't speak or write in English is essential. Instead, successful models that stress high academic quality and strive to teach children to be truly bilingual with an aggressive approach to building engaging and relevant curriculum and preparing future teachers for linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms need to be replicated.

Five teachers, employed by the Central Middle School for at least two years and one reflective essay to share, were interviewed for a scheduled one hour interview answered questions about the effectiveness of their pedagogy and teaching ELL students. Common themes emerged from the interviews were identified and compiled and cross-examined to themes discovered from their reflective essays. The essays were considered as archival data because they were written as part of their contractual agreement for employment prior to my research project.

The results of this study contributed to the pool of research in the process of learning and teaching a second language and how ELL students learn in a recently

acquired second language. It revealed findings of misconceptions that ELLs are academically inferior, unmotivated, and unwilling to learn.

The Need for Passionate Teachers

Educators have acknowledged that reading comprehension and ability is a critical factor and essential skill that determines a student's potential to reach academic achievement. Reading in English can be overwhelmingly challenging for English language learners. Given that ELLs are still in the process of acquiring academic language skills in English, they often struggle to master content that is vital to their success. It's imperative to realize that when students who have been identified as being limited in their English language proficiency score poorly on high-stakes exams or fall below grade level, some teachers may assume they are special need students who have learning disabilities.

Like all students, they need teachers who can assess their strengths and needs and differentiate instruction to address varying cultural backgrounds and languages. Often time, educators don't have a clear understanding of the second language acquisition process. Consequently, English language learners often are being placed in low ability groups, retained or referred to special education classes. Sadly, many well intended teachers complete erroneous referrals because the students are assumed to have a learning disability when it's primarily a matter of their not understanding the teacher's language and the instructional materials.

Challenges Encountered by Teachers

Many of the discussions that emerged from the interviews and reflective writing revolved around the theme of teacher positioning which can form a barrier to successful pedagogy. It is an unfortunate reality that ESL teachers, programs, and students are often marginalized. ESL teachers are frequently not seen to be on the same level as

mainstream teachers at all points on the educational continuum, from elementary to higher education to adult education (Auerbach, 1991). Grey discusses a variety of factors that contribute to marginalization of ESL teachers which include the fact that immigrant students are expected to become *English speakers* and *Americans* at the expense of their native language and culture and that initiatives such as *English Only* and subtractive bilingual education play a critical role in the way that linguistically diverse learners are viewed (Auerbach, 1991). Researchers have found that the way teachers perceive their linguistically diverse learners directly affects the way that teachers teach those students as well as the students' attitudes about themselves (Clark, 1988; Flores, 2001; Nespore, 1987; Pajares, 1992). When teachers have negative beliefs towards their ELL's, either based on their culture, language, or other factors, these beliefs and attitudes can translate into behaviors on the part of teachers that have a negative effect on students, specifically in terms of student efficacy and achievement (August & Hakuta, 1997; Cummins, 2000; Díaz-Rico, 2000; González & Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gutiérrez, 1981). If ESL students and teachers are marginalized, meaningful instruction and collaboration across the disciplines becomes difficult, if not impossible.

The ESL teacher can also serve as a helpful resource and provide background information about the children's cultures that may assist with literacy teaching and learning. Insufficient background knowledge about U.S. customs, slang and idioms, and history may interfere, in particular with second language learners' reading and comprehension skills.

Further examination of the data revealed that teachers shared similar concerns in regards to students' linguistic differences and their radically different literacy abilities,

problems that for some were intensified by large classes. The focus in the interview was on English language learners, but these discourse patterns that we shared apply in many learning contexts. However, it is ELLs who are more likely to become passive because language and cultural differences can disconnect them from mainstream schooling.

The participants, like many teachers of all grade levels, face the challenge to increase and improve the language use and reading skills of their students; thus educators should consider what they do and could do better and then apply communication structures that are appropriate for both the age and proficiency of the student. Because most novice readers, regardless of their age, are capable of understanding and appreciating texts that are far more demanding than the ones they can already read, successful teachers can benefit from capitalizing on strategies such as read-alouds and think-alouds experiences as a means for teaching comprehension. These models encourage children's active participation during the reading through open-ended questions and discussion (Beck & McKeown, 2001).

