

PATHWAYS TOWARD PROFICIENCY:
A CASE STUDY OF BILINGUAL STUDENTS' OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN
ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

by

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Pathways toward Proficiency: A case study of bilingual students' opportunities to learn academic language

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The purpose of this study was to examine bilingual students' opportunities to learn in schools affected by high-stakes accountability policies. Understanding that access to instruction supporting language development is essential to improving bilingual students' opportunities to learn, I examined the ELD program at a bilingual school as well as the ways high-stakes accountability affected the development of academic language in both English and in Spanish. My study was based on the perspective that not only viewed language development in relation to social and contextual factors, but assumed that these social and contextual factors are, in fact, problematic. To this end, I conducted a qualitative case study of six classrooms across two language environments within the same school. Additionally, I followed six students to examine differences in instructional opportunities based on students' levels of proficiency in language and in literacy. My hypothesis was that ELD could not be distinguished from other types of instruction occurring during the literacy block and that students opportunities varied greatly based upon their levels of proficiency.

Through two levels of coding, my analysis revealed a typology of ELD experiences, which I identified as language before interaction, language through interaction, and language through interaction, *intended*, which occurred when instructional activities supporting ELD shifted to prepare students for high-stakes testing. Additionally, I found that instruction supporting academic language development in Spanish mirrored the type

of instruction supporting academic language development in English based on the types I identified above. Finally, in order to navigate the general school setting, which many argue is the purpose of developing academic language, students were socialized within a data-driven culture toward participating in a testing Discourse where they needed to learn how to talk about their performance levels, their proficiency rates, and about meeting standards. Findings revealed a need for educators to be aware of the type of language that is developed in data-driven schools and for educators to question the ethics and utility of defining testing language as academic.

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Chapter 1

Latino children in public schools who speak Spanish and English are the new “norm” (Escamilla & Hopewell, 2010). In the first decade of the 21st century, the number of Latinos living in the United States increased by 48% from 35.2 million in the year 2000 to 51.9 million in 2011¹. While the proportion of Latinos to the total national population increased by 4% from 2000 to 2011, the proportion of White (non-Hispanic) people decreased by 6% during the same time period. As of 2011, Latino babies now account for one quarter of the total births in the United States, surpassing immigration as the largest driver of Mexican-American population growth. One impact of this population shift is a projected increase in the workforce by 7.7 million Latinos by 2020, while the number of white workers is expected to decrease by 1.6 million. Another major impact of the growth of Latinos in the United States can be seen in public education. 86% of school-aged (ages 5-17) Latino children are reported to speak English and Spanish or English-only at home, and as of 2006, there were 5 million students classified as English Language Learners (ELLs²) enrolled in K-12 classrooms (GAO, 2006, as cited in Bassiri and Allen, 2012). This was over 10% of the total enrollment in public schools. Further, enrollment for ELLs as a sub-group grew by over 60% between the 1994-1995 and 2004-2005 school years, while the overall K-12 enrollment increased by only 2% (Bassiri and Allen, 2012). These powerful statistics

¹ Unless otherwise cited, data reported in this section were drawn from the Pew Hispanic Research Center (2011). Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2011 (Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of 2000 Census (5% IPUMS) and 2011 American Community Survey (1% IPUMS)).

² In this study, I will refer to these children as emerging bilingual, or bilingual, to reflect the totality of these children’s linguistic resources. This term will be used interchangeably with English Language Learners (ELLs) when it matches to facts, figures and external reports on these children.

must imply two notions: first, we can no longer talk about educational excellence as a nation sans the achievement of Latino students; and second, the 21st century English Language Learner is more likely a simultaneous bilingual student who has been exposed to Spanish and English, at varying degrees, prior to entering school. In spite of these widely-reported statistics, the reality is that the linguistic needs and resources of these students have been undervalued, misunderstood—or completely overlooked—in the era of standards based reform (Wiley & Wright, 2004). As such, my research interests include examining the educational opportunities available to Latino children by understanding how the intersection of language ideologies and high-stakes accountability policies can either compromise or construct students' opportunities to learn and been seen as capable learners.

In 2004, Wiley & Wright reported that in the 10 year period before Congress authorized the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), emerging bilingual students had grown by 95% while total K-12 student enrollment had grown by only 12% (Wiley & Wright, 2004). This signifies that data about a population shift, including the 2000 census, were emerging before the construction of NCLB. This data should have signaled to Congress the need to write policy that would reflect the cultural and linguistic heterogeneity in 21st century schools. However remiss, NCLB materialized as a race-blind and language-blind reform effort, grounded in the idea of sameness as fairness (Crosland, 2004). What Congress felt was needed was only high expectations and common standards for all students in order to close the proverbial achievement gap dividing minority students from their white counterparts. High-stakes, English-only, assessments would also be used to measure the effectiveness of teachers and schools in

accelerating the academic growth rates and the rates of English Language Development of their students.

What escapes 21st century reform efforts are definitions of what constitutes opportunities to learn, especially for emerging bilingual students. Nearly 20 years ago, McLaughlin and Shepard (1995) suggested that Opportunity to Learn (OTL) standards should be created and constantly evaluated before and in addition to content and performance standards. Unfortunately, what we know is that since the standards based reform movement began, more attention has been placed on student outputs, in the form of achievement data, than on the quality of educational inputs (Valenzuela, Prieto, & Hamilton, 2007) in all schools, and primarily in those serving minority and bilingual communities.

In general, OTL standards “refer to the availability of resources, programs and qualified teachers needed to enable all students to meet challenging content and performance standards” (McLaughlin & Shepard, 1995, p. xix). While McLaughlin and Shepard (1995) primarily provided recommendations for an exploration of what OTL standards should include, they did suggest that clearly defined standards for English Language Development³ (ELD) were essential to supporting learning opportunities for emerging bilingual students. This is aligned with the belief that academic performance is contingent upon a students’ access to and command of academic registers of language (Bailey, 2007; Cummins, 2008). However, prior to NCLB and prior to McLaughlin and Shepards’ (1995) report of the National Academy of Education Panel, there was very little evidentiary support including actual classroom data that adequately captured the language

³ In this study, English Language Development is defined as second language instruction that “provides a combination of explicit teaching that helps students directly and efficiently learn features of the second language such as syntax, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and norms of social usage and ample opportunities to use the second language in meaningful and motivating situations” (Goldenberg, 2008).

demands of schooling (Bailey, 2007). While such scholars as Bailey & Butler (2003), Scarcella (2003), Bailey (2007), and Schleppegrel & O'Hallaron (2011) have contributed greatly toward a definition of the academic language construct, more research is needed to understand not only 'what' language students need to acquire, but what are students' opportunities to learn and practice it.

Rather than continuing this conversation, the majority of state and district performance data continue to report on the persistent achievement gap between emerging bilingual students and their English-only classmates, without talking about how differences in educational opportunities, including the absence of effective English language proficiency standards or quality instruction may have contributed to this gap. Because language of instruction has been the civil rights focus in education for Latinos (Gándara & Contreras, 2009), labeling students based on their levels of proficiency (or lack thereof) has been a key component of efforts to improve educational opportunities for students classified as English Language Learners. However, as Gándara & Contreras (2009) point out, such discourse may dichotomize English proficiency to the point where students are stuck with the label Limited English Proficient (LEP) until they are reclassified as Fluent English Proficient (FEP). These labels can segregate Latino children into groups where LEP students often receive language services absent content instruction, while FEP students receive academic content usually without language supports (2009). Without adequate measures of language proficiency, and without an understanding of how students may be on a continuum of language proficiency, which includes practical and grammatical competency in their home language as well as in English, schools may succumb to misunderstandings about students' needs or their abilities to succeed academically.

Due to the enormous pressure to make academic growth on English-only assessments, and to meet achievement objectives in tests of language proficiency, there is an increased demand for English proficiency and pressure toward an early-exit from ELD programs. However, as assessments and standards for both academic content and language proficiency grow in increasing alignment, it is important to consider the political messages and overt and covert attitudes underlying the pressure for rapid acquisition of academic language as the primary means to be successful in schools. By privileging academic language in classrooms and on assessments, schools reproduce notions that academic language is the only form of language that is valued. For Latino students, many of whom come from bilingual homes, their primary means to achieve the right to learn and be seen as a capable learner depend on their acquisition of a register of English referred to as academic language.

Problem Statement

One of the major consequences of Standards Based Reform, as defined under NCLB and Race to the Top, is that, “standardized tests become the *de facto* language policy when attached to high stakes-consequences, shaping what content schools teach, how it is taught, by whom it is taught, and in what language(s) it is taught” (Menken, 2006, p. 537). Specifically, there has been a highly-unified effort to adopt frameworks for English Language Development that intentionally dovetail the common core content standards and the accompanying assessments that measure the attainment of those standards (Gottlieb, 2004). These frameworks include very narrow definitions of academic language that attend primarily to the features of English of which students must develop a specified level of competency. However, they place little value upon the language that students possess as

they enter school or on how students might be able to use their home language to access academic content.

Because content standards have historically reflected the language and values of those who created them, in this case white, English-speaking, middle class people of power, students of color are expected to compensate for perceived mismatches in the language and background knowledge required to access content standards. Instructional implications include the imperative to accelerate the rate at which students acquire ‘academic language’ as *the* language of standards and assessments. Among second language educators, there is some consensus that the primary function of ELD should be to teach the language of schooling (Goldenberg, 2008). Yet one of the biggest opportunity gaps for English Language Learners in particular, has been the lack of clear standards for ELD that distinguish between teaching the language of schooling and teaching the language of standards and assessments, which may not be one in the same. Prior to NCLB, ELD was not designated as a content for which standards should be written (Bailey & Huang, 2011). As a result, the ELD standards, while essential to providing opportunities to learn for English Language Learners (McLaughlin & Shepard, 1995), are emerging three-decades behind the development of content and assessment standards.

The delay in creating effective ELD standards has meant that, “two-thirds of limited-English speaking children are not receiving the language assistance they need in order to succeed in their academic and intellectual development” (Valdés, 2001). More recently, Goldenberg (2008) reported that nearly one-fifth of English language learners receiving all-English instruction, are not receiving language development instruction. Because preparing for testing is a high-stakes motive, teachers may find it easier and more

imperative to use ELD time as a means of improving students' proficiency on basic skills and test-taking strategies (Menken, 2006, 2009). Additionally, the movement to develop ELD standards that only dovetail the Common Core standards may be diverting attention away from designing ELD that has lasting benefits for students. Absent from the discourse are programs or initiatives designed to construct robust language environments that would allow students to develop all of their linguistic resources to provide access to academic literacies that are challenging, transferrable to local communities, and that provide long-term, educational rewards. As a result, the unfortunate outcome of standards based reform for linguistically diverse students is, first and foremost, that narrow definitions of academic language implicitly devalue students' home language as they enter school. Additionally, because of slowly emerging standards for ELD, emerging bilingual students are also being denied opportunities to access the language of schooling that has been determined as a requisite for accessing content standards.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine how a bilingual school defines academic language, and provides opportunities for students to learn and practice it. The very notion of teaching academic language in a bilingual school where over 90% of students enrolled are Latino raises questions of access. The rationale behind emerging ELD frameworks is to determine students' readiness to engage in classroom discourse around academic content using academic texts and taking assessments. These frameworks however, do not account for students' proficiency in their home language and their ability to use this language to participate in classroom activities. Given this context, it is necessary to question whether

providing access to challenging content and materials may be reserved for students who have been classified as English proficient.

An additional aim of this study was to contribute to Second Language Acquisition research by examining the *politics* of language development. Luke (2003), Gutierrez (2004) and Valdés (1998, 2001, 2002, 2004) have argued that what goes on in ELD classes has not been politically neutral, yet conversations about language development have mostly centered on defining and teaching the features of language students need to acquire without attending to the sociopolitical contexts that may be problematizing students' opportunities to learn. Because of the complex and widespread influence of Standards Based Reform, as well as the high-stake implications for English language proficiency, a multi-theoretical lens on language development is needed to uncover the policies and structures affecting rates of proficiency. As Luke (1994) reminds us, "Despite stated intentions of equality of educational opportunity (exclusionary practices) are at work in our communities and schools" (p. 11). To this end, I explored the practices used to support the development of academic language in relation to sociopolitical structures in order to distinguish between those practices which are exclusionary and those which provide emerging bilingual students with equality of educational opportunities.

This study was designed to track how students' labels of proficiency may determine their educational opportunities. For example, decisions about student grouping and placement are often based on their abilities to read at grade level. For students who are not reading at grade level, there is tremendous pressure, as a result of NCLB accountability measures, to provide remedial instruction with the goal of getting students to be proficient on high-stakes assessments (Amrein-Beardsley et al., 2010; Climbricz, 2002; Nichols &

Berliner, 2008). This type of instruction may look entirely different than the opportunities provided to students who are already proficient on large-scale assessments or who are reading at grade level. For students with a Limited English Proficient label, one line of inquiry for this study was to determine whether or not these students are receiving language supports or whether they are grouped alongside students who are not proficient in content assessments. In the latter, students labeled as Limited English Proficient, may be receiving the remedial literacy instruction that does little to improve their proficiency in English. In both scenarios, research is needed to understand whether students labeled as non- or partially-proficient in language or literacy receive access to the same level of challenging content instruction as students who are already proficient.

Research Questions

Given the need to understand academic language as it is taught in a bilingual context, the proposed study asked the following questions:

1. What are students' opportunities for ELD in grades 3-5 at a bilingual elementary school?
2. How does high stakes testing affect the development of academic language in English and Spanish?

Significance

With so much emphasis on the achievement gap and the disparaging image of educational achievement for minority students, it is important that we return to McLaughlin and Shepard's (1995) recommendations to constantly create and evaluate students' opportunities to learn. As Carter and Welner (2013) remind us, constantly measuring the educational achievement gap without considering students opportunities to

learn is “like a gardener trying to increase her fruits’ growth merely by weighing them anew each day” (p.1). An examination of educational opportunities for emerging bilingual students, especially as they relate to academic language, could redefine what “proficient” means as a performance category on both language and content assessments. It would explain how students have the chance to develop and use their linguistic resources in order to succeed in school, and it would explain how assessment outcomes more closely reflect students’ opportunities to develop language rather than their mastery of basic skills. Implications for a new definition of proficient would mean no longer seeing emerging bilingual students for their deficits or lack of basic skills. It would also shed light on the practices that both help and prevent emerging bilingual students from developing positive educational trajectories.

Theoretical Framework

I began this chapter by explaining that my research interests included examining the educational opportunities available to Latino children by understanding how language ideologies in addition to reform measures can either compromise or construct their opportunities to learn. McLaughlin and Shepard (1995) recommended that effective standards for English Language Development are key to providing opportunities to emerging bilingual students. Since 1995, there has been a significant contribution of research on English Language Development stemming from either cognitive or sociocultural perspectives, much of this framing pedagogy aligned with either perspective. While newly emerging ELD frameworks (Gottlieb, 2004) tend to align with cognitive perspectives on the nature of learning, the framework for this study is based on the perspective that not only views language development in relation to social and contextual

factors, but assumes that these social and contextual factors are, in fact, problematic (Pennycook, 2001). In these instances, we cannot discuss students' levels of proficiency, in language or in content, without understanding the sociopolitical structures driving instruction and ultimately affecting learning.

In this study, I draw upon Ruiz's (1984) orientations to language planning to show that there are implications for the processes of language acquisition and language socialization when ideology intersects with the high-stakes testing and the standards based reform movement. The outcome of this intersection determines opportunities to learn for emerging bilingual students in either compromising or constructive ways.

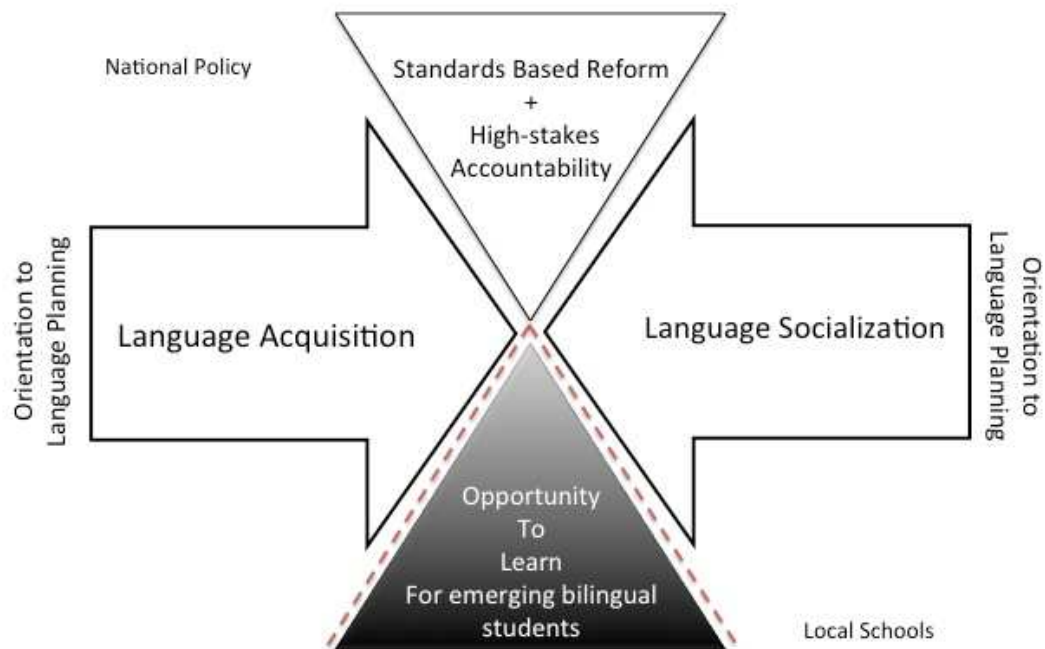


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.

Because effective language standards were not developed prior to No Child Left Behind, frameworks for developing language standards now are highly connected to academic content standards and assessments. This highly unified, national process has sustained academic language as the primary language of schooling even when data show a population shift toward an increased enrollment of emerging bilingual students. This level of standardization has become a norm against which speakers of other languages or other registers of English are compared. Depending on one's orientation toward language planning, the outcomes of instruction for academic language development could provide distinct learning opportunities for students.

Language Orientations. In 1984, Ruiz defined language orientation as a disposition toward language. Ruiz (1984) proposed three orientations toward language planning: Language-as-a-Resource, Language-as-a-Right, and Language-as-a-Problem. A Language-as-a-problem orientation views language-planning efforts as activities designed to solve a language problem. Essentially, language planners with this orientation feel that the educational under achievement of Latino students has everything to do with their lack of proficiency in Standard American English, and that Spanish may be interfering with their abilities to succeed in school. This type of orientation was represented in the 1998 English for the Children campaign sponsored by Ron Unz in California and other anti-bilingual education initiatives such as Prop 203 in Arizona, Question 2 in Massachusetts, and Amendment 31 in Colorado, holding that the best way to improve educational opportunities for Latino children is to accelerate the rates at which they acquire English.

A Language-as-a-Right orientation connects language to civil and human rights. From this perspective, language-planning efforts should include an understanding that students have a right to use their language in communal activities (Ruiz, 1984). Failure to allow students to use their language could make skill acquisition more difficult (1984). Analyzing language planning with a Language-as-a-Right orientation helps to identify exclusionary, or even discriminatory practices, whereby speakers of non-dominant languages are deprived of their language rights and are thus excluded from participation events and activities, or from representation in public institutions such as schools and courts. This orientation contradicts the Language-as-a-problem orientation, which sees linguistic deprivation as a benevolent act toward helping minority groups gain access to mainstream society.

A Language-as-a-Resource orientation may help to enhance the status of minority languages (Ruiz, 1984). These types of language-planning efforts support the establishment and sustainability of bilingual programs counter to reform efforts, which only place value on one register of a higher status language. The sustainability of bilingual programs has the potential to reshape race relations as the language of minority groups begins to gain status (Ruiz, 1984). A key advantage of language planning with a Language-as-a-Resource orientation is that it pushes back on national efforts that “impede the process of building on local strengths” (Auerbach, 1993, p.25). Large-scale planning efforts that allow bilingual students the opportunity to use all of their language skills within the context of schooling, helps build prestige in the minority group’s language, which ultimately builds up students’ academic identities and allows them to be seen as valued learners within the school community.

Language Planning during the era of standards based reform has mostly aligned with Language-as-a-Problem orientation. By requiring schools to meet Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) for language acquisition, NCLB structurally embedded pressure for schools to push students toward a level of English proficiency with the ultimate goal of making Adequate Yearly Progress on English-only assessments. The value placed on English language proficiency was not so tacitly constructed by the architects of NCLB who overtly and deliberately removed all traces of bilingual education from federal policy: The Bilingual Education Act became the Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students Act; the Office for Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs was changed to the Office of English Language Acquisition; and the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education was changed to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (Wiley & Wright, 2004). These labels exemplify the manifestation of problem-oriented ideologies in current reform efforts whereby the acquisition of academic language becomes the primary means of improving academic achievement for emerging bilingual students.

Language Acquisition and Language Socialization. From a language acquisition perspective, students in K-12 schools are expected to gain linguistic competence in the forms of Standard American English, which has systemically become synonymous with academic language or formal English. For this reason, scholars (Bailey, 2007; Bailey and Huang, 2011; Bowers, Fitts, Quirk, and Jung, 2010; Cummins, 1979; and Schlepppegrel, 2003, and Schlepppegrel and O'Hallaron, 2011) have sought to distinguish between the features of academic and social language in order to identify the language demands of school-based tasks and to determine the forms of language that should be explicitly taught in the

classroom. For example, Schleppegrel and O'Hallaron defined academic language as "The language through which school subjects are taught and assessed (p.3)," which can be further described as "the discourse, lexical and grammatical challenges of the tasks students are asked to engage in across school subjects" (p.4). Bailey (2007) further explained that competence in academic language is required by schools for three reasons: 1) its form is recognizable to teachers; 2) it is an accepted norm for discourse; and 3) teachers expect it. Since the onset of Standards Based Reform, it is also expected as the register needed to access content and performance standards. As found in this study, teachers identified that it may be necessary for students to become competent in the language represented in writing prompts and the directions on formal assessments.

Many second language acquisition researchers take up cognitive perspectives whereby proficiency is defined as "the acquisition of the rules that bring the learner's performance into ever greater conformity with the target language- in terms of accuracy of production when compared to native speaker performance" (Larsen-Freeman as cited in Kramsch, 2002 p. 36). However, the conceptualization of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) or situational competence (Bourdieu, 1977) suggested a need for research that would create a balance between cognitive and social perspectives (Firth and Wagner, 1997). While gaining linguistic competence in the features of Standard English has grown in importance in k-12 public schools, so too has the research grounded in a language-as-a-social practice lens through which classrooms have been examined, and through which frameworks for improving classroom instruction have been empirically supported (Lantolf & Beckett, 2009). Second language acquisition research that is conducted with a language-

as-social-practice lens concerns less grammar rules and more the process by which a learner becomes socialized into a speech community (Kramsch, 2002).

Similarly, in their work on first language acquisition in early childhood, Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) distinguished between studies on language acquisition, which look at the process of gaining communicative competence, from studies on language socialization, which include examinations of the social organization of language activities. From a language socialization perspective, the development of academic language moves beyond discussions of form and function. In this way, academic language may simply be defined as “a related family of social languages” (Gee, 2005, p. 19) in that “social language is a way of using language so as to enact a particular socially situated identity” (p. 19). In this way, “academic social language” (p. 21) goes beyond the practice of defining very specific features of languages (lexical, syntactical or discursive) that are used in or across academic disciplines and that become benchmarks against which students are compared; rather, academic social language simply considers the “particular ways of being-doing intellectual inquiry” (p. 21). Further, Schleppegrell (2001) conceptualized the role of schools as “an institutionalized framework” (p.437) in which students are socialized into the ways of formal learning. The distinction between language acquisition as opposed to language socialization can affect the way we compare sub-groups of students within districts and across schools.

“In other words, to refuse to delegitimize the languages, cultures and home discourse practices of minority people is to interrogate two myths: that Standard English, or Edited American English, is the correct communicative form that should be used by all American English speakers; and that its users, particularly classroom teachers and researchers, must protect the language

from nonstandard practices. Such myths reiterate dynamics of “right”/“wrong,” “correct”/“incorrect” in the presence of multiple languages while reinforcing linguistic homogenization and the neglect of linguistic diversity. However, much such myths abounds in the presence of linguistic diversity, composition and literacy scholars must ask ourselves: What are we to do to combat such language myths and how are we to engage in this work in the space of our classrooms?” (Kinloch, 2005, p. 84)

Through the work of Smitherman (1972, 1981, 2012) and Lee (2001, 2005, 2006, 2008) we have learned that just as classroom discourse has historically excluded communities of color, there is limited research on the types of speech currently present in these communities (Lee, 2006). Because of this, Smitherman and Lee have both defined African American Vernacular English (AAVE), defended it as a valid type of academic language, while simultaneously documenting how many school districts fail to legitimize AAVE as academic (1981). Kinloch (2005) further suggests the reason why Standard American English is generally conflated with academic language may be because of the degree to which those who design schools believe that it is correct.

Silverstein (1979, as cited in Woolard, 1994) defined language ideology as “commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world” (p.235). The significance of language ideologies in the present study can be found in Behizadeh (2014) who questioned the ideology behind large-scale writing assessments. Positing that current large-scale writing assessments require students to use the conventions and mechanics of standard English, Behizadeh (2014) argued that these tests lack validity, both in construct and consequential, for culturally and linguistically diverse students. In my informal communication with Behizadeh shortly after her publication, Behizadeh stressed her belief that academic language does not have to be purely SAE. Behizadeh acknowledges with her

work the potential utility of non-standard languages in classroom spaces, and argues for more alignment between writing tasks and sociocultural theory.

A consideration of multiple perspectives on academic language, those which also include the various languages that might constitute this register, is important for two reasons: 1) it contextualizes the process of language development; and 2) it allows for an examination of the opportunities students have to engage in academic content using multiple linguistic resources (Auerbach, 1993). Socially oriented definitions of academic language have implications for how we interpret rates of language proficiency. Gee (2005) argues that because language is tied to identity, the acquisition of a new language can be perceived as a disassociation from a prior socially situated identity. The only way a child would take up this disassociation is by finding value in the new social language, or by believing that he or she will have real access to it (p.23). While Gee's (2005) claim is related to the shift students make in using academic or more formal registers to describe something that otherwise could be discussed using ordinary or everyday registers, in this dissertation I observed how, what I call "testing Discourse" has become a new social language of currency where students are socialized through and toward the use of terms such as fluency, reading levels, and proficiency in order to talk about data and meet standards in the school's data-driven culture.

Critical Work on Language Development. Because ELD frameworks under standards based reform rely heavily upon cognitively-oriented definitions of academic language that include primarily what features of language students lack, I argue, along with Firth and Wagner (1997) that a balance between cognitive and social perspectives is needed in order to integrate all dimensions of Second Language Acquisition. While social

perspectives view language acquisition in relation to social and contextual factors, in this dissertation I expand upon this by arguing that when social relations are problematic, inequitable educational opportunities affect the rights students have to learn and use language. Alastair Pennycook (2001) writes,

“A central element of Critical Applied Linguistics, therefore, is a way of exploring language in social contexts that goes beyond mere correlations between language and society and instead raises more critical questions to do with access, power, disparity, desire, difference, and resistance. It also insists on an historical understanding of how social relations came to be the way they are” (p.6).

For decades Applied Linguistics has grounded research on the teaching of second and foreign languages. As a graduate student Alastair Pennycook (1990) introduced Critical Applied Linguistics to problematize applied linguistics and make it politically accountable (Pennycook, 2001). A productive use of this approach is to question naturalized ideas, or notions that are no longer questioned (Pennycook, 2001, p. 7). In the United States, for example, Standard American English is widely known as the language of schooling and the language of testing (Bailey, 2007; Gottlieb, 2004, 2006). Because of the complex and widespread influence of Standards Based Reform, as well as the high-stake implications for English language proficiency, a multi-theoretical lens on language development is needed to uncover the policies and structures affecting rates of proficiency in academic language. Under current reform efforts, language pedagogy appears caught up in the demand for teaching the specific features of the academic language that are connected to academic standards and assessments but have little value in real life when compared to features of language(s) that help construct and connect knowledge to the extra-school community. While the need for teaching features of academic language have been normed, conversations about teaching academic language remain disassociated from the larger

social structure that determines who may speak, to whom, when, why and for what purposes.

Pennycook (2001) posits that a critical perspective can address longstanding concerns within the field of applied linguistics, which include the positivist view of language testing and the politics of pedagogy. First, Pennycook (2001) cites Shohamy (1997) in defining Critical Language Testing, which assumes “the act of language testing is not neutral. Rather it is a product and agent of cultural, social, political, educational and ideological agendas that shape the lives of individual participants, teachers, and learners” (1997, p. 2 as cited in Pennycook, 2001 p. 16). This definition sets the criteria for interpreting test scores based on the cultural validity of assessments. Thus, when tests of language proficiency are developed to measure the attainment of language standards that closely dovetail (Gottlieb, 2004) content standards that also reflect monocultural and monolingual domains of learning, the validity of those test scores must be interpreted based on the intersection of language, culture and cognition (Solano-Flores, 2012). Cummins (2000) defined academic language proficiency, as “the extent to which an individual has access to and command of the oral and written academic registers of schooling” (as cited in Cummins, 2008, p. 3). The importance of defining language proficiency is for educators to understand that even though students may be classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) or Re-classified Fluent English Proficient (R-FEP), the quality of exams used to measure English Language Proficiency don’t always adequately predict how well students could perform in the content areas (Bailey and Huang, 2011). This is especially true when the only register that counts for predicting how well a child will do in school, is the language that dovetails English-only content standards. Using these

frameworks (Gottlieb, 2004; CCSS, 2012), a child in a bilingual school still may not be deemed ready to engage in academic discourse even when he or she could do so in his or her heritage language.

Pennycook (2001) explains that the purpose of studying the politics of pedagogy is to understand how power “circulates at multiple levels” within the educational system (p.114). Citing Auerbach (1995, p. 9), Pennycook (2001) identifies that power and inequalities are structurally embedded and evident in all aspects of classroom life including the way needs assessments are made, the way curriculum is designed, the provision of materials, language use and policies, the quality of large-scale assessments, and student participation structures, etc. Just as large-scale, language-planning decisions set the stage for classroom interactions, so too does “the political content of everyday language and language learning practices” affect learner autonomy (Benson, 1997, p. 32 as cited in Pennycook, 2001, p. 116).

Within the context for this study lays the tension in the way pedagogical decisions are made that may run counter to the national reform agenda. When monocultural and monolingual domains of learning have a monopoly over language testing, academic content, and large-scale assessment systems, classrooms may turn to reflect dominant interests and reproduce such domains of learning (Pennycook, 2001). The result are classrooms that become a site of a cultural struggle (2001) where students fight to be seen as holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado-Bernal, 2002), and where education becomes centered on acquiring basic skills of isolated knowledge. Because the responsibility of teaching English Language Development is legally and ethically relegated

to these classrooms, the same political power structures are bound to have an affect on language acquisition.

Person as Instrument

My first year in a classroom was 2005—three years after NCLB was signed into law and five years after 63% of voters in Arizona passed proposition 203- English for the Children. It was also one year before the state of Arizona adopted and implemented their 4-hour ELD block for English Language Learners. While I don't know the teaching profession without the influence of NCLB's high-stakes accountability measures or Arizona's English-only education policies, I do know what it is like to spend four years struggling to provide robust educational opportunities to high school students classified as English Language Learners. These students' educational trajectories had been defined by their performance on English -only assessments. I also know what it is like to suppress my own linguistic resources while teaching, and to hide bilingual materials while our ESL classroom program was being audited by the state. In the schools where I taught, students' first and last names may have well been their performance status on the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA) and the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test. "Mr. ELL-Intermediate, AIMS Falls Far Below," had more practicality across campus than an actual name, as this classification was an algorithm for determining the classes this student would take until, most likely, he would receive a certificate of completion—not a diploma. At the time, I only had a hunch that my students who had received elementary education in their home countries were better prepared for high school and felt more validated in their academic identities than the students who were born in or arrived early to the United States. Mr. "ELL-Beginning, AIMS-untested" evoked some hope for me and my fellow

teachers who knew we had a chance to place these students on a positive track toward graduation being that they had not spent up to 9 years receiving remedial, basic skills education in language-restrictive classrooms. When a 17-year old student admits to never having read a book—in English or in Spanish, as a teacher you first wonder what you are going to do to change this, and despairingly, you also ask questions about his last 12 years of schooling. Unfortunately, making-up for missed opportunities in elementary school became the norm in my teaching experience. It also became the inspiration for this dissertation.

Conclusion

Rather than drawing upon students' home knowledge, language, and experience to inform classroom instruction, a standardized approach to education using academic language has become the primary tool mediating development. Further, because a language-as-a-problem orientation constitutes language-planning efforts under NCLB, the acquisition of academic language is seen as the remedy for the educational underachievement of Latino students classified as English Language Learners. Thus, understanding the way current definitions of and pressures to teach academic language-only is pushed upon bilingual schools is critical for identifying and improving emerging bilingual students' overall opportunities to learn.

Chapter 2

Valdés (2004) provided a framework for understanding the nature of the conversation around academic language including the multiple voices representing diverse, or even divergent paradigms. This discourse is created by researchers in the field of biliteracy, linguistics, and TESOL, in addition to politicians and practitioners. All voices in the conversation are working to define the construct of academic language and find ways of teaching it, perhaps, however, for a variety of purposes. Valdés (2004) also raises the question of the types of academic language that can be taught in classrooms, and the types of experiences and interactions students need in order to learn the language required by educational institutions (p. 103). While Valdés (2004) does not argue for certain voices, or ideologies, to be removed from the conversation, she does argue for expanding the conversation to include broad definitions of academic language in addition to those that include examinations of how “language, social class, and power” affect children’s ability to learn academic language (p. 120).

In this review of literature, I have included four bodies of research, the first of which includes a sample of studies that sought to define and measure students’ opportunities to learn across schools. Similarly, the second body of research includes one report and three empirical studies showing how language and high-stakes testing policies generally impacted opportunities specifically for students classified as English Language Learners across several states. The third body of research includes several empirical studies on the development of academic language with English Learners from those voices in the field that define academic language as an English-only construct. The final body of research includes studies from researchers who seek to define academic language as it is taught in a bilingual context. Using Proquest to search over 46 databases, my criteria included peer-reviewed studies that were published after the passage of

NCLB in 2002 using “academic language” or ALP and “English Language Learners” and NCLB as key terms. Studies were selected based upon their relevance to my research questions, and they were organized using the following categories: 1) Opportunities to Learn for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students; 2) Language Policy, High Stakes Testing, and English Language Learners- California, New York, Arizona; 3) Defining and Teaching Academic language; and 4) Academic Language in Bilingual Context: Language as a Resource.

Studies in the first two categories contribute information about how to examine emerging bilingual students’ opportunities to learn in relation to a larger sociopolitical context. Specifically, the work done by Menken (2006) relates as she examines how the effects of high-stakes accountability measures implicitly and explicitly influence language planning and policy decisions in the state of New York. Each of the studies in the second category guide the methodology used in the present study by providing frameworks for analyzing the language demands of schooling. For example, the methods used in Bailey, Butler, & Sato’s study (2007) shows how to link the language represented in content and ELD standards with the lesson plans that could be used by classroom teachers, and how teachers might identify language objectives within their lessons. The final category includes studies that relate to the present study by identifying how students’ home language can be used as a resource when developing academic language in English or when participation in school. Following each category I provided a summary along with a description of how the proposed study may contribute to these bodies of research.

Opportunities to Learn for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

Current research on opportunities to learn seek to identify the way opportunity is

structured. In her case study, Olson (2007) looked at the social organization of learning at a bilingual elementary school and found that high stakes testing had led to a standardization of instructional practices. This standardization ultimately had implications for what counted as literacy. Using Cultural Historical Activity Theory, Olson looked at the social context through which language mediation occurred. Specifically, by studying two, second grade classrooms, Olson sought to identify the instructional practices and policies influencing primary language instruction for students classified as language learners. Second grade was the focus of her observation due to the high number of English learners at this grade level and because it was the first year students would be required to take the SAT-9. Data collection included interviews of teachers, administrators and participant observations. Olson used guided participation to analyze the patterns of interaction in each classroom. Her findings revealed the alignment of both the curriculum and instructional practices with supporting the teaching basic skills. She also found that “the primary form of teacher guidance given across classrooms focused on the sequential steps of each individual instructional task instead of larger learning goals” (p. 128).

In a separate study, Turner and Celedón-Pattichis (2011) used mixed methods research to explore Latino students’ opportunities to learn math in kindergarten. The authors (2011) defined opportunities to learn to include time, quality and design (Tate, 2005, as cited in Turner and Celedón-Pattichis, 2011). Turner and Celedón-Pattichis (2011) used the constructs of time and quality to analyze for the level of opportunities present across classrooms. Time describes variables that impact whether students had the time to access grade level math. Quality is defined as strategies that positively affect student achievement (2005). For students classified as English learners and example of quality instruction may include modeling math discourse (2011, p. 150). Using a classroom observations and a pre/post test design, Celedón-Pattichis compared three

kindergarten classrooms' performance data with the types of instructional activities available in each classroom and argued that access to problem solving activities improved students opportunities to do well on assessments. In addition, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that the language environment had a significant impact on student performance such that the classroom whose students performed highest on the post-assessment was the only classroom where students received math instruction in their first language. In the other two classrooms, students received math instruction in the language they were in the process of acquiring.

In a 2007 study, Shriberg argued that while demographics is a well known variable predicting educational achievement, sparse was the conversation on the correlation between students' opportunities to learn and their rates of achievement. As such, in his study, Shriberg (2007) looked at demographics and a diverse sample of 68,210 students in Massachusetts and their opportunities to learn as defined as a reflection of the types of courses they had taken. Using extant data on the performance of students on Massachusetts' 2001 10th grade Language Arts and Math exam, Shriberg classified students as either at-risk or not at-risk. A student was considered at risk if he or she was either in special education, classified as limited English proficient, had a migrant classification, eligible for free and/or reduced-priced lunch, self-identified as African-American, Latino or Native American. Using predictive modeling and logistic regression, Shriberg found not only that not at-risk students had greater access to course options associated with higher rates of performance on the state test (p. 67), but that access to particular courses was a more powerful predictor of performance than demographic risk factors taken alone (p. 69). Shriberg's (2007) findings have implications for educators who should constantly monitor the type of enrollment in course offerings in order to better describe and consider students' opportunities to learn.