When students don't feel encouraged to participate during the reading and open-ended discusses, there are several reasons why ELLs may struggle to respond appropriately to teachers' prompts and questions. If ELLs are embarrassed, if tasks are too far above or below their proximal zone of development, or if teachers do not provide frequent opportunities and strategies for ELLs to successfully develop as readers and writers, then ELLs will disengage just like other adolescents confronting learning environments stacked against them (Ballenger, 1997, Verplaetse, 2000a; 2000b; 2003).

Certainly, not all teacher questions are clearly understood by students, and, if such is the case, teachers should rephrase or clarify queries in order to facilitate student

comprehension. Teachers may also not wait long enough for students to consider a question and formulate a response (Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachure, & Prendergast, 1997; Rowe, 1974). In addition, while first-language learning is largely motivated by a child's intrinsic desire to socialize, second-language learning often needs more extrinsic influence (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983).

Students may not wish to participate if the teacher expects them simply to recite low-level knowledge or if the teacher sets low expectations for the students. Clarity, wait time, higher order thinking, and higher expectations are factors that influence the quality of teacher interactions with all students, but some factors pertain more specifically to the participation of ELLs.

Secondary school content-area instructors who seek to promote academic literacy development therefore need to understand and address the social and emotional needs of adolescents within the context of the content-area classroom. It's important to consider that for some students who elect not to participate in reading activities because they lack fluency skills, associate reading poorly with public embarrassment, don't feel as valued members of the classroom community. Moreover, the classroom teacher should encourage and motivate all learners in becoming proficient readers. In the case of ELLs, the issue of language becomes explicitly relevant because ELL students must also believe that they can become proficient readers in the English language, a feat they may or may not have accomplished in their native language. This is not a matter of "dumbing down" the curriculum or applying different standards. It is a matter of implementing the curriculum at a language level that makes it accessible to ELLs.

If we want adolescents to be able to competently use reading, writing, and speaking in English to learn, to define themselves and their worlds, and to develop their voice (goals identified by Cushman, 2003; Kamil, 2003; Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999; Rycik & Irvin, 2001; and Verplaetse, 2003; among others), they need learning environments in which they are actively engaged in dialogue and with text and where we scaffold their growing abilities so they can successfully use academic language (e.g., Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller, 2001).

Although the challenges we explored during the interview and the reflective essays are faced by teachers nationwide of various grade and expertise, the ease or difficulty of implementing recommendations such as those discussed in the study will likely depend on teachers' perceived need for change and on the level of support provided to make that change. These conditional requirements are as relevant to ELLs as to any other secondary school students (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000). It is difficult to become better at something if one refuses to engage with it (Erickson, 1987). Therefore, it is essential that teachers be able to successfully motivate ELLs to engage with academic texts written in English through reading, writing, and speaking. Only then can the dual aims of academic literacy development and content area learning be met.

Conclusions

The study highlighted the significance of the interface between students' social and cultural practices in the home and those that is dominant in schools. The voices of the participants make it clear that their struggles as adolescents have motivated them to become educators and to continue striving for their fullest potential.

For ELLs especially, the teacher serves as a conduit for sharing information and scaffolding social and academic language. Low levels of instruction and low-quality interactions often combine to yield poor academic achievement among students who are busy constructing the meaning of the language and the content of school. Rich language interactions, however, encourage thinking, social relationships, and expanded language use. As Johnston (2004) admonished, we "have to think more carefully about the language we use to offer our students the best learning environments we can" (p. 1). From the data collected, I have grown as an educator and this study gave me such an enriching experience threading narratives of my participants to pull together the past, present, and future of their respective students. The stories we tell about the past become the past, and through them, we claim identities and compose lives. (Reissman, 1994, p.68)

I may have focused on the area of ELL's, but much of the information collected is beneficial for any teacher or person interested in making a career in the educational arena. Each of us has gained useful knowledge that will help us to grow into enhanced reflective and successful life-long learners. Some of the take-aways from the interview and reflective essays included concepts of resiliency, integrating life lessons with personalized instruction, addressing and managing differing degrees of overlap in reading abilities, internalizing underdeveloped schema, growing up in a literate culture, and overcoming reluctance and low self-esteem.

Whether easy or difficult, change must start somewhere for educating ELLs, and a single action can potentially serve as the beginning link in a chain of activity that give all second language learners a first-class education. The strategies suggested in the study

are for practical approaches to common problems in encouraging educators everywhere to question and ponder, to get to know their students and recognize the salient issues, and to seek and try out new ideas to make a difference in their students' literacy lives.

Implications

Diversity in the classroom encompasses many categories, among them ethnicity, culture, learning needs, and other issues. For all of these, educators have to hone their pedagogical skills to differentiate instructional practices to meet the varying needs of the population in the general classroom. The significant shift in the balance of diverse students—the multicultural panorama of 21st-century school environment—is no longer an exception to the world outside of the classroom, but a direct reflection of it.

Ginott (1995) made a powerful statement when he described the overpowering influence the teacher has in the classroom:

I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized. (p.302)

I believe all participants involved in this study gained deeper insights and clarified perception in regards to not only about ELLs, but about implementing passionate instruction and the rewards from respecting and celebrating culturally diverse students. Being a successful teacher of ELLs does not require mastered knowledge in a second

language. However, one needs to exercise extreme patience and persistence, which should be innate in all educators. Many ELLs, as any other mainstream learners, may not comprehend a taught concept or skill on the first, second, or third attempt. Therefore, it's imperative that educators learn the value of modification and discover innovative methods to re-explain or teach it multiple times before genuine comprehension comes to fruition. Also, it's important to recognize and appreciate the cultural backgrounds of all students, and their perspective on how they learn on an individual basis.

Limitations

Some limitations of this study have implications for future research in this area. This study was small and its results are not necessarily generalizable to larger populations. The sample size of five teachers that were interviewed for this study yielded thought-provoking and noteworthy findings. However, a larger sample size may have been more informative for research purposes. In addition to the small number of participants, the lack of a control group, and relatively short duration of the intervention were possible deterrents in being able to draw causal connections.

Recommendations for Future Research

As noted in the previous section, future research in this area would target larger sample sizes with randomized assignment designs and increased intervention times to verify if the patterns detected indeed result in increased achievement for struggling and English learning readers. The study provided opportunities for discussions and reflections to identify reading strategies to enhance reading skills for English Language Learners. Future endeavors could implement a tangible product, such as a pedagogical guide or series of lessons plans to compliment the narrative research findings.

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Appendix A
Cover Letter to Participants

Jacquelyn C. Edwards
University of Houston College of Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
4800 Calhoun Road
Houston, Texas 77004

Dear Energized Educators,

As part of my doctoral studies at the University of Houston, I am recruiting energized participants for a research study that will examine effective reading strategies for English Language Learners and pedagogical practices that strengthen their academic, emotional, and humanistic growth.

I would like to extend an invitation to you for your participation in the study. As an educator who has taught English Language Learners, I have walked in your shoes. Your contribution to the study is valuable because it will help promote pedagogy that infuses culturally relevant curriculum and passion for instruction and document the impact that educators make toward giving English Language Learners access to equal and quality educational opportunities.

If you agree to be part of the research study, I plan to interview you for one hour about your experiences. Additionally, all identities will be kept confidential as prescribed by the University of Houston Human Subjects Committee. Please be aware that your participation is voluntary.

Furthermore, I plan to collect data from the reflective essays that were written during your professional development workshops as part of your contractual agreement for employment. Permission to use the reflective essays has been granted by the director of the school.

The essays will be used as a guide for interview questions and identify common ideas and themes that can be used to capture the experience of teaching and learning a second language and using differentiated instruction to build the academic, social, and emotional growth of English Language Learners.

If you are interested in contributing to this study and being a part of the interview, please respond to the e-mail. I will coordinate follow-up phone calls to schedule the group interview and answer any questions you may have in regards to the research study. This project has been reviewed by the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. The contact number is (713) 743-9024.
Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,
Jacquelyn Edwards

Appendix B
Participant Consent

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

PROJECT TITLE:

A NARRATIVE EXPLORATION OF PROVIDING EFFECTIVE READING STRATEGIES TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: Negotiating Standards and Assessments with Passionate Instruction

You are being invited to take part in a research project conducted by doctoral student, Jacquelyn Edwards, from the Curriculum and Instructional Department at the University of Houston. This research study is part of her dissertation and partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree. The project is being conducted under the supervision of her advisor and chair of her dissertation committee, Dr. Laveria Hutchison.