Diamond (2012) examined the link between high stakes accountability policies, school organization and instruction in Chicago elementary schools. Citing Espeland (1998), these linkages are referred to as recoupling. Diamond's (2012) central argument was that high stakes accountability policies do affect school organization, however the ultimate impact on classrooms may not be in the way policy makers had intended and the impacts may vary in terms of subject matter. For example, Diamond (2012) argues that schools with poor student outcomes may engage in practices to improve performance status but not student learning. He calls instruction in these schools "didactic" (p. 5) in that it entails more recitation of basic skills and more seat work. Diamond (2012) used data from case-studies at 8 elementary schools shortly after the Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act (1995) initiated high-stakes accountability policies in the city. Case-studies at 8 schools included classroom observations and interviews in 105 classrooms and with over 40 teachers. In addition, Diamond (2012) used social network survey data for information on whom teachers called upon for help when making instructional decisions. Findings revealed that math and language arts teachers were more likely to refer to district or state standards when planning instruction than science and social studies teachers whose subjects were not tested. Further testing and standards were found to influence instruction in terms of changes to the curriculum sequencing and pacing. Finally, Diamond (2012) documented that students in working-class schools had fewer educational opportunities compared to students from middle and upper-middle class schools. In working-class schools, students had little to no access to activities that required higher-order thinking, problem solving and complex communication. Diamond (2012) concludes by mentioning that educational resources are distributed unequally across schools serving diverse student populations.

Summary. Jeannie Oakes (2005) identified two features of schools that affect students' opportunities to learn—time to learn and quality of instruction. Considering time to learn and the construct of tracking, high-performing students and low-performing students may have identical time spent on certain tasks. However, Oakes (2005) indicates that simply providing students with time to learn is not exactly a straightforward indicator of achievement. This may be due, in large part, to the feature of quality of instruction, which goes beyond normal behaviors of good teachers such as the use of a variety of activities, materials, and attitude (2005). As seen in the above studies (Olson, 2007; Turner and Celedón-Pattichis, 2011; Shriberg, 2007; and Diamond, 2012) opportunities to learn vary greatly across schools in terms of the social organization of learning, the language environment, and the level of alignment with standards and testing. Together, these studies contribute information not only on inequitable learning opportunities across schools, but also on how some scholars are defining and measuring students' opportunities to learn.

Language Policy, High Stakes Testing, and English Language Learners- California, New York, Arizona

The following reports document how high-stakes accountability measures influence many levels of instruction including what is taught, how it is taught, and in what language it is taught (Menken, 2006, p. 537). The found changes in curriculum and language of instruction as well as the quality of instruction, represent the local impact of NCLB on all students and particularly for English learners, and especially those in states with English-only language policies thereby impacting student opportunities to learn.

California. The article by Gándara and Baca (2008) is a report on how the intersection of NCLB measures and language policies impact schools in California. Their findings may generalize to

other states with English-only policies and large percentages of students classified as English Learners. Using secondary data sources Gándara and Baca describe several school districts in California in relation to local and national language policies and education reform measures. The districts selected serve large numbers of language learners and were also labeled as failing. Gándara and Baca (2008) suggest that a failing label means these districts' ELL students "cannot pass standardized tests that are administered in a language that they do not understand" (p. 202). Gándara and Baca (2008) concluded that California's English-only policies and NCLB's high-stakes accountability measures resulted in "inadequate and incomprehensible" (p. 201) instructional practices used with ELLs.

One major source of inadequate instruction was found as a result of the passage of Proposition 227, California's English-Only Law. Through the implementation of Prop 227, ELLs became rapidly assigned to mainstream classrooms where teachers were not trained to teach language (2008). Because NCLB does not recognize English as Second Language as a specific content area, districts in California, like other states, had little incentive to find and train "highly qualified" ESL teachers. Moreover, while teachers were supposed to be implementing a Structured English Immersion model, the state lacked a solid definition of what SEI instruction should look like, resulting in a great deal of confusion among teachers. Gándara & Baca (2008) also found that even those teachers who had adequate experience and training as a bilingual teacher, were penalized and "threatened with lawsuits if they used the skills they had acquired" (p. 204). As a result, the teachers from prior studies (2008) reported feeling that they were unable to meet the needs of the ELLs in their classrooms.

The implementation of NCLB provisions only made matters worse as those teachers faced great pressures to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) by improving student

performance on large-scale assessments given only in English (Gándara & Baca, 2008). For English Learners who were expected to take those tests after three years of being enrolled in a U.S. public school, Gándara & Baca argued that it was unrealistic that language learners would attain the level of academic language language proficiency needed to pass those assessments. As a result, Gándara & Baca (2008) have documented that in California the curricular offerings were narrowing to include only those subjects tested, and, for English Learners, teaching the test was a necessary practice to avoid facing sanctions for failing to meet AYP. Finally, even if bilingual education were to be restored in California, Gándara and Baca (2007) concluded that the pressures placed on passing English-only assessments under NCLB have meant that there was little incentive to provide native language instruction or to sustain bilingual programs.

Pacheco's dissertation work (2005) empirically examined what Gándara and Baca (2008) described above by analyzing how accountability frameworks transformed school-based practices. She used George Orwell's concept of "double-think" as a metaphor for that study arguing that what teachers articulated to be their beliefs about educational practices differed from what teachers actually said and did as they bought into narrow definitions of performance and educational success for English Learners in California. Pacheco contrasts critical literacies—those that engage students, leverage their experiences, and show them how to "right their school careers" (p.5)—with reductive practices that narrow definitions of successful readers by emphasizing mastery of basic skills. Pacheco also involved herself deeply with the school site where she did her research, serving as a volunteer support staff for the faculty for twelve months, (this was a year-around school). In doing that, she immersed herself in the entirety of school practices through her close work with teachers, reading specialists, paraprofessionals, administrators and even students' families. Pacheco's research questions were as follows: 1)

What mediates reading achievement in primary language classrooms for English Learners? 2) What were the opportunities to learn reading and content for English Learners? 3) What institutional (state, district, school, classroom) characteristics and beliefs facilitate or constrain language and literacy development and reading achievement for English Learners? 4) How do the beliefs and practices of current educational reforms align (or not) with district, school, and classroom beliefs and practices?

Overall, Pacheco wanted to examine how new reforms converged with teachers' beliefs and ideologies (2005). Grounded in a Cultural-Historical perspective, Pacheco wanted to observe social practices in a way that allowed for her to understand why practices were organized the way they were. Additionally, CHAT allowed her to understand the multiple ways learning was mediated by examining activity as situated within a larger context. By looking at remediation versus re-mediation, Pacheco observed how reductive notions of literacy, while helping students perform better on tests, limited students' opportunities to learn and, as a result, their academic trajectories were narrowed.

Pacheco's research design was a qualitative case study. As mentioned, Pacheco spent an entire year volunteering and observing at her dissertation site collecting over 100 hours of observation data. Data collection included the following: 1-Archived data (historical texts and media reports) focusing on key political and educational issues in the community; 2- Participant observation & video documentation focusing on two full instructional cycles of four teachers at various grade levels; 3- Data analysis of performance data for the year before and after her observation period; 4- Interviews (1 teacher focus group, and personal interviews of principals, support staff, and district-level administrators) focusing on people's beliefs and ideologies about

best practices along with reform efforts; 5- Document analysis, which included teacher work samples of in-class literacy tasks and workbook exercises.

Pacheco reduced large amounts of data by transcribing interviews, and using content logs to document the videotaped sessions she observed. Data was later coded and analyzed in multiple ways, for example, she used critical literacies to compare reductive teaching practices, and she used hybrid language practices to compare to the discursive patterns she observed in classes. Her four main conclusions are summarized below:

- 1- “School-like Correctness:” Pacheco found evidence that while teachers seemed to have a certain degree of flexibility with their English Language Arts curriculum, they diminished this flexibility by aligning with state standards and using district-prescribed programs. Pacheco articulated the difference between teaching to standards versus teaching through standards, arguing the former limited opportunities for critical literacy practices that could promote “social justice in disenfranchised communities” (p.73).
- 2- “Narrowing Repertoires:” In this chapter, Pacheco reveals the “double-think” teachers exhibit as they restrict learning by using only standards-driven, and English-dominant practices (p.101). Additionally, teachers used assessment outcomes to identify student problem areas, and design instruction to attend to these areas rather than designing instruction that teaches to students’ potential. In this way, instructional practices are reductive and narrow the opportunities provided to children.
- 3- “We do what they tell us.” An interesting finding from this chapter showed how due to evasive accountability frameworks, teacher experience did not guarantee a

positive effect on student outcomes, suggesting indeed that top-down reform has belittled the skills of experience teachers, turning them into robots. Pacheco attributed expertise to teachers, regardless of years spent teaching, who were able to leverage their personal experience and provide opportunities for rich literacy experience in spite of top-down reform efforts. Students in these classes performed well on measures testing their reading abilities in their primary language. Unfortunately, this type of success is not recognized by the state in their accountability framework.

- 4- “Performed-Positioning:” In contrast to teachers whose ideologies and expertise allowed them to provide opportunities for rich literacy experiences, Pacheco in this chapter describes what she found of teachers whose deficit orientations to “poor students of color” (p.196) were reflected in practices that modified (rather than enhanced) curriculum into the teaching of isolated knowledge and decontextualized skills and activities. This finding adds to what we know about how accountability frameworks not only narrow instruction, but also redefine what teachers see as successful readers. The teacher Pacheco says that fits this category, identified the attainment of basic reading skills as “successful reading” for the poor students of color in this teacher’s classroom.

New York. In New York, Kate Menken (2006) found evidence similar to what Gándara and Baca (2008) and Pacheco (2005) reported in California. In her dissertation, Menken conducted a yearlong case study of 10 high schools on how NCLB accountability measures impacted language policies at a local level. Specifically, Menken’s (2006) research questions included: 1) In what ways have reforms emphasizing high-stakes tests influenced the

instructional practices and the learning experiences of ELLs in high school? and 2) What are the language policy implications of the focus on assessment? To answer these questions, Menken used interview data, conducted classroom observations, analyzed state and district policy documents as well as student graduation/drop-out/retention data. In total, Menken interviewed 128 people including school administrators, students, ESL and bilingual teachers, and guidance counselors.

Menken's findings support the notion of teaching to the test as a real phenomenon. In one way, Menken (2006) reported that schools change their language policies in order to prepare students for passing the state's Regents test. While most schools began increasing the amount of English instruction, some schools increased the amount of native language instruction, but both types of changes were made to improve test scores. Second, Menken (2006) found that schools were operating under implicit English-only policies. Unlike California, New York is not an English-only state, yet the majority of schools in her study increased the amount of ESL block times from one block to two recognizing the need to accelerate English language acquisition rates in order to help students pass English Language Arts exams. Third, Menken reported that changes were made to the ESL curriculum so that they mirrored more closely the English Language Arts curriculum. One example is a shift from teaching oral language development to teaching literary analysis. Not only does Menken (2006) report a change in the curriculum, but also through teacher interviews she found that instructional practices often include drill-and-kill activities to better prepare students for tests. One other change reported in Menken's (2006) study was that teachers of math, science and social studies at bilingual high schools began to shift the language of instruction to match the language of testing, when they otherwise could have provided content instruction in another language.

Arizona. Wright & Choi (2006) documented how restrictive language policies (Proposition 203- English For the Children) as well as NCLB accountability measures have impacted educational opportunities for English Learners in Arizona. Their study contributes specifically how teachers perceived the impact of these policies. Wright & Choi (2006) selected schools with 30 or more third-grade students classified as English Learners. Their rationale was that 30 students was the minimum group size in a grade on which the state would report data. Additionally, schools with larger proportions of ELL students were likely to be better-trained teachers who were knowledgeable about the needs of ELLs and were more aware about local language and accountability policies. In total, 59 schools were identified, all principals of these schools were contacted, and 44 agreed to recommend a third grade teacher who had a large number of ELL students in his or her classroom to participate. Ultimately, 44 teachers were then invited to join the study, and 40 teachers elected to participate. All but four counties within the state of Arizona were represented in this sample.

Wright & Choi conducted a phone survey with each of the participating teachers using both open-ended and selected response items. The average interview lasted 45 minutes, and all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The author's noted that few teachers were content to provide a single answer to the selected response items; however, these questions provided the grounds for in-depth discussions around open-ended questions (2006). Qualitative data from the open-ended response items were "interwoven" with the quantitative data from selected response survey items (2006, p. 6). SPSS was used to calculate the results of the survey, which consisted of 115 items within 11 categories: 1) Background information on the teacher's current class, including total number of students and number classified as ELLs, and the official designation (bilingual, sheltered English immersion, mainstream, or other) of the classroom; 2)

Views on Proposition 203; 3) Effects of Proposition 203 on their school's instructional programs for ELL students; 4) Views on high stakes testing for ELLs; 5) Effects of high stakes testing on content areas taught to ELLs; 6) Effects of high stakes testing on classroom instruction/practices for ELL students; 7) Behaviors ELL student exhibit while taking high stakes tests; 8) Accommodations provided for ELL students when taking the test; 9) Impact of school labels; and 10) Background information on the participant's teaching experience and certification (2006, p. 7). 11 open-ended response items were coded and analyzed using Nvivo software based upon themes that emerged during this portion of the interview.

It is relevant to note that data collection for this study occurred four years (2004-2005 school year) after the passage of Proposition 203 in November 2000, which was just a few months prior to the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. Statistical data revealed that of the 40 teachers interviewed over 75% of these teachers had over 5 years of teaching experience, 14 teachers designated themselves as mainstream classroom teachers, 19 as Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) teachers, 5 as bilingual, and 2 as unsure. Of the 33 mainstream and SEI teachers, 10 teachers did not possess a full-ESL endorsement (2 of these 10 reported having a provisional endorsement), this is not surprising as these endorsements were not required prior to NCLB. In all classrooms, ELL students had only a 30% passing rate on the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) high-stakes test.

Wright & Choi (2006) concluded that they found no evidence that Prop 203's English-only mandates had improved education for ELLs in the state of Arizona. Teachers reported to hold views contrary to those of the state about language requirements in schools, and they overall felt that proposition 203 restricted the instructional approaches that could benefit ELL students. Additionally, Wright & Choi found that English-only, high-stakes testing also had not improved

education opportunities for ELL students in Arizona. While teachers reported that accountability was important, they were aware of the “psychometric problems” (p. 45) with the tests, and that pressures to improve performance compelled many of them to spend substantial time preparing students to take the test. Teachers also reported observing that little accommodations were used during testing and that students’ levels of language proficiency affected how well they could participate in large-scale assessments.

Summary. These four reports, (Gándara & Baca, 2008; Pacheco (2005); Menken, 2006; Wright & Choi, 2006) represent three geographical diverse states serving large numbers of students classified as English Language Learners (New York, California and Arizona). Regardless of the official language policy, teachers in all three states reported feeling pressure to adjust instruction to prepare their students who were language learners for English-only assessments. Additionally, teachers either reported or were found to be ill prepared for the rapid assignment of ELL students to mainstream classrooms. California (due to Prop 227) and Arizona (due to Prop 203) forced the devaluing of bilingual teachers who were most prepared to provide language support to their students, but who were no longer allowed to use the skills they possessed. In New York, de facto language policies also devalued bilingual teachers when emphasis was taken off of bilingual programs by schools that increased the amount of English-only instruction time to accelerate rates of English acquisition. In conclusion, the major impact of NCLB on students classified as English Language Learners has been the rapid assignment of these students to classrooms where teachers have been grossly underprepared to meet their needs and where instruction and curricular offerings have shifted, or narrowed, to prepare them to take high-stakes tests “in a language they don’t understand” (Gándara & Baca, 2008).

Together, these studies show how NCLB and English-only state mandates have limited opportunities to learn for ELLs. While the present study is not situated in an English-only state, the school site is under pressure to prepare students for English-only assessments. As such, findings from my study reveals how a bilingual school may face the same challenges. In addition, the proposed study contributes information about how these mandates narrow students' opportunities in relation to language development specifically, how emerging bilingual students had chances to develop academic language in English and in Spanish.

Defining and Teaching Academic language

One of the ways the research community has sought to improve educational opportunities for students classified as English Learners has been to identify the language demands of schooling to help inform instruction based upon the language students need to access content standards and large-scale assessments. Explicitly teaching academic language was thought to ensure that all students had the language skills to succeed in academic contexts (Bailey, Butler, & Sato, 2007). The following studies addressed the way academic language is defined as well as provide recommendations for teaching this register.

In their study, Bailey, Butler & Sato (2007) acknowledged the implicit demand for schools and districts to align their ELD standards with content standards as well as with language proficiency assessments according to Title III in the NCLB Act. To that end, the authors sought to evaluate protocols that could measure “the degree to which content standards, such as English language arts and science, overlap with English language development standards in terms of implicit and explicit language demands placed on students” (p. 53). Their method was to develop, test and report on a protocol for making standards-to-standards linkages (content to ELD), as well as standards to instructional materials linkages (content standards to lesson plans). Bailey and her colleagues evaluated the language and science content standards in the State of California at the

5th grade level, 5th grade was selected based on the fact that this grade-level represents an “endpoint” (p. 57) in terms of a student’s language development in elementary school, and also because at 5th grade, students are in the position of reading to learn, with science being a very language-rich content. Research questions included: 1) To what degree do state ELD standards reflect the language demands of state academic content standards? 2) To what degree is each protocol effective in yielding evidence that will help states meet the requirements of the NCLB Act? And 3) What considerations and refinements are needed, if any? (p.57).

One protocol was developed to rate the language demands of ELD and content standards documents based on the required language skills and language functions found with the standards themselves. They provided the example of a standard asking students to prepare a persuasive writing piece. In this case, persuasion is the language function. Next, raters would determine the linguistic complexity required by the standard as well as the language modalities (reading, writing, listening and speaking) to be used. Finally, a “crosswalk instrument” (p. 62) was used to compare the ratings of language demands, modalities, and language complexity across standards documents. Finally, the results of the standards-to-standards analysis was used to provide a linkage between the standards themselves and instructional materials (specifically, the research team evaluated lesson plans) using the same protocol. This was done to validate the language demands of the standards, as often, language actually used for imparting and acquiring knowledge at the classroom level presents additional language demands. This step identifies more clearly for teachers, the language complexity of certain standards based upon how they are actually taught (2007).

An important aspect of this study was finding and training raters who would use the protocol to conduct both types of analyses. Raters were selected based on their academic content

knowledge, test development experience, alignment expertise, and knowledge of ELD (2007, p. 62). These raters were then trained on the protocol. Interrater reliability was achieved when consensus was reached on the language demands and linguistic complexity of select standards.

In answering their research questions, Bailey, Butler and Sato (2007) found that the language demands of the 5th grade California, science content standards were reflected in the corresponding ELD standards. They note, however, that only 34% of the standards were evaluated because 66% of the content standards were deemed to have insufficient information to identify their language demands. At the classroom level, the research team found the greatest relationships between language at the syntax level and language function across standards and lesson plans. The team found that the vocabulary mentioned in the ELD standards was actually rated at lower levels of complexity than the vocabulary included in lesson plan documents. Overall, Baily et al., (2007) concluded that it must be considered that only 34% of the standards were actually rated, but that in general, their protocol could be useful for helping states meet NCLB requirement by creating and using effective ELD standards. Refinements in the protocol were necessary to separate language and cognitive functions, to better identify the language skills required by the standards, and to better understand academic vocabulary in relation to language proficiency, (learning a vocabulary word in the context of a particular unit is more a question of content knowledge than language proficiency). Additionally, standards could be improved by making language skills (grammatical structures, and word usage) more identifiable.

Ernst-Slavit and Mason (2011) investigated the oral academic language students were exposed to by their teachers during three content area classes (math, social studies, and language arts). Acknowledging academic language proficiency as a key factor in creating the achievement gap between “high- and low-performing” subgroups of students (2011, p. 430), the purpose of this

study was to examine teacher talk as an essential aspect of teaching and learning. Using ethnographic and sociolinguistic methods (p. 432), the authors of this study conducted “systematic and sustained” observations in five classrooms across three school districts in southwest Washington to study the nature of what was said during classroom interactions (p. 432). Participants included teachers who met the following criteria: were 4th or 5th grade teachers; had at least 5 ELL students of varying language proficiency levels; had at least 5 years of teaching experience; and had received a specialized ESL education. Ultimately, all participants were native-English speaking, white, middle-class women who were “highly regarded by peers and administrators” (p.433).

Data collection included teacher interviews, classroom observations, videotaped recordings, digital audio recordings, photographs and field notes (p. 433), 12 hours of content instruction was observed in one week per teacher. Aligned with findings regarding narrowing curriculum (Menken, 2006) mentioned in the previous section, Ernst-Slavit and Mason (2011) reported finding no science instruction by any of the teachers during their observations. As data were analyzed, the researchers mapped certain sections of data to be transcribed and coded. Particularly, they looked for academic language use, lost opportunities for academic language use (they provide the example of a math teacher saying, “bottom number” rather than denominator), use of social language, use of confusing language such as idioms, culture-specific terms, and homophones. The researchers indicated a use of a sociolinguistic/sociocultural analysis to review these sections of data in context to capture the entire interaction including events that proceeded or followed each segment of data, gestures or other non-verbal cues used including visuals.

Ernst-Slavit and Mason (2011) concluded that students had very little opportunity to hear

academic language used during content instruction, and that a great deal of confusing language (as defined above) may have interfered with their abilities to understand the material being presented. Of these two findings, the former was determined based on the actual percentage of academic-specific words used during a lesson. The authors give the example of a teacher's talk during a 45-minute lesson contained 90% non-academic vocabulary or social language, (example: "Is that top number bigger than that bottom number") (p. 434). The author's also accounted for missed opportunities for students to engage in academic discourse. The authors used an example of a conversation between students and their teacher during their history lesson about defining a slave. In this interaction, the teacher affirms all of the students' descriptions, but does not offer the opportunity for students to practice discourse for presenting alternative points of view (p. 435). The sociolinguistic analysis lead to the conclusion that the teacher aided in the construction of discourse that affirmed the "dominant narrative" (p. 435) by using the text as a complete fact, rather than challenging or providing a critical analysis of concepts presented in the text. Finally, the authors found that across the five classrooms, the use of "opaque terms" may have confused students who were English learners. "Opaque terms" was defined as "words or phrases that can be difficult to decipher such as deictic pronouns (that, there, over there), homophones and homonyms (p. 435-436). In one example, the author's discussed how one teacher's metalinguistic, mini-lesson on the multiple meanings of the word "mean" (average, and not nice) was complicated when in moments after the mini-lesson, she inadvertently used a third, alternative meaning of this word (mean=to signify). While mean=average was the academic vocabulary word, alternative meanings, including one that was not taught, could have confused students in learning how to calculate an average. Overall, academic language that is taught, or left un-taught, can complicate students' opportunities to participate in classroom instruction.

As Bailey et al., (2007) described in the above referenced study, an element of linguistic skills demanded by schools includes morphology (as well as phonemes, vocabulary words, phrasal words, conventions, and sound-symbol correspondence) (p. 64). In their 2012 study, Kieffer and Lesaux evaluated the affects of instruction on different aspects of morphological awareness for “language minority” children and native English speaking children. Kieffer and Lesaux (2012) conducted a quasi-experimental study that included 133 language minority children and 349 native English speaking students in grade 6, across 7 urban middle schools where they measured the effects of an 18-week intervention where teachers implemented prescribed best-practices for teaching the relational and syntactic aspects of morphological awareness. This study was a component of a larger study that had already found the intervention to have a positive affect on students’ lexical knowledge, resulting in greater overall reading comprehension (Lesaux et. al, 2010). The research team used data from the 2010 study and reanalyzed it for a morphological awareness outcome, (the Real Word Morphological Decomposition task) and they incorporated additional data not reported, (the Nonword derivation task) from the 2010 study. Outcomes from both of these data sources were then compared. Research questions included: 1) To what extent does a teacher-delivered multicomponential academic language intervention have impacts on syntactic and/or relational aspects of morphological awareness in grade 6, and are the impacts greater for syntactic or relational aspects? 2) Are the impacts on morphological awareness equal in magnitude for language minority learners and for their native English-speaking classmates, and do language minority learners demonstrate higher impacts on syntactic and/or relational aspects, relative to their classmates?” (2012, p. 524).

In the 2010 study, Lesaux et al. sampled 482 students, 75% of whom were classified as

English-Language Learners. For 18 weeks, the treatment group received instruction based upon the Academic language Instruction for ALL Students (ALIAS), which consisted of eight, two week units, and two one week review units. During each unit a total of 7.5 hours of instruction was provided on target academic vocabulary words appearing frequently in the text and across disciplines in addition to 13 different, high frequency suffixes. Each morphology lesson included a review of the suffix, a discussion about the meaning of the word, the meaning in relation to the root word, and the part of speech. Collaboratively, students and teachers would take the suffix and pair it with words found in prior units or in personal experience to make new words, and these words were recorded on chart paper. Finally, students read a text with incorrect usage of the target vocabulary and were asked to make corrections. In the control group, observations were made using the same observation protocol used in ALIAS classrooms. The research team found that instruction looked very different between the treatment and control groups with virtual no attention paid toward morphology.

Students in both treatment and control groups were given the following pre-and post tests: The Real Word Morphological Decomposition Task to measure relational aspects and Non-word Morphological Derivation task to measure the syntactical aspects of morphological awareness. A third measure, item response theory modeling, was used to account for the relationship between these two aspects as they were expected to be highly correlated due to the fact that they both measure aspects of morphological awareness. Data from these assessments was analyzed using multi-level modeling to account for the effect of the treatment and the performance of Language Minority students versus native-English speaking students. Results indicated no statistically significant difference between treatment and control groups on the pre-test, however, the treatment did have a statistically significant positive effect on both aspects of

morphological awareness. The treatment was also found to have a significant effect on Language Minority students in both aspects, while positive effects for native-English speaking students was found only in relation to relational aspects of morphological awareness. The author's concluded that teaching morphological awareness is beneficial to all students. Additionally, the Language Minority students may benefit more from instruction based on the syntactical aspect possibly because their levels of proficiency was far lower than that of native-English speaking students at the onset. This suggests that the intervention has a greater benefit for students with lower levels of English proficiency.

Fang (2006) contributed research on the language demands of reading in science classrooms. Fang's purpose was to identify linguistic challenges in science texts and to provide suggestions for teaching strategies that help students overcome these challenges. The focal grades for Fang's study was middle-school, where reading to learn becomes the instructional goal more so than learning to read as in grades K-5 (2006). Fang wrote that the challenge of school becomes making a successful shift from reading narrative styles of writing to more expository texts as found in science classrooms. Expository texts tend to contain more academic language than what Fang calls everyday language. Fang states that academic language differs from everyday language in lexical, syntactic, and semantic features especially in science when specific language has been developed "to meet the needs of scientific methods as well as those of scientific arguments and theories" (p. 493).

Fang's article (2006) is a report of the work he conducted under a reading, math and science initiative grant funding by the United States Department of Education. Fang identifies and describes many linguistic features present in science textbooks, and suggests instructional techniques to help teachers address them. The first feature is technical vocabulary, which is

prevalent in Science but occur rarely in everyday contexts (or even in other academic contents). These words, he describes, are multi-morphemic and have differing meanings when used in science class (he gives the examples school, fault, and volume). Likewise, prepositions, conjunctions, and pronouns can also have different meanings when used in Science or be used in texts as connecting words. In such instances students may struggle to find the noun corresponding to the pronoun/relative pronoun, especially when the noun is a specialized science vocabulary term. Omitted terms or phrases, ellipses, can be problematic for students struggling to comprehend a text that is lacking relative pronouns and auxiliary verbs. One improvement suggested by Fang is to include the word “that” or “that is.” Fang (2006) provides the example: “A diagram called an energy pyramid...” can be made more comprehensible when written as “a diagram [that is] called an energy pyramid...” (p. 498). Subordinate clauses, prepositional phrases, abstract nouns, complex sentences and use of passive voice are all subtleties present in academic science texts that are problematic and hinder comprehension for all students, especially those who are language learners.

After his analysis of middle-school science texts, Fang (2006) suggests the following pedagogical techniques to help students overcome these challenging linguistic features. Generally, helping students become aware that these features exist enable students to understand the structure of their text. This, in addition to frequently used comprehension strategies such as using KWL charts and reciprocal teaching strategies while reading, will provide extra assistance for students trying to read in Science. One additional technique includes vocabulary building exercises especially those that teach prefixes, root words, and suffices. Creating noun charts that help students understand “lengthy nouns” (2006) such as “a group of water-loving animals called crocodilians” as opposed to just “a group of crocodilians.” (p. 511). Fang also suggests

strategies for helping students become active readers such as creating sentence strips and developing awareness of signposts (italicized words/phrases). Fang concludes that explicitly teaching these features is required, because mere exposure to these features in science texts is not enough to facilitate comprehension (p. 516).

Summary. Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act called for states to develop English Language Development standards. NCLB with its emphasis on standards and high-stakes accountability measures also created the incentive for ELD standards to match content and performance standards. The first step in the process has been to adequately define the language demands of schooling between and across content areas and then establish the criteria to measure the alignment between ELD and content standards. Bailey et. al. (2007) and others have lead the field in defining academic language. This step has been critical work for educators who have increasingly large numbers of students classified as English Language Learners, with little understanding about how to teach language or what characterizes academic language (Gándara & Baca, 2008). The studies in this category all contribute information about the forms and features of academic language and the linguistic complexity of certain academic tasks. They also offer research-tested methods for teaching aspects of academic language to improve the academic performance of English Learners. However, as Ernst-Slavit and Mason (2011) point out, students still have varying degrees of opportunities to hear academic language from their teachers and are often confused by the subtleties language in the form of idioms, homophones and other “opaque” features that make learning more difficult for English learners in mainstream classrooms.

This study contributes to this research by identifying whether or not teachers can identify the language demands of standards and in the lessons they were teaching. Bailey et. al (2007) found

that the vast majority of standards they reviewed had insufficient information to identify their language demands. It would be expected, then, that teachers would also have difficulty identifying language objectives as they design lessons to teach to these standards. Second, while research on academic language has been essential for helping to identify the language demands of schooling, it also lends itself to discussions that only describe the language that English Learners lack. Because 86% of school-aged (ages 5-17) Latino children are reported to speak English and Spanish or English-only at home⁴, the present study documents the language resources “ELLs” are thought to be lacking and how these two languages may be used together to support the acquisition of academic language.

Academic Language in Bilingual Context: Language as a Resource

Olmedo (2003) presents research on the communicative strategies of emerging bilingual kindergarten students in school. Her study draws upon psycholinguistic research on child language, research on the relationship between bilingualism and cognition, and research on second language learning in academic contexts. Generally, she posits that peer interaction benefits young students especially those who are participating in classrooms where they are expected to use their second or additional language. Olmedo’s case study took place in a dual language immersion magnet school in Chicago where the majority of students were Hispanic and qualified for free or reduced lunch. In kindergarten, 80% of instructional time occurred in Spanish and 20% occurred in English. The classroom consisted of 21 kindergarten students and a teacher who was a fluent, but non-native speaker of Spanish. Overall, 12 of these 21 students participated in Olmedo’s study, 6 of these children were Hispanic, and used Spanish as their

⁴ Pew Hispanic Research Center (2011). Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2011 (Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of 2000 Census (5% IPUMS) and 2011 American Community Survey (1% IPUMS)).

primary home language; three children were white, monolingual English speakers; two children were African-American, monolingual English speakers; and 1 child spoke Portuguese and was becoming trilingual in the Spanish-English immersion program.

Olmedo collected 22 hours of videotaped and 14 hours of audiotaped classroom lesson and activities between October and May of one academic year. Episodes were recorded as they naturally occurred in the classroom in order to capture normal interactions between students (p. 148). The videotaped and audiotaped classroom lesson and activities were analyzed alongside field notes and documents provided to Olmedo by the classroom teacher. Olmedo analyzed her data by identifying the situation, context and the topics being discussed. She made outline summaries of each video and later transcribed pertinent sections of the recordings. Olmedo looked for breakdowns in communication between students and the teacher or between students and their peers. She then looked to see if and how other students intervened to repair the breakdown. In these instances, she documented what strategies students employed as they intervened, such as code-switching, paraphrasing, or translating. Other instances of classroom interactions were analyzed to document communication tasks including story retelling, picture identification, sentence repetition, and sentence completion tasks (p. 149). Finally, the 12 participating students were interviewed to determine their perceptions of their language environment and their attitudes toward languages.

Olmedo's findings reveal four types of strategies, which she calls "bilingual echos," used by bilingual children as they aided in the breakdown in communication in academic contexts. Strategy 1, translating, was characterized by students paraphrasing or code-switching. Strategy 2, scaffolding, included providing verbal cues and paralinguistic cues. Strategy 3, modeling the behavior as characterized by students using gestures or modeling the response, and Strategy 4,

interpreting contextual clues or situational cues to help aid in comprehension. These strategies developed as a result of students demonstrating four requisite steps: 1) the student as a language mediator must understand the “communicative intent in whatever language”; 2) the child must ascertain that his or her peer is having trouble with communication; 3) the child must be able to determine a strategy that would help remedy the communicative breakdown; and 4) the child must successfully be able to use such strategy (p. 150-151). Olmedo also identified “pre-fabricated language and linguistic routines” (p. 151) that created the space for these strategies to be learned and used. Pre-fabricated language includes those used in regular, reoccurring, classroom routines, procedures and tasks that are easy to predict and participate in using the strategies listed above. Olmedo findings reveal that bilingual children are able to use multiple strategies to facilitate comprehension of academic activities beyond mastery of academic language. Children as young as five or six become proficient in drawing upon their linguistic resources to remedy communicative breakdowns and are even aware of how and when to remedy situations when their peers are struggling. This study documents how collaborative techniques that draw upon students’ multiple linguistic resources enable children to help each other participate in challenging academic tasks.

Lucero (2012) looked at the academic language demands faced by emerging bilingual children in a first grade, dual language classroom. In her study, Lucero defines emerging bilingual children as those who are learning two languages simultaneously (p.278). Lucero views academic language proficiency from the perspective that academic language is never fully acquired as all students, English learners or not, continue to learn and develop language at various rates. For the purposes of this study, the author takes up a functional linguistics framework understanding that language develops according to a particular purpose. This

framework allows for an analysis of language functions as “the goals a speaker is trying to accomplish through specific language structures and vocabulary” (p. 278).

Data for this study were collected during the 2009-2010 academic year at a public, K-5 international school in the Pacific Northwest. At the time of the study, the school was in its second year of implementation of a dual language program. Lucero reported that of the students enrolled at the site, 25% spoke Spanish as a first language, 42% of students received ESL services, and 69% qualified for free or reduced lunch, this school also had the second largest ESL population in the district (p.279). Lucero conducted participant observations in three first grade classrooms, observing complete instructional units in each classroom. Of these three classrooms, one teacher provided the Spanish component of the dual language program, and two teachers provided the English component. There was a strict separation of languages where as 50% of the children’s day was taught in English and the other half was taught in Spanish. There were 27 students participating in the study, 13 were native Spanish speakers, 13 were native English speakers, and one child was considered to be a simultaneous bilingual student. Lucero (2012) reports that the children’s language proficiency in English and Spanish varied greatly. Data included audio recordings of classroom observations, multiple interviews with each teacher and with administrators, and the school’s ESL specialist, as well as curricular documents, which she analyzed for language demands, language goals and expectations (p. 280).

Lucero (2012) found that across language environments, there were three categories of language functions: 1) define and describe; 2) compare and contrast; and 3) predict and hypothesize. These functions were found over the course of the entire academic year and across content areas as well. Lucero also identified several tensions in the children’s development of academic language. First, one teacher in the English-medium classroom admitted to letting

students with lower levels of English proficiency “opt out of oral participation in small groups” (p. 285). This was done to protect the students’ socio-emotional well being by not putting them on the spot. Lucero considered this as a lost opportunity for these students to develop academic language, she felt that by allowing these students to “opt out,” the teacher was allowing them to participate in small groups without having to use academic language (p.285). The implication, which Lucero later observed, was one Spanish speaking student who took advantage of this practice, and never opted-into classroom discussions. In the Spanish classroom, the teacher asked students to write collaborative pieces. This forced students to practice oral language, as being able to identify vocabulary and construct syntactically correct writing was key to participation. Lucero (2012) did mention that some students, who chose not to participate in group work, missed this opportunity for oral language development. Another tension identified by Lucero (2012) was that students’ opportunities to learn academic language depended on their teacher’s knowledge of academic language and their abilities to teach it. Additionally, for emerging bilingual children, Lucero (2012) called attention to the missed opportunities for teachers “to facilitate cross-content and cross-language academic language development”, (p. 287) citing that because the three types of language functions were found across language environments, students would benefit from “meaningful and systematic instruction” (p. 287).

Alvarez (2012) reports on data from her dissertation, draws attention to academic language development, while understanding “the bilingual, sociolinguistic context”, and how students use all of their language resources to address the language demands of school (p.32). Alvarez conceptualized her study with a purposefully vague definition of academic language as well as a consideration of how we teach academic language in bilingual contexts. First, Alvarez contests practices that assume or define English Learner’s by their lack of academic language.

Drawing upon James Gee (2006) Alvarez posits that all language exists in context; so rather than defining academic language by its specific features (lexical, syntactic or discursive), a narrow definition would presume that academic language is just the language used in academic contexts. As such, teaching or focusing on prescribed or discrete skills that presumably students do not have, a narrow definition would allow for students to respond flexibly in situations using whatever language resources they have to make sense of the academic content. Alvarez also problematizes how we refer to the language used in school as Academic 'English,' regardless if the school is bilingual. The teaching academic language in a bilingual context, as suggested by Alvarez, would benefit from providing opportunities for students to access content in two languages as well as make cross-language connections.

Using design-research methodology, Alvarez tested how students use all of their linguistic resources when engaging in academic tasks. Alvarez writes, "Design researchers study learning in context and develop interventions and local instructional theories grounded in these contexts" (p. 35). Her study was conducted at a K-8 school where students were predominantly Latino and designated as language learners. Alvarez designed, taught and documented the activities in a small reading group for eight students whose primary home language was Spanish and who were classified as ELL. For several months she pulled these students for small-group for 25-45 minutes during their last period of the day, which was supposed to be an opportunity for teachers to provide Social Studies instruction in Spanish. During small group, Alvarez provided opportunities for students to read Science based books in Spanish, (Science was a subject otherwise taught in English). Activities used during this time were developed to complement what was being taught during Science class, but also were co-constructed as

Alvarez shifted her role to ‘facilitator’ allowing students to have flexibility in what they did together.

In total, 85 sessions were recorded. When the small group sessions were completed, Alvarez used retrospective analysis, “summarizing each day’s thematic patterns and how they were articulated through a series of student and teacher moves” (p. 36). Alvarez analyzed patterns for both the linguistic complexity of the texts, and also how students constructed meaning of the texts. Alvarez also used discourse analysis to examine how students interacted with and used both English and Spanish. She focused little on discourse, syntax and vocabulary; instead she looked at what “Mercer (2004) describes as the functions of language for the pursuit of joint intellectual activity” (p. 37).

Alvarez found 7 types of language demands: 1-grappling with abstract, unobservable phenomena; 2- comprehending generalized processes; 3- deriving meaning from textual structure; 4- understanding linguistics structures that related ideas across sentences; 5-filling conceptual gaps; 6- interpreting figures; and 7- making meaning of new vocabulary (p. 37). In general, “reading to learn,” called for students to interact and talk about what they thought difficult concepts meant. In some instances, students connected terms to what they learned in their English based Science class. Talk-in-interaction categories included: initiating questions, self-monitoring language use, (or assisting their peers); building context by making connections or talking about concepts; rephrasing ideas in ways that made sense to them; hypothesizing, sometimes in response to the questions they themselves raised; and extending or elaborating on each others ideas. Students also defined words by discovering cognates or connecting words learned in their English-Science class and reflected, together, on larger concepts or smaller features, (this sounded like group problem solving to me).

Through the above, talk-in-interaction strategies, Alvarez also observed and analyzed the bilingual resources students employed. Despite being classified as Limited English Proficient, students used English strategically, as well as Spanish when it made sense for them to do so. Alvarez concluded, “Both research and teaching need to be grounded in the sociolinguistic realities of bilingual students” (p. 47). Thus, the research and teaching of academic language in bilingual contexts cannot separate or overlook how students may use (in this case) Spanish even when the academic context supports the use of academic language. Alvarez emphasizes that current definitions of Academic ‘English’ Language—as they stand—will become benchmarks against which we measure bilingual students (p. 48). Re-defining academic language as simply the language used in ___x___ academic context may also privilege students who successfully use two languages, or multiple registers, in their academic contexts.

Crosson, Matsumura, Correnti, and Arlotta-Guerrero (2012) sought to address the problem of low levels of writing proficiency for native Spanish speaking students. Crosson et al., mention that lack of proficiency in the lexical, discursive and grammatical features of academic language is widely documented as the cause for low writing proficiency rates among English Language Learners. However, in their study, Crosson et al., wanted to determine the quality of these students’ writing tasks, the opportunities for students to develop writing skills in a bilingual context, and to document their usages of academic language when writing in Spanish. Their study is grounded in the idea that developing academic language in Spanish may be an important resource for Spanish speaking students learning to writing in English and Spanish. Crosson and colleagues’ (2012) theoretical framework takes up a systemic functional linguistics approach to analyze the lexical and grammatical features of academic language that are associated with academic voice (p. 471). Additionally, the authors draw upon Snow & Uccelli’s (2009) work on

the challenges of developing the academic register of English. Crosson et. al (2012) asked the following questions in their study: (1) To what degree do students use salient features of academic language when writing in their native language (Spanish)? (2) What is the quality of writing tasks assigned to students such that they are challenged to engage with rigorous texts, interpret texts, and use evidence to support assertions? (3) Does students' use of academic language vary as a function of individual teachers, tasks, and students and if so, does the quality of tasks predict students' use of salient features of academic language?

Crosson et al., (2012) conducted research at 12 schools in one urban school district in the Southwest. In this district, over 76% of students are Hispanic, and 93% qualified for free or reduced lunch. Overall, 26 teachers who provided language arts instruction in English and in Spanish, participated in this study. Spanish-speaking students enrolled in bilingual programs within this district took the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills in Spanish if they have more developed academic skills in Spanish than in English (p. 474). Data for this study included four classroom-based writing tasks administered over two years. Writing tasks were developed and administered at the discretion of the teacher but fell within genres specified by the research team. Writing tasks were conducted using the language of instruction. Teachers selected four samples of student work: two identified as high-quality, and two identified as medium-quality. In total, the research team collected 56 Spanish writing tasks consisting of 224 samples of students' work. Three measures were used to assess students' work: 1) measures of task quality (the degree to which a text contains complex and engaging content; and the degree to which a task is cognitively demanding) (p.475); 2) measures of academic language that assessed the lexical and grammatical features of student writing; and 3) measures of global features that assessed the overall organization and structure of the academic writing piece (p. 477).

Using multi-level modeling, the research team measured the variation in students' use of the features of academic language as a function of teacher's assignment of rigorous/less rigorous tasks and other student and classroom characteristics (p. 478). Crosson et al., (2012) found the following: For half of the students sampled, nearly 90% of their writings contained very limited use of academic vocabulary in Spanish; only 17.9% of the writing tasks were determined to be cognitively demanding, and half of the tasks were determined to be basic quality; the variance in students' use of academic language could be predicted by the quality of the tasks provided to them. Crosson et. al (2012) suggest that these findings could be interpreted as students are more likely to use academic features of language when the tasks explicitly or implicitly challenges them to do so (p. 483). An additional finding was that more cognitively demanding tasks positively predicted the quality and total number of academic words used (p. 484). In one example of a writing task labeled as basic, there was almost no evidence of the lexical and grammatical features of academic language (p. 488). This was is stark comparison to a more cognitively demanding task where a student demonstrated usage of embedded clauses, effective transitions, use of proper nouns to talk about characters, and stronger use of academic vocabulary. These findings speak to the importance of quality of instruction. Unfortunately, students in this study were generally exposed to low quality of tasks and thus their writing samples demonstrated little use of the academic register of Spanish. While the author's claimed that Spanish speaking students demonstrated a low command of academic language, they do provide evidence that when students are given challenging tasks, that the quality of their writing does increase.

Lubliner and Hiebert (2011) also aim to contribute strategies for helping English Learners overcome the linguistic challenges of academic contexts. In their study, Lubliner and Hiebert

analyze cognates as a feature that could facilitate a cross-language transfer of vocabulary. This study is grounded in the idea that vocabulary development is a key component of improving the reading comprehension rates of English Learners. Additionally, English Learners who also speak Spanish have the advantage of drawing upon Spanish-English cognates to aid in the acquisition of new vocabulary words. The authors document how orthographic, semantic and phonological factors may affect the usage and relatedness of cognates. For example, semantic differences that grow as languages evolve reduce the relatedness of words and create false cognates. Additionally, slight orthographic or phonological differences may also prevent students from recognizing words as cognates, whereas when words are spelled or pronounced similarly, students are more likely to make connections between words.

Lubliner and Hiebert (2011) study consisted of a three part analysis of two major word lists: 1) The General Service List (GSL); and 2) The Academic Word Lists (AWL). The former consisted of over 2,000 words that generally occur in the written language, and the latter consisted of over 570 words that did not appear in the GSL but that frequently appeared in academic texts. Lubliner, a non-native Spanish speaker, first translated the words in each list and then identified cognates. Lubliner compared the translations to those conducted by a native Spanish speaker (a director of an international school in Ecuador), and later a professor in Mexico also rated words in the list to determine which should be considered as cognates. Once cognates were identified from these lists they were analyzed as follows: 1) Pattern Analysis to classify cognates based on high-frequency orthographic differences; 2) Transparency Analysis to identify orthographic and phonological transparency between cognates in the GSL and the AWL; 3) a frequency analysis to examine the frequency of cognates in Spanish and English.

Lubliner and Hiebert found that 34% of the words in the GSL could be identified as one

of four types or clusters of cognates, and nearly 75% of words in AWL could also be identified as a type of cognate. Additionally, the frequency analysis revealed that a large percentage of cognates in the Academic Word List in English were considered as everyday words in Spanish. The high percentage of cognates found in the GSL and the AWL indicates that instruction incorporating cognates may increase students' academic vocabulary as an important requisite for reading comprehension. Not only do the authors suggest that students need to become aware that cognates exist, but they also need to be explicitly taught how to identify false cognates as well as the orthographic and phonological differences between words that may inhibit their recognition of true cognates.

Summary. These studies show that children, as young as five or six, have keen abilities to use multiple languages as a resource to participate in school, to make sense of academic content, and to aid their peers when communicative breakdowns occur. Moreover, Lubliner and Hiebert (2011) and Lucero (2012) found that an opportunity exists to teach cross-language academic language development to emerging bilingual students due to similarities in language functions and vocabulary in the form of cognates. While it is accepted that certain linguistic features of academic language make academic tasks challenging to English learners, promoting metalinguistic awareness and teaching students to be resourceful with their two languages functions as a way to help students overcome difficult situations. Allowing students to use their first or their home languages is natural (it makes sense as early as kindergarten), and it is an authentic way for children from the same community to be socialized into schooling and to respond flexibly while participating in academic tasks. However, professional development is needed to prepare teachers for understanding how to be advantageous and strategic about teaching academic language across languages.

In addition to identifying how students need to be explicitly taught to use two languages as they participate in school, the proposed study draws attention to how language acquisition might be political. Particularly, a bilingual school may seek to develop academic registers in two languages; however NCLB mandates may compel teachers to teach the academic register of English only. Even worse, pressures to accelerate English language acquisition for the purposes of test taking, may alter instruction whereby reducing or narrowing students opportunities to develop language holistically— language instruction that includes the academic and social registers of English and Spanish. This study documents how academic language is really developed in a bilingual school, but also how sociopolitical factors influence instruction in these schools.

Conclusion

The federal No Child Left Behind Act in addition to language planning policies at the state level have systemically promoted academic language-only as the linguistic capital of 21st century schools. However, as scholars have shown (Bailey, 2007; Baily & Huang, 2011; Bailey & Butler, 2003; Scarcella, 2003; Schleppegrell, 2001, Valdés, 2004) defining academic language and finding ways to teach it is complicated and political. As difficult as it has been for researchers to define academic language, and as frustrating it may be for educators to find ways to teach academic language, it is all the more challenging for young children to learn it. The studies above have illustrated these challenges, but they also suggest methodologies for examining the academic language construct abstractly and for examining it in real-time bilingual contexts. Some of these strategies were taken up in the present study as I tried to find ways to document the opportunities emerging bilingual students have to learn and succeed in school. My study contributes to these conversations as it qualitatively examines the opportunity for students

to learn academic language, at a bilingual school, that is implementing the WIDA ELD Standards Framework within a district, placing a heavy emphasis on testing and accountability.

Chapter 3

When asked directly whether or not he would accept a moratorium on high-stakes testing during his invited talk at the 2013 conference of the American Educational Research Association, Secretary Arne Duncan opposed the idea outright. Secretary Duncan acknowledged that our nation's assessment system was broken, but that we should not balk at the opportunity to perfect the standards-based, accountability system that has already become the centerpiece of federal education policy. This moment in his talk was poignant for two reasons: 1- it gave voice to the concerns of the research community gathered to confront Secretary Duncan about the perils of high-stakes testing; and 2- it reminded the research community that high-stakes tests would persist as the primary measurement tool for student achievement.

With so much attention paid toward quantitative data, there is a need for more qualitative research to measure the quality of educational input—in addition to performance-- which would include examinations of curriculum, instruction, policy, and the school community (Valenzuela, Prieto, & Hamilton, 2007). Within Rocky Mountain Public Schools, the setting for this study, a district initiative entitled “Transforming Students Into Learners” (TSIL) was implemented with the intent of holding children accountable for their academic performance. In classrooms that I have observed over the last two years, bar charts galore have adorned bulletin boards signaling students with a constant reminder about their reading and math proficiency levels in comparison to the grade-level benchmark and to their classmates. In classroom discourse, young student talk included words such as partially proficient as students have become hyper aware of their reading levels. While reading numerical data has become a common practice within classrooms, the positivist nature of this data does not explain performance in terms of how or why. Kelly-Hall (2012) wrote, “The meaningfulness of the quantified data can only be determined through

qualitative judgments based on the perceptions of those from whose lives the data are drawn” (p. 139). Because young children are now socialized into learning using a discourse centered on performance data, it was important to examine classroom environments to contribute a perspective for documenting the factors and phenomena that mediate their learning. To this end, I have proposed a qualitative case study examining how the “deep structures of educational change” (Cummins, 2000, p. 254) were reflected in the instructional decisions made at a local level whereby either empowering or disempowering (2000) emerging bilingual students.

The purpose of the study was to examine how a bilingual school defines academic language, and provides opportunities for students to learn and practice it. Using critical applied linguistics as an element of my framework, I intended to draw attention to the political factors affecting what type of language was taught, how, and to whom. Research on the effects of tracking on students’ overall opportunities to learn has shown how these effects were magnified for students who were also language learners (Abedi, 2004; Gross, 1993; Harklau, 1994). The study was designed to track how students’ labels of proficiency in language and literacy may result in ability grouping, which could have significant implications for students’ opportunities to develop language. One additional line of inquiry included studying the ways in which Spanish can be developed and/or used as a language for accessing academic content and participating in school. The research questions guiding the study were as follows:

1. What are students’ opportunities for ELD in grades 3-5 at a bilingual elementary school?
2. How does high stakes testing affect the development of academic language in English and in Spanish?

A Single-Case Study of Willow Elementary School

Case studies “are a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process of one or more individuals” (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). This particular case study explored, in depth, the language and literacy activities offered to emerging bilingual students at a single elementary school. The support for conducting a single-case study was found with Yin (2009) who suggested that one method of inquiry was to represent an “extreme case or a unique case” (Yin, 2009, p.47). Yin cited Gross, Bernstein, and Giacquinta (1971) who conducted a single-case study of a school with a “history of innovation and could not be claimed to suffer from “barriers to innovation” (2000, p. 48). As I describe further in a forthcoming section, the research site for this dissertation also retained an “innovation school” designation by its district, giving it unique autonomy from district policies. This was meaningful, because we expected that if any school within Rocky Mountain Public Schools could have the freedom to challenge the operation of coercive power structures (Cummins, 2000), the school site for this dissertation could have had a compelling chance.

Creswell (2009) also defined a case study as bounded by time and activity. Understanding that “teaching to the test” is a real phenomenon that increases in propensity as the test date approaches (Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Climbricz, 2002; Amrein-Beardsley et al., 2010), I collected data in the semester prior to the administration of the state assessment. This allowed data collection to occur during the portion of the school year when teachers might have had the chance to negotiate the opportunity to teach academic language, versus teaching the language of testing that may include isolated skills toward grammatical competency. Additionally, the administration of the new language proficiency assessment would largely interrupt instruction during the month prior to the content area assessments (January). As such, the first semester of the academic year, (September through December) was the most suitable

time to observe the instruction as it typically, or most naturally occurred. Considering that the first semester also constitutes the longest time of uninterrupted instruction, any findings would suggest a significant impact on a student's educational opportunities.

Finally, for this case study, I used a critical lens to add to the national discourse on the effect of standards based reform on local schools. Critical studies “take an ideologically sensitive orientation (Canagarajah, 1993) by seeking to address how the patterns and norms of an event index, accommodate to, contest and/or transform larger social structures such as power, social justice, discrimination and so on” (Kelly-Hall, 2012, p. 152). An empirical case study with a critical lens could better connect research on language pedagogy to larger political structures. This builds upon Pennycook's theories (2001), as suggested by Canagarajah (1993), by empirically studying the classroom to better understand how social structures may transform pedagogical events. Specifically, I was interested in examining how teachers and literacy coaches chose instructional activities that either reinforce norms for academic language development and standards for literacy, or that challenge those norms by constructing the language and literacy block in a way that was reflective of and transferrable to the local community. Additionally, data were analyzed for the way instruction might be differentiated for students based on their rates of proficiency in language and literacy.

Setting and Participants

Situating the study. Willow Elementary, a K-5 bilingual school within the Rocky Mountain Public School District (both pseudonyms) was the setting for this case study. In 2010, Rocky Mountain Public Schools unveiled “The District Plan,” emphasizing the “School Performance Framework,” which they proclaimed to be the most comprehensive measure of school performance nationwide. The School Performance Framework had a color coded rating system

for all schools in the district: (1) Blue represented “Distinguished;” (2) Green represented “Meets Expectations;” (3) Yellow represented “Accredited On Watch;” (4) Orange represented “Accredited on Priority Watch;” and (5) Red represented “Accredited on Probation.” The School Performance Framework measured two primary areas of interest: Was the educational program a success? And was the organization effective and well run? Within those areas were seven indicators: Student Progress Over Time (growth); Student Achievement Status (percent proficient on the state assessment program); Post-Secondary Readiness Growth (high schools only); Post-Secondary Readiness Status (high schools only); Student Engagement & Satisfaction (attendance and program offerings); Re-Enrollment; and Parent Satisfaction. Of those seven categories, student progress over time and student achievement status are—by far—the most heavily weighted categories with nearly 88% of the total points possible based on student achievement and growth (see table 3.1 below). A deeper look at the measures behind the first 2 indicators (see table 3.2 below) revealed that of the 89 points for “Student Achievement Level-Growth”, 81% of those points were awarded based on student growth rates on the State Assessment Program (SAP), and an additional 19% of the points based on rates of growth on the English Language Proficiency Assessment (test for students designated as ELL). Likewise, of the 35 points for Student Achievement Level-Status, 85% of those points were awarded based on student performance on the State Assessment Program (SAP) and 15% of the points based on student performance on the English Language Proficiency Assessment. Those ratios showed how proficiency rates on large-scale language and content exams explicitly determine a school’s overall achievement rating.

Table 3.1

2012-2013 School Performance Framework Point Allocations

Elementary School Level

Indicators	Possible Points	Percentage of Total Points ~(rounded)
1. Student Progress Over Time—Growth	89	63%
2. Student Achievement Status (percent proficient on the state assessment program)	35	25%
3. Post-Secondary Readiness Growth (high schools only)	n/a	n/a
4. Post-Secondary Readiness Status (high schools only)	n/a	n/a
5. Student Engagement & Satisfaction (attendance and program offerings)	6	4%
6. Re-Enrollment	4	3%
7. Parent Satisfaction	8	6%
Overall School Performance	142	~100%

Table 3.2

2012-2013 SPF Indicators by Measures

Indicator	Measures	Points	% Weight of Points
1. Student Progress Over Time—Growth	1.1a-c Median growth percentile- SAP	6	85%
	1.2a-c Median growth percentile- SAP compared to similar schools	6	
	1.3a-c Catch up growth-SAP reading	12	
	1.4a-c Keep up growth-SAP	12	
	1.5a-c Continuously enrolled growth-SAP	12	
	1.6 SAP-growth	4	
	1.7 a-d Achievement gap change	16	

	1.8 CELA growth	4	
	1.9 DRA2/EDL2 growth	4	15%
	1.10 DRA2/EDL2 growth compared to similar schools	4	
	Total Points for Indicator 1:	80	100%
2. Student Achievement—Status	2.1a-d Percent SAP proficient or above (reading, writing, math, science- 2pts each)	8	
	2.2 a-d Percent SAP proficient or above compared to similar schools	12	81%
	2.3a-d Percent Achievement gaps (FRL, ELL, Special Ed., & Ethnicity)	8	
	2.4 Percent SAP advanced	2	
	2.5 Percent DRA2/EDL2 on grade level or above	2	
	2.6 Percent English language proficiency assessment proficient or above	2	
	2.7 Percent English language proficiency assessment above proficient	3	19%
	Total Points for Indicator 2:	37	100%

School report cards, based on the results of the School Performance Framework, are made public annually and have far-reaching and profound effects. For underperforming schools, strategies under the district’s continuous improvement plan may include, “enhancing current programs, replacing school leaders, and/or a significant portion of the staff or replacing existing schools with new schools” (District Plan, 2010). The report cards are also used for allocating professional compensation (ProComp) and principal incentive pay that “pairs autonomy with accountability” (District Plan, 2010). The results trigger district intervention at underperforming schools, and provide financial incentives for “Distinguished” schools. Moreover, part of the plan for increasing expectations and changing outcomes for students is to endorse and increase school

choice. According to the District Plan, the school performance framework is a tool that parents can use to make choices about their children's schools. Also to aid in the decision, the District Plan included the creation of a district welcome center where parents can go to learn more about the educational options [charter schools] available within the district.

Along with choice, classroom instruction is placed at the core of the District Plan, which purports that effective teaching is proven to close the achievement gap. With this philosophy, recruiting, training and empowering effective teachers, as well as replacing ineffective teachers, is one of three critical strategies for supporting the instructional core, along with increasing parent and community involvement and strategically managing financial resources. Embedded in each facet of the model is a system of accountability, transparency and performance management, measuring anything from teacher effectiveness to building maintenance items being "fixed within the requisite time" (District Plan, p. 62). Strategies aimed at improving underperforming schools included allocating district money for the purchase and use of commercial and packaged programs.

School ratings based on this framework emerged in 2008. Quickly, it became evident that in fact, students of color were not equally distributed across distinguished schools and schools on probation. Among traditional schools in 2011, only 2⁵ blue, distinguished schools had percentages of students of color above 50%, while 100% of red, probationary schools had overwhelming percentages- 90% or more of students of color. Based on this data we can argue that Rocky Mountain Public schools are highly segregated. Even worse, we might argue based on what we know about the implications for the district school performance framework, teachers at schools serving higher percentages of minority students may be more likely to feel more

⁵ One of the two blue schools serving large percentages of students of color was stripped of its distinguished status after allegations of cheating emerged the following year.

pressure to teach to the test since student performance on tests impacts teacher placement, evaluations, and tenure.

Willow Elementary School. This case study investigated Willow Elementary School. In 2011 Rocky Mountain Public Schools designated Willow as an “innovation school”. According to the 2009 Rocky Mountain Public School district innovation act, it “provided schools the opportunity to seek autonomy from district policies and to bring more decision-making to the campus level” (2012, District Planning Document). The primary purpose of designating innovation status to schools is to allow for schools to meet the unique needs of its students in order to improve academic performance. There are currently 27 innovation schools in the Rocky Mountain district whose status was ultimately approved by the state board of education. To become an innovation school, the school’s principal must apply by describing the innovations they plan to use in order to improve academic achievement. This application must be submitted with the community’s and the majority of the school’s faculty’s support. Working with district officials, the application must also be approved by the district’s school board before being presented to the state. Once the application is approved, maintaining innovation status depends on the schools’ ability to increase the performance rate of its students as determined by SAP.

The district innovation act can be traced to the 2008 Colorado Senate Bill 130, written and passed to give schools “maximum degree of flexibility possible to determine the most effective and efficient manner in which to meet their students’ needs” (Colorado SB 08-130). According to this statute, districts are “strongly encouraged” to allow for site based decision making with regard to curriculum, programing, personnel, and using school resources. Allowing a school to have autonomy over “resources, programs and qualified teachers” (Shepard & McLaughlin, 1995) means that an innovation school, should have a maximum degree of flexibility

in ensuring students' opportunities to learn. However, even as an innovation school, the challenge remains for Willow to meet the unique needs of its emerging bilingual students, while also competing for a high performance rating as determined by the district's school performance framework.

From 2011 to 2012, Willow Elementary improved its SPF rating from yellow (on watch) to green (meeting expectations). It maintained this rating after the 2012-2013 school year. Willow was one of ten new schools that achieved the coveted green rating in 2012—a reprieve from the possibility of sanctions, job loss, and decreased student enrollment as described above. Willow retained this rating after the 2012-2013 school year. During 2013-2014 school year, Willow had a total student enrollment of 607. Of these students, 95.7% qualified for free or reduced lunch, 93.9% were minority, 62.3% were designated as ELL, and 9.4% received special education. Its report card status according to the district framework since 2008 can be seen in table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3

Willow Elementary School Report Card History

Academic Year	Overall Status	Status by Indicators 1 and 2
2012-2013	Green- Meets Expectations	Student Progress Over Time- Growth Meets
2011-2012	Green- Meets Expectations	Student Achievement Level- Status Approaching Student Achievement Level- Status Approaching
2010-2011	Yellow- Accredited on Watch	Student Progress Over Time- Growth Approaching Student Achievement Level- Status Approaching
2009-2010	Yellow- Accredited on Watch	Student Progress Over Time- Growth Approaching Student Achievement Level- Status Does Not Meet

2008-2009	Yellow- Accredited on Watch	Student Progress Over Time- Growth Approaching Student Achievement Level- Status Does Not Meet
2007-2008	Yellow- Accredited on Watch	Student Progress Over Time- Growth Does Not Meet Student Achievement Level- Status Does Not Meet

For 3 years prior to this study Willow Elementary School had partnered with our research team in order to receive professional development around an instructional model designed and tested to effectively place emerging bilingual students on a trajectory toward biliteracy. One component of the biliteracy instructional model is Literacy-Based ELD, which is a book-based model incorporating specific strategies for offering language and literacy development to emerging bilingual students in grades K-5. This biliteracy instructional model had been tested for 9 years in 31 schools, in four states, and with over 4,000 students and 200 teachers, with results showing that bilingual children who participate in this biliteracy instructional model make excellent gains in their abilities to read and write in two languages (Escamilla & Hopewell, 2009; Escamilla, Butvilofsky, Hopewell, Sparrow, Soltero-González, Escamilla, M., & Figueroa-Ruiz 2010). While knowing how to offer an effective ELD instruction is an urgent imperative as well as a legal obligation, Willow Elementary School is wavering in their implementation of ELD in spite of the fact that they have a proven successful model readily available. We also know that Willow, whether intentional or inadvertent, omitted ELD block-time from their master schedule for the 2012-2013 school year.

Teachers at Willow Elementary. Willow Elementary consists of two strands: 1) English Language Acquisition- Spanish (ELA-S) where students receive literacy instruction in Spanish and English; and 2) English Language Acquisition- English (ELA-E) where students receive

English-only literacy instruction. There were twenty (20) teachers among these two strands in grades kindergarten through 5th. While approximately 90% of the students at Willow are Latino, the teaching faculty were ethnically segregated across language strands within the school. In 2012-2013 all but one of the ELA-S teachers were Latino, while all but two of the ELA-E teachers were white. Thus, for students receiving all English instruction, very few were taught by teachers of color. Additionally, less than half (5/12) ELA-E teachers identified as bi- or multilingual. Finally, 45% of teachers had less than 5 years of teaching experience, half of the teachers hold advanced degrees, but only 25% of teachers (5 total) earned an endorsement in TESOL, ESL or Linguistically Diverse Education prior to the year this study was conducted. At the time, 12 teachers were enrolled at CU Boulder to receive their endorsement and Master's degree in Linguistically Diverse Education. At the end of the 2012-2013 school year, I met with the principal of Willow Elementary to select teachers to participate in my study. Teacher selection occurred based on three factors: 1) a history of these teachers being open and willing to work with me; 2) their placement in grades 3, 4, and 5; and 3) gaining a sample of teachers representing each language strand (ELA-S or ELA-E).

This study focused on upper elementary because the pressure to show academic performance and growth on the state assessment program is heavily emphasized in these grades. Additionally, language proficiency rates tend to plateau in upper elementary (Crawford, 2011) presenting a compound challenge for teachers to both improve language proficiency as well as academic performance. Table 3.4 (below) shows the demographics of the participating teachers for this study.

Table 3.4

Teacher Demographics

	Grade	Language Strand	Ethnicity	Sex	Bilingual (Y/N)	Years of Teaching Experience
Teacher 1	3 rd	ELA-S	White	Female	Y	5
Teacher 2	3 rd	ELA-E	African-American	Male	N	5
Teacher 3	4 th	ELA-S	Latina	Female	Y	2
Teacher 4	4 th	ELA-E	White	Male	N	15+
Teacher 5	5 th	ELA-S	Latino	Male	Y	15+
Teacher 6	5 th	ELA-E	White	Female	N	1

While the principal of Willow Elementary approved this selection, these teachers were also asked personally about their willingness to participate in this study.

Participating Students. I selected one student from each of the participating teacher's based on the criteria the school set for tracking students into differentiation blocks. Salient is that these categories slightly differed across grade levels.

Table 3.5

Student Selection

Student	Classroom	WIDA ACCESS Overall Score	EDL2 (Spanish Reading)	At Grade Level? (Y/N)	DRA2 (English Reading)	At Grade Level? (Y/N)	State Assessment Program Label for Reading	School Label/Placement ¹
Gladys	Classroom3S	3	30	Y	14	N	n/a	At Grade Level Spanish, but not yet within English grade level trajectory/ Intervention Group 6
Diana	Classroom3E	3	n/a	n/a	20	N	n/a	At Grade Level Spanish, but not yet within English grade level trajectory/ Intervention Group 4
Keith	Classroom 4S	5	40	Y	24	N	Proficient	At or Above in Spanish, but needs more English Vocabulary development, about 1 year below in English, but okay on bi-literate trajectory/ Intervention Group 2
Citlali	Classroom4E	4	n/a	n/a	38	N	Partially-Proficient	CUSP ² Kids Group 2/ Intervention Group 3
Ezequiel	Classroom5S	5	40	N	38	N	Proficient	At or Above/ Enrichment Group 1
Ray	Classroom5E	3	n/a	n/a	28	N	Unsatisfactory	DRA 20-28/ Intervention Group 4

¹ Labels copied from Willow's D Block student grouping planning document; See Chapter 6 for a description of intervention groups

² CUSP Kids are students who are almost proficient on the State Assessment Program

Half of the students participating in this study were from the ELA-E strand and half of the students were from the ELA-S strand. The criteria for selecting students was based on a combination of their language and literacy proficiency rates to give me a variety of types of students typical at Willow Elementary. Literacy rates were determined by, readily available, student large scale (SAP) or classroom level (Pearson's Evaluación del desarrollo de la lectura-EDL2 and Developmental Reading Assessment-DRA2) assessment data. Language proficiency rates were based upon the newly implemented WIDA ACCESS Test. My rationale for selecting a variety of students was the presumption that instructional activities and thus opportunities to learn may have differed based upon the student's language and literacy proficiency status.

Role of Researcher

The questions for this study evolved authentically as I worked with teachers at Willow Elementary for two academic years to implement a biliteracy instructional model as part of a larger study conducted at the University of Colorado. I had the opportunity to form relationships with these teachers while identifying with their struggles to negotiate between the model we offered and the programs and practices that were either supported by their district or known to produce short-term results. Such practices included engaging in explicit test preparation or using packaged programs that were not conceptualized or research tested for emerging bilingual students. My questions emerged as I began to see instruction differentiated for students based on their language and literacy proficiency rates. This differentiation occurred school wide and began in kindergarten. These observations compelled me to examine the trajectories of students and their opportunities to learn in order to complement the data we've collected with our research project.

As my focus shifted so too did my role at the school. Prior to the first day of school for the 2013-2014 school year I attended a professional development day with all teachers to re-introduce myself. Teachers have learned that while I was there to provide support with regard to our biliteracy project, my role was not to observe the fidelity of implementation of our instructional model. Instead, teachers understood that I was collecting data for my dissertation, which was based on improving English Language Development instruction at their school. To reciprocate for being a daily presence in their classrooms, I offered to continue to support teachers and to serve as a medium between Willow Elementary and the research team at the University of Colorado.

Internal Review Board Permission

Because this case study contributes information about the setting for the larger biliteracy project, it falls under the same review board and needed permission from both the University of Colorado and Rocky Mountain Public Schools. As such, we had permission to collect classroom observation data including videotaping. We also collected parent and teacher consent forms for each school year. Additionally, I have cross referenced student selections with our database to ensure we had parent consent forms for these students to participate. This enabled me to have access to their testing data and other pertinent information such as demographic data. Teachers provided consent for me to conduct research in their classrooms, which also included conducting interviews. All data collection efforts, as described in the following section, was done in accordance with our IRB protocol.

Single-Case Study Design

This case study was designed to map how emerging bilingual students' opportunities to learn and develop academic language may differ based upon their proficiency status on large-

scale content and language assessments. To that end, I have designed my study following a research method recommended by Yin (2009), that included an “embedded, single-case study design” (p.50). An embedded design, as opposed to a holistic design, has multiple units of analysis within a particular context. In my study, the context was Willow Elementary School and the units of analysis were the instructional activities that naturally occurred within the school, as well as the policies and programs implemented by school leadership and teachers within the school. Instructional activities included all those used in the primary classroom, in classrooms used during differentiation blocks, and in those classrooms used for interventions. School leadership included the local and/or district level administrators who initiated or sustained programming for a particular purpose. In a single case study, using multiple units of analysis may minimize threats to internal validity by allowing the researcher to examine “any specific phenomenon in operational detail” (p. 50) that may be having an effect. This was especially helpful in this critical case study that sought to uncover any structure that may be compromising versus constructing opportunities to learn for various types of students. It also helped in identifying disconfirming evidence that was not aligned with the theories grounding this study.

Data Sources and Data Management

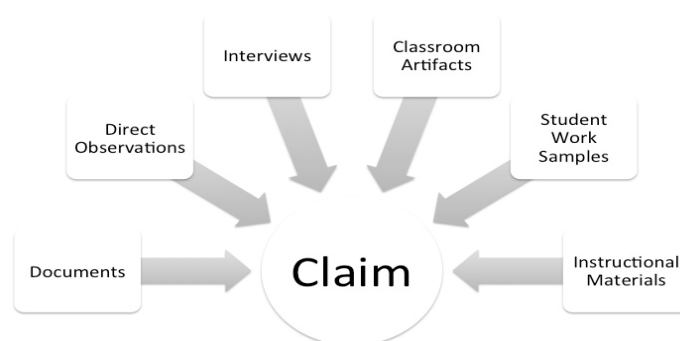
Data collection occurred during the fall semester (August through December) of the 2013-2014 academic year, and largely focused on the observing instructional activities to which the six focal students described in the preceding section had access to. Data collection aligned with Yin’s (2009) principles of case study research. These principles and how I followed them are explained in detail below.

Principle 1: Use Multiple Sources of Data. As Yin (2009) described, while triangulating data is important for improving the validity of any research project, using “as many sources as possible” (p.103) is especially important to sufficiently describe a single case study. A

form of triangulation, the convergence (2009) of multiple sources of data helped to improve validity as all data were examined in order to substantiate a single fact (p. 116). Using this concept, the figure below, which has been adapted from Yin (2009), illustrates the sources of data I collected.

Figure 3.1.

Data Sources



Documents. In case studies, documents “corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (Yin, 2009, p. 103). The documents I collected included analysis, planning and instructional programming documents. In the present study, documents were critical to understanding how the policies of larger structures influenced instructional activities. I organized these documents at three levels: District, School and Classroom. District level documents included the 2010 Rocky Mountain District Plan, School Performance Framework, the 2013 Strategic Regional Analysis, the English Language Acquisition Program document, the District Literacy Guide (literacy standards), and the documents related to the newly implemented English Language Development Standards Framework. This information was useful in identifying specifically the policies and programs operating within the district. The 2010 Rocky Mountain District Plan was written to outline how to “accelerate reforms and to sharpen the focus on

student achievement” in order to “ensure that all of our students, regardless of ethnicity or income status, graduate from our high schools prepared for college or career” (Superintendent Memo, 2010). Part of this plan includes the use of the district, School Performance Framework. Documents related to this framework included information on the criteria by which all schools were evaluated and rated. The 2013 Strategic Regional Analysis is the product of an analysis aiming to understanding the quality of schools, the growth and demand for programming, as well as the quality of such programs. According to the Rocky Mountain Public Schools website, this analysis is used by the Board of Education and school officials in making decisions related to school quality improvement as well as zoning and capital funding. The English Language Acquisition (ELA) Planning Document outlines how students classified as English Language Learners are placed into an ELA program, what each program offers, how personnel are recruited and trained, as well as the district’s plans for accountability and how students may exit the program. Other documents germane to the entire school district were added as uncovered (see Appendix A for a complete list). One such document included a consent decree between the Department of Justice, the Congress of Hispanic Educators, and the Rocky Mountain Public School District that requires Rocky Mountain Public Schools to provide language support services to all of its students classified as English Language Learners. Finally, the newly implemented English Language Development Standards Framework includes documents pertaining to the theoretical framework behind the standards, the standards themselves, and the method for implementing the framework. These, in addition to the literacy standards, were analyzed for the language demands as they were taught or represented in lessons.

School level documents primarily included the school’s master schedule, the most recent the School Improvement Plan, the School Handbook, as well as the U.S. Department of

Education grant written by the BUENO Center for Multicultural Education for funds relating to the creation of Willow Elementary School as a model bilingual school. These documents were used to find information about programs and planning specifically as they pertained to Willow Elementary. Likewise, classroom documents mainly included planning documents related to the school's differentiation block, or D-block, which I will explain in great detail in chapter 6, as well as publically available information on packaged programs used within the classroom for instructional or evaluation purposes.

Direct Observations. Direct observations were the primary form of data collected as they allowed me to collect evidence in the natural setting of the case and in real-time (Yin, 2009). The purpose of my observations was to document instructional activities used across language environments and across students with various levels of language and literacy proficiency. Using field notes, I took extensive notes and audio recordings of classroom activities. Understanding that classroom activities rarely follow a linear schedule that is free of interruptions, a meeting with participating teachers was scheduled in advance, and during the course of the study, in order to schedule observations of a maximum amount of uninterrupted instruction as it would normally occur. Generally, I planned to spend two weeks in each participating teacher's classroom. In one instance (Classroom5E) I spent three weeks due to interference by district assessments, fire drills and personal issues presented by students.

I focused my observations on each teacher's literacy block. Literacy blocks took place in the morning from approximately 8:00am to 12:00pm. In English-only classrooms, literacy blocks generally consisted of one hour for English reading and one hour for English writing following RMPS' curriculum scope and sequence. In bilingual classrooms, time was allocated to 45 minutes for Spanish literacy. Teachers' posted schedule indicated that a block of time ranging

from 30 minutes to one hour was to be devoted for ELD, although in some classrooms this time was absorbed into extended time for Reader's and Writer's Workshop. Finally, the literacy block included a differentiation block (D-block) for focused English reading instruction, which was initially intended to take 45 minutes but was reduced to 40 minutes to allow time for changing classes. Following Engestrom's (1987) model for understanding activity, being immersed in a classroom included my taking notes on the class schedule, rules for participation within the classroom, the division of labor, how students were grouped and for what purposes, what materials and other objects used during instruction, and most importantly, how language was used, by whom, when and for what purposes. In addition to observing the classroom, I shadowed 1 student that was selected by the classroom teacher based on the way students were tracked into their D-blocks. Shadowing students included sitting with them during whole group, guided reading or independent practice activities within the normal classroom, as well as following them to their differentiation blocks. Observations of the classroom as well as shadowing students occurred during the language and literacy block, which was scheduled for the first half of each school day.

When possible, I conducted direct observations of team and individual lesson planning meetings respective of the time I would be in each teacher's classroom. For example, when I observed 4th grade, I attended, if open to me, 4th grade level planning meetings. This was a limited opportunity with the 3rd and 5th grades due to inconsistencies in scheduling at the school site. During the course of the study, it became salient to attend D-block planning meetings at each grade level where I documented how teachers made placement decisions for their students.

Interviews. I conducted interviews of school administrators (2), participating teachers (6), and literacy coaches (1). Interview protocols were followed that included a small number of

questions used to create a guided conversation, versus a structured query (Yin, 2009). These were open-ended, but focused interviews scheduled for a short period of time (2009). The purpose of these interviews was to confirm or disconfirm any evidence collected during my direct observations as well as gain educator knowledge and perception about teaching academic language. As such, interviews with teachers occurred during my last week in their classroom and interviews with administrators and the literacy coach occurred during the last month of my study. Interviews with teachers, interventionists, and literacy coaches specifically targeted their definitions of academic language, as well as their rationales for how they provided ELD. Attaining rationales for student assignment to small groups and differentiation blocks was also a subject of these interviews. My strategy was to review student data and to work with the educator (teacher, interventionists, literacy coaches) and ask him or her to talk about their instructional decision making. The purpose of employing this strategy was to minimize the difference between what teachers say they believe and what they actually (double-think) as found in Pacheco's (2005) dissertation. An list of interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Classroom Artifacts, Student Data, & Instructional Materials. In addition to taking field notes I also used an I-Pad, which allowed me to record a small number of videos and take pictures in a very non-evasive way. Classroom artifacts such as bulletin boards, SMARTboard presentations, anchor charts, and any graphs used to display student achievement could quickly and quietly be captured using the camera feature of the I-pad. Student data, which also included scores on large scale assessments as well as any language proficiency test, was collected from the school office while shadowing the respective child. In addition, I documented materials used during instruction primarily including lesson plans (when available) to identify not only what I

have perceived to be the language demands of the lesson, but if the teacher had identified any language objectives. Other materials included copies of any text used by the teacher or produced by the students such as textbooks, workbooks, worksheets, other literature found in the class library, basal readers, flash cards, etc. I also documented the types and levels of texts selected by students for their use in their independent reading program. These materials and artifacts were collected while I was doing direct observations, or before the school day began each day and was analyzed for the language used within them.

Principle 2: Create a Case Study Database. The purpose of a case study database is to improve the reliability of the study by providing a source for organizing and documenting the sources of data (Yin, 2009). In my study, this took three forms: 1) I used Excel during the data collection phase to store lists of data collected by type with dates, times, and personal notes about the data, and later I used Dedoose, a secure, internet based application for analyzing this data; 2) Using the hard drive to my securely locked personal computer, I stored PDF versions of all documents, which included those that were downloaded from the internet as well as those that I scanned and manually entered; and 3) I wrote case notes and analytic memos as data was collected and analyzed that would help me to maintain a chain of evidence before I wrote my findings. Storing and managing data efficiently not only kept data secure yet accessible to me for the purpose of reducing and analyzing data, but it may also help avail the steps of my data collection to any researchers interested in replicating the study.

Principle 3: Maintain a Chain of Evidence. Part of managing data involved maintaining a chain of evidence (Yinn, 2009). The function of this was to improve construct validity by having provided a direct link between any findings and my research questions. This

was achieved using Dedoose where I easily tagged data, citing time and location, so that I could trace data sources included in my analytic memos directly to the source.

Data Analysis

As I collected data, I organized and cited data within a larger database (as described above), and I noted salient passages of data based on my research questions. I also wrote memos about teachers, students and instructional activities. My initial memos were essentially “conversations with myself about the data” (Clarke, 2005, p. 202 as cited in Saldaña, 2012, p. 41). In playing with the data I identified the steps I would take to analyze the data upon completion of data collection. The first step I took was to analyze student grouping in their D-block classes. This was especially relevant to my study due to my interest in tracking student pathways. By creating a database that included all students in grades 3-5, I documented their grade level and program area (ELA-S or ELA-E), D-block placements, which I categorized into seven categories, and their language proficiency rates. Using descriptive statistics I calculated D-block placement by average ACCESS scores and I was able to identify to which D-block classroom students who were classified as ELLs had access. Likewise I was able to calculate the relationship between student program area and to which D-block classroom they were placed. As I described in detail in Chapter 6, I identified problems of access where ELLs and ELA-S students were less likely than non-ELLs or ELA-E students to be placed in enrichment groups.

After completing the D-block analysis, I sorted my data into three categories: classroom data, interview data, and policy documents. Following methods suggested in Saldaña’s (2012) coding manual I analyzed each set of data in two cycles. During the first cycle I practiced descriptive coding where I assigned labels to data to summarize in a word or short phrase the basic topic of selected passages of the data. (2012). After the initial cycle I wrote analytic memos for the interview data, the policy data, and one memo for each teacher’s set of classroom

observations. In second cycle, I practiced pattern coding where I assigned a “meta-code” (p. 209) to identify similarly coded data. In this way I was able to organize my data into constructs and eventually develop themes. The purpose of second cycle coding was to begin to make claims based on the most frequent themes emerging across all data sources. In this process I used Dedoose where I was able to create various code charts that visually represented the number by type of codes that I applied to the data and the number of codes that co-occurred in each data excerpt. Finally, I could see code weight statistics that helped me identify the most frequently occurring codes and biggest themes emerging from my data. These code charts can be found in Appendix C.

Research Question 1: What are students’ opportunities for ELD in grades 3-5 at a bilingual elementary school? This question emerged after the observations I made while conducting professional development at the research site for two years prior to this study. These observations raised questions about the fidelity of Willow Elementary’s ELD program and about students opportunities to learn and practice academic language. Willow Elementary took initial steps during the prior school year (2012-2013) to understand how to implement the new English Language Development standards framework (2004). This framework was aimed at providing emerging bilingual students with access to the language of school subjects and of social language.

While collecting data through formal observations across six teachers’ classrooms I initially believed that my original hypothesis was correct in that I could not find evidence of ELD. This was in spite of the fact that ELD was listed as a block of time that was to occur each morning. Through teacher and administrator interviews, I examined educators’ beliefs about ELD including its purpose and the type of instruction that best supported it. As I describe further

in chapter 4, interview data revealed that educator knowledge about ELD varied widely and the resources to support ELD were scant. However, as I studied my classroom observations in-depth, and through coding, I was able to identify categories and sub-categories (using parent codes and child codes in Dedoose) of opportunities for ELD. I began to notice that each teacher fell into a very specific category based on the way they helped students to develop language.

Research Question 2: How does high stakes testing affect the development of academic language in English and Spanish? To answer this question, I analyzed the data sources described above to substantiate whether students academic language-only was, in fact, the language of schooling at Willow Elementary. An examination of instructional activities, materials, classroom artifacts, and student work samples centered on analyzing data from a language acquisition perspective and from a language socialization perspective. From a language acquisition perspective, I looked for the way academic language was explicitly taught. Academic language was defined by the field (Bailey, 2007; Bowers, Fitts, Quirk, and Jung, 2010; Bailey and Huang, 2011; and Schlepppegrel, 2003, and Schlepppegrel and O'Hallaron, 2011) based on its distinct lexical, syntactical or discursive features.

Lexical knowledge speaks to the type of vocabulary that is predictive of reading ability. Each content area has a specific type of vocabulary that students must know in order to access the texts. Bailey and Heritage (2008) categorize three types of vocabulary: 1-general academic vocabulary-words that are presented across content areas (ie: synthesize or analyze); 2-context-specific vocabulary- every day words that mean different things in a particular academic context (ie: by means divide in math); 3-specialized academic vocabulary- words that are specific to a particular academic area (ie: Multiplication in math) (Bailey and Huang, 2011). Schlepppegrel (2001) distinguishes between the lexicon of spoken interaction and the lexicon of school based

texts (p.438). In spoken interaction, word use is more generic (every day, high-frequency words such as people, says, think). In school based texts lexicon is more dense (ie: sedimentary rock; closely associated; methods; evaporation). The lexical density of school based tasks can be measured by literally counting the number of every day words to specialized vocabulary, divided by the total number of words in a lecture or textbook. Lexicon can also be distinguished by the type of subject used in sentences. In every day language, the subjects of a sentence are often pronouns (I, you, he, she, it). In AEL, students are required to use more content specific words (Topographical maps show...).

Language at the sentence level includes word order, morphology and grammar (Bailey and Huang, 2011). Here, one must consider the language structures present in educational inputs (teacher talk and texts), which, in academic contexts, are very specific: the Tigres and Euphrates River run parallel to each other; The Mississippi River is fed by many tributaries). Schleppegrell (2001) explains the difference between everyday syntax and the syntax used in school as writing the way we talk (every day language), versus writing for academic purposes where the writer is more detached from the text (Schleppegrell, 2001). The rhetorical style used when writing the way we talk directly involves the way the writer feels about a particular subject and conveys more emotion (Schleppegrell, 2001). Writing that is more valued in academic contexts is more factual than emotional. Another feature of academic syntax is that it does not rely as heavily on conjunctions to introduce clauses (Shleppegrell, 2001). In everyday syntax, we often start an utterance with, and, so, well; while in academic contexts, students use complete sentences or “non-embedded clauses” (Schleppegrell, 2001, p. 447).

At the discourse level, students are asked to perform tasks that include informing, explaining, comparing, classifying, and persuading, which teachers expect a particular format

(Bailey and Huang, 2011). As early as preschool, students are expected to participate in show-and-tell using a particularly organized form of discourse. Schleppegrell (2001) explains that in show-and-tell students are expected to name and describe objects. Students who can use nouns versus pronouns, or gestures have more likelihood of interacting with their teacher than students who cannot (Michaels and Collins, 1984 as cited in Schleppegrell, 2001 AND Bailey and Huang, 2011). In upper elementary, discussion around texts often draw upon these same skills, and students' comprehension of these texts often depend on their ability to articulate what they know (Hopewell, 2010).

An additional theoretical proposition relevant to this analysis was that is due to high stakes accountability measures under NCLB, teaching the language of testing has become the *de facto* language policy shaping what content schools teach, how it is taught, by whom it is taught, and in what language(s) it is taught (Menken, 2006, p. 537). Due to high stakes, accountability measures that place tremendous pressure on teachers to improve student achievement rates as determined by large-scale assessments, instructional practices may be corrupted (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). In this way, students who are not proficient on content assessments may be subjected to more drill and kill type instruction aimed at teaching to the test (Berliner, Beardsley, 2010, p.7) more than teaching English Language Development (Menken, 2009, 2006). The way politics, in this case, NCLB accountability measures, impact, or corrupt instructional practices was examined by analyzing documents in conjunction with classroom observation. This critical aspect of the study was included to uncover how power circulates at the school level (Auerbach, 1995 as cited by Pennycook, 2001) and effect students' opportunities to learn and develop academic literacies.

To answer research question 2, all data sources were examined to see if students had the opportunity to practice academic language in English and Spanish, or if they were provided access to more discrete and isolated skills and test taking strategies using English only. Also key to this analysis was to see whether these opportunities might vary by student based on his or her levels of proficiency in language and literacy. Teacher interviews were also critical to understanding whether teachers understood the difference between instruction that supports English Language Development, and instruction that teaches mostly grammatical competencies with isolated skills, and to which students teachers thought these instructional differences might apply.

Students in the ELA-S strand received Spanish literacy instruction. It cannot be presumed that students who were native Spanish speakers did not need to develop academic language in Spanish. For this reason, I was interested in seeing how literacy instruction in both English and Spanish could be used as opportunities to teach academic language and to learn content. Data in this study was analyzed for the quality of instruction that can be determined as being structured to teach concepts using English and Spanish as a resource across language environments. Specifically, emerging bilingual students should be explicitly taught how to transfer language and literacy skills from one language to another (Jimenez, 1997).

Because language development looked very different at the instructional level in classrooms across Willow Elementary, I began to analyze the data from a language socialization perspective (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Understanding that since I did not find strong evidence of the explicit teaching of academic language as defined at the word, sentence and discourse level, and since I did find strong evidence of a performance driven culture, I looked to see how language developed naturally in this type of environment. To do this I documented how activities

tied to reading and reporting data required a specific type of language at the word level and discourse level. I also documented instances when teachers identified that the purpose of doing certain classroom activities, such as studying grammar, was to do well on district and state level assessments.

Conclusion

In this qualitative case study multiple sources of evidence were collected and analyzed together in a way that compared emerging patterns with the theoretical propositions guiding this study. Evidence from this analysis may inform existing paradigms about emerging bilingual students' opportunities to learn in the era of standards based reform. While direct observations, teacher interviews, and the collection of student data and instructional materials provided evidence of the types of instructional activities offered at Willow Elementary school to support the development of academic language, document analysis provided critical information on the larger structures influencing classroom practices. Together, this data provided a qualitative interpretation of student achievement based upon the educational inputs at Willow Elementary.

Chapter 4

RQ1: What are students' opportunities for ELD in grades 3-5 at a bilingual elementary school?

Prior to conducting this dissertation, I spent two years helping to implement an instructional model for biliteracy at Willow Elementary. Through my participation in classrooms during that time, I began to question the fidelity of Willow's ELD program. While many teachers had ELD posted on their daily schedules, in reality, I could never distinguish between the explicit teaching of language and the teaching of language arts. As a result, my primary research question for my dissertation emerged as a genuine concern over students' opportunities to receive instruction for English Language Development. I hypothesized that ELD was not being provided on a regular basis. In connection to extant literature on this topic, I argued that high-stakes testing was to blame (Gándara & Baca, 2008; Menken, 2006; Pacheco, 2005; Wright & Choi, 2006). Due to the pressures to perform, I believed that ELD time was absorbed into the literacy block to provide more concentrated instruction on remedial literacy skills. In this chapter, I will document how I found a typology of ELD opportunities provided at Willow Elementary, and through teacher interviews and through policy analysis, I will also build a rationale for the various types.

Toward the legal protection of ELLs in Rocky Mountain Public Schools

Not only was ELD provided at Willow Elementary, it is also very well protected by federal, state and district policies. Following the Lau Remedies (Lau v. Nichols 1974) and the application of the Castañeda Standards (Castañeda v. Pickard 1981), Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act appropriated funds (\$750,000,000 yearly for the first 5 years) to help ensure that students who were classified as Limited English Proficient would attain English proficiency, to

assist these children achieve at high levels, and to develop high quality instructional programs for English Language Development (Part A Sec. 3102. Purposes). Title III, the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act, also required that states, or consortia of states develop English Language Development Standards and language proficiency tests to measure the attainment of those standards. While the inclusion of students who are classified as Limited English Proficient in federal law was a notable step toward bringing the needs of these children into the national spotlight, it is also notable that Title III replaced Title VII of the Bilingual Education Act explicitly defining achievement through the attainment of English proficiency only. For the first time, teachers and schools would depend on the achievement of their Limited English Proficient Students to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on statewide content assessments and Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) for English language proficiency or face penalties. In fact, the Chief Academic Office in Rocky Mountain Public Schools cites that the reason we should be concerned over ELL students now is that they affect the overall achievement rates of the entire district (Cordova, 2012).

Subsequently, Colorado passed the English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA) (HB14-1298) to carry out obligations under Title III. This act required local education agencies (LEAs) to provide ELD programs that enabled students to acquire English and maintain grade-level performance in academic content. In addition, this act called for the state to support LEAs in establishing evidenced-based ELD programs. In 2014, Colorado reauthorized this act under HB 13-1211. The most significant revision was the extension of funds to support English Language Learners from two years to now seven years which reflects what many educators believe is the time it takes for learners to acquire both social and academic language (Cummins, 1979, 1981).

The ELPA also helped to establish Colorado's Office of Language, Culture and Equity within the State Department of Education to support programming and to administer funding to LEAs.

In compliance with Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act, On December 10, 2009 the Colorado State Board of Education voted to adopt the World-Class Instruction Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards as the Colorado English Language Proficiency (CELP) standards. The WIDA standards framework was designed to integrate the original CELP standards with the Common Core Content Standards resulting in 5 new ELD standards:

- Standard 1, the Language of Social and Instructional Language;
- Standard 2, the Language of Language Arts;
- Standard 3, the Language of Mathematics;
- Standard 4, the Language of Science; and
- Standard 5, the Language of Social Studies.

Overall, these standards intend to represent the academic language needed and used by English Language Learners (ELLs) to access grade level academic content while learning English. Teachers at Willow Elementary began to receive training on these standards in the spring of 2013.

Currently, if evenly distributed, ELLs would comprise nearly half of all students in every classroom in the Rocky Mountain Public School District, and this number is growing (Cordova, 2012). Arguably the success of the entire district depends on improving the educational opportunities and the educational achievement of ELLs. Yet, as of 2012, Rocky Mountain Public Schools once again came under a Consent Decree of the U.S. District Court over its English Language Acquisition (ELA) Program, replacing and nullifying the 1999 consent decree. This was the most current step in a decades long battle to provide educational opportunities to English

Language Learners in this district. Rocky Mountain Public Schools' modern history of legal battles concerning its Latino students began in 1969 with a desegregation district court case. In 1972 the U.S. Supreme Court took the case and, for the first time, it extended its *Brown v. Board* remedies to a non-southern state. Following, in 1980, the Congress of Hispanic Educators (CHE) filed a complaint on behalf of the state's English Language Learners arguing that the school district did not provide adequate programming for language development. This led to a series of motions and settlements over language rights in the Rocky Mountain School District resulting in consent decrees in 1984, 1999, and 2012. In 1997, the Office of Civil Rights found the district in violation for providing inadequate services to LEP students⁶. The fact that this is an ongoing battle should be evidence that in spite of legal protection, ELL students in Rocky Mountain Public Schools have historically been denied adequate programming for English Language Development.

The 2012 Consent Decree contains guidelines that parallel the Castañeda Standards in terms of legal requirements for ELD programs. These include parameters for instructional services, parent involvement, entrance and exit criteria, personnel and training requirements, considerations for bilingual, special needs students, program effectiveness, program oversight, and parent involvement. Regarding instructional services, Willow fell under the category of a Transitional Native Language Instruction (TNLI) program, where native language instruction in addition to "supported English content instruction, and ELD" should be available and be provided by fully qualified ELA-S and ESL/ELA-E teachers. ELD, primarily in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and understanding English, is required for "up to 90-minutes per school day" (p. 8). According to the principal at Willow, she found that the consent decree did

not contain a lot of specific information about what exactly was to occur during the time allotted for ELD; as a result, beyond placing ELD on the master schedule (which initially was overlooked) she and her teachers did not spend much time discussing it beyond whether or not they were meeting the time allocations (Personal Interview, 2012).

The Rocky Mountain School District's ELA holds that "English Language Development is the foundation for English Learner's success" (RMPS, 2012, p.1). Within their mission statement established in the Rocky Mountain District Plan, the school district also acknowledged the complexities of language development and the need to maintain learners' access to "equitable academic rigor" (2012, p. 7) while they are learning English. They also stated their belief that culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families are full members of the community whose "capital" is valued. Finally, as part of their "core beliefs," the district states,

"We believe that all students can learn at grade level or higher (*no excuses*), make dramatic gains in student achievement, reach their full potential and graduate prepared for success in life, work, civic responsibility, higher education, and competition in a global community. We believe this is true for all students and is not determined or limited by race, family income, *native language*, disability, gender, or area of residence" (RMPS, District Plan)

This statement matches what is found in literature as a "Sameness as Fairness" (Crosland, 2010) approach, where high expectations alone can solve the achievement gap. The stated asset orientation taken by district is also documented in the ELA program guide (2013):

"The foundation of Rocky Mountain Public Schools' ELA programs is viewing students' home languages as an asset. RMPS values and supports students' use of their native languages to support English acquisition. In RMPS we are committed to an additive approach to English language acquisition in contrast to a subtractive orientation that seeks to replace students' home languages and cultures with the English language and culture dominant in the United States" (p. 1).

The district program guide further specifies the components of ELA-S and ELA-E programs, and takes into consideration language development progressions and the time an ELL

would, theoretically, move through the five levels of proficiency (Level 1 to Level 2- 1 year; Level 2 to Level 3- 1 year; Level 3 to Level 4- 2 years; Level 4 to Level 5- 2 years). This progression shows that the district acknowledges that ELLs would spend the majority of their time in the intermediate and late intermediate stages of proficiency (2013), which is characteristic of the students followed in this study and is consistent with the literature which acknowledges that it takes at least five years to acquire academic language (Cummins, 1979, 1981).

At the school site, Willow Elementary's innovation-status application reflects that "the staff at Willow has come to a full consensus that preparing our students to continue on to the middle and high school fully proficient in English literacy skills is (our) number one priority" (2013, p. 6-7). This stated priority toward proficiency in English literacy is surprising considering that an essential component of their innovation plan was to receive "top notch professional development" (p. 13) on research based and tested methods to provide bilingual literacy instruction in English and in Spanish. In the innovation application, the values of biliteracy are mentioned alongside the stated goals for measurable achievement in English literacy. Taken together, I would argue that just as the district appears to support the diverse forms of cultural and linguistic capital possessed by students and the families in the district, what is actually valued is gains in English as this can be measured by statewide and district wide assessments.

All together, these policy documents provided encouraging evidence that English Language Development is a stated and legally protected priority in the Rocky Mountain School District and at Willow Elementary. However, the history of legal battles and conflicted priorities toward performance may suggest that these policies are not guaranteeing that there would be

effective methods used to support English Language Development implemented with a certain degree of fidelity at the school level. In the next section, I will show through teacher and administrator interviews how there is a lack of clarity about what constitutes ELD as well as a limited understanding about how to use these policies to help English learners overcome linguistic barriers during instruction.

ELD at Willow Elementary- Teacher and Administrator Perspectives

“I don't think that people know [ELD] is a priority, Jackie....So, I really don't think most teachers that I've come across understand that language proficiency is actually an area. Like, I know that, because I didn't know that it was. I understand that grammar and spelling are lets say an area or a domain, or not a domain, but an area that you need to work, but I don't think that people really comprehend the language proficiency piece. I don't think they know what to do during ELD. So, is it, I think, I really think it's an ignorance thing, an issue of ignorance on the teachers' part and on the school's part, more than anything. I think Willow's teachers would comply more with improving English language proficiency than actually complying with district mandates about these tests, like the DRA and the EDL (See appendix E), but I don't think they know how to do it. But, part of that, I don't think they even know that it's a thing!” (Teacher3S, Personal Interview, 2013)

The above quote shows, part of what I found to be, a tension caused by a lack of information about how to teach ELD and, as I'll describe in Chapter 6, a unified effort to produce, analyze and use data in order to improve student gains in literacy. As I studied the interviews, it became obvious that teachers, administrators and the literacy coach could talk about performance goals for literacy in depth, however I discovered inconsistent levels of ability to define ELD (when directly asked to do so), difficulty in articulating language objectives for the lessons I observed, scant knowledge of what instruction for ELD should consist of, and I discovered that expectations for what should occur during ELD block times are unclear.

Teachers' Understandings about ELD. As teachers spoke about ELD, I documented one detailed definition, and several instances where teachers really struggled to talk about what ELD is or how they provide it. The definition that was most consistent with current literature on the

topic (Goldenberg, 2008) was from Teacher3S who defined ELD as, “developing a child's oral language skills, so when we talk about language skills, we're talking about reading, writing, listening and speaking, as well, in order to help acquire English Language” (Teacher3S, Personal Interview, 2013). One more limited definition from another teacher was, “The development of language. ELD, in specifics, being English Language Development” (Teacher3E, Personal Interview, 2013). The definition was followed by general remarks about ELD consisting of using sentence stems and teaching vocabulary. Overall teachers generally stammered in attempt to answer my interview questions with foggy interpretations of previously acquired knowledge on the topic. One teacher struggled, “[ELD] strengthens a student's vocabulary through reading, writing, speaking, and ...I guess... in listening to be able to...(thinking) build skills...for their future...I guess...I don't know. Also those skills that can be transferable from English to Spanish..and apply them” (Teacher4S, Personal Interview, 2013). A few seconds later she added, “You have to build in what they're missing; "pronouns" for example” (Teacher4S, Personal Interview, 2013). The most veteran teacher I interviewed struggled the most. When asked to define ELD he responded, “Well, English language development, (hesitating), the WIDA is like a big consortium thing that Colorado is involved with now with I think like 15-20 other states and uh it...from what I...my perception of it is that it's a way to focus on, to acknowledge and focus on um academic instructional language as well as social language skills” (Teacher4E, Personal Interview, 2013). Later, when I asked how he could provide ELD, he added, “for students, so that can be done through a lot of things like grammar, punctuation things that we do in here, Um... but it's basically recognizing for English language learners a need for um English learning development...Uh... not just for this but also for social...social language as well... That can be done through the literacy squared... uh that we've been using here at Willow the last

couple years...grammar punctuation packets, editing skills... (asking himself) what else do we do? Spelling” (Teacher4E, Personal Interview, 2013).

Part of the interview script for this study included talking to the teachers about the language objectives for the units of instruction that I observed. While all teachers acknowledged that they should have content language objectives, eliciting what these objectives were was laborious:

- (1) JH: What were the content language objectives for the lessons I was observing, for the “small moments” lesson?
- (2) Teacher4S: For the small moment, I guess my CLO’s, I haven’t even posted them. We’re just learning punctuation, something simple, obviously there’s more, I just put that there because I remember from last year they were having a hard time even distinguishing the sentences, and that’s kind of where I was at, so just spelling, punctuation, the CUPS
- (3) JH: And that’s for this Unit 1.
- (4) Teacher4S: Yes.
- (5) JH: So, CLOs...

[Then the teacher pulls out the district literacy guide and begins reading the objectives that could be accomplished in the current unit]

- (6) Teacher4S: ...Points of view. And compare and contrast. This one is hard to do. The first person...what else, what else, ummm, so, I, no, I guess we didn’t do this, grade level phonics, I mean we talk aloud, but to read out loud or apply? We kind of did the word analysis, like the content; decode the word, like when we did the content clues, but not an entire lesson. So here are the adjectives, capitalization, conjunctions, that’s where I got that, umm, I know we talked about that. You know I don’t know where cognates come in/ Spelling grade appropriate words/ we talked about academic language, but, normally I put... academic language, but I need to do that, put academic language, (digressing) but you know we talk about that, and I’ll give examples throughout the year, like “academic language is to build,” and they’re like (mimicking a conversation with the students) “What is that?” That’s the language that we use to speak in the classroom, the words that we’re learning. It’s not the words that you’re going to use when you go out to the playground. That’s how I explain it to them.

In this example, the teacher jumped to CUPS (Capitalization, Usage, Punctuation, Spelling) in her attempt to identify the language objective for her literacy unit before digressing completely. In a different classroom, I spoke with the teacher about her language objectives,

which were posted, using strips of paper taken from the Complete Common Core State Standard Kit for Language Arts, published by Carson-Dellosa (see image 4.1 below).

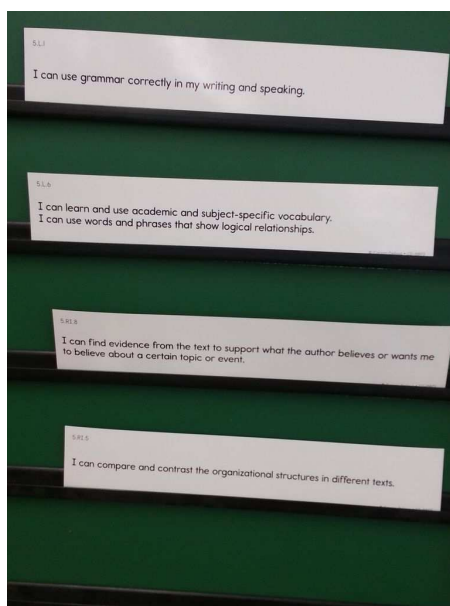


Figure 4.1. Classroom Display of the Complete Common Core State Standards Kit.

In this classroom, the posted language objectives were (as pictured above) “I can use grammar correctly in my writing and speaking,” and “I can learn and use academic and subject-specific vocabulary. I can use words and phrases that show logical relationships.” These language objectives were intended to support the posted literacy objectives, “I can find evidence from the text to support what the author believes or wants me to believe about a certain topic or event,” and “I can compare and contrast the organizational structures in different texts.” Thinking that these language objectives seemed vague, I asked the teacher how she came up with the language standards and she mentioned: “They don’t, the way the common core standards are written, they don’t directly correlate...however you can find a language standard [in the kit] that will match [the literacy standard]...I just don’t have enough experience with it”

(Teacher5E, Personal Interview, 2013). According to her, in order to use the Common Core Standards Toolkit correctly, teachers must subjectively try to match the best language objectives to achieve their literacy objectives.

When asked directly to state his content and language objectives for a lesson I observed, Teacher3E had to grab a lesson plan and then explained his experience with Content Language Objectives. Interestingly, the teacher pulled out a lesson plan that had been prepared for him (which is not what I observed being taught), but still struggled to identify a language objective:

- (1) JH: What language objectives did you teach?
- (2) Teacher4E: Well I mean language objectives are going to be different parts of the article heading, captions, subtitles, titles, author.
- (3) JH: So it is with the ...do you guys now have to do content language objectives? Is that something that...how is that rolling out...?
- (4) Teacher4E: I mean it's not something that, I mean now that we have that we're doing team planning we're filling out templates that have an area for English language, well language objectives and its been kind of slow going because when we meet we have administrative meetings two days a week and then supposedly to meet three days a week as a team but it gets interrupted a lot and they have other meetings too so its slowly rolling out. (Teacher4E, Personal Interview, 2013).

This is an example where I had to back out of the line of questioning, because it was clear that the teacher had no idea what his language objectives were.

Lack of Materials and Resources. Regarding Resources and Curriculum, teachers mentioned that planning for ELD takes a lot of time. For one teacher, she admitted to staging an ELD lesson when she was given 1-day notice about an observation from “the RMPS committee or whatever.” She mentioned that it took a long time to plan and that she imitated a lesson demonstrated by one of the literacy research partners, but that the timing was off making her lesson much too long. She said, “I wish you would have been there this morning, I did a full on

ELD lesson!” This moment of the interview was poignant to me, because a teacher could identify and acknowledge that there was only 1 opportunity for me to have had observed a planned ELD block—in a lesson staged for a district observation-- in spite of the fact that I spent 3 weeks in her room (the interview took place in the week following my classroom observations). This teacher, I believe, is really interested and is trying to learn how to do ELD, but she proclaims that she lacks experience and know-how in order to plan for it.

Avenues is an ELD curriculum-text that sits on the shelves at Willow. I never saw a single lesson using *Avenues*. One teacher mentioned that she thought that *Avenues* is a good text, but that nobody at Willow uses it rendering the text useless in the upper grades.

- (1) Teacher4S: Yes, so we have to differentiate, beg, middle, and advanced. And *Avenues* has that, which we can apply in our classrooms. Now, as a school, we are not using *Avenues*, but they leave it to a teacher’s discretionary use.
- (2) JH: Who’s they?
- (3) Teacher4S: [The Principal] leaves it on a teacher base. The individual teacher decision on what we are going to use for ELD. That being said...not discrediting any of the educators here, but for example, we need to all be consistent and have the same foundation, because when they get to 4th grade, it’s obvious that the students are lacking English language development skills (Teacher4S, Personal Interview, 2013).

There is tension for teachers with wanting to provide ELD and needing instant gratification and needing something to quickly throw together. One teacher, who is really trying to use the new biliteracy program at Willow, articulated clearly her struggles with her progress. She described how much time she spent planning, “looking for articles on the internet” and after she exhausted her search, she had several articles but not one sentence structure or sentence frame. During instruction, I observed, that she had not decided or determined if she should be teaching the language of cause and effect or problem/solution or compare and contrast writing. The morning of her lesson she admitted to “winging it” and during the interview she described

the lesson as “pulling it out of my [expletive].” During the lesson, she found that she spent one hour working with students on how to use the sentence structures she ultimately came up with. The result: “Ok, I just spent an hour, ‘cause it was over an hour, I spent over an hour and we got one sentence. It’s hard. It is hard to be okay with that, to say, that’s ok” (Teacher5E, Personal Interview, 2013). This teacher, who was really trying, was frustrated that after many days, her students had not written more than a few notes, and were nowhere close to completing, or even beginning, their essay. In this conversation, the teacher knew that she should have language objectives, but she struggled to determine what they were, she struggled to plan for them, and she felt very little satisfaction after having tried to teach them. What I did observe in her classroom is that she used grammar packets that students took home for homework each week. She and other teachers commented that using grammar packets, including the DLI⁷ book, was a quick way to ensure that students were getting an English grammar lesson daily.

Two other teachers spoke about teaching oracy using vocabulary and sentence stems to support English Language Development. Both teachers’ responses also supported my observation that teaching ELD is a tension between teaching oral language development, and teaching discrete grammar skills. The first teacher stated that when he teaches ELD he teaches, “...Oracy, vocabulary and sentence stems and giving students the opportunities for that within an academic environment; GLAD; cause and effect sentence stems and oracy, vocabulary, I used DLI ” (Teacher3E, Personal Interview, 2013). This teacher has learned that ELD should include oracy supported with sentence stems and vocabulary, but that he also uses DLI to cover specific, discrete language skills. The other teacher mentioned that, as a new teacher she was instructed to use DLI as a “daily dose of grammar and language,” but that she found that she didn’t have the

⁷ DLI is a daily language curriculum developed by RMPS teachers

time to teach isolated grammar and that she found it to be “fairly unsuccessful” (Teacher3S, Personal Interview, 2013).

Administrative Expectations for ELD. What teachers admitted doing for ELD was found to be very inconsistent. I think this has a lot to do with unclear administrative expectations. During one segment of an interview, a teacher asked me to stop recording, and then told me that the Principal explicitly told teachers that collectively, ELD would not be an area of concern since the school is green and that there was no pressure to change what they were doing. During my interview with the Principal, I found some evidence of this, however the principal distinguished between meeting the minimum time requirement set by the consent decree and quality of the ELD, which is “making sure students are learning the English they need to learn.” She stated that she expected teachers to be providing quality ELD instruction, but she also added, “We don’t talk a whole lot about the consent decree, and the reason we don’t is because it is so...not detailed...So because there isn’t a whole lot of detail in that consent decree we don’t talk about it a whole lot ‘cause we’re meeting the minimum (time requirement), so I don’t feel like we’re going to get in trouble, or that we’re not meeting it.” (Principal Interview, 2013).

During my conversation with the Assistant Principal, as with teachers, she also struggled to produce a definition of ELD. She stated that when teaching ELD, teachers need “to be really very explicit, in their teaching of language, um, to, (pausing), hmmm, that’s a really good question. Um, to focus more on structure of the language, um, pronunciation, making sure that it’s correct and proper, um, I would hope that, I guess that I see it as more formal instruction of the English language”. (Assistant Principal Interview, 2013). At the end of the interview, she admitted to struggling with her response (cited above): “So, (laughing) ELD? What DO we do?! I was like, that’s a good question Jackie! No actually, if there’s one thing I’ve always been

nervous about, it's that conversation with people that come in and want to know what we do during that time because I'm STILL not clear what's supposed to be going on during ELD". (Assistant Principal Interview, 2013). This was an interesting finding because this administrator also mentioned that as an evaluator, the LEAP⁸ framework, as it will be described further in Chapter 5, specifies that teachers must be teaching academic language.

Both the assistant principal and the principal mentioned that there was an effort to learn the WIDA standards framework and to use it to help teachers "plan ELD strategically." However, both administrators admitted as a school, they were "not quite sure we've gotten there, yet." (Assistant Principal Interview, 2013). After acknowledging this, the Principal went on to talk more about how there is not a good way to progress monitor for ELD. This coincided with a comment made by the third grade ELA-S teacher who felt that if she could progress monitor for oral language development during the differentiation block and connect this to literacy achievement, that she would have better luck gaining approval to use her differentiation block to focus on oracy.

One teacher summarized the school's progress on using the WIDA standards framework with frustration. She was frustrated that there was only one PD prior to the start of the school year and she expects more from administrators than just "here's the WIDA standards, have a good year, good luck!" (Teacher4S, Personal Interview, 2013). She continued, "I mean, we're barely getting together what the common core standards, which we haven't even looked at as a school, we're barely trying to do that in our team planning, but again, we don't have the curriculum, the time, the man power, to do what they're asking". (Teacher4S, 2013). I think there IS a difference between meeting the minimum time requirement set forth by the consent decree

⁸ LEAP is Rocky Mountain Public Schools' framework for evaluating teacher performance

and teaching a quality ELD block. If administrators are not going to spend time talking about ELD, then we cannot expect that teachers would feel well trained and prepared to implement ELD standards and language objectives within their lessons.

A Typology of Opportunities for English Language Development

While I had initially hypothesized that there were no opportunities for ELD at Willow Elementary, I ultimately found a typology of different methods used to teach language. Even when teachers purported to not know what to do during ELD time, I found that embedded in their literacy instruction there was evidence of teaching language. In some instances, teaching language also meant applying a high level of acceptability whereby students must produce the correct syntactical form or the appropriate vocabulary term in order to share their ideas and participate in daily classroom discourse. In total, I found two main types of ELD: 1- *Language through Interaction*; and 2- *Language Before Interaction*. I also found a third type, which I labeled *Language through interaction, intended*. Under this type, I found that teacher3E provided opportunities for students to learn language through interaction unless he needed to prepare students for district assessments.

Table 4.1

A Typology of ELD in Classrooms at Willow Elementary

	Opportunity Type	Instructional Characteristics	Corresponding Classroom
Type I	Language through Interaction	Whole-language approach Language objectives support literacy objective Language skills developed in context	Classroom3S
Type II	Language before Interaction	Skills based approach Grammatical competence valued over comprehension Lack of, or inconsistent use of language objectives to support literacy objectives	Classroom4S Classroom4E Classroom5S Classroom5E
Type III	Language through interaction, <i>intended</i>	Practice included Type I instruction, but shifted toward Type II when preparing students for high stakes testing	Classroom3E

Type I-language through interaction. I observed students learning language through Literacy Based ELD in both third grade rooms (ELA-E and ELA-S). Literacy Based ELD is a research-based method for teaching second language literacy that includes providing opportunities for students to transfer their reading behaviors from their first language toward reading in their subsequent languages (Escamilla et al, 2014). In addition, instructional characteristics for Type I included a whole language approach to reading where language skills are developed in context. In this section I will describe third grade ELA-S as the other third grade room also fell into TYPE III, which was Language through interaction, intended. At other grade levels, I also found students learning language through interaction in unplanned circumstances where students used Spanish to help them develop English in order to “get things done.”

Teacher driven language instruction through interaction. In third grade ELA-S, the teacher consistently provided rich opportunities to teach language in a time specifically designated for ELD and to allow students to practice using the language they would need to achieve their literacy objectives. It is important to note that ELD instruction was planned and explicitly taught during the scheduled and posted time allotted for ELD.

In Classroom3S, the literacy objectives were: (Spanish Literacy) Puedo Analizar los elementos de ficción (I can analyze elements of fiction) and Puedo emular a escritores excelentes (I can emulate excellent writers); (English Literacy) I can describe characters. In this unit students read two texts La escoba de la viuda (the Widower’s broom) by Chris Van Allsburg and My Diary from Here to There by Amada Irma Pérez. To achieve the English literacy objective, students were learning about character traits, which, as they are taught, may differ from feelings. The texts used in English and Spanish literacy both had a strong

main character with distinct traits providing a rich platform for describing characters. This was a paired literacy class where instruction in Spanish was connected and helped support literacy in English. Learning to describe and talk about *la Viuda* by providing evidence from the text in Spanish literacy directly supported students in English writing where they would then draft an essay whereby describing Amada, the main character in *My Diary from Here to There*, also using evidence from the text. In achieving this objective, Teacher3S was also able to integrate mini-lessons for teaching the use of adverbs, proper nouns, and adjectives to show how characters feel. These grammar points were tied to literature in that students read Amada's personal narrative and learned to describe her based upon what they've read, and, most importantly, based on what they discussed during ELD and Literacy.

During an ELD Lesson, students were learning about how Amada demonstrates courage. Her family is separated as they cross the U.S.-Mexico border as Amada goes to live with relatives while her dad moves to Los Angeles to find work. During Spanish Literacy, the Spanish noun "coraje" was the daily vocabulary word in the morning before this lesson. During their ELD lesson, the teacher displayed the following language structures on the board to help students respond to a prompt:

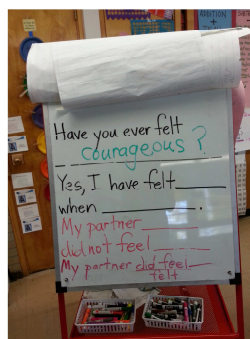


Figure 4.2. Language Structures from a 3rd Grade ELD Lesson.

The transcript for this lesson is below:

- (1) Teacher: Characteristics are things that describe a person all the time. And feelings, well can someone pull out a word from feeling?
- (2) Student: Feel
- (3) Teacher: Feelings are things that people feel. Words that describe how a person feels. When we talk about characteristics we are going to talk about how a person feels. Today we are going to talk about Courageous. Can everyone say Courageous?
- (4) Students: COURAGEOUS
- (5) Teachers: Courageous. Oh! If I am looking at the word, I see a really nice word that I can pull out. When you look at this word, (student name), what do you see? Do you see a word that you could pull out?
- (6) Student: -geous
- (7) Teacher: -geous. Ok this is actually a word at the end of the word that we call a suffix.
- (8) Student2: -ous
- (9) Teacher: Ok we just talked about -ous
- (10) Teacher: Has anybody heard of the word courage?
- (11) Student Chorus: NO!...oh yeah
- (12) Teacher: OK! Has anybody ever seen that movie with the witch and the scarecrow and the tin man?
- (13) Students: ----
- (14) Teacher: The Wizard of Oz?
- (15) Students: Oh!!!! Si (they recall from 2nd grade) El mago de Oz!
- (16) Teacher: Ok, can anybody think of which character was afraid? He wanted to go into the woods, but he was too afraid? He wanted to ask for "Courage" from the wizard. So courage is the word we can take out, it is the base word or the root word, and it means brave. Ok, so we can use the word brave. So brave is when you think you are going to do something hard, or maybe like the SAP, or maybe something that makes you feel scared, but you want to do it, ok? I want you to/ (pointing to a student)/ Can you read that question?
- (17) Student: Have you ever felt sc..
- (18) Teacher: Ok, we are going to put in there courageous. Ok, that's a long word so I'm going to leave in the courage and write (students choral) -ous. Ok, have you ever felt courageous? Ok, everyone: cour-age-ous. Courageous (students repeat in syllables and then the complete word). Ok, so have you ever felt brave? Have you ever felt like you were scared of doing something but you did it anyway? Ok, I want you to talk with your shoulder partner so (She pairs students by name). So ask your partner...Let's actually give an example. I'm just going to pretend like I'm sitting on the floor and I'm going to ask my partner, "Hey ---, have you ever felt courageous"?

- (19) Student: (Shrugs his shoulders)
- (20) Teacher: Do you think --- is going to learn a lot of English if he just responds (showing how he shrugged his shoulders)? What should he do?
- (21) Student: (Pointing to the board) mumbling
- (22) Teacher: He should use the words in the sentence (pointing to the question) and transform into these (pointing to the language structures below the questions (see figure 4.2 above).

The lesson continued and the teacher gave examples of transformations to the sentence structure such as “I have felt courageous” and how to talk in the 1st person and in the 3rd person when presenting what they learned about their partner. Students were encouraged to continue the dialogue to get more information about the situation when they felt courageous. As students pair, I moved to sit with two girls who talk about a time when they felt courageous:

- (1) Girl 1: N, have you ever felt courageous?
- (2) Girl 2: Yes, I have felt courageous when it was the first day of the school year.
- (3) Girl 2: J, Have you ever felt courageous?
- (4) Girl 1: Yes, when I had to take a test.
- (5) Me: So did you do well on your test?
- (6) Girl 1: Yes, I got an 84 on lectura (reading). I was the highest.
- (7) Me: (turning to the next student) Do you always feel nervous on the first day of school?
- (8) Girl 2: Yes, like when I go to another grade, like when I go to 4th grade I’m going to be courageous. And when I go to 5th grade, I am going to feel courageous, too.
- (9) Me: Is this because it was a new school, or have you guys always been in Willow (elementary)?
- (10) Girl 2: I’ve always been at Willow except for ECE. In ECE I went to Acorn (elementary).
- (11) Girl 1: Estaba in ECE y poquito en Kinder alla en --- (I was in ECE and awhile in Kinder over in---)(not recalling).
- (12) Me: Cual? (which)
- (13) Girl 1: (Not remembering the name she tries to tell me what school she went to by telling me what color uniform she had. Doing so, she switches to Spanish).

Quickly after this exchange, the students shared what their partner said. To do this, they had to transform the sentence structure into the past tense by saying, “My partner FELT courageous when...” This was helpful, because when they wrote about Amada from their text they were using the past tense. The teacher also had this opportunity to provide support when a student struggled to say “courageous” and also forgot to switch the verb “break” to “broke” (see example below):

- (1) Student: “My partner Diego felt cor... when he break the window.”
- (2) Teacher: Courageous (she makes him repeat it). And he broke, rompió, the window.

This lesson is meaningful for three reasons: 1- students practiced English as they spoke about their own life experience; and 2- students were learning the academic language they needed to describe the main character in their book and to meet the posted literacy objectives; and 3- the structure of the lesson lent itself toward using primary language as a support and as a conduit for furthering the conversation. The teacher referred to this as “meaningful conversation.” These students were meeting the literacy objective (describe a character) for the standard related to fiction narratives. Their language objective was completely connected to this literacy objective. In addition, students were encouraged to go into depth, at which point a student switched into Spanish, which was ultimately accepted by her partner for the sake of discussion. Additionally, to use Spanish as a primary language support, students also could draw upon the morning’s vocabulary mini-lesson on coraje. Finally, being able to say that Amada felt courageous when... connects to their writing lesson where students will first have to talk about how a character felt, and later provide evidence from the story about how they knew the character felt a certain way.

During my observations, students moved through several iterations of writing their essays about Amada. On each day, the teacher asked them to add detail and description to their work as habits of “what good writers do.” Knowing “what good readers and writers do” is a theme in Willow Elementary’s literacy curriculum, although it is defined differently in other classrooms. In classroom 3S students learn that good writers use adjectives. To begin, students started with their Spanish narratives where they described people. She asked them to describe the same people in English and allows students to ask clarifying questions in Spanish. Together she and the students wrote a list of words: friendly (similar to friend), strong, funny, beautiful, fun/cool, brave, crazy. One student describes their person as “drinks a lot.” Teacher3S still finds a way to include this response in the classroom discussion by writing “unhealthy.” Whenever a new word emerged, she asked them to take out a word they recognized (Friend/Friendly). She also added synonyms in a red marker to help expand their list. After activating a list of adjectives in English, students were instructed to use a t-chart to identify traits/feelings possessed by Amada (column 1) as well as supporting evidence from the text (column 2) for each trait/feeling. Teacher3S instructed students to quietly re-read the first page of their book. Together, they then identified that Amada felt scared. They highlighted parts of the text, “I know I should be asleep already, but I just can’t sleep...how can I sleep knowing we might leave Mexico forever” (Pérez, 2002, p. 3). Students will use this excerpt as evidence that Amada was probably scared at the beginning of the story. Additionally, Teacher3E gives students a sentence frame Amada felt _____. Evidence of this is _____. Students were expected to incorporate this into their story about Amada. In other ELD lessons, Teacher3S

sentences. However informal, this register mattered as it helped the students move their English writing toward more standard usage.

Example 1: Using Spanish to edit to work on English writing in small groups

- (1) Student Leader: (demanding), Ponle, "I started." (*Put it!! "I started."*)
- (2) Student 2: No lo terminaste! *You didn't finish it* (referring to what Student Leader wanted him to do).
- (3) Student 3: Es que no terminé! (*It's just that I'm not done yet*).
- (4) Student Leader: Yo te ayudo. A ver. (*Ok, I'm going to help you*).
- (5) Student 3: Yo lo voy a copiar: (*I'm going to copy this phrase* (from his rough draft) "help, I yelled to my father to come rescue me."
- (6) Student Leader: Si está bien. (*Yes, that's right*).
- (7) Student 3: Done! Ya está mejor. (*Done, now that's better*).
- (8) Student Leader: (reviews his work)
- (9) Student 2: Escribiste "Small" wrong (she starts to correct him) (*You wrote "small" wrong*).
- (10) Student 3: SI LO PUSE BIEN (*no, it's right!*)

As I will describe in the next section, evidence in this example was the use of demonstrative adjectives and pronouns that are so forbidden in the main script of the classroom. I found when the students' speech was not monitored so closely by the teacher, they were able to finish their work. Most importantly, they were able to figure out what corrections were needed by helping each other. In this example Student 3 smiled as he finished and uttered to himself, but still audible "Now that's better." He was truly proud of his work and even defended himself in the end (No, it's right!).

Example 2: Using Spanish to edit to work on English writing in small groups:

- (1) Student 2 (referring to peer essay): Are you trying to say white, or while?
- (2) Student 1:?
- (3) Student 2: ¿Quieres poner blanco or mientras? (*Do you want to say white or while?*)
- (4) Student 1: Mientras (*while*)
- (5) Student 2 (writes "while" on the white board): Así se escribe while. (*That's how you write, while*)
- (6) Student 2: (Writes Garfield)

- (7) Student 3: Es que no sé escribir Garfield (*It's just that I don't know how to write "Garfield"*).
- (8) Student 2: Te enseño. Escribe Garfield así, Escribe While así. (*I'll show you. Write Garfield like this, write while like this*).
- (9) Student 1: Así (*Like this?*)
- (10) Student 2: No! Todavía sacaste mal. (*No, it's still wrong*).

Being bilingual, the students can more quickly identify the confusion between words like White/While, which sound very similar, when they are able to use Spanish to assist them. In this example, one student resources her Spanish in which the translations, blanco/mientras, are more distinguishable. Her classmate, because he knows Spanish, is able to answer her question, and they are quickly able to move on to their next problem, which is finding the standard spelling of Garfield.

Example 3: Using Spanish to edit to work on English writing in small groups:

- (1) Student 1: ¿ahora, otra hoja? (He points to his essay and wants to know if he should re-write it).
- (2) Student 2: Sí
- (3) Student 1: ¿Por qué salió mal? (Señala una palabra)
- (4) Student 2: No es que la "I" *en inglés* siempre lleva la mayúscula
- (5) Student 2: (reading) "...I was happy to go to my soccer game..." she reads all of student one's paragraph and starts rewriting it on the little white board.

In this example, a highly performing student was working with a struggling student (as identified by their reading levels). Student 2 cannot identify why he got "i" wrong, since he thinks he spelled it correctly. The highly performing student shows metalinguistic awareness and understands that she needs to explicitly say that the problem is not what he wrote, it's just that "I" in English is always capitalized while "yo" in Spanish is not. Again, by connecting both languages, the students are able to work quickly through the editing process.

Example 4: Using Spanish to edit to work on English writing in small groups:

- (1) Student 3: Eso no entiendo
- (2) Student 4: Freverish
- (3) Me: Oh feverish. Ok.
- (4) Student 3: Maestra, así se escribe soprising?
- (5) Me: No, [I write “surprising” on a small white board]
- (6) Student 4: Y también “telent”
- (7) Student 3: No lleva la 'a"

Also in this example, students were able to quickly move through problems and get their questions answered. Even when they were not maintaining the integrity of the specified language environment, they are still making progress toward achieving standardization in their writing in English. In all of the above examples, students were able to use formal or informal registers of Spanish to meet writing standards in English while working in small groups. However, as you will see in the next section, during the main script of the classroom, students in Classroom4S must monitor their language usage in order to interact with the teacher during whole group.

Type II- Language before interaction. Language before interaction was a type of language development that occurred in Classroom4S, Classroom5S, and Classroom4E. There were two ways this occurred. First, in unplanned interactions between teachers and students, the teachers demonstrated high levels of acceptability and closely monitored students’ language use during the literacy block. Second, in Classroom4E and in Classroom5E, during a time devoted to ELD, the teacher planned instruction to teach isolated grammar points that were not connected to larger literacy objectives.

Language via strategies embedded in literacy blocks. Across multiple classrooms, I found strategies used by teachers to control language production in class discussion and in writing. Among the most common of these strategies were CSIQ (Complete Sentence In Question), Accountable Talk, and CUPS (Capitalization, Usage, Punctuation, and Spelling). Bailey (2007) defined academically proficient as being able to “use general and content-specific

vocabulary, specialized or complex grammatical structures, and multi-various language functions and discourse structures all for the purpose of acquiring new knowledge and skills, interacting about a topic, *or imparting information to others*” (p. 69). In classrooms that demonstrated I language instruction, I found that teachers expected proficiency in academic discourse, syntax, and vocabulary especially when students were demonstrating new knowledge.

CSIQ. I first heard CSIQ in classroom4S. In this room, when a student does not respond with a complete sentence, Teacher4S would ask, “Can I get a CSIQ on that?” Students were trained to know that this question meant that they would have to rephrase their response before the teacher would accept an answer. When I interviewed Teacher4S, she told me that she learned of CSIQ from her son who attended school in a neighboring district. When I researched CSIQ, I found a few colloquial teacher sites (www.teacherspayteachers.com for example), that defined the term as helping students in constructed response, test items by teaching them how to identify and use the words in a question to write a complete sentence in an answer.

In classroom4S, students were to use their “\$100 word” notebook to finalize their small moments paragraph. The teacher was telling students that their paragraphs were expected to have 5 sentences and she led them through a discussion about what is a sentence. A student shares that the idea is that a sentence ends with a punctuation mark.

- (1) Teacher4S: What action of the writing process was I using; *using CSIQ*?
- (2) Student4S: Editing
- (3) Teacher4S: Can I get a complete sentence?
- (4) Student4S: You were modeling editing.
- (5) Teacher4S: Beautiful

In classroom5S, the teacher was explaining a reading strategies bingo card, and asked, “So when can you make a compare and contrast about a book and an event in your life, [calling out Student5S]? And you call tell me in Spanish, if it’s easier.”

- (1) Student5S: [Silent]
- (2) Teacher5S: When can you do it?
- (3) Student5S: [Silent]
- (4) Teacher5S: Puedes contestar in Espanol si quieres.
- (5) Student5S: [Minutes of Silence]
- (6) Teacher5S: Is this too much? Do you want a pass?
- (7) Student5S: Nods (801_0063)

The teacher spends another 3 minutes of instruction trying to get the answer to the question “When can you make a compare and contrast [between a book and real life events]?” Two students begin trying:

- (1) Student 1: When you read the book
- (2) Student 2: In the middle
- (3) Teacher5S: (provides more coaching around the question)
- (4) Student 1: When you make a connection
- (5) Teacher5S: Can you give me a CSIQ on that?
- (6) Student 1: [Silent]
- (7) Teacher5S: (More coaching)
- (8) Student 1: You can make a compare and contrast when you make a connection to your real life (801_0063)
- (9) Teacher5S: Excellent.

By using CSIQ, the student is able to show that he understands the purpose of making text-to-self connections. Between the student who did not produce a response and the boys who knew the answer but were struggling to produce the response in the correct form, I documented 8 minutes of instructional time had passed.

Accountable Talk. The second strategy used to control for language during literacy was Accountable Talk, which was adapted by Rocky Mountain Public Schools from the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh (See Appendix D). Accountable Talk is research tested “academically productive talk” (Institute for Learning, 2014) that includes sentence frames that structure discourse in a learning community to promote problem solving and critical thinking. According to the University of Pittsburg (Institute for Learning, 2014), Accountable Talk is part of a student-centered discussion where students should respond to and further

develop what other students have said, use accurate and relevant knowledge and evidence about the topic of discussion, and practice active and attentive listening (Institute for Learning, 2014). Most classrooms I observed had Accountable Talk frames posted in the classroom (See figure 4.5-4.7 below). I also observed teachers asking students to use accountable talk when engaging in table work.

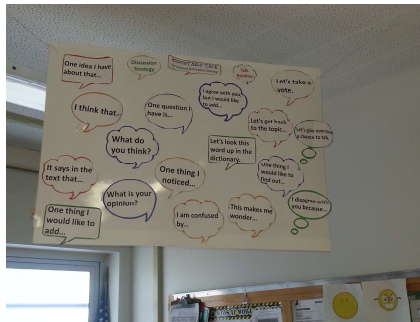
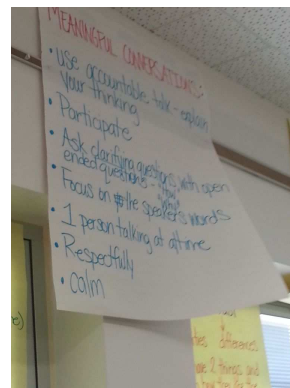


Figure 4.5. *Accountable Talk Classroom3E*



Figures 4.6 and 4.7 *Accountable Talk Classroom5E*.

This was an expected and rewarded norm for classroom conversation in classroom5E. Before and after an activity, the teacher would rehearse the Accountable Talk practice for explaining and thinking, as well as the respectful talk, which also included words such as please, may I, thank you, you're welcome and other norms for what

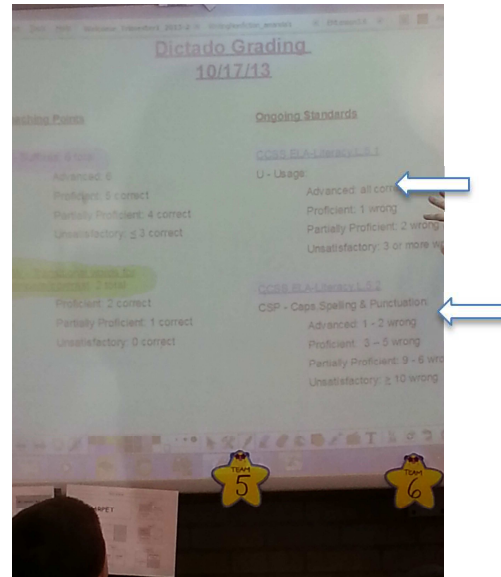
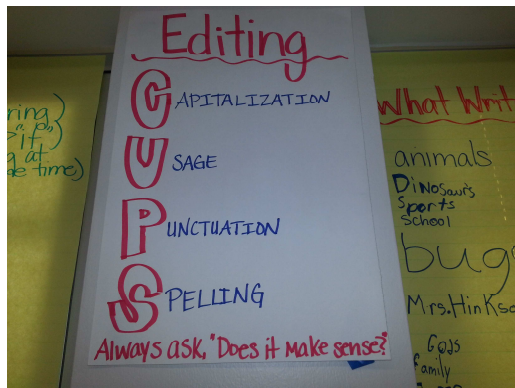
Teacher5E calls meaningful communication. One table received a table point for using respectful and accountable talk, and in one observation, I found that Teacher 5E walked around the room to monitor and correct conversations not employing these two norms as she would expect them to be used:

- (1) Student: May I please trade with you a card?
- (2) Teacher: A card?
- (3) Student: (Correcting himself) A non-fiction card
- (4) Teacher: We need to practice speaking in full sentences.
- (5) Student: May I please trade with you a non-fiction card?

Here the student correctly used the word “May” to initiate a card trade as he was taught, but because he did not use the descriptor “non-fiction,” his teacher actually corrected him telling him that he needs to speak in full sentences.

CUPS. CUPS was an acronym used to help students control for Capitalization, Usage, Punctuation and Spelling in their writing. Most classrooms used CUPS to control for language in writing. Teacher4S specifically mentioned CUPS when asked to define her language objectives, and Teacher5E used CUPS as a framework for evaluating students’ writing. As seen in figure 4.7, she linked these categories to Common Core Standards CCSS.ELA-Literacy L.5.1 and CCSS.ELA-Literacy L.5.2. (See Figures 4.8 and 4.9). Teacher4E mentioned that students would also be referring to CUPS as they edited their writing, and a student added that they knew how to do this because they used CUPS with Teacher3E. Students were very familiar with the use of CUPS in Writer’s Workshop due to the alignment across grades and classrooms by the use of this tool, it is also used to help students assess their work. In classroom5E students were asked to grade their work based on CUPS and then classify themselves as Advanced, Proficient, Partially Proficient, or Unsatisfactory. The teacher then opened her grade book, and students publicly identify themselves with their scores in each of the three-

categories/teaching points. The weight placed on CUPS when grading, teaches students that in order to be proficient writers they have to produce correct language. In this way, they did not learn that the content of their ideas would be valued.



Figures. 4.8 and 4.9. CUPS in classroom5E.

Production over comprehension. Because of the way teachers embedded language development into the literacy block using CSIQ, Accountable Talk, and CUPS, often the production of standard form was assessed, taking away from formative assessment and feedback on content knowledge, in Classroom4S this became a time consuming practice. I found evidence of what Rampton (2013) identified as the language binary present in public education between high and low registers of language, and a tension caused by a teacher's high level of acceptability for production of a certain register or style in her or his classroom. One exchange that occurred between teacher4S and student 1, who is also an English Language Learner, while the student was asking a clarifying question:

- (1) Student 1: “Do we need to do this and then put it in that?”
- (2) Teacher4S: “WHAT? Is that a question?”

The students and teacher went back and forth, inviting other students to clarify what the teacher was asking, for **several minutes** until student 1 could say:

- (1) Student 1: “Are we going to finish the final draft of the small moment essay?”
- (2) Teacher4S: “Yes. And, you need to learn how to formulate a question.”

Here the teacher spent precious instructional minutes waiting for her students to ask a question correctly. This was a frequent form of interaction in room 4S, which I also found during a math lesson that I had the opportunity to observe. Students were working on Math Facts in a Flash, which is a two-minute drill on simple math skills aligned with a student’s personal level. While students were learning how to turn on their NEOs (a keyboard through which they take math and reading quizzes), Teacher4S asked, “Why do we do Math Facts in a flash?” As students responded, Teacher4S expected them to use a correct sentence format in their answer:

- (1) Teacher4S: Why do we do Math Facts in a flash?
- (2) Student 1: *For we can’t* forget multiplication.
- (3) Teacher4S (stopping the student): *For we can’t?* How do we say this correctly? (Calls on Student2)
- (4) Student 2: So we can’t forget
- (5) Teacher4S (stopping): No! Not that we can’t forget, so we CAN ____.
- (6) Student 1: So we can remember multiplication.
- (7) Teacher4S: Can I get a CSIQ on that?
- (8) Student 1: We do math facts in a flash so we can remember multiplication.

This same error happened again:

- (9) Student 3: For we can be....
- (10) Teacher4S: See how we are using FOR, say SO we can!
- (11) The class: SO WE CAN
- (12) Student 3: So we can practice a lot; we are studying for the SAP.

Teacher4S tried correcting the students again:

- (13) Student 4: For you guys can help us. For we can practice and *you can see in the computer and see how we are doing.*
- (14) Student 5: So you know math so better.
- (15) Student 6: So we can learn more stuff.
- (16) Teacher4S: What's the main reason?
- (17) Student 6 (repeating): So we can learn some new stuff.
- (18) Teacher4S: I'm going to give you the word: "COMPUTATION: TO BUILD SPEED"

Not only were students expected to say, "So we can" instead of "For we can," teacher4S also taught students the word, "computation" which connects to the math drills they were completing. While the students had valid reasons for why they were doing math facts in a flash, instructional time was spent teaching the structure, "So we can__."

Similarly, in classroom5E, students were asked to use Accountable Talk in small groups as they completed a Venn diagram consisting of features of fiction and non-fiction texts. In sitting with my focal student, I found his group's work to be efficient and polite just not necessarily "accountable" in the methodical sense, and it did not include any of the sentence frames suggested by the Accountable Talk model:

- (1) Student5E (dealing cards): Just mix 'em
1 for you, 1 for you, 1 for you, this one's ripped
Do you want this one?
Put those away so we can be even.
I got 4. (To each table partner) 4, 4, 4
- (2) Student 2 I got 3.
- (3) Student 3: I got 5. (801_0041)

In this small group exercise, students in classroom5E were asked to identify text features distinguishing between fact and fiction, and Student5E explains, "Fiction is like when it's not real." This is evidence that the student understood the difference between fiction and non-fiction. The students then began dealing their flashcards and organizing them into the Venn diagram as follows:

- (1) Student 1: This is both.
- (2) Student 2: Table of Contents is both.
- (3) Student 3: Author's in both

The activity was completed very quickly, although they did not practice using Accountable Talk. Conceptually, the children did not appear to struggle. Later, in whole group, students were required to use specific sentence structures and vocabulary to show the teacher what they have learned. However, when the teacher began to review the activity in whole group, Student5E struggled to articulate his decisions in spite of the fact that he correctly identified features of fiction and non-fiction texts during the small-group activity:

- (1) Student5E: Title is what a book has...a title is what a book has.
- (2) Teacher5E: You have to use "non-fiction, fiction."
- (3) Student5E: They both have, uh, both..
- (4) Teacher5E: uh? Have both?
- (5) Student5E: Fiction has title and non-fiction has title.

The teacher expected Student5E to say, "Both fiction and non-fiction texts have titles." The teacher continued, "Some of you are struggling with sentences." She then puts up several language structures:

_____ Is/are in fiction/non fiction/both genres.

Both genres have _____.

Still students struggled:

- (1) Student: Authors is in ____.
- (2) Teacher5E: Authors is?
- (3) Student: Authors are in both genres.

In addition to reviewing the academic syntax pattern, the teacher also reinforced academic vocabulary. She used this activity as an opportunity to review the three tiers of

vocabulary words that she expected students to be using. As in the transcript of Student5E's table group, many students used demonstrative adjectives (this one; that one; these; those) in place of proper nouns (fiction, non fiction, title, author, etc.). The teacher pointed to the paper hung above the front board describing the three tiers (see figure 4.10 below). She told the students that text features are Tier 3 words. She mentioned, "To be honest, I could have heard more vocabulary instead of, Can I have this, do you have these?" She also ensured that students could use the academic terms correctly:

- (1) Student 1: I just put DEDICATE on top of there because dedication is like, dictating it to your family.
- (2) Teacher5E: DICTATING it?
- (3) Students: (helping student1; whispering) DEDICATING it.

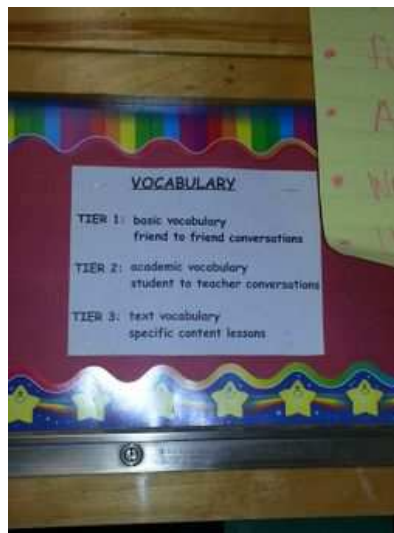


Figure 4.10. Tiers of Vocabulary Classroom5E.

Rather than teaching language as a tool to help students learn content knowledge, I found that unless students could produce language in a style accepted by the teacher, the students could not demonstrate their understandings of the content. As in classroom5E, the students in the group I observed did not struggle to identify the elements of fiction and non-fiction texts, rather, they struggled to use correct language to tell the teacher that they

could identify the elements of fiction and non-fiction texts. As a result, the feedback they received was based on the production of language and they did not receive credit or praise for meeting the content standard.

Planned ELD Lessons of Isolated Grammar. Teacher4E taught ELD daily as specified on the daily schedule. ELD consisted of three main activities: Paragraph Editing, Spelling, Grammar Packets and Dictado¹⁰. The teacher used the book Grammar and Punctuation by Evan-Moor (2009) for these activities. This was evidence of grammatical competence and did not appear to be connected to any language or literacy objectives. In fact, in 4th grade, there were no posted language or literacy objectives.

Below is an example of language instruction in this class where students were transitioning to their seats, silently taking out their paragraph editing packets from their writer's workshop notebooks. The teacher provided a count on the board of the errors students needed to find:

- (1) Teacher: In fact, *there's* only 2 errors for apostrophes. With periods there are 5 errors.
- (2) Student: Spelling?
- (3) Teacher: The apostrophes are what you are looking for. You should have your red editing pen out. I'll know you are done because you will be silently reading.

On the board, the teacher wrote the following number of errors in today's paragraph: Capitalization (2); Language Usage (2); Punctuation (apostrophes (2); Period (5); Spelling (3)). Note, this reflects the practice of using CUPS to evaluate good writing.

¹⁰ The dictado is a cross-language writing method used to refine language arts skills in both Spanish and English, and it can be used to teach spelling, conventions, and grammar. More importantly, it can be used to teach the skill of self-correction and metalanguage (Escamilla, Soltero-González, Butvilofsky, Hopewell, & Sparrow, 2009).

Students began working independently as the teacher monitored. After 10 minutes, the teacher reviewed and corrected the students' work in a whole group format.

- (1) Teacher: When we are making corrections I told you that we look for grammar, spelling and language usage. What is language usage? (He calls on a student.)
- (2) Student: ----- (no response)
- (3) Teacher: Do you know? Do you remember? We're talking about language usage. There were two errors for language usage in this paragraph (calling on another student) Help him out.
- (4) Student: Language usage is like the wrong tense or the wrong word.
- (5) Teacher: Ok, so maybe it's the wrong tense, like past tense or present tense, or possibly the wrong word for that sentence. So when we talk about language usage, we need words that make sense that fit. There were two of those.
- (6) Teacher: (Beginning to read the paragraph they edited): *"Those who support uniforms say they will make all students equal they also believe that students will focus more on school work instead of comparing..."* I'm running out of breath; that's a long sentence, right? So, what's the first error in this sentence that we need to fix? Go ahead (he calls on a student).
- (7) Student: It is missing punctuation. We need to put a period after equal.
- (8) Teacher: It is missing a period. Ok, and how do I insert a period?
- (9) Student: (gives the standard marking code).

This review continued for approximately 20 minutes until all errors were found. On October 1, Teacher4E introduced a new unit through which students would learn to read informational text. During ELD on this day, students would work on Spelling rather than the language presented in the informational text, literacy unit. Teacher4E selected 9 words and students were asked to find patterns in them:

Tiff, Scoff, Staff,
Hill, Tell, Doll
Miss, Glass, Dress

After interacting with the students for a few moments, the teacher began instruction on the "Floss Rule." The 9 words above met the criteria of the floss rule:

- 1- Ends in double l or double s or double f
- 2- All words have 1 syllable
- 3- The middle vowel is a short sound

As students recorded this information in their notebooks, Teacher4E explicitly reviewed the definition of the floss rule: “If a one syllable word with a short vowel sound ends in l, f, or s, double the final l, f, or s.” There was no attention placed on the meaning of any of these words. Students’ homework was to add to the list of 9 words to which the floss rule applies. The next day students demonstrated that they had a difficult time coming up with words that followed the floss rule. The teacher said that perhaps he did not do a good job teaching this rule, but also reminded students, “Good Spellers Make Patterns” (801_0035).

Type 3- Hybrid- Language through interaction, Intended. In Classroom3E, the teacher showed that he intended and knew how to use direct, explicit and interactive methods to teach language in a way that supported the literacy objectives. Also, I found that he taught language daily. My observations in this classroom occurred at the end of the first semester, just before winter break. At this time, students were taking interim assessments, and they were beginning to talk about taking the upcoming state assessments. When participating in testing activities, I found that the teacher altered his practices.

Language through interaction in classroom3E. During the two weeks I was in this class, the posted literacy objective was “Students will orally discuss nonfiction books using nonfiction text features and will compare and contrast nonfiction and fiction.” The teacher added, “You will know you have done a good job when you can participate with the class discussion to complete the graphic organizer” (December 2, 2013). An additional objective

was, “Students will orally explain and physically examine the word descriptive to better understand what descriptive writing is.” During this time, students would be analyzing professional brochures and creating their own brochure featuring their elementary school. Teacher3E prepared students for writing by sharing example texts. He told them, “Today we will explore different types of brochures. We need to study different types and write down our *noticings*” (801_0084, 40:00-42:00). Students were asked to orally discuss in their table groups the following sentence stems, which were differentiated by syntactical complexity:

One noticing I have is _____.

I observed _____.

One attribute of brochure writing is _____.

Teacher3E modeled how to use the above sentence stems while interacting in small groups. He modeled, “One ***noticing*** I have is bold headings” (801_0084). He then invited a student to try. This student noticed “diagrams” which was a vocabulary word from the morning meeting on the previous day.

As students worked in small groups, one made an observation, while another student wrote what her partner found (801_0084). In my group, students looked at a brochure for the Denver Aquarium and other downtown attractions including the governor’s mansion. To begin, they helped each other figure out how to spell “noticing.” Teacher3E walked around and reminded students that they need to practice talking, and saying these sentence stems as well as writing. He also disseminated brochures in French and Spanish. He reminded students that even if they do not understand the language, they could also make *noticings* based on the pictures. While this was a good oral language

development exercise, the word “noticing” in the first sentence stem was used as a key vocabulary word but it is not Standard English. As the kids worked, they grappled with this word, having to spelling “noticing” as they began writing using the posted sentence frames. Students used the sentence frames, but they struggled and ultimately thought about using a different sentence frame.

- (1) Student 1: I don't know how to spell “Noticing.”
- (2) Student 2: It's, N, I'll tell you, N-O-T (pause)
- (3) Student 1: N-O-T...
- (4) Student: Ok, How do you spell Noticed?
- (5) Student 2: N-O-T-I-C-E-D. I mean. -I-N-G
- (6) Student 1: Noticing. -I-N-G.
- (7) Student 1 (writing): One thing I'm noticing I have is...
- (8) Student 2: One noticing I have is maps.

Later,

- (1) Student 2: Can you write this down? One thing I *have noticing* is...
- (2) Student 1: OH! I know one! Where's the pen? Do we have to use one of those sentence stems or can we use the same one?

There were 4 students at this table. While two tried to use the frames provided by the teacher, the other two did not. As these students looked at brochures, they spoke about the attractions pictured and discussed whether or not they had visited these places.

- (1) Student 4: Oh!! Here's downtown aquarium. I went there for my field trip. I went there *like* 1,000 times. Look! *It's at* downtown.
- (2) Student 3: Downtown Aquarium! I only went there 2 times.
- (3) Student 4: I went there 1,000 times. Just kidding. I only went there *like* 1 time. It's where *there's this* animals...I mean like sea animals. Huh?
- (4) Student 3: Yeah, and a tiger.
- (5) Student 2: (Chimes in) I know what the aquarium is, *yeah, but*, I just never went there.
- (6) Student 2: (Showing a different brochure with a map) Look! Look! *This is the whole Colorado.*
- (7) Student 4: Dang! I could find a *symmetry* (a cemetery). Let's find a *symmetry* (a cemetery).

When looking liberally at the brochures (as in the conversation about the aquarium), students did not monitor their language use and at times did not use standard forms of English. When using sentence stems, two things happened: 1- students stayed on task (noting general features of brochures); and 2- students monitored their language use more closely. The way ELD was provided in this classroom differed from classroom4S where students' language use was heavily monitored. In classroom4S, where the teacher had a high level of acceptability, students were explicitly asked to repair their language use in order to interact with the teacher. In classroom3E the teacher gave students the opportunity to rehearse a language structure through interaction in small groups while working on a literacy activity. In spite of the fact that one of the language structures provided to the students did not demonstrate standard use of English vocabulary, the context for language learning allowed for students to troubleshoot their production of the phrase, "One noticing I had" until ultimately, in a whole group cloze exercise, the student shared, "One thing I noticed is websites." The examples above provide evidence that language can be learned *through* interaction, which is different from the cognitive idea that language is learned for the purpose of interaction (Lightbown and Spada, 2006). Additionally, the dialogue above showed how one student (student 2) was able to use language flexibly, switching to non-standard academic language, when engaging with his "off-task" table partners, but was also able to use a different register, standard academic language, while trying to participate in the ELD lesson. When given the opportunity, he worked with his partner to approximate the language structure suggested by his teacher.

Language practice before a test. On December 2, Teacher3E spoke to students about the state assessment directly before doing an ELD lesson using a DLI worksheet (801_0081,

801_0082). Unlike the way ELD was provided on prior days, this day's ELD lesson was not connected to a separate literacy objective. As the morning meeting began, Teacher3E reviewed "the competition" going on at Willow Elementary. This competition was related to attendance which was an indicator of student engagement for the purpose of rating overall school performance on the district SPF. In her interview with me, the principal mentioned that this competition was the idea of the attendance committee, a group of teachers who were working together to improve the school's score in engagement. Classes with the highest rate of attendance would win a field trip "to somewhere fun," which included a free bus drive. Teacher3E reminded students that this calendar game competition included the last 15 days before winter break. He told students that after break they would have about 1 month to get ready for SAP as a result they would be doing "things" to get ready before break.

Directly after this comment, students moved back to their spots on the rug for a DLI lesson on how to make different singular nouns plural. On the board was a poster with different endings of singular nouns and how to make them plural: -s add es; -x add -es; -h add -es; -e add s; -g add -s (there was an example of each Glasses, boxes, dishes, plates, logs). Students watched a 1:30-minute YouTube video of adding -ies to singular words that end in y. Then they added the rule for adding -ies to their chart. They were handed a DLI worksheet and they went back to their seats. They worked on page one and then did silent sustained reading for 15-minutes. After a few moments, Teacher3E reviewed the answers. He read the example and the correct spelling (Berry-> Berries). Next he called on students to spell the plural form of each noun (There were 6 nouns).

Conclusion

Goldenberg's (2008) research synthesis suggests that the best way to teach ELD is through, "explicit teaching that helps students directly and efficiently learn features of the second language such as syntax, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and norms of social usage," and "ample opportunities to use the second language in meaningful and motivating situations" (p. 13). This synthesis (2008) also includes evidence that ELD may be best provided in a separate block time and with the support of students' primary language. The types of ELD provided at Willow Elementary run the gamut of methods, from classroom to classroom, that range from teaching explicit language forms, to closely monitoring norms for social usage, to providing meaningful and motivating situations for practicing language. What Goldenberg (2008) suggests is that there needs to be a balance between these methods (p. 13).

In classroom3S, the teacher offered a balance of opportunities to use and practice language while engaging with a culturally responsive text, while also providing an opportunity to explicitly teach parts of speech contextualized through a written assessment based on the book, *My Diary from Here to There* (Perez, 2002). In classroom4S, 5E and 5S students learn language through closely monitored interactions with their teacher where communicating content knowledge required student usage of specific language. In classrooms 5E and 4E, the teacher provided daily language activities including grammar packets (homework in classroom5E), paragraph editing or the teaching of spelling patterns. Finally, in classroom3E, the teacher offered a balance between activities that supported the explicit teaching of language, and those that provided meaningful and motivating opportunities for students to interact and practice language. However, this differed from classroom3S as the explicit teaching of language in his room did not support a larger literacy objective; rather, he made connections between using DLI to improving performance on state assessments.

Overall, I found that both third grade classrooms and classroom4E met minimum time allocations for ELD. Although I did not find a regularly, planned language development block time in classroom 4S, Teacher4S did use a school-wide strategy called the Dictado (Escamilla, K., Hopewell, Butvilofsky, Sparrow, Soltero-González, Ruiz-Figueroa, Escamilla, M., 2014). Through the Dictado, three times weekly, students should be receiving teacher directed and explicit instruction that integrates spelling, punctuation and grammar and that helps students to develop metalinguistic skills and to make connections between language use in Spanish and in English. I did find evidence of this in all classrooms, however the degree to which this strategy was implemented with fidelity varied. Teacher5S did not provide ELD, he attempted the Dictado once by dictating a Halloween poem, but provided no other planned opportunities to teach language.

Teacher 5E was attempting to learn how to provide ELD. She had attended several professional development days during the semester I was at Willow Elementary, and she opened her room to instructional coaching by a member of a biliteracy research team working with the teachers at Willow. She, along with the other teachers, are struggling to provide ELD due to what they state is a dearth of information and resources on the subject, as well as inconsistent expectations from the administration. As a result of these inconsistencies, the ELD opportunities were different in each room. As I will discuss in Chapter 5, these challenges combined with the pressures to progress monitor for literacy means that regularly planned instruction for ELD is often foregone in spite of the fact that ELD is a stated goal at the school level and the district level, and in spite of the fact that ELD is legally protected and mandated.

Chapter 5: The language of a data driven culture

RQ2: How does high stakes testing affect the development of academic language in English and Spanish?:

The National Literacy Panel found that paying explicit attention to the features of academic language can have a significant impact on the achievement of second language learners (2006). Additionally, Lesaux and Geva (2006) found that making academic language an instructional focus might improve second-language learners' reading comprehension. By one definition, academic language is "the vocabulary, sentence structures, and discourse associated with the language used to (a) teach academic content as well as the language used to (b) navigate the school setting more generally" (Bailey and Huang, 2011, p. 343). In this case study, I found that in order to navigate the school setting, students were taught and were expected to know how to talk about and evaluate their academic progress. By analyzing data from mainstream and D-block classrooms I found evidence of a testing Discourse, sentence frames to discuss point totals, and vocabulary words that included terms such as fluency and proficient. While district documents and interview data revealed a stated priority for teaching academic language among district leaders, school level administrators, and teachers, data from classroom observations indicated that opportunities to explicitly teach the language used to learn the academic content were reduced due to a lack of progress monitoring tools for tracking language development. Instead, I found more attention toward progress monitoring for literacy, as well as deficit orientations toward students' language repertoires in Spanish and in English.

Policy: Teacher Effectiveness Leading Effective Academic Practice (LEAP)

During the 2011-2013 school year, the state adopted rules under S.B. 10-191 that school districts must use to evaluate teachers. One of the critical effects of S.B. 10-191 was

that it required teachers and administrators to be evaluated at least 50% based on the academic growth of their students (State Department of Education Power Point, 2011). The implications of this policy were changes to requirements for probationary status and tenure. In response to S.B. 10-191, RMPS modified the District Plan to provide a framework for evaluating not only school performance but also teacher effectiveness. This framework lead to the development of LEAP as well as to the RMPS Framework for Effective Teaching (LEAP Handbook, 2013). In accordance with S.B. 10-191, LEAP's measures include rating teachers would be based 50% upon professional practice and 50% on student outcomes from classroom, district and state assessments (see figure 5.1). In this system, teachers create professional growth plans with their administrators and peer observers from around the district to identify and pursue opportunities for improved practice (LEAP Handbook, 2013). Teachers are then rated as Distinguished, Effective, Approaching, or Not Meeting. This system is designed to help the district focus on the instructional core, and is based on the belief that great people drive better outcomes for students (p. 4).

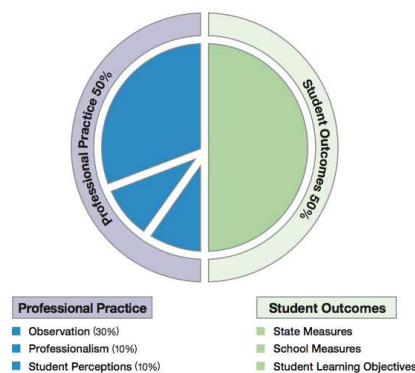


Figure 5.1. LEAP Measures.¹¹

¹¹ Taken from RMPS LEAP 2013-2014 Handbook

As the assistant principal mentioned in her personal interview with me (2013), academic language development is a component of the LEAP evaluation framework. In fact, RMPS provides their definition of academic language in the LEAP Handbook (See Appendix F):

“**Academic Language** is the formal language of a given content area needed by students to access rigorous material and credibly interact in both academic and professional settings (i.e. functions, forms and discipline-specific vocabulary).

- Language functions: the purposes of the communication (e.g. to classify, persuade, explain, describe, compare, sequence, etc.).
- Language forms: the conventions used to communicate (e.g. grammar, syntax, mechanics, vocabulary, etc.)” (LEAP Handbook, 2013, p. 28)

In this document (2013) RMPS goes on to provide their definition of language register (see below). It is noticeable that this definition can be found in a section entitled “Sheltering” (p.28). Sheltering is further defined as “controlling the language register” (p. 28), whereas in other contexts sheltering is widely used as a way to make content instruction comprehensible (Echevarria et al, 2012). I found that these definitions partly explain district expectations as to how language should be taught beyond simply the program components and time allocation guidelines as described in Chapter 4.

“Sheltering: Involves embedding content in context (e.g., making input comprehensible by using visuals, gestures, etc.) and controlling the language register to focus on high frequency words. Language register is one of many styles of language determined by such factors as social occasion, purpose and audience. Register is also used to indicate degrees of formality” (2013, p. 28).

Learning Environment and Instruction are the two categories in the LEAP framework: (2013, p. 15). Within Learning Environment; there are 4 indicators used in evaluations, and within Instruction there are 8 indicators, 6 of which explicitly mention language. Indicator 1.4 of the LEAP framework for evaluation is, “Ensures **all** students active and appropriate **use of academic language** (2013, p. 15). Observable evidence for a

teacher rated as effective includes the following teacher and student behaviors:

Table 5.1

Indicator 1.4 of the LEAP Framework (Adapted from LEAP Handbook, 2013, p. 29)

	Teacher Behaviors	Student Behaviors
Effective Instruction	Consistently and explicitly teaches and models precise academic language connected to the content-language objective(s) using the target language (students' L1 or L2, as appropriate).	Students use academic language (in their native language or English) with the teacher, peers and in their writing.
	Provides frequent opportunities within the content for students to use academic language in rigorous, authentic ways through listening, speaking, reading and writing.	Students are observed using target language in a variety of contexts and for cognitively demanding tasks, often in collaboration with other students.
	Acknowledges students' use and attempts at using academic language to develop concepts, and coaches students when academic language is not used or is used incorrectly.	Students regularly and accurately use content vocabulary and language forms relevant to the objective(s).
	Consistently encourages students to use complete sentences.	

A teacher rated “distinguished” based on indicator 1.4 can be described as a teacher that “facilitates students’ recall and use of academic language from other contexts and/or personal experiences,” and “Enables students’ transfer of academic language to real-world situations” (p.

28). Students of a distinguished teacher should be “observed encouraging one another to use academic language regardless of their language development levels or formal English background,” and “Students appropriately transfer academic language skills from other contexts or real-life experiences” (p. 28). It seems that the idea of transferability to and from real-life experiences is rated more highly than “encouraging students to use complete sentences,” (p. 28) which is a descriptor of an effective teacher. By this indicator, in the present study Teacher3E might be rated as distinguished in this category as she provided opportunities for students to talk about their experiences when they were courageous, an academic vocabulary word, using both English and Spanish. Teacher4S could also be rated as distinguished if an observer had noticed the unplanned interaction between her students during small-group, editing exercises. However, based on whole group observations, she could also be rated as effective, since her way of promoting academic language was in monitoring language to ensure that students were speaking in complete sentences.

Assessment Frameworks and Implications for Student Performance

In addition to 50% of a teacher’s overall effectiveness rating being based on student outcomes, as I described in detail in Chapter 3, the District Performance framework also rates schools using a point system whereby nearly 90% of points are based on student achievement and student growth on the state-wide assessment. Just as these ratings have implications for teacher tenure, there are consequences for poor school performance such as being publically rated as “red,” and the potential for school closure. Willow is currently on innovation status, however this status is reviewed every three years. The state department of education’s Innovation Act entitles the local school board to revoke an innovation status “if student academic performance at the affected school or schools does not improve at a sufficient rate” (CDE, Innovation Act Fact Sheet, 2008). Local school boards are required to monitor innovation

schools to ensure that they are making adequate progress toward achieving academic performance results (2008).

The state assessment framework for reading and writing is published on the Department of Education website. Assessment frameworks specify the content that may appear on the state exams. I found that academic language proficiency is tested both implicitly and explicitly based on language function and form. For example, on the 4th grade reading framework, students could be asked to refer to details, determine a theme, summarize text, skim materials, describe overall structures, determine or clarify meaning, compare and contrast points of view, interpret information, use text features, and consult reference materials. Explicitly, 5th grade students could be asked to determine the meaning of general academic or domain-specific words and phrases in a text, or quote accurately from a text on the reading assessment, and use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform or explain the topic on the writing assessment. These are all examples of how the Colorado Assessment Program requires the comprehension and use of academic language in order for students to perform well. It also explains why teachers, in their interviews with me, described the need to explicitly teach the language needed by students to comprehend the prompts on district and state level assessments.

District Interim Assessments also have implications for a teacher's rating based on the LEAP framework as well as for Willow's innovation status. According to various teacher interviews as well as my interviews with both the school principal and assistant principal, the district assessments have grown in increasing alignment with the state assessment. While there is no longer an assessment for reading, (as progress monitoring for this will rely on the STAR test developed by an external company called Renaissance Learning,) a

sample writing interim is posted online, and is given to all students each October. An excerpt of this assessment is in figure 2 below:

Now look carefully at each of the underlined words or phrases in the paragraph below. If there is a mistake, write the word or phrase correctly on the blank line below the passage. If there is no mistake, write *OK* on the blank line.

A	The United States <u>purchase</u> Alaska from Russia in 1867 for a total of \$7,200,000.
B	Alaska was admitted <u>too</u> the union on January, 3, 1959.
C	Today, Alaska <u>is</u> the largest
D	of the 50 <u>states the</u> state is so large that many <u>villiages</u> can only be reached by boat or
E	plane. As the tourism industry continues to grow, many people travel to Alaska to go
F	<u>biking hiking fishing</u> , and sight-seeing.

	Correction:
A	
B	
C	
D	
E	
F	

Figure 5.2. Sample Question from District Interim Assessment.

Prior to the paragraph editing section, students are given multiple-choice questions on grammar, spelling and punctuation. This is evidence that students must be proficient in the conventions of Standard English in order to perform well on district assessments.

Teacher Perspectives on Testing and Academic Language

In the previous section, I outlined how there were high-stakes implications for developing students' academic language—both for teachers and for the school's rating. Through teacher interviews and through classroom observations, I found tension around knowing what language to teach and for which purpose. When talking about academic language during their interviews, teachers and administrators focused on vocabulary and on grammatical correctness. They also spoke about the need to help students know how to comprehend the formats of their exams.

Vocabulary. Both administrators and a few classroom teachers believed that children come from homes where they lack exposure to “vocabulary” in general, in both Spanish and in English. An ELA-S teacher clarified and stated that many Latino kids are exposed to what she calls, “kitchen spanish”: “*¡Ponte las chanclas! ¡Quítate esas! ¡um parqueate overthere!* You know what I'm saying? They're not even speaking, you know, the vocabulary, *Puedes revisar tú tarea por favor?* [Instead] *Quítame esa...* you know or bad words come out, you know, so it's not like they're articulating, I don't know” (Teacher4S, personal interview, 2013). Other teachers, in the interview and in informal conversations, stated that students' vocabulary is limited in both languages. The principal also added that the kids who are not proficient in literacy or in English “are the kids that when they're on break all they speak is Spanish.” As a remedy, she feels “it can't just be general words that these students need, but *academic* vocabulary development” (Principal Interview, 2013).

Teacher4E began his discussion by telling me that during the prior school year, he was part of a professional learning committee with a group of teachers who studied academic language. He spoke positively about the experience, stating that he felt like he learned a new way to think about academic language, but yet, in the interview, he still struggled to articulate what academic language is, “Like it'd be a list, almost you know, like it has more to do with.. uh it's

hard to explain, it has more to do with terminologies. It's more than just definitions and terms I guess, you know" (Teacher4E, Personal Interview, 2013). When I pushed him to talk about how he might teach academic language, he replied, "I think it's holding kids accountable for using, using the language for it, uh using those terms. Um, you know, uh, I don't know" (Teacher4E, 2013). From administration down to teachers, there is an understanding that kids need to be held accountable for learning and using specific terms, but I question whether teachers are prepared to teach students how to do so. The assistant principal mentioned, "There needs to be more direct instruction with vocabulary," (Assistant Principal Interview, 2013) but even she admitted that she is unsure what instruction should look like.

There was an effort around teaching scientific spelling. A 3rd grade teacher used scientific spelling and at least two other teachers were trying to do this as well. Scientific spelling was described as, "It's just like heavily, just based on pretty much the, uh, a lot of the uh phonology of the words and not just recognizing the patterns of blends and stuff but um words that end a certain way and funny patterns in that" (Teacher4E, Personal Interview, 2013). While I didn't observe this teacher practicing this method in his classroom, I did observe one method of teaching vocabulary in two other rooms. One teacher had students work on a vocabulary card during Breakfast In Class (BIC). During BIC, students were given a word, which could be connected to the literacy lesson, and students had to identify the prefix/suffix, guess on a definition, and use the word in a sentence. The activity is designed to increase students' academic word recognition and usage, as well as to teach them how to identify a new word when they do not know its meaning. This also matches the SAP Assessment Framework for grades 3-5 for the need to know how to use prefixes.

Table 5.2

Prefixes on the SAP Assessment Framework

3 rd Grade-Reading	4 th Grade-Reading	5 th Grade-Reading
<p>Alignment Code: RWC10-GR.3-S.2- GLE.3-EO.a.i</p> <p>Identify and know the meaning of the most common prefixes and derivational suffixes. (CCSS: RF.3.3a)</p>	<p>Alignment Code: RWC10-GR.4-S.2- GLE.3- EO.c (i-vii)</p> <p>Read and understand words with common prefixes (un-, re-, dis-) and derivational suffixes (-ful, -ly, -ness)</p>	<p>Alignment Code: RWC10-GR.5-S.2-GLE.3- EO.c</p> <p>Read and identify the meaning of words with sophisticated prefixes and suffixes.</p>
<p>Alignment Code: RWC10-GR.3-S.2- GLE.3-EO.c.ii</p> <p>Determine the meaning of the new word formed when a known affix is added to a known word (e.g., <i>agreeable/disagreeable</i>, <i>comfortable/uncomfortable</i>, <i>care/careless</i>, <i>heat/preheat</i>). (CCSS: L.3.4b)</p>		<p>Alignment Code: RWC10-GR.5-S.2-GLE.3- EO.d</p> <p>Apply knowledge of derivational suffixes that change the part of speech of the base word (such as active, activity).</p>
<p>Alignment Code: RWC10-GR.3-S.2- GLE.3-EO.c.iv</p> <p>Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root (e.g., <i>company</i>, <i>companion</i>). (CCSS: L.3.4c)</p>		<p>RWC10-GR.5-S.2-GLE.3-EO.g.iii</p> <p>Read and identify the meaning of roots and related word families in which the pronunciation of the root does not change.</p>

Two teachers spoke specifically about tiers of vocabulary. First, Teacher3S used 3 tiers in her reference to vocabulary with Tier 3 connected for academic vocabulary or “vocabulary that a

kid is going to come across or that a student is going to come across in a text book, or in work related to a specific content, and that in order to really access that content that they really need to understand” (Teacher3S, personal interview, 2013). When this teacher spoke about Tier 1 and 2 vocabulary, she distinguished between Tier 1 and 2 as higher order versus lower order thinking words, both of which are “words that a kid needs to basically comprehend.” This teacher continued by showing that in her experience, Tier 1 and Tier 2 words are just as important to teach as Tier 3 words, because “a lot of the really good words that kids really need to understand in terms of accessing content, and accessing language in general are in Tier 2.” Tier 2 words, she added, were present in a lot of the language structures she tries to use.

When asked whether she considers teaching academic vocabulary in Spanish, Teacher3S replied, “In Spanish, I take for granted that they know a little bit more, but frankly what I found, is that they usually don't, um, and that I teach, I don't really think about it in terms of English and Spanish. I used to, but I don't really any more. I think of it more as what language do my students need to know in order to access the objective, and that language is not necessarily "academic." Um, I find in Spanish, just like in English, um, *their vocabulary is extremely limited*, and we're seeing and hearing the same language over and over again. So, no, maybe a little bit more I teach, I focus on the academic vocabulary, but not a whole lot more. Maybe I should. (Laughing)” (Teacher3S, personal interview, 2013). I think this teacher has blurred the lines between social and academic language, and she provided a nice example of how to co-construct language development based on what students know regardless of what tier those words might be. Even so, it is interesting that the teacher concludes that she could focus more on the “academic vocabulary” in Spanish.

The second teacher, Teacher5E, who also spoke about tiers of words, spoke mostly in reference to a particular student who struggled with Tier 3 words. This teacher described Tier 3 words as “big words” compared to Tier 1 words that the student is practicing in her intervention block such as one-syllable words that end in –ull. The teacher explained that this student had the Tier 1 words down, and was disappointed that her student was spending time, daily, re-learning how to spell Tier 1 words. The teacher felt, “[The student] doesn’t know what these big words are. Her vocabulary is really minimal” (Teacher5E, personal interview, 2013). The teacher described how she struggled for 45 minutes trying to teach this student how to use the word “essential” in a sentence and how she didn’t think the student got it:

- (1) **Teacher5E:** “I tried to explain to her what’s, what essential means. It means something is important, really is what it was. *But then, I don’t know, I struggled with it so I’ll be honest I...because I don’t know and I haven’t been taught and there aren’t many lessons for it, I don’t know.* And its all stuff that’s really natural for us, but...” (Teacher5E, Personal Interview, 2013).

This teacher expressed frustration that a seemingly simple concept, teaching the meaning of a word, should be easily taught and acquired, BUT, sans training in proper methods for teaching academic language, she struggled, and spent a significant amount of time trying to teach this concept, and ultimately was unsuccessful.

Reading Prompts. Both administrators and one classroom teacher referred to academic language as “higher-level thinking words,” which are “...part of academic vocabulary, are all of the things we expect kids to do, so if we say "summarize, or analyze or explain or describe," those verbs themselves are academic vocabulary because if a student doesn't understand what they're supposed to do, then they can't be successful in the task and um demonstrating their knowledge” (Assistant Principal, personal interview, 2013). The principal also added that

academic language, and the language students need for SAP “is the same because it’s still academic language” (Assistant Principal, personal interview, 2013). She thinks that where students struggle, and where they need instruction is in being able to understand the instructions on SAP. The principal mentioned that students need to “be able to understand and do what [the test item] is asking” (Principal, personal interview, 2013). For example, the principal mentioned that students often lose points on SAP when they miss such instructions as writing whether the term is ok, or whether or not they’ve highlighted correctly, or following directions that ask students to only write within the box. These procedures include academic vocabulary and, she felt, “should be taught” (Principal, personal interview, 2013). It is not clear how these terms would be transferrable outside of the testing or classroom environment to be used by kids at home, but it appears that the administrator feels that part of academic language that students need to know, is the language they need to understand the instructions on SAP

This deliberate attention to teaching academic language as it relates to test prompts was verified by a classroom teacher:

- (1) Teacher3S: So, a lot of deliberate teaching is centered around the language that we know is going to be in the questions on the test.
- (2) J: Like what?
- (3) Teacher3S: Um, like, I wouldn't call it "academic vocab" necessarily, but, so if we have a prompt in writing, and they don't understand the word "describe" or "details" or "sequence of events" or a word like that, then they're going to bomb the prompt. So, even if they know, they have, have some way that they think they can answer the prompt; a lot of kids get stumped on those words. And it stops their thinking, so yes; we do a lot of deliberate kind of "training" around prompts for writing..."(Teacher3S, Personal Interview, 2013).

Grammatical Competency. In our discussions on academic language, several teachers and both administrators made comments about grammatical competency. In reference to teaching ELD, the principal mentioned that teachers should be “making sure that students are *learning the English, they need to learn*, and that they’re connecting it to Spanish so that they have some base

to go from” (Principal, personal interview, 2013). She continued, “Students should be able to speak, read, write, listen to *formal English*. They should be able to interpret what’s in a textbook. They should be able to use those terms in their own conversations and to formulate their own questions...*it’s using the proper terms at the proper time*...like scientific terms, or grammatical terms” (Principal, personal interview, 2013). This comment references content and general academic vocabulary, which she distinguishes from informal vocabulary. After this comment, the principal discussed her belief that students need to understand the procedures on tests as an example of formal English.

Both the assistant principal and one classroom teacher made a connection between ELD and teaching “correct grammatical English language” (Teacher3E, personal interview, 2013). The assistant principal specifically mentioned that teaching the structure of language should include “making sure that it’s correct and proper” (Assistant Principal, personal interview, 2013). Here I see evidence that the overarching perspective of academic language development includes “formal instruction of the English language” (Assistant Principal, personal interview, 2013), which is different from how Teacher3S was able to blur the lines between social and academic language in order to teach students whatever language they need in order to achieve the literacy objective.

Teacher4S expected her students to know formal English in terms of vocabulary, which she sees is the function of ELD (Teacher4S, personal interview, 2013). She described that her teaching of academic language is based upon what students are missing:

- (1) Teacher4S: “How are we doing that? Um, just using the vocabulary, taking the time to teach, ok, adjectives, let's write a sentence with adjectives, that's it, *even if you don't get to anything else, you know now, what the terminology, adjectives, is*. They need to see, they need to be exposed to that [term] adjective. [Mimicking student] ‘Now, you know how you brought up that fancy word I used that today’? I said, ok, you need to know that academic language term, 'adjectives,'

but if you want to call it 'fancy word,' 'foo foo word,' whatever, you can use that with your friends, spice it up, *splend* it up, whatever, but you need to be exposed to that, because if you go into another English only class and if they say adjective, you're going to be all over the place, you need to know.” (Teacher4S, Personal Interview, 2013).

In terms of grade level proficiency in **literacy**, this same teacher described high-performing students as those who can *independently* articulate “CSIQ quickly,” use “hundred dollar words” and can “glide over” their skills from Spanish to English (Teacher4S, personal interview, 2013). Similarly, “high students” who are also ELLs can participate by making connections between Spanish and English on their own, but they were “lacking vocabulary and English Language Grammar” (Teacher4S, personal interview, 2013). In this classroom, then, students labeled as “high” in literacy are those who demonstrate correct academic syntax (CSIQ), have a rich vocabulary usage, and can transfer their skills between languages. Low students are those who are “even having difficulties in their own native language,” so that when the teacher says “adjective,” they don’t know this term in English or in Spanish. During the present school year, the teacher admitted,

- (1) Teacher4S: “So my instruction is going to be difficult. I teach, this is hard, I teach whole group, there you go. Then I try to just pull them individually. I tend to gravitate to my, and I know this, and I am going to try and work on this, to my struggling students, but I need to get my CUSP¹² kids, the kids like my (naming) “ELL student1”, and my “ELL student2.” If you just, if I just were to spend a little more time with them, they'll get it” (Teacher4S, personal interview, 2013).

At the same grade level, the ELA-E teacher spoke about the girls I selected as my focal students for the purpose of this study. Both girls used to be in the ELA-S program, but transitioned to ELA-E by 2nd grade. These girls were described as being “highly performing” students. Particularly, the teacher mentioned that the girls impressed him due to, “Right off the

¹² CUSP kids are defined as students who are on the cusp of becoming proficient on the state literacy assessment.

bat, not just the penmanship but particularly the grammar they use and the sentence structure” (Teacher4E, personal interview, 2013). What is interesting about this case is that the teacher described these girls as “both pretty solid for reading,” but “they’re a little below grade level” (Teacher4E, personal interview, 2013). However, in spite of being a little below grade level, the teacher stated, “they’re on par with their peers,” because they have control over standard grammar and sentence structure.

Progress Monitoring. A finding from this study is that Willow Elementary is data driven. Teachers and administrators have created a culture around using formative assessment data as sign posts to help address students’ needs and deficiencies in advance of the large-scale assessments in the spring. Data Driven is a term taken from a school improvement model, which I will describe further in Chapter 6 and is based upon Bambrick-Santoyo’s (2010) guide to improving instruction using quantitative data. Teachers are required to collect multiple data points on their students’ growth in literacy; however, as the school principal explained:

- (1) Principal: “...*but nothing measures ELD*. I worry that without data teachers are just kind of teaching everything. And it’s really hard to pinpoint what students really need. And while not all students need that pinpoint, some of them really do, like the third grader, why is she not learning English? Is it the books she’s been given? Is it that she is missing just a few pieces of phonics, here we’re giving her all the phonics and maybe she doesn’t need any of them, or maybe she just needs a few letters to, to complete her foundational skills” (Principal Interview, 2013).

The quote above was made by the principal in response to a question about how important data is to her. She began by explaining that she does worry that “if it becomes all about the numbers and not about the kids, that you kind of lose sight of the kids” (Personal interview, 2013). She also fears that data tracking can consume too much teacher time, and she looks for the best formats to make data collection manageable. All six of the teachers that I interviewed commented on progress monitoring and it’s

impact on their classroom. As the assistant principal described, in order to meet the stated, “ultimate goal” (Principal interview, 2013) of all students reading at grade level by the time they reach third grade, D-block¹³ was created as an intervention used for which teachers are to collect and look at data on a weekly basis to ensure that they are “meeting the needs of all the kids at their grade level” (Assistant Principal, personal interview, 2013). While Willow is an innovation school, the assistant principal stated that they still participate in interim assessments because they are good progress monitoring tools and they are more closely mirroring the end of the year assessment (SAP).

In addition to D-block data, Teacher4E uses the Accelerated Reader¹⁴ program (AR) for progress monitoring: “I show them their test scores and say, you know, you got 70’s on the last two tests, which is pretty good but your goal is 90 or higher, so let’s get a couple of those going and then we’ll come back to this book” (Teacher4E, personal interview, 2013). This teacher also has students’ AR data posted in his classroom so that his students can continually evaluate their progress. In fact, I documented evidence of progress monitoring through AR in nearly all of the classrooms I observed.

However, Teacher5E admitted that AR tests, “tell me nothing other than the fact they read the book” (p.21). She continued by saying that she doesn’t do much with accelerated reader test scores except for posting them once a week. She told me that she received an email from the literacy coach saying “you need to take more tests, you need to run the report and post it once a week” (p.22). Her stated reaction to the email was,

¹³ D-block is Differentiation Block used daily to track students based on their individual needs and performance levels. It is a term created by school leaders at Willow and is a model adapted from a program found at another school in the same district.

¹⁴ Accelerated Reader is a widely used, k-12 reading program from Renaissance Learning based on students reading leveled books and using quick, computer based assessments, to track and monitor student progress in reading.

(1) Teacher5E: “If you want to come in here to try to get my students to take more tests, more power to you but come look at my chart. I’m not going to do anything more than what I’m doing. Nothing more, I’ll tell them to take the tests, I’ll reward those, and on my grades there, on home room they get a grade for being able to set a goal and reach it. My three students will get a proficient the others will get an “unsat”. That’s it, I’m done” (Teacher5E, personal Interview, 2013).

Aside from Accelerated Reader, several teachers discussed pressures placed on them to continually progress monitor the literacy gains of their students. First, Teacher5E, who is a second year teacher, admits that she can’t tell me how to improve the literacy gains of the focal students I observed in her room without, first, looking at data. This is an interesting comment. She confirms that teachers are supposed to be forming “data teams” where they are supposed to be continually looking at data. She continued by saying that right now she is not looking at or using SAP data, but she is teaching to interim data and unit tests. When asked whether or not she will look at more data in the future (after more teaching experience), she replied,

(1) Teacher5E “Probably. Because right now, because it’s another set of, because it’s another set of data. I have **data overload** right now, I can only handle so much in my head. So right now I can handle interims, and I can handle my unit test, and I can handle to manage my anecdotal notes that I take in class, that’s it. I *can’t* handle the test score that they got at the end of last year. I *can’t* handle the monthly STAR test that they take at the end of the month that I think is a joke. That I think is not accurate. *It’s too much.*”

Overall, conversations with three teachers (two ELA-S and 1 ELA-E teacher), revealed concerns over the amount of progress monitoring at Willow. First, Teacher4S found that the requirements set by the Read Act, which is described further in Chapter 6, is taking time away from providing students with what she feels that they really need: “They’re lacking the basic foundation, which is reading, understanding what they read, and able to write that, that’s all it is. But there’s no opportunity for that. I mean, TESTING, you’ve seen it alone. *It’s taking me almost two weeks to do progress monitoring, and that’s easy compared to the normal DRA test that we’re supposed to be doing once a month!!*” (Teacher4S, personal interview, 2013).

Teacher3S mentioned that all teachers were supposed to read the Data Driven text (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010) over the summer, but she described the data driven culture to not coincide with her teaching philosophies, which create a great deal of tension where she, “finally convinced them (school leaders) that the D-block period just wasn't, it just didn't do a whole lot for my kids, so I pulled them out. And I got a lot of attention, not necessarily positive attention for that. Um basically I was told (giggling), *"Well, xxxx, if you're not going to have our, or if you're not going to take our intervention help then however these kids progress rests on your shoulders."* So, D-block is just to excel, excel, excel the kids until we get them to a higher DRA2 and EDL2 level, period. *We're not even sure how worthy those tests are.* So I pulled them and I basically did my own thing”(p.46).

Finally, Teacher3E who had been at Willow for five years, admitted that he has “yet to look at [Spanish-EDL2] side by side with a SIT mate.” Student Intervention Teams (SIT) are used to strategize on the appropriate course of action for struggling students. During this interview I pushed him to describe the data used during SIT meetings. He admitted that at Willow, like in any school nationwide, the focus is on “reading-reading-reading, this kid needs to be on grade level for reading-reading-reading” (Teacher3E, personal interview, 2013). He does say that when a student is not performing on grade level for reading, all sorts of data is brought to SIT meetings including ACCESS scores; however, these meetings are “more focused around DRA or STAR or STAR literacy, those particular assessments, *not* mainly ACCESS (the language proficiency test) data” (Teacher3E, personal interview, 2013).

The focus on “reading-reading-reading” over language proficiency is a concern I observed. The principal mentioned that schools receive the results of their literacy interims within 24 hours. She showed me that she has access to a “really beautiful spreadsheet”

(developed by the district), “that tells you how [students] did on each question and you can really break it down and look at the question and see why kids missed it” (Principal Interview, 2013).

After reading the Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) text, she had decided that she was going to meet with teachers individually to go over their classroom scores on the interim assessment (Principal Interview, 2013). In addition to interim data, the principal mentioned that the district gives her “a lot of information, in some ways it’s too much” (Principal Interview, 2013). She can look at “are the kids growing, are they catching up, are they keeping what they have? so I can “look at reading. And because I have it, for this it’s only in English, unfortunately, I don’t think it shows me in Spanish” (Principal Interview, 2013). All of this data is used in conversations with teachers to determine “the kids who are getting interventions” and “depending on how severe their need is, determines how often they’re monitored” (Principal Interview, 2013).

As far as language proficiency is concerned, even though the district provides the principal with “all kinds of data” (Principal Interview, 2013), she admitted, “we don’t have a good way to progress monitor for ELD” (Principal Interview, 2013). I think this impacts instruction directly. First, as quoted above, ACCESS data is rarely used during SIT meetings and thus is rarely considered when problem-solving for a student who is not reading at grade level. Additionally, when I asked a teacher whether or not she could bring data on language development to a data team meeting, she replied, “I think it would be, I think it eventually would be. I think there would be a lot of push-back at first because we want, everything is based on reading levels, and so they want, especially the district, wants to see DRA2 and EDL2 growth, they don't necessarily want to see, [pausing/shifting]...well there's nothing to measure. We don't have something to measure kids’ oracy at a district level, so no” (Teacher3S, personal interview, 2013). She continued by saying that if a tool existed for measuring oral language development,

its data would only be counted if, she feels, it could be directly connected to gains in literacy.

Opportunities to Learn and Use Academic Language in the Data Driven School

I found that testing Discourse was evident in classrooms at the vocabulary, sentence, and discourse level. Testing Discourse is teacher talk that included that the reason for doing certain classroom activities was to improve test scores. As part of the data driven culture, students used frames provided by the teacher to learn how to talk about their performance on classwork. This included knowing words such as reading levels and points in relation to the status of proficient or partially proficient, or to meeting the standards. Finally, I found that students could articulate the definition of fluency but they had a difficult time when asked to actually make meaning of the texts they were reading. All of this was perpetuated by the omnipresence of data posted in classrooms and in hallways to help students maintain constant awareness of their reading levels in relation to their peers.

Teachers Getting Things Done. “Teachers getting things done” is a code I applied to situations when teachers connected their classroom activities to testing. I found that some teachers stated that the reason for certain assignments was to help students reach standards or to test as proficient on the state assessment. This theme emerged in the data across several classrooms during instruction for reading, writing and language. I found that testing Discourse made students a participant in the data driven culture implicitly when engaging them in test preparation or when asking them to participate in school-wide activities to boost the schools overall performance rating, and explicitly when language development directly supported talk around tests.

Becoming Proficient and Meeting Standards- The reason for learning. On November 7th, Teacher5S introduced students to a bingo card of comprehension activities that

students were to complete while they did their independent reading. These activities ranged from making predictions, talking about characters, and making connections to the text. As the teacher setup the procedure for this activity, one student struggled to find a synonym for the word illustration (801_0063).

Sensing apathy, in response, the teacher attempted to build motivation with the students by explaining why the students should care about the activity:

- (1) Teacher 5S: Here's one observation I made. I counted 15 students who are now reading chapter books where at the beginning of the year, you were all reading small books. The other thing that I noticed during our conferences is that you all are reading, *you understand where your reading level is*. Alright? You know where your reading level is and you're already making goals to improve your scores. One thing you need to be aware of is that remember how we started publishing? We started publishing your scores up there [pointing to the classroom wall] with your names and where you rank in the class. Now we are going to be showing your progress, not with your name, but it will be with your ID number. And you're going to compare your scores with the scores from classroom5E and classroom5E2 and we're going to post it on that wall right there [signals to hallway]. I really need everyone's attention. So you're going to be showing your scores, we are going to be showing your scores up on that wall. Your (our class') colors will be yellow—apples. Yellow apples. There's a whole bushel of apples. So hopefully we'll be harvesting good scores. Do you understand?
- (2) 1 Student: Yes.
Teacher5S: This is really important. This activity. These reading activities are going to help develop your comprehension skills no matter what level you are at.

In this lesson, the students are taught that the reason for improving their comprehension skills is so that they can have better reading outcomes, not so that they can connect to the books they are reading. Additionally, the teacher places pressure on the students by telling them they will be publically ranked according to reading levels in comparison to their peers. When students still show little engagement, Teacher5S

continued until he stated that the entire reason why students should come to school is to improve their reading outcomes:

- (1) Teacher5S: Let me see if I can explain this in a different way, ok?
Because these activities, you're going to be responsible for them, you want your scores to go up, right?
- (2) 1Student: Yes, true.
- (3) Teacher5S: Teacher: Otherwise, *why come to school, right?*
- (4) Students: Yeah.

Teacher5E often connected the reason for learning to becoming proficient on the state assessment. She also taught students that incomplete or substandard work was the reason for not performing well on tests. On Oct 18th, she reviewed the grammar homework given by the substitute teacher the day before when she was attending a professional development. While the students were sitting on the rug during whole group, she told them, “Being able to make really simple sentences into compound/complex sentences is what you will have to do in order to make the jump between 4th and 5th grade.” She continued, “For those of you who are still partially proficient, this is something that you need to pay attention to.”

One of the primary ELD activities in this classroom involved the use of reading response packets for homework with prompts based on their independent reading program. This assignment included an “ELD focus” that could entail using or identifying specific language forms while writing. In reviewing their work, Teacher5E told her students, “There is a trend in that those students who are doing their homework (reading response packets) are proficient in writing; especially those who consistently do their ELD focus.” It is possible that because she is referring to homework, which is an independent exercise, that maybe it is the kids who are proficient in language, who are able to do the literary response plus the ELD focus, without direct support from the teacher. Because I had volunteered to grade the reading response packets,

I was able to see that there were a high number of kids who did not do the ELD focus in their homework, possibly suggesting that the non-proficient students may simply not have known how to do the homework correctly.

On October 9th, I recorded Teacher5E telling me that prepositions and correlative conjunctions are big language standards for the 5th grade. On the same day, the teacher did two ELD lessons. The first involved using a fly swatter where kids read a sentence and then they had to decide which correlative conjunction was used. In the second activity, the Dictado, students practiced writing compound and complex sentences where the same correlative conjunctions were used. As students were getting ready to begin their Dictado, the teacher pushes them, “Do you think that I’m teaching you about compound and complex sentences, editing, and spelling in your Dictado directly before you take part II of your District Interim Assessments is a coincidence?” Again, it is stated that the reason why students should learn how to write complex sentences, that include correlative conjunctions, was to do well on their interim assessments.

In classroom4S I found more evidence of the students being taught that the purpose of certain classroom activities is to do well on the test:

- (1) Teacher4S: (Signaling her graphic organizer) ¿Qué es la diferencia entre tabla de contenido y índices, Keith? (What is the difference between table of contents and indices, Keith?)
- (2) Keith: Índices dice sobre otras cosas y... (Indices tell about other things and...)
- (3) Teacher4S: Pero me dices específicamente? (But, can you tell me specifically?) (Providing the language structure):
 “Estamos comparando, _____ y _____.”
 “We are comparing, _____ and _____.”
- (4) Keith: (No response)
- (5) Teacher4S: Para los exámenes del estado tienes que distinguir entre ficción y no ficción. (For the state exams you have to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction)

In the above, Keith was not producing the specific form of the answer and was shut down. Teacher4S wanted the student to identify distinguishing features of fiction and non-fiction texts, but Keith, trying to identify what an index is, did not understand why he was shut down. Although this is an opportunity for Spanish literacy, the teacher states that students have to be able to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction [in English] for the state exams. Additionally, Keith was confused possibly because he thought he knew the difference between index and table of contents, but because he couldn't respond correctly, he may have thought that he did not meet the objective. As a result, Keith probably thinks that he won't be able to do well on the state exams.

In addition to doing well on tests, meeting standards was a clear, stated objective in Classroom4E (there were no other literacy objectives posted in the classroom). In Classroom4E, students needed to comprehend terms related to performance in order to self-assess their writing. These terms included rating themselves as Not Yet (not meeting), Approaches (approaching), Meets (effective), and Advanced (distinguished). The task was for students to look at their rough drafts and self-assess their writing based on the common core state standards listed below:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1: Demonstrate command of conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.2: Demonstrate command of conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Students were explicitly taught that the characteristics of good writing included meeting the standards. Assessment based on these standards may teach students that the characteristics of a good writer, who meets standards, include mastery of the conventions of standard English. In fact, Teacher4E, in his interview (as identified in the prior section), identified students as “high” if they demonstrated good conventions, penmanship and grammar.

On September 24 Teacher4E introduced another rubric (see figure 5.3 below) and spoke

to students about the strategies of good writers:

- (1) Teacher: Raise your hand if you want to get the best grade you can possibly get on this writing piece.

(Most (not all students) raise their hands).

- (2) Teacher4E: Well you should, because if you're showing perseverance, and excellence, like pride, then that means you did want to do your best. Right? Yep. And I want you to also. So what I want you to start thinking about is "Characteristics of Good Writers Rubric" (signals to students to hit the lights as they all sit on the rug in front of the Promethean Board). This is what good writing should look like. We're not going to fill this in today, but I want you to start thinking about it. Eyes are up here. On the screen. I want you to think about if you're going to get a 3, possibly a 3, the most points you could get, 2 being in the middle, and 1 being the least amount you could get, kind of like how our standards based report cards are but they go to a 4 and we don't have a 4. 3 would be that it *meets the standards* in writing. Ok, and all these things we practice, in your journal, and mini lessons, we try to *meet the standards for writing*, um, 2 would mean that it's not quite all the way there, but it's close and it may need a few revisions. All right? And *1 means that it does not meet, it does not meet the standards*. Ok? Show me with your fingers which one YOU are going to strive for?

③ Meets the Standard	② Partially Meets the Standard	① Does not meet Standard
• The lead makes the reader want to read more	• The lead is simple or somewhat boring.	• There is no lead. The reader does not know there is a "beginning"
• Includes 3-4 Sensory hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, smelling details	• Includes 1-2 Sensory details.	• Does not include Sensory details
• Writing is organized (has a beginning, middle, and end)	• Writing is somewhat organized but needs some revision.	• Writing is unorganized and has little to no structure.
• Good ending! The reader feels satisfied. It can be circular or a reflection of earlier events(s)	• An ok ending but is boring or cliché ("The End," "They lived happily ever after," etc)	• No ending or abrupt ending (it just stops....)

Figure 5.3. Writing Rubric in Classroom4E.

Later, Teacher4E taught students that if they wanted to be good writers, they would need to try some of the techniques that good writers do. He directed students to the rubric (figure 5.3 above) and told them:

- (1) Teacher4E: “As you can see by the rubric...these techniques are then directly correlated to meeting the standards. Thus, you have to demonstrate these techniques of good writers if you want to meet the standards in writing.”

Overall, participation in this classroom required students to move toward a specific form of writing. “Moving toward,” as it is known in the classroom, could mean applying the mechanics or specific conventions of writing during the writing process. Additionally, students in the 4th grade were expected to “learn the words that they should or shouldn’t use” (Teacher4E, teacher interview, 2013) in order to be deemed proficient on the state assessment. As the examples above show, students were aware of the need for these skills as using specific language forms and vocabulary connected to meeting standards and to being good writers. In this way, classroom discourse often included the use of evaluative terms such as meeting and partially meeting standards, whereby teaching students that the purpose for writing was to meet standards

In reading, Teacher4E did a “read aloud” of the book, Stripes by David Shannon. Students were excited to read the book and then the teacher stated, “When we are trying to *reach the standards in reading*, as a good reader, we want to make connections to the text.” Then, the teacher showed the text and as he read aloud he modeled making connections to the book. After they read aloud, students returned to their seats for 60 minutes of silent sustained reading (SSR). Their assignment was to read and take quizzes as well as record in their Reader’s Response notebooks the connections they’ve made. After the SSR, the teacher returned the students to whole group, he then announced that the class is “35% of the way through the semester,” and

that they need to review their Accelerated Reader reports to see if they are on track with points. Charts showing points for reading comprehension were publically displayed (see figure 5.4 below) to remind students of their reading progress goals in relation to their classmates. This sequence of activities may have taught students that reaching standards is equal to being a good reader, which is equal to making connections to the text, which results in earning points on informal and formal assessments. Over a 10-day period, students averaged over 80 minutes of silent reading each day during their literacy block, with one day reaching 135 minutes. These connections, plus the quantity of time devoted to the accelerated reader program, may indicate to students that the purpose for reading is to take tests.

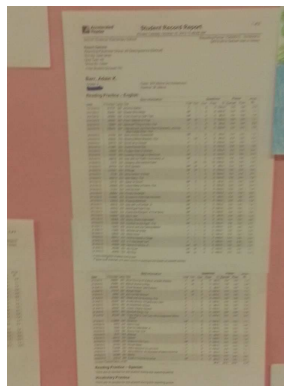


Figure 5.4. Reading Levels posted in Classroom4E.

Language socialization in a data driven culture. Literacy activities in multiple classrooms directly connected to the Data Driven model (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010) as the responsibility of tracking progress was shifted to the students. This required students to be able to listen to and read, write and talk, about data points in relation to their reading program, Accelerated Reader. As per the school leadership, as Teacher5E mentioned in her interview, teachers are expected to review data reports from this program regularly with their students.

When publicly reviewing reading progress during the literacy block, Teacher4S provided

a sentence structure for students to announce how well or how poorly they were performing in an independent reading program:

Sentence structure: My percentage points are _____. I have earned _____ points. I am reading _____ minutes a day.

- (1) Student 1: 25 (forgets to say points).
- (2) Teacher4S: What class???
- (3) Class (shouting): POINTS
- (4) Teacher4S: And how many minutes?
- (5) Student 1: 11.
- (6) Teacher4S: Can you please say that in a complete sentence?

After every session of SSR in Classroom4E, students had to record their level, the total points possible and they had to write how many points they received on quizzes about their book. This is significant because SSR is the largest component of the literacy block in this classroom and it is structured so that students were collecting data on themselves. Most importantly, this practice was supported by school level and district level administration. On September 27th, the school principal entered Classroom4E during the literacy block with an official from the district. They observed what several students were doing and then, together, they reviewed the students' Accelerated Reader points, which were posted on the east wall in the middle of the classroom (Refer to figure 5.4 above). Whether the principal and the district official approved of what they saw is less relevant than the fact that the students saw that the principal cared about the points that they were getting in their independent reading program.

In addition to being able to work with data, in a lesson I observed in Classroom5S, I found that students were able to talk about a literacy skill, and fluency, but they were not able to make meaning from a text in spite of their levels of fluency shown while popcorn reading.

- (1) Teacher5S: When we are reading out loud, we are reading for fluency. If you're a fluent reader, then this time you're reading for content. What's fluency?
- (2) Student 1: Like if you were the person and you wanted to inform someone about what you are reading.
- (3) Teacher5S: Very good. Are there any examples, if you agree with what (Student 1) is saying, or if you disagree, are there any examples? Does someone have something to add to what (Student 1) is saying? When we are reading for fluency what are teachers looking for?
[Teacher calls on a specific student]
- (4) Student 2: Silent.
- (5) Teacher5S: It's not a test. What do you think? Do you agree with student 1 that when we read, we read as if the person who wrote it is reading? What does fluency mean?
- (6) Student 3: You don't read good.
- (7) Teacher5S: What does reading good mean?
- (8) Student 3: You don't read fast or slow. Just perfect.
- (9) Student 4: You read with expression.
- (10) Teacher5S: And what about punctuation? Can you read punctuation?
- (11) Student 4: You take a deep breath.
- (12) Teacher5S: When do you take a deep breath?
- (13) Student 4: At a period or a comma.
- (14) Teacher5S: Ok, let's begin, make sure you are tracking with your fingers. Be sure as you are reading this, you are thinking about how it relates to obesity.

Students began to popcorn read with an article entitled, "Take a Fresh Look at Lunch." After several minutes, the teacher stopped the students from reading to discuss the text.

- (1) Teacher5S: What do you think about carbohydrates? That's a good 5th grade word, (35:44) when we read non-fiction, we read facts and we need to support or refute these facts. Do you understand?
- (2) Students: -----
- (3) Teacher5S: (Calls on a specific student). What do you think about carbohydrates? I ask because you've been reading a lot of non-fiction books about cooking. Just curious.
- (4) Student: -----

- (5) Teacher5S: Students are you paying attention? This is a check for understanding. I want to make sure you understand.
- (6) Students: -----
- (7) Teacher5S: Ok, we'll come back to that.

In looking at the data excerpt above, the first example shows that due to literacy drills, students easily engage in a discussion about fluency. I don't think that "fluency" is a general academic vocabulary term for students—it's teacher talk that has been pushed onto students to help them understand the skills they need to become good readers. Not only were students familiar with this term, they were also familiar with its definition ["It means you read with expression"], and they had little trouble talking about it. After reading the article out loud with the class, the teacher commended several students by telling them that they had excellent fluency. However, the goal was to be able to write opinion essays about obesity and to include information from an article that either supported or refuted the students' opinions, and I did not find evidence that the students understood how to use the facts from the article. Students had difficulty discussing the effects of carbohydrates in a person's diet either because they didn't know about the effects, or because they were not accustomed to finding meaning out of the texts they were reading.

More evidence of how kids are socialized using language associated with their school's data driven culture was found during an ELD exercise when students were asked to self-assess their Dictado. This week, their teaching points for Dictado were Suffixes, transitional words, and Usage (Punctuation, Spelling, and Capitalization). Students were asked to grade their work and then classify themselves as Advanced, Proficient, Partially Proficient, or Unsatisfactory. Then the teacher opened her grade book, and students publically identify themselves with their scores in each of the three categories for each of the teaching points.

Literacy Time Spent on Test Prep and Raising the School Performance Rating. On

December 9th, during their morning meeting, Teacher3E reviewed the assessment page of his teacher portal. He shared a roster with students showing how they ranked on the last math interim. Students were ranked Advanced, Proficient, or Partially-Proficient. He called out one female student because she was the only one who scored Advanced. As I watched Teacher3E preview the assessment portal using his Promethean board, I found that teachers had links to tabs labeled, Standards Mastery, Skills Analysis and Item Analysis. In looking through these tabs with the students, I noticed 59.1% was the average total score for Teacher3E's third grade class in math. To improve scores, Teacher3E reminded students to: 1) Show their work, 2) Use their test taking skills, and 3) Show what they know.

Academic Spanish

The research question guiding this chapter was to ask about opportunities for students to develop academic language in both English *and in Spanish*. In the school's innovation application, it reads that biliteracy is an asset, and that school leaders are committed "to providing our native Spanish speaking students with opportunities to further develop their native language literacy skills to become fully biliterate" (Innovation application, 2014, p. 7). In this chapter I described how in order to participate in a data driven school culture, students were socialized to navigate their school setting by learning to talk about standards and assessments. Because high-stakes tests are conducted in English, the most predominate way that academic language was developed was through testing and in English. However, I found that teachers teach academic Spanish in similar ways in which they teach academic language.

There were three bilingual classrooms included in this study. In Classroom5S, there were few opportunities for Spanish literacy in general. On one occasion I observed how Teacher5S dug out a class set of dusty, social studies textbooks that were written in Spanish. He told the

class that these books had been printed 3 years ago but had never been used. He then pulled down a rolled map over the chalkboard and conducted a collective reading of one section of a chapter about indigenous people during the Spanish literacy block. He taught the students about the word “indigenous,” but I found this to be an isolated opportunity for students to develop academic vocabulary in Spanish and it did not connect to a larger literacy objective. The significance of the absence of data from this classroom is that even when bilingual students have a fully bilingual, veteran educator, scant were the opportunities for Spanish literacy and Spanish language development for these students.

In Classroom4S, students did have the opportunity for Spanish literacy, and language development in this environment occurred much as it did in English. First, students were taught that the purpose of learning about text features between non-fiction and fictional texts was to do well on state exams (copied from previous section):

- (1) Teacher4S: Para los exámenes del estado tienes que distinguir entre ficción y non-ficción. (For the state exams you have to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction).

Second, Teacher4S showed low levels of acceptability for answers that were not given using complete sentences in Spanish. During one Spanish literacy block, Teacher4S took out a graphic organizer that she made in Spanish, which included a circle that read, “Una cosa que me gustaría saber es...”// “One thing I would like to know is...”. Teacher4S pulled popsicle sticks and students were expected to complete the sentence frame with a transformation: Una cosa que me gustaría saber *de ficción/no ficción* es...// One thing I would like to know about fiction and non-fiction is... (This transformation was not posted). For example, students could say, “Una cosa que me gustaría saber [de ficción] es como hacen los dibujos// One thing I would like to know about fiction is how they do

illustrations. As a student struggled to complete this exercise, Teacher4S held her accountable:

- (1) Student 1: Una cosa que me gustaría saber PORQUE.... (One thing I would like to know because...)
- (2) Teacher4S (Stopping Student 1 and asking *a different* student): ¿Por qué tienes una mirada tan confusa? Why do you have such a confused look?
- (3) Student 2: Porque (Student 1) dijo Porque. (Because student 1 said because)
- (4) Teacher4S: Y porque estás confusa? (And why are you confused?)
- (5) Student 2: Porque, porque no es la respuesta correcta. (Because, because is not the correct answer)
- (6) Teacher4S: OK, (Student 1), otra vez: (Ok, Student 1, again)

Due to this exchange, student 1 was embarrassed, but responded:

- (7) Student 1: Una cosa que me gustaría saber **es**.... (One thing I would like to know is).

In another example, Teacher4S holds her students accountable for using the academic language vocabulary word “outline” during an opportunity to develop academic language in Spanish:

- (1) Teacher4S: Qué vamos a hacer? (What are we going to do?)
- (2) Student 1: Vamos a usar el “chart” para describir... (We are going to use the chart in order to describe...)
- (3) Teacher4S (Stopping Student 1): ¿Cómo se llama a esta? (We are going to use it all year, who can help?) ¿Cómo se llama? (How do you call this? We are going to use it all year, who can help? How do you call this?)
- (4) Class: Un OUTLINE (An OUTLINE).
- (5) Teacher4S (affirming the response and turning to the student to repeat)
- (6) Student 1: Outline.

These two examples show how during instruction, the teacher has a high level of acceptability for formal Spanish when students are participating in class, just as she did in English. However, in the first example, the teacher uses a non standard Spanish term for confused (*confusa* en lugar de *confundida*); and in the second example, this teacher responded by code switching, using an academic term in English, in order to accomplish her

goals. This is evidence that academic language in a bilingual classroom may neither be Standard English or Standard Spanish—it may include a *mezcla*-- a little of both!

Teacher3S also taught academic Spanish very similarly to the way she taught academic language. In her interview, she admitted to taking for granted that her students “know a little bit more” in terms of academic language in Spanish and therefore does not teach it explicitly (Teacher3S, Personal Interview, 2013). I found that this teacher thinks broadly in terms of academic language teaching whatever language her students might need in order to access the literacy objective. As a result, in her classroom, language development was highly contextualized.

When working on the text *La Escoba de la Viuda*, Teacher3S reviewed what the students had read on a previous day and then she began to read. After a few sentences she stopped reading to provide instruction on the high-level word, “Maligno”// Malignant, that was used to describe a character (the broom) in the story. She asked the students, “No sé esta palabra, pero puedo usar el resto del texto. ¿Qué puedes sacar de esta palabra?//(I don’t know this word, but I can use the text. What can I pull out of this word?) A student responds, “Malo”//Bad, and a conversation ensued about why the broom was described as Maligno//Bad. This example shows how Teacher3S teaches the language that her students need in order to access the literacy objective, which on that day, in Spanish, was to analyze elements of fiction, while in English, students were to describe characters. Instruction in this way not only developed students’ vocabulary in Spanish, but she also modeled how to look for familiar words inside new or unknown words. It also opened a conversation where students had a chance to talk, in Spanish, in an academic context. Finally, although this lesson was done in Spanish literacy, students were collectively describing a character,

which could help them achieve their literacy objectives in English. While this example shows how Spanish is developed to support English, opportunities to develop language in Classroom3S were strategic and carefully planned.

Overall, the way Teacher3S taught academic vocabulary in Spanish matched the way she taught academic vocabulary in English. Below I copied an excerpt from Chapter 4 on an ELD lesson that included defining the word, *courageous*. You can see that the strategy used by Teacher3E to teach this word is the same as the strategy she used to teach *maligno* in the example above from Spanish literacy:

- (1) Teacher: Today we are going to talk about Courageous. Can everyone say Courageous?
- (2) Students: COURAGEOUS
- (3) Teacher: Courageous. *Oh! If I am looking at the word, I see a really nice word that I can pull out. When you look at this word, (student name), what do you see? Do you see a word that you could pull out?*
- (4) Student: -geous
- (5) Teacher: -geous. Ok this is actually a word at the end of the word that we call a suffix.
- (6) Student 2: -ous
- (7) Teacher: Ok we just talked about -ous
- (8) Teacher: Has anybody heard of the word courage?
- (9) Student Chorus: NO!...oh yeah

Just as in Spanish literacy, conversation followed about times when students were courageous after Teacher3S provided direct instruction on the term. In both instances, *maligno* and *courageous*, the words were adjectives used to describe characters (literacy objective) and came directly from the text that the class was reading.

Conclusion

In their 1978 article, Brown and Burton discussed models for diagnosing students' misconceptions about procedural knowledge in the classroom. They wrote:

"A common assumption among teachers is that students do not follow

*procedures very well and that erratic behavior is the primary cause of a student's inability to perform each step correctly. Our experience has been that students are remarkably competent procedure followers, but that they often follow **the wrong procedures**" (Brown and Burton, 1978, p. 157).*

This study (1978) came to mind while analyzing students' opportunities to develop and use language at Willow Elementary School. Just as the teachers in Brown and Burton's (1978) study had negative assumptions about their students' abilities to follow procedures, I found that the teachers at Willow Elementary had deficit orientations toward the language resources of their students. While Teacher4S explicitly labeled her students' Spanish as "Kitchen Spanish," other teachers and administrators simply stated that students lacked vocabulary. Because opportunity to learn is a major concept in this study through which I analyzed my data, I was able to see that there was also a misconception about the students at Willow. Students at Willow are part of a data driven culture where testing Discourse is prevalent. In order to navigate this environment, students have learned to use and define words such as fluency. They can self correct themselves based on meeting "standards," and they talk frequently with their teachers about their "proficiency" status. As such, I would argue that students at Willow do *not* have limited vocabularies. In fact, I think their vocabulary is reflective of the prevailing Discourse of their school. I think that students, in many instances, are lacking in opportunities to develop vocabulary *to show* that they can make meaning out of the texts they are reading.

Chapter 6

Student Pathways

*“The whole point is to plug the holes; not fix the holes.”
(Literacy coach, Planning Meeting)*

During a quarterly planning meeting, Willow’s literacy coach advised teachers that the way to help students do better on the STAR reading test was not necessarily to teach to the test, but to teach the individual skills that appear on the test. By doing this, teachers, using students’ differentiation block, would be able to “plug the holes” that cause students to underperform on informal reading assessments. This differentiation block, or “D-block,” allows for the provision of enrichment or intensive intervention for students based on universal data collected through a variety of progress monitoring tools. D-block comprises 40-45 minutes of students’ daily literacy block and students are grouped based on their reading levels. I found that language proficiency is rarely taken into consideration when these placements are made. As a result, I found a relationship between students’ levels of language proficiency and their D-block placement, such that students who are proficient in English were more likely to be placed in a reading enrichment group, whereas the lower the student’s level of language proficiency, the more likely they would be placed in remedial reading groups. Because D-block fills a significant portion of students’ literacy blocks at Willow, I argue that student tracking in this way has a significant impact on students’ opportunities in reading. In this chapter, I will explain D-block in greater detail and what it means to be data-driven at Willow. Finally, I will show through six focal children, what opportunities look like for students based on the way they are tracked.

RTI, the READ Act and Willow Elementary

Since the reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004), Response to Intervention (RTI) models have been implemented as a problem-solving process that applies a criteria for special education referrals. According to Rocky Mountain Public Schools,

“The principles of the RTI initiative are reflected in The District Plan (2010). The plan calls for the use of data to drive decisions about instruction, elimination of the barriers between departments in planning for student achievement, and support for the core curriculum in helping all children to learn. These are clearly principles that are reflected in the philosophy and application of RTI” (RMPS, Division of Student Services).

RTI is intended to be implemented with three tiers of support and instruction. According to Rocky Mountain Public Schools, the first tier or universal level, should include research-based instruction in the general education classroom for all students. Using a “specific assessment plan” that includes “universal screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring,” schools can identify students who may need more support, inform instruction, monitor progress and evaluate whether instruction is able to help student achieve at grade level (*RMPS, Division of Student Services*). The decision of which specific assessments are to be used is left up to individual schools. According to Willow’s literacy coach:

- (1) *“I used what we call Universal Data, for the whole grade level, so for like a 4th grade class, it would be the SAP, DRA/EDL, and STAR testing, stuff I have for every kid, and then, we use different data, like uum, per group, like we’ll use DIBELS or whatever” (Literacy coach, Personal Interview, 2013).*

Under RTI, universal data would identify which students require interventions based on whether or not they were meeting grade level benchmarks. According to Klingner and Edwards (2006), “fundamental to the notion of the RTI model is that instructional practices or interventions at each level should be based on scientific evidence about what works” (p. 108).

This means that classroom instruction should be based on sound theory and scientific evidence for what works, and the assessments used to monitor student performance should be valid and reliable. Furthermore, the type of instruction and assessments used may look differently for culturally and linguistically diverse students in order for the RTI process to work effectively (Klingner and Edwards, 2006).

At Willow Elementary, D-block is used to provide Tier II interventions, however, their model, which they have picked-up and adapted from other schools is based on the idea that “everyone gets some extra support in addition to their core instruction, um for literacy... so just a block of time where everybody is of similar abilities or similar needs” (Literacy coach, personal interview, 2013). This includes providing enrichment to students who are meeting grade-level benchmarks. D-block begins in kindergarten and is extended through the fifth grade. In addition to RTI, The Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (the READ Act) was passed by the state legislature in 2012, to help students who were reading below grade level in English. In order to eliminate achievement gaps between ELLs and non-ELLs, the READ Act specified that schools make “data-informed decisions” to identify the level of support needed by individual students (ELL READ Guidance, CDE, 2014). At the time of this study, D-block was in its 4th year of implementation, meaning that for the 5th graders at Willow, students may have been a part of this intervention system since the 2nd grade, for 4th graders since grade 1, and upon entering kindergarten for third grade students. While the READ Act pertains to grades K-3 and is newly being implemented, teachers, as indicated in their interviews, are already feeling the impact of the increasing use of data and progress monitoring on their classroom routines.

Data Driven

In my interview with the school principal, she structured her responses to several of my questions around Bambrick-Santoyo's (2010) guide to improving instruction using quantitative data. According to his profile (2010), Bambrick-Santoyo is the leader of the North Star Academy Network and has trained over 2,000 school leaders on how data-driven instruction can result in school improvement and the closing of the achievement gap. The principal pointed me directly to this book (2010) and explained how influential it has been for her as an administrator. In this book, Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) claims that a data-driven culture does not mean that educators should teach to the test; rather, the school should be focused on whether or not students are learning. The essential point of Bambrick-Santoyo's (2010) model is that learning should drive teaching, as opposed to teaching driving learning. Additionally, teacher evaluations, action plans, and accountability should be aligned to this process. Bambrick-Santoyo's model has been built upon the work he has done in urban schools, namely in Oakland, Chicago and New York. There are 4-key principles to his model: Assessment, Analysis, Action and Culture.

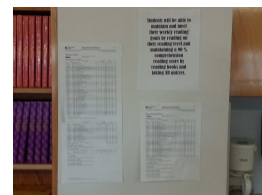
Assessment means that teachers need better and more frequent interim assessments that will align to the standards and to the larger-scale assessments given annually. According to Bambrick-Santoyo (2010), his assessment principle, "whether it is praised for emphasizing a results orientation or condemned for teaching the test, the practices of data driven instruction are inextricably bound up with the process of assessment" (p.6). More frequent assessments include the use of regular, rigorous and aligned assessments to track progress. Alignment means that the curriculum scope and sequence should "precisely match the standards tested in the interim assessment" (p.xxx-xxxi). Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) believes that teachers cannot effectively teach toward standards if they do not know how the standards will be assessed, which is often the case with large-scale end of the year assessments. By starting with the assessment, teachers can

ensure that lesson planning and units are developed to match the rigor of the end of the year assessment. Additionally, teachers should conduct regular checks for understanding and provide more formal testing, on a quarterly basis at a minimum. Interims given quarterly should match the rigor and the format of the end of the year assessment. Note, this component only suggests that assessments match the large-scale assessment; it does not suggest that the formative assessments should be valid and reliable for the population of students for which they measure. Bambrick-Santoyo's (2010) argument is that other informal assessments (those which are similar to what Poehner and Lantolf (2011) recommend in terms of dynamic or interactive assessments) do not demonstrate what a student can do without the support of the teacher, and thus are ineffective (at improving test scores). As such, teachers need to know how the student will perform *independently*. After formal, interim assessments are given, teachers should be given the opportunity to evaluate the results, make improvement plans, and identify struggling students (2010). This point is relevant to Willow because much of what happens during D-block results from the alignment toward the interim assessment. For example, students in lower literacy groups, are assessed using the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and are taught decoding and phonics strategies, with little attention toward constructing meaning from texts. As a result, even if, as the Literacy coach claims, that she advises her teachers not to teach to the test (in this case the SAP), teachers during D-block are set-up for teaching to the formative assessments used during D-block.

The analysis component of the data driven model, (2010) means that school leaders should train teachers to personally analyze their own classes' data frequently, and to provide follow-up with their students. School leaders should also make time for teachers to analyze data. This is precisely the purpose and the focus of the D-block planning meetings as I observed them.

Teachers were coached to collect data, present data, and made decisions about student placement based on the data they collected. The Literacy coach suggests to teachers the types of progress monitoring tools that teachers should be using. Creating a data-driven culture where a significant amount of time is spent analyzing data, includes Bambrick-Santoyo's (2010) framing of analysis that is analogous to performing an autopsy. He suggests that schools should provide regular opportunities to examine "illnesses," rather than waiting to perform an "autopsy" at the end of the year to find out why the child died (p.xxxiii). Results could indicate which students should be targeted for re-teaching or intervention on particular standards in order to help such students compete with their peers. This problem-oriented approach may explain why it is more comprehensible to teachers to organize D-block based on what skills students are lacking, rather than based on constructing learning opportunities based on the skills they possess.

The action principle has two main parts: first, teachers should design lessons and administrators should evaluate teachers based on whether or not teaching addresses what type of learning the data show is needed. This could mean spending extra time teaching skills that students demonstrate they are lacking. Second, students should also be engaged in the process, much like in RMPS's TSIL (Transforming Students Into Learners) model. Data-driven cultures consist of students also knowing their end goal, how they are performing, and how they can improve (p.96). This speaks to the need for graphs and public display of performance on STAR reading quizzes (see figures 6.1-6.4 below).



Figures 6.1-6.4. Public Displays of Performance at Willow Elementary.

The culture principle is connected to achieving teacher buy-in. In her interview, the school principal explained that any program would improve her school if she had total buy-in from teachers. However, Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) recommends that principals should not demand or wait for total teacher buy-in before implementing a data-driven model. Teachers should drive data analysis meetings and administrators should not compete ideologically with teachers, rather the emphasis should be placed on letting the data results drive buy-in from teachers (2010). It is the role of school leadership to schedule and prioritize the administration, scoring, evaluation and professional development around interim assessments. Additionally, there should be allotted time for re-teaching (2010), which could be administered as remediation as it is practiced in the D-block model.

Notable about Bambrick-Santoyo's (2010) model is that it lacks a theoretical framework. Bambrick-Santoyo writes that this model "was not created in a theoretical laboratory" (p.xxv). Additionally, in order to provide professional development to teachers, justifying this model requires that school leaders be short and direct, and connect with educators on a personal level. "In this regard, stories and analogies (particularly from sports) are extremely effective" (p.117). Bambrick-Santoyo suggests using short anecdotes to sell his model to teachers, and letting the data speak for itself even if it takes a few years. Of course, it is questionable if these anecdotes and sports analogies meet the Castañeda Standards (1981) for programs serving English Language learners, which mandate that programs be based on an educational theory recognized as sound by experts in the field of English as a Second Language/Bilingual Education.

D-block at Willow Elementary

Background. D-block, or Differentiation Block, is a school wide program (K-5) whereby students are re-grouped by grade level and reading levels in order to receive targeted instruction. The school's literacy coach initially assigns students based on their Spring DRA2 (Developmental Reading Assessment) scores. Every 6 weeks, teachers and paraprofessionals meet with the literacy coach to analyze student data in an effort to re-evaluate placements. Changes to placements are made when teachers and paraprofessionals present quantitative evidence they've collected through the use of such progress-monitoring tools as DIBELS or STAR reading, showing the extent to which students are demonstrating growth. Some qualitative assessments are made for individual students on a very limited and case-by-case basis (usually when the D-block teacher and the classroom teacher can agree upon the student's needs apart from the data they present in planning meetings).

By attending planning meetings and in conversations with teachers, I learned that D-block placement might not be considerate of language proficiency. For example, a third grade teacher called attention to a student whom she felt had very low receptive skills in English. She raised the question that the D-block did not help with this. There were few ideas and little known by the team as to what to do with learners similar to this student and the conversations fell flat. As an example, the following dialogue occurred during the D-block planning meeting around the placement of a newcomer as well as another student who seems to read at a low level in English:

- (1) D-block Teacher (Parapro): Diana is where I have a question about. Um, she's trying very, very hard, but she doesn't understand English.
- (2) ELA-S Classroom Teacher: (clarifying) Yeah, she just came this year.
- (3) D-block Teacher (Parapro): Yes, (agrees), so I'm wondering, she doesn't understand my questions in English, and the kids usually translate, and I'm wondering, "Am I doing her any good?"
- (4) Literacy coach: Right, she should be in the lowest Spanish.
- (5) Other ELA-S Teacher: She could come with me.
- (6) Literacy coach: OK.

- (7) ELA-S Classroom Teacher: But EDL, she's a 34. She's high in Spanish.
- (8) ELA-E Teacher: Would it be possible to put Daniela (who is currently working with Imagine Learning¹⁵) instead in (D-block group with the parapro)?
- (9) Other ELA-S Teacher: Oh dear!
- (10) Literacy coach: 'cause her English, is... describe her to me again??
- (11) ELA-E Teacher: (about Daniela) She's a 10 DRA2, but she's a 6 in EDL, right. And its, it sounds like she needs that one on one time, other than Imagine Learning.
- (12) Literacy coach: And then possibly, Diana, on Imagine Learning?
- (13) ELA-E 3rd Grade Teacher: Yep.
- (14) ELA-S Classroom Teacher: Well, Ms. M had talked to me about this new program that the GLAD ladies gave her...
- (15) Literacy coach: ...OH YEAH...
- (16) Classroom Teacher: For those who need English, or very beginning English
- (17) Literacy coach: I forgot to tell you; you're not going to get (the GLAD ladies). You're not going to get her. I had to re-do the schedule. I'm sorry, and I forgot to communicate that to you too. I'm so sorry. But she still has that program, and I don't know... (Switching away from the GLAD option) *You want to try Imagine Learning with (Diana) for 6 weeks? and then we need to do something, we'll do a STAR test, she's been STAR tested since she's been here, right?*
- (18) ELA-S Classroom Teacher: Yes.
- (19) ELA-E Teacher: So do we want to put her in my room (to do Imagine Learning)?
- (20) Literacy coach: Yes, we'll switch Diana into the ELA-E room for Imagine Learning.
- (21) ELA-S Classroom Teacher: She scored low (on STAR), but not very low, but I think she was just guessing.
- (22) ELA-E Teacher: So, put her in Imagine Learning for the Vocabulary?
- (23) D-block Teacher (parapro): agrees
- (24) ELA-S Classroom Teacher: I'm not sure she'll understand anything (Whispers to neighbor).
- (25) Other ELA-E Teacher: But, Imagine Learning, she'll take a pre-test and it will start at her level?
- (26) Literacy coach: Yeah, exactly where she's at.
- (27) D-block Teacher (parapro): Ok, Ok, all right, I think that will be good to get the language and the experience, yeah.
- (28) Literacy coach: And then Daniela who's on Imagine Learning, I would like Daniela to still be able to use it...
- (29) ELA-E 3rd Grade Teacher: I can put her on it (too).

All pre-emerging students that I observed (usually non-Spanish speaking newcomers in the ELA-E program as well as other students classified as NEP) were assigned to a computer to

¹⁵ Imagine Learning (<http://www.imaginelearning.com>) is a language and literacy software intended for use with English Language Learners, students with disabilities, struggling readers, and in early childhood.

do Imagine Learning in the back of a classroom where D-block was occurring with a different group. In Diana's case, an ELA-S student, you can see that nobody, other than the ELA-S teachers, paid attention to the fact that she was reading at grade level in Spanish. Second, Diana was ultimately assigned to the same program as Daniela, an ELA-E student, who was not a newcomer, but was identified as not reading at grade level in either Spanish or English. It was determined that Imagine Learning would be used for 6 weeks for both girls "and then (they) would have to figure *something* out." What that "something" will be, is the ultimate question.

In this planning meeting, I observed that two students with distinct language backgrounds are recommended the same D-block strategy that is of questionable benefit to either of them. Because of observations such as this, I questioned D-block placements and I analyzed them using simple descriptive statistics based on English Language Proficiency as well as by program areas. Students spend 40-45 minutes of their daily literacy block in their D-block groups. This large time allocation in addition to the school-wide effort to design and coordinate this program shows that D-block may have a significant impact on student learning opportunities. It also impacts teachers in the time it takes to plan D-block, transition students in and out of their regular classroom, and to administer, collect and analyze progress-monitoring data. The level of impact may be positive or negative in a school with a large number of emerging bilingual students, if D-block does not leverage or at least take into consideration students' language resources.

Organization. As mentioned, students are initially placed in D-block using their Spring DRA2 scores (See Table 6.1 below for DRA2 scores by grade level). Within the first few weeks of school, the literacy coach provides teachers with a document that lists with which teachers students should be placed, the students' DRA2 scores, the instructional foci for each group, and

the suggested progress monitoring tools. Students spent up to 45-minutes each day, or approximately 1/4 of their Literacy Blocks, in their D-block groups. During D-block and during literacy, teachers should be progress monitoring regularly in order to accumulate data to present at the D-block planning meetings held every six weeks.

Table 6.1

DRA2 Levels by Grade Level (Escamilla, et al 2014).

DRA2 Levels By Grade Level	
Grade	DRA2 Levels
K	A, 1, 2, 3
1	4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16
2	18, 20, 24, 28
3	30, 34, 38
4	40
5	50

Instructors. All certified classroom teachers lead one D-block group. In all instances I observed, the certified classroom teachers lead the groups with the highest DRA2 scores. During the spring of 2013, the 3rd grade ELA-S teacher fought to keep all of her ELA-S students during D-block in order to provide literacy support that matched her instructional objectives in Spanish and in English. This ELA-S teacher explained to me that this was a contentious situation; however, it did lead to changes for the current school year, and now she is allowed to lead a D-block where she taught guided reading to ELA-S students using Spanish as the language of instruction. This was the only observed instance where Spanish was used as the primary language of instruction during D-block. At the time of the first planning meeting, it was not clear which progress monitoring tools would be used for her D-block in Spanish; however, it was suggested that this teacher conduct running records and monitor fluency.

In addition to classroom teachers, 6 paraprofessionals also lead a D-block group at each grade level. These paraprofessionals work in a large room divided by cubicles each large enough for a small group of approximately 5 students. Ms. P graduated from a RMPS high school in 2004, is bilingual, and is currently working on her B.A. in Human Development with a concentration in early childhood education. Ms. R graduated from a RMPS high school in 2013 and is hoping to attend a local university soon. Ms. S attended high school in Texas and has been working at Willow Elementary since 2007. Ms. SR was hired as a paraprofessional in Math. She graduated from a RMPS high school, holds a B.A. in elementary education and an M.A. in curriculum and instruction in Math and Science. She was hired to be a math interventionist. Ms. A is currently attending school to become a sign language interpreter. Ms. L is also a paraprofessional, however there was no additional information readily available for her. In addition to these paraprofessionals, Ms. M, a bilingual reading interventionist, leads 1 D-block group at each grade level; however, for most of this current semester, she was absent due to back problems. Ms. M is a graduate of a RMPS high school, holds a B.A. and an M.A. from a major university in the metro area. The Literacy coach works with these paraprofessionals to educate them on the work that they will be doing with the students. This information shows that students with the greatest needs are assigned to groups with teachers who are the least qualified (no classroom experience) or whose qualifications do not match the needs of this position.

Categories. From the D-block planning schedule and through observations, I identified 7 different groups through which differentiation would occur and I've ordered them from highest enrichment opportunity (group 1) with groups 4-7 consisting of intervention groups leveled by DRA2 scores with group 7 being the furthest from grade level proficiency. Group 2 consists of the Spanish literacy group for ELA-S students added at grade 3 only, thanks to the efforts of the

ELA-S teacher at this grade level. 4th grade also assigned ELA-S students to group 2, however I did not observe instruction during this block in Spanish. Group 5 was used for students classified as Non English Proficient at all three grade-levels. The following table is a brief description of the type of instruction found in each group plus the name of the individual responsible for leading each group.

Table 6.2

D-block Categories

D-block Group #	Description	Suggested Instructional Focus	Progress Monitoring Tool	Instructor
1	Enrichment <i>At or Above Grade Level</i>	Literature Circles (4 th and 5 th) Digital Research Projects (3 rd)	STAR Reading	3 rd grade- Library Teacher 4 th grade- Classroom Teacher plus parapro 5 th grade- Classroom Teacher
2	Biliterate, or At or Above in Spanish and 1 year below grade Level in English/ Spanish Guided Reading (3 rd grade only) English Vocabulary Development and English Guided Reading (4 th and 5 th grade students)	Grade 3 Guided Reading (Spanish); Transition to English Grade 4 Word Work (manipulatives and I-pads); Guided Reading (English)	STAR Reading	ELA-S Teacher (Grades 3) Interventionist (Grade 4)
3	CUSP (<i>almost at grade level</i>)	Next Step or Transitional Guided	STAR Reading	Classroom Teacher (Grades

		Reading/ Thinking Strategies		3, 4, 5)
4	Intervention (<i>One year below grade level</i>)	Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI)/Guided Reading/Decoding and Comprehension Mix	DIBELS/STAR Reading	Paraprofessional (Grades 3 and 4) Classroom Teacher (Grade 5)
5	Imagine Learning (<i>NEP Students</i>)	Imagine Learning (Grades 3, 4, 5)/Lexia (Grade 5)	STAR Reading/Imagine Learning Tests	Independent Computer Work
6	Intervention (<i>1+ year below grade level</i>)	Next Step or Early Guided /ILE/ Word Work	STAR/Early STAR Reading/IDEL	Paraprofessional (Grades 3, 4, 5)
7	Intervention (<i>Significantly below grade level</i>)	Next Step or Early Guided Reading/ILE/ Word Work	IDEL	Paraprofessional (Grades 3, 4, 5)

Sample D-block activities. In group 1, enrichment, I observed instruction around digital research projects lead by the school library teacher. The library teacher is bilingual and is fully certified. There were 31, 3rd grade students placed in this group. Of these 31 students for which I had data, 17 were drawn from the ELA-E program and 7 were drawn from the ELA-S program. These students were working on a couple of different facets of the research process toward publishing e-books on earth materials (a topic the library teacher selected). During this block, the teacher also provided instruction on the writing process, the research process, vocabulary and identifying higher-order thinking questions using the Q.A.R. (Question-Answer Relationship) questioning strategy. The overall objective was for students to identify a research question, research their topic, and publish their work as an e-book. Progress monitoring was based on a pre-post test on information literacy and how to research information.

In 4th grade, I observed D-block group 2, which is designed for ELA-S students who are at grade level in Spanish but who are about 1 year below grade level in English. These students were identified as being on a biliterate trajectory (see Appendix G). The literacy coach suggested that activities should focus on English vocabulary development through leveled reading and progress should be monitored using STAR reading. This block was normally instructed by the bilingual interventionist, however, due to health problems, these students had substitute teachers conducting the guided reading groups. As such, it is unknown if more Spanish instruction would occur if the bilingual interventionist were present; however, in other D-block groups that I observed when this interventionist was present, instruction only occurred in English. There were 12 students working in rotation on 2 of 3 activities each day. One activity consisted of guided reading with the teacher and occurred every other day for half of the block, the second activity consisted of students playing various word games in English on the I-pad (2 students working together on this), and the third activity consisted of making words and sentences in English from strips of paper, which were pre-organized in envelopes.

Across grade levels, D-block groups 4, 6, and 7 were designed to provide ELA-E and ELA-S students who were reading more than 1 year below grade level in English with literacy interventions. For example, one 5th grade group was organized with 5 students reading at a DRA2 14-18. Progress monitoring for these groups was DIBELS. Each day, this group completed several minutes of guided reading with a paraprofessional. After reading, the paraprofessional guided them on working on word parts and sounds where they were given an ending word part (example: -ull) and students would come up with words that end with this sound (example: pull, full, bull). Next, students used writing notebooks, which was not lined paper, and they wrote a few sentences to summarize the story they read during guided reading.

The paraprofessional assessed their spelling as they wrote. When students came to a word that they didn't know how to spell, four types of coaching was observed: 1- students asked how many letters were in the word, they drew the spaces (like in hangman) and then they tried to fill in the blanks; 2- the paraprofessional looked for misspellings, and she handed students white tape to cover the misspelled word and instructed the students to write the word again. 3- The paraprofessional made a connection to sound relationships between English and Spanish; or 4- the paraprofessional had the students turn over the paper and helped them to recall a word part/sound activity from a prior day. After writing and checking spelling, students could draw.

Student Placement Disaggregated by Grade Level and Language Program. Tables 6.3-6.5 below show the percentage of ELA-E or ELA-S students represented within each D-block group. In grade 3, over 50% of all ELA-E students were placed in D-block group 1 (enrichment), while 49% of all ELA-S students were placed in D-block groups 6 or 7 (intervention). Another 28% of ELA-S 3rd graders were given access to the Spanish guided reading group with their classroom teacher. In 4th grade, 47% of ELA-E students were placed in D-block group 1 (enrichment), while 50% of ELA-S students were placed in D-block group 2 where they worked on vocabulary and word-work in English. Finally, in 5th grade, 36% of ELA-E students were placed in D-block group 1 (enrichment), and another 27% of ELA-E students were identified to be on the CUSP of proficiency. They were labeled, “darn close,” to reading at grade level and read at a DRA2 38. These students were placed with a classroom teacher where they worked in literature circles. Conversely, 48% of 5th grade ELA-S students were placed with a paraprofessional in D-block group 4 for a literacy intervention. These students were reading at a DRA2 30. Only two ELA-S students in grade 5 were designated as “darn close” and were placed in group 3.

Table 6.3

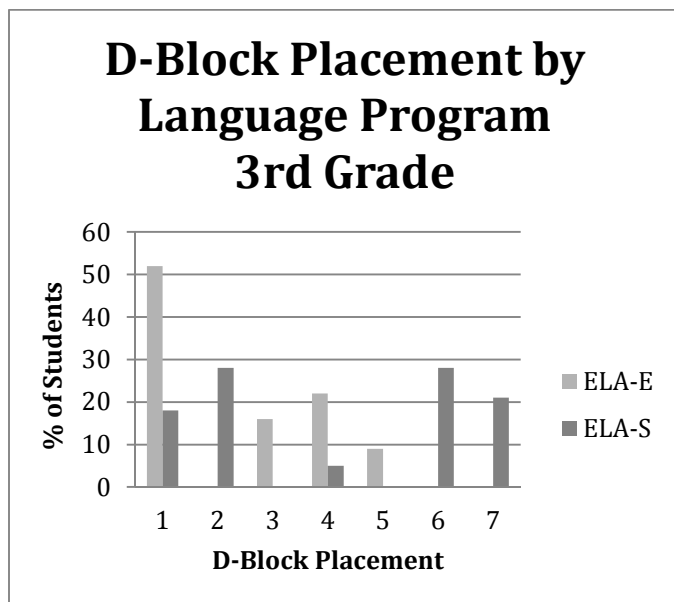
3rd Grade D-block by Language Program

Table 6.4

4th Grade D-block by Language Program

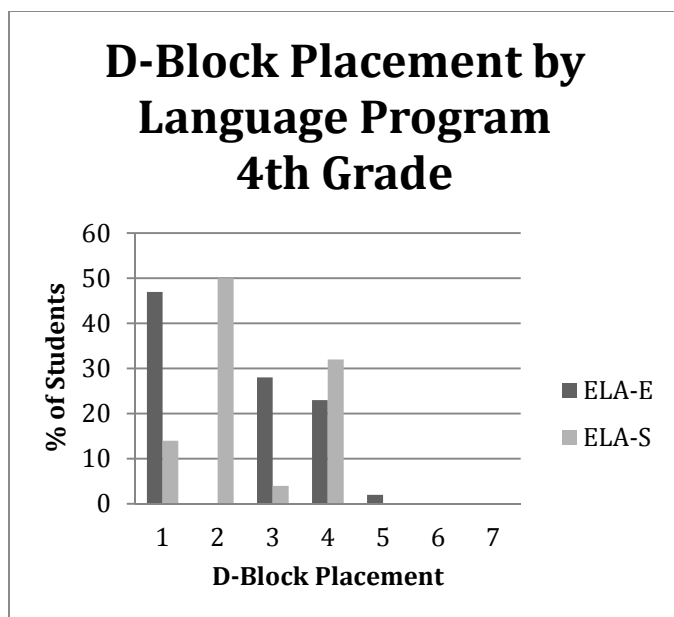
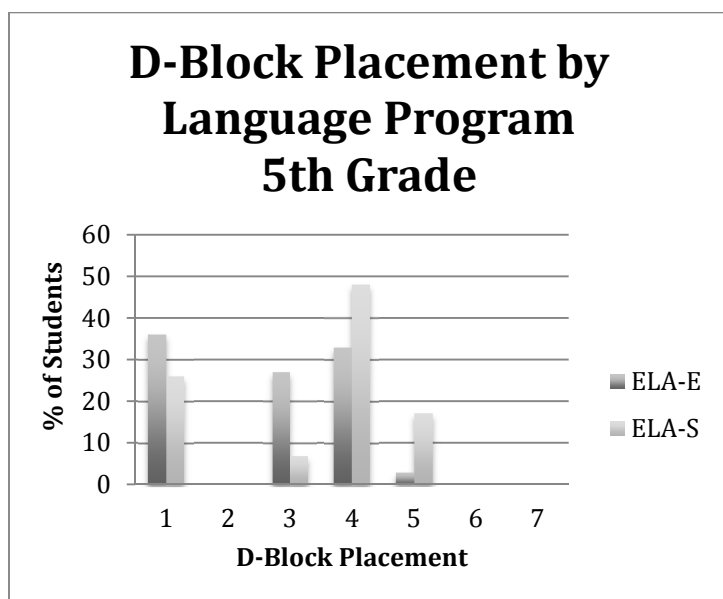


Table 6.5

5th Grade D-block by Language Program



Student Placement Disaggregated by Grade Level and Language Proficiency Scores.

Tables 6.6-6.8 below show the relationship between student language proficiency scores and

their D-block placement in grades 3-5. ACCESS is the new, statewide language proficiency exam given annually to students classified as English Language Learners. 67% of students at Willow Elementary were classified as ELLs during the 2013-2014 school year. Based on ACCESS scores, students were clustered into 6 levels of language proficiency: Level 1-Entering, Level 2-Beginning, Level 3-Developing, Level 4-Expanding, Level 5-Bridging, Level 6-Reaching. Level 6 is for students who have been reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP).

I found that a positive linear relationship exists between D-block grouping and average ACCESS scores such that students with the highest DRA2 scores and D-block placement corresponded to the students with the highest levels of language proficiency. In 3rd grade, I found that students in D-block group 1 (enrichment) had an average access score of 4, while Students in D-block groups 4, 6, and 7 (intervention) had an average ACCESS score of 2 (beginning) or below. In grade 4, students in D-block group 1 (enrichment) had an average access score of 5.1 (Bridging), while students receiving intervention in D-block group 4 had an average ACCESS score of 2.7 (beginning-developing). In 5th grade, students in D-block group 1 (enrichment) had an average access score of 5.0, while students receiving intervention in D-block groups 4 had an average ACCESS score of 3.6 (developing-expanding). In grades 3,4 and 5, students in D-block group 5 (Imagine Learning) had respective average D-block scores of 1.5, 2 or 2 (Entering), which is aligned with the observation that this group is reserved for Non English Proficient or newcomer students.

Table 6.6
3rd Grade D-block Placement by Language Proficiency.

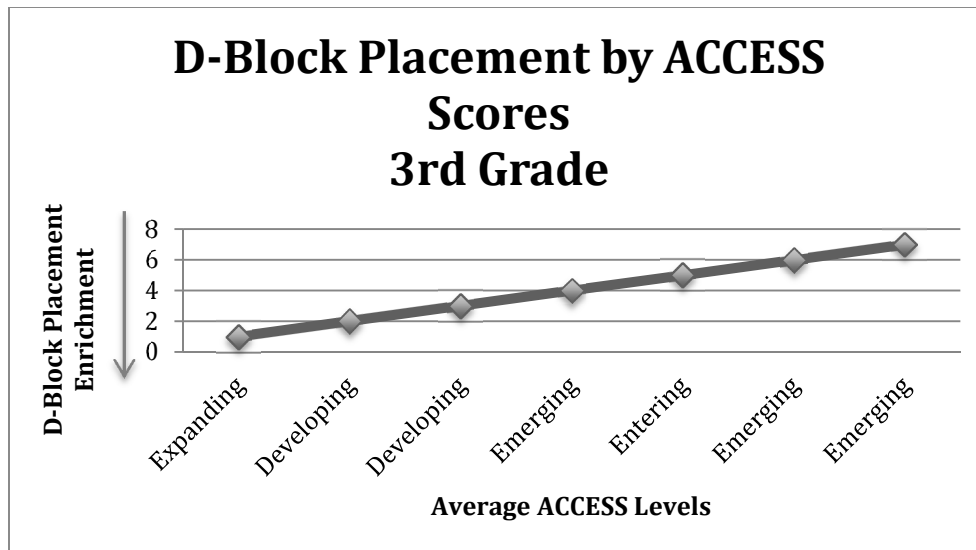


Table 6.7

4th Grade D-block Placement by Language Proficiency

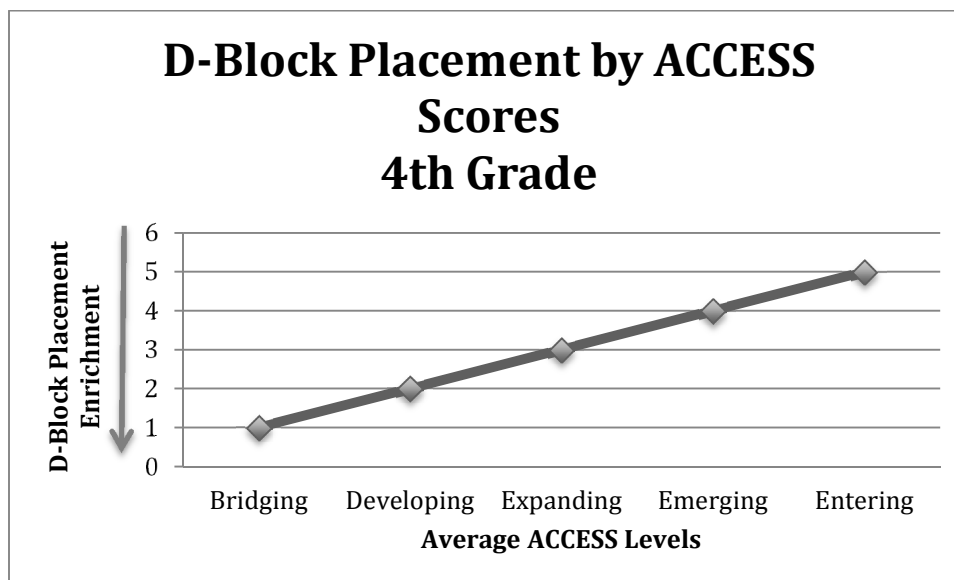
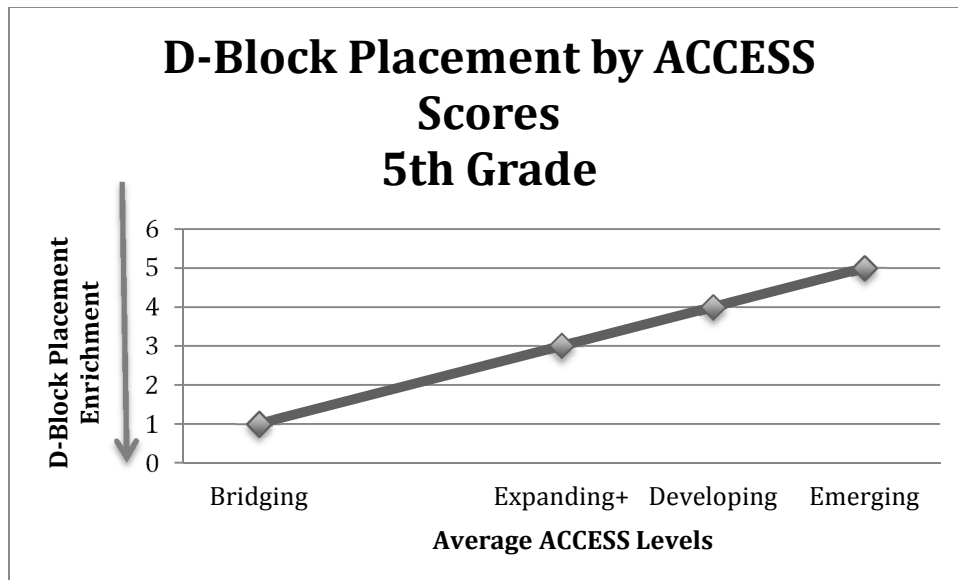


Table 6.8

5th Grade D-block Placement by Language Proficiency



Focal Students

The title of this dissertation represents my concern over students' individual pathways toward proficiency in their data-driven school. Willow Elementary is a school where over 60% of students were classified as English Language Learners, yet, what I've shown in chapters 4 and 5 is that the quality of opportunities to provide language development in both English and in Spanish varied greatly across classrooms. Additionally, as shown in the present chapter, students appear to be tracked into differentiation blocks to "plug holes" affecting their achievement in literacy without taking into consideration their levels of proficiency in English. As I will describe later, the assessments used to measure student achievement at Willow were not always valid for culturally and linguistically diverse students rendering inferences made about the students at Willow questionable. In each of the six classrooms I studied, I selected a focal student using the same criteria used by Willow to track them. I selected students from a variety of the D-block groupings to capture an adequate sampling of the distinctive types of instruction provided to students at different levels. All of the students I selected happened to be intermediate or advanced English Language Learners. One student, Ezequiel (5th grade ELA-S) was reading at

grade level in English and was placed in an English-reading enrichment group. Two students (Gladys and Keith, third and fourth grade ELA-S, respective) were below grade level in English but were reading at grade level in Spanish and were placed in English-reading intervention groups. The other three students (Reyna, Citlali, and Ray, 3rd, 4th and 5th grade ELA-E, respective) were reading below grade level in English and were also placed in intervention groups.

Gladys. Gladys was a bright, eager, third grade, ELA-S student who spoke Spanish and English. She had many friends and was admired by her classmates and her teacher. Regarding her test scores, she entered third grade with a 30 EDL2 score and a 14 DRA2 score. This means that based on a scale that would measure monolingual children, she entered third grade at grade level in Spanish and at a first grade level in English. However, when evaluated based on scale to measure bilingual children (Escamilla et al, 2014), Gladys was nearly meeting the benchmark for biliteracy at her grade level. As a result of her below grade level reading outcomes in English, Gladys had an ILP in reading in the 2nd grade. An ILP is an individualized plan to help students reach grade level proficiency in reading by the third grade by addressing 5 components of reading (phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and phonics). In terms of language proficiency, she received a 3 overall on the ACCESS test. This meant that Gladys's language proficiency level was in the developing category indicating that she was still classified as an intermediate English Language Learner.

In this study, Gladys's classroom teacher (Teacher3S) fell into the *language through interaction* ELD type based on her ways to provide ample opportunities for students to develop academic language in both English and in Spanish using interactive and culturally responsive methods.

From Table 4.1

Typology of ELD in Classrooms at Willow Elementary

	Opportunity Type	Instructional Characteristics	Corresponding Classroom
Type I	Language through Interaction	Whole-language approach Language objectives support literacy objective Language skills developed in context	Classroom3S
Type II	Language before Interaction	Skills based approach Grammatical competence valued over comprehension Lack of, or inconsistent use of language objectives to support literacy objectives	Classroom4S Classroom4E Classroom5S Classroom5E
Type III	Language through interaction, <i>intended</i>	Practice included Type I instruction, but shifted toward Type II when preparing students for high stakes testing	Classroom3E

I observed this classroom toward the end of my case study. Gladys's teacher mentioned to me that she had seen Gladys make gains in reading over just one semester. In the general classroom, I observed that Gladys was independently reading *Gracias a Winn Dixie* (*Because Winn Dixie*). This is significant because in the 4th grade enrichment group (a grade level above Gladys), students who were language proficient and reading at grade level in English had the opportunity to read and discuss this chapter book in literature circles with their peers. During instruction, Gladys often volunteered to contribute to group discussions. During her morning work, her teacher engaged students in a strategic translation exercise. Students were asked to find the English equivalent of the Spanish idiom, "Ser uña y carne// to be finger nail and flesh," which roughly compares to the English idiom "to be like Peas and Carrots." The teacher helped the students by drawing and talking about the anatomy of a finger and how the fingernail cannot be easily separated from the nail bed. Using English and Spanish, I observed Gladys's class predict that this expression could be used to describe two people who are very close. The teacher asked for students to think about a person they are close to and then say why. Gladys quickly

volunteered, “Jacqueline y yo somos uña y carne porque somos BFF. // Jacqueline and I are like peas and carrots because we are BFF.” Gladys showed her ability to participate in class, to make a personal connection to a Spanish idiom, and that she is proficient in the use the colloquial-English term BFF (Best Friend Forever), which keenly captures the meaning of uña y carne.

For the first 6-week cycle of D-block, Gladys was assigned to intervention group 6 for reading in English. According to the school’s planning document, these students were classified as “above grade level in Spanish but not yet within English grade level trajectory (for biliteracy).” For these students, the focus of instruction was listed simply as “English,” and teachers were asked to progress monitor using STAR, Early STAR and Imagine Learning (an assessment designed for monolingual English speakers). As I followed her to her D-block, I observed that Gladys transformed from a class leader to a struggling student. In her D-block, Gladys began by reading *Pig’s New House*, independently (Book 42; Level E Fountas and Pinnell). This book correlates to a first grade reading level or DRA2 level 8. This was below Gladys’s DRA2 level of 14 and significantly below her reading ability in Spanish. After completing her independent reading, she worked on word work with her small group. There was a table of different words (Unit V1 Diphthongs and other ambiguous vowels sounds from Pearson Education, 2009) using the –ou (out) and –ow (how) sounds. Gladys was asked to cut then sort the words into –ou and –ow categories. The goal was for her to understand that –ou and –ow can sound the same but when paired with different letters in different ways they can sound differently. Gladys and her group were asked to leave extraneous words aside. For example, *through* has the –ou sound but does not sound the same as couch or out. The words that didn’t fit were through/rough/tough. Gladys and at least one other student did not get this. When I helped Gladys, she had *gown* pulled out as an extraneous word as well as rough. She could read rough,

but did not recognize the word tough. She also did not recognize the word gown. She had never seen or heard this word. Instead of explaining what a gown was, the teacher moved quickly into a one-minute exercise where they reviewed misspelled words from the previous day's writing exercise. After this, the paraprofessional leading Gladys's group, Mrs. L, gave each student a word to use in a sentence. Words included should, could, inside, outside, and I'm. These words were considered sight words for third grade. First, Mrs. L asked a student who was a newcomer from Mexico and who was non-English proficient to use the word, "could" in a sentence. Mrs. L. did not give the meaning of this word. The girl was silent for a moment, and then finally asked Gladys to translate the word. The little girl then told Gladys a sentence in Spanish. Gladys translated this sentence into English, which was ultimately accepted by Mrs. L. Again, Gladys showed that she could be a resourceful student. When I mentioned to her classroom teacher what she was doing in D-block, her teacher became frustrated. At the next D-block planning meeting, she advocated for Gladys stating that Gladys did not need to be working on such skills as spelling. As a result, the literacy coach re-classified Gladys into a slightly higher D-block group, intervention group 4. In this group, students who were above grade level in Spanish but not yet at grade level in English would work with a certified teacher on fluency by doing more guided reading in English. Gladys was to transfer to this group after winter break.

Reyna. Reyna was a shy third grade student in the ELA-E program. Her home language was Spanish, but because of her placement in the English only strand, she was not assessed in Spanish. Her DRA2 scores showed that she entered third grade reading at level 20, which corresponds to 2nd grade. She also had an ILP in reading in the 2nd grade. On the ACCESS test, Reyna earned a 3 overall. Like Gladys, Reyna was in the developing category and was classified as an intermediate English Language Learner.

In this study, I classified Reyna's general education classroom as *language through interaction, intended*, as instruction in her room often included interactive methods that were tied to the literacy objective unless her teacher broke to prepare students for an assessment.

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Type III	Language through interaction, <i>intended</i>	Practice included Type I instruction, but shifted toward Type II when preparing students for high stakes testing	Classroom3E

The classroom was arranged so that students sat in tables. Teacher3E identified Reyna's table as struggling. Reyna participated actively within her table group, but her team often had difficulty completing their class work. Part of the ELD objective during my observations was for students to be able to write descriptive sentences. One day students were asked to work at their table to make a descriptive sentence about a random image. Reyna's table was assigned a football field with the word touchdown printed in the end zone. I watched as students struggled to write a sentence:

- (1) Teacher3E (during whole group): "You and your table need to come up with ways to describe your noun, adverbs and a prepositional phrase and write your sentence under your picture."
- (2) Student 1: (Reyna's table): Long, I think, Long
- (3) Student 2 (writing): I don't know how to spell...
- (4) Student 2: I thought you said "wrong" for a second (laughing)
- (5) Reyna: L-O-N-G
- (6) Student 2: I don't know how to spell it.
- (7) Student 1: L-O-N-G

- (8) Student 3: L-O-N-G
- (9) Student 2 (singing): L-O-N-G, L-O-N-G, L-O-N-G
- (10) Student 1: A long, white
- (11) Student 2 (singing): L-O-N-G
- (12) Student 3: Do you know how to spell it? Do you know how to spell it, (asking student 2)?
- (13) Student 2: White.
- (14) Reyna: Now, we already know what a, “touchdown field” is.
- (15) Student 3: Touchdown field.
- (16) Student 1: How about we could just call it field?
- (17) Student 2: A football field.
- (18) Reyna: But what is, (cut off)
- (19) Student 3: Just put a touchdown field.
- (20) Reyna: But it IS a touchdown field.
- (21) Student 2: No it’s a football field.
- (22) Student 3: It only tells you...
- (23) Reyna: (insisting) Yes it is!
- (24) Student 1: I know...
- (25) Student 3: It only...
- (26) Reyna: It says, “Touchdown.”
- (27) Student 3: It only tells you, um, where the football, where you’re supposed to catch them.
- (28) Student 1: It’s a football field.
- (29) Student 2: I’ll just put field.
- (30) Reyna: Are you sure you can write field?
- (31) Student 2: It’s F-E-I-L-D
- (32) Reyna: F-I-E-L-D
- (33) Together: F-I-E-L-D
- (34) Student 2: You just made me spell E.
- (35) Students: (laughing)
- (36) Student 2: Ok, field
- (37) Students: uh,
- (38) Student: um,
- (39) Student 3: There isn’t really no verbs.
- (40) Student1: A verb...?

The students ran out of time to complete their sentence before the teacher called them for lunch. Later, during an independent reading session, I sat with Reyna. She had her books from her book bag sprawled out. She explained that she was at a 2.3 reading level (STAR reading) and only received 8/10 and 9/10 on her Accelerated Reader quizzes (students were not expected to take quizzes until they had spent enough time with a book and could get 10/10). She was reading

the book *Shimmer* by Alyson Noel. It had 190 pages and, as a chapter book, it correlated to a DRA2 level 60 or for grades 5-9 according to Scholastic. She explained that it was not an AR book but that she liked it and that she read it at home. This was a common occurrence at Willow. Many students selected library books that they wanted to read; however, teachers often had rules that restricted students from reading books that were not at their AR level even if they were more interesting to the students. Students were asked to read books that were not at their level at home. When asked to tell me about her book, she recalled that *Shimmer* was about a girl who is dead and a boy who had some type of wizard's bag. She was still near the beginning of the book. On a later day, I observed a guided-reading with Reyna and her classmates on a book during D-block. The book was a leveled, non-fiction book (Level L) from Fountas and Pinnell. Level L has a second grade reading level. Reyna and her partner struggled to sound out words and often did not self-correct their mistakes.

Reyna was assigned to intervention group 4 for D-block. This group would be the group that Gladys would ultimately be joining after winter break. This is interesting because although Gladys and Reyna have the same level of language proficiency, as evidence by the caliber of her work in Spanish, Gladys is a much stronger student than Reyna. A third grade ELA-E teacher taught intervention group 4 in English only. There were 11 students assigned to this room. The lesson was planned in two rotations. In the first rotation, students would do leveled, guided reading with the teacher. In the second rotation, students would work with a partner to practice fluency. The literacy coach provided "Fluency Practice Books," which contained short passages that students would read aloud each day, in paired reading. As one student read, their partner completed a running record placing a check mark if the reader missed a word. Students would write down the name of the article they read along with their WPM on their record sheets.

Students also completed a graph where they could monitor their own progress. There was no pre-teaching about the content of the passage, and no discussion about the passages followed.

Keith. Keith was a 4th grade ELA-S student. His older brother was classified as fluent English proficient and was transitioned into the ELA-E program at an earlier grade. At the end of third grade, Keith tested on the ACCESS test as a 5 overall. At a level 5, Keith was classified as Bridging in terms of language proficiency in English, which means that he is an advanced English Language Learner. Entering 4th grade, he was reading at a level 40 (EDL2), or at grade level in Spanish, and at a level 24 (DRA2), at a 2nd grade level, in English. When his reading behaviors are placed on a trajectory toward biliteracy (Escamilla et al, 2014), Keith's English is only slightly lower than his Spanish meaning that he is becoming biliterate and should not be treated as a student with a reading problem. In fact, Keith scored proficient on the English reading component of the statewide assessment.

In terms of Keith's opportunities to develop academic language, I classified his general classroom as the ELD Type, *language before interaction*.

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Teacher4S had a very high level of acceptability and required students to demonstrate academic vocabulary and syntax before their contributions to classroom discussions would be accepted. Additionally, in Classroom4S I found evidence of the students being taught that the purpose of certain classroom activities is to do well on the test. In chapter 5, I provided evidence where Keith was confused by the teacher who questioned his contribution on the differences between indexes and a table of contents. Because Keith did not answer using an accepted form of academic syntax (“Indices dicen sobre otras cosas y...[*Indexes talk about other things...*],” the teacher did not accept his answer and Keith was left wondering whether he met the content objective. Keith was often pushed on his language production. On September 11th, Teacher4S shared a video on the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York. Students were asked to summarize the video in paragraph form. When asked to re-tell what he had learned, Keith attempted to provide a topic sentence:

- (1) Teacher4S: The theme here is 9/11 (She directed students to take out a pen to copy what they would be writing).
- (2) Teacher4S: The theme is 9/11. I need a topic sentence.
- (3) Keith: The topic is when the two airplanes crashed into the Twin Towers.
- (4) Teacher4S: Um, so, that’s a topic sentence, right? So you’re going to put, that’s what you are going to talk about. You’re going to start your paragraph with this, right? So how is yours going to start? You’re going to change it now that I’m going to write it. You’re going to make it better, huh?
- (5) Keith: (shrugging)
- (6) Teacher4S: Yes you do. Tell me what you are going to write about.
- (7) Keith: My topic is...
- (8) Teacher4S: You’re not going to write, “My topic is...”
- (9) Keith: My topic is when two planes crashed into the Twin Towers.
- (10) Teacher4S: So, when I read your paper, do you think you’re going to say, “My topic is?”
- (11) Keith (again): My topic is when...
- (12) Teacher4S: But do you have to tell me “topic”? SO how can you say that? If I start talking, and I say, “Do you want to know what I did this weekend, what is my topic?”
- (13) Keith: What you did on the weekend.

- (14) Teacher4S: Am I going to say, “Do you want to know the topic of what I did this weekend?” Or do I tell you, “Do you want to know what I did this weekend?” So can you tell me a topic sentence that is for 9/11? How are you going to start your paragraph? All this “topic” means is how I’m going to start my paragraph. How are you going to start your paragraph?
- (15) Keith: When two airplanes crashed the Twin Towers.
- (16) Teacher4S: When?! Or are you making a statement.
- (17) Keith: A statement.
- (18) Teacher4S: “When,” you kind of leave me hanging on, that’s not a complete statement, right?

Ultimately, Teacher4S writes, “Two airplanes crashed into the Twin Towers,” for Keith and asks the class to write their own topic sentence. This exchange took over three minutes, where Keith did not get credit for his idea because he couldn’t understand the format the teacher was expecting of him. Keith often wanted to contribute in class, and he was excited to talk about 9/11. He shared an urban legend about how after one of the towers fell, the devil appeared in the smoke. He was the first to raise his hand when asked to contribute information about 9/11. However, it took him the longest amount of time to get his ideas heard, because he could not use the format expected by the teacher. While Keith was not the only student taught in this way, teaching language using the *language before interaction* type of instruction, meant that often times content objectives were not reached because of the time consumed by the teacher monitoring language usage.

In D-block, Keith was assigned to group 2. This group was for students who were “at or above in Spanish, but needs more English vocabulary development, about 1 year below in English, but OK on biliterate trajectory” (4th Grade D-block planning guide). All 12 students were from Classroom4S. Keith was supposed to working with the school’s bilingual interventionist. The literacy coach suggested that students should work on vocabulary development through literature. Students would be split into two guided reading groups and

would be progress monitored using STAR reading. What I observed in this D-block was far different than what the literacy coach had suggested. First, the bilingual interventionist was absent. She missed most of the semester due to back problems. As a result, students were assigned various substitute teachers who were not always bilingual. However, the bilingual interventionist left lesson plans and, according to Keith, the activities I observed matched what was typical even when the interventionist was present.

In D-block Group 2, students were divided into three groups. In Group 1, five students worked with the teacher on a guided reading book in English. In Group 2, students selected individual words from envelopes to make sentences. In Group 3, students worked on the I-pad, Keith was in Group 3, he and a partner worked for twenty minutes on an activity from Flink Learning, which consisted of 36 weekly spelling games. Keith was given a clue and a scrambled up word with extra letters. The way the game was designed, there were hints to tell the students how many letters were in the answer. To proceed, students needed to spell the answer correctly:

- (1) Clue: A period of time, usually a short period of time:
- (2) Letters: WHLEZQSTI
- (3) Answer: WHILE

- (4) Clue: Groups of things with students:
- (5) Answer: Classes

- (6) Clue: A desert with filling and crust:
- (7) Answer: Pie

For the most part, this activity was not challenging, however, as in the next example, Keith and his partner still struggled at times:

- (1) Clue: A Sport, like baseball, but with a larger ball
- (2) Keith: Football

This was interesting because the word “softball” appeared on the screen as a clue but he still guessed football not softball. Later, Keith’s partner also made the same mistake. On the screen the word, “bath” appeared, but the student guessed, “robot” based on the clue that was given.

The next clue was “a bed that hangs made out of a large piece of *canvas*.” First, Keith’s partner had a hard time pronouncing *canvas*. Then, the word “hammok” appeared. They didn’t recognize it. As a result, they spent time trying to add letters like /e/, or /g/, just to see what would be accepted by the computer program. I finally coached them to read the word. Keith