NON-PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Taking part in the research project is voluntary and you may refuse to take part or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any research-related questions that make you uncomfortable.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine effective reading strategies for English Language Learners and pedagogical practices that strengthen their academic, emotional, and humanistic growth. I hope my study can be contribution to the pool of research available on educating English Language Learners and promoting pedagogy that infuses culturally relevant curriculum and passion for instruction. Your contribution will document the impact that educators make toward giving English Language Learners access to equal and quality educational opportunities.

The duration of the entire study will be approximately six months, including data collection, analyzing and summarizing findings in the written dissertation. Participants time invested will be limited to a one-hour interview and time spent reviewing the transcripts.

PROCEDURES

You will be one of 5 subjects invited to take part in this project that will be divided in two parts. The first part of the study consists of using your reflective essays as archival data. The essays will be used as a guide for interview questions and identify common ideas and themes that can be used to capture the experience of teaching and learning a second language and using differentiated instruction to build the academic, social, and emotional growth of English Language Learners. You have the option to agree or disagree to allow me to use this data in my research.

The second part is a one-hour group interview where I will ask you to reveal and elaborate on your experiences teaching English Language Learners and being a middle school identified as an English Language Learner. You have the option to agree or disagree to allow me to use this data in my research.

ARCHIVAL DATA

- ☐ I agree to allow my reflective essay(s) to be used as archival data for this research study
- ☐ I do not agree to allow my reflective essay(s) to be used as archival data for this research study.

INTERVIEW

You will be interviewed about your teaching experience and your experience as a student. This interview will take approximately one hour and will be held on the campus located at 6021 Aschroft Houston, Texas 77081. After the interview is transcribed, you will have the opportunity to read it and make any revisions or corrections. Your total time commitment for both the interview and document review will be approximately one and a half hours.

- ☐ I agree to be interviewed.
- ☐ I do not agree to be interviewed

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- How does culture and self-esteem play a role in addressing the academic needs of English Language Learners?
- Do you feel that teachers should be evaluated solely on the state-mandated test results?
- What were some of your best experiences/challenges in your reading classes?
- How do you feel teachers and students should be assessed in order to determine that high levels of teaching and learning exist in their classrooms?
- Can individuals who have been labeled ELL/at-risk be considered resilient based on their personal outlook?
- How do teachers' belief of and knowledge about ELLs impact classroom instruction?
- How do teachers' belief of and knowledge about ELLs impact their (self-esteem) social and emotional growth?

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your participation in this project. Each subject's name will be paired with a code number by the principal investigator. This code number will appear on all written materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the assigned code number will be kept separate from all research materials and will be available only to the principal investigator. Confidentiality will be maintained within legal limits.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks to you in this study.

BENEFITS

While you will not directly benefit from participation, your participation may help investigators better understand the academic, social, and emotional needs of English Language Learners and effective pedagogical practices to ensure high levels of success in middle school and beyond.

ALTERNATIVES

Participation in this project is voluntary and the only alternative to this project is non-participation.

PUBLICATION STATEMENT

The results of this study may be published in scientific journals, professional publications, or educational presentations; however, no individual subject will be identified.

SUBJECT RIGHTS

1. I understand that informed consent is required of all persons participating in this project.
2. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop my participation in this project at any time before or during the project. I may also refuse to answer any question.
3. Any risks and/or discomforts have been explained to me, as have any potential benefits.
4. I understand the protections in place to safeguard any personally identifiable information related to my participation.
5. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Jacquelyn Edwards at (832) 265-1074. I may also contact Dr. Laveria Hutchison, faculty sponsor, at (713) 743-4975.

6. **Any questions regarding my rights as a research subject may be addressed to the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (713-743-9204).** All research projects that are carried out by Investigators at the University of Houston are governed by requirements of the University and the federal government.
7. All information that is obtained in connection with this project and that can be identified with me will remain confidential as far as possible within legal limits. Information gained from this study that can be identified with me may be released to no one other than the principal investigator and Dr. Laveria Hutchison. The results may be published in scientific journals, professional publications, or educational presentations without identifying me by name.

Principal Investigator (print name and title): _____

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date: _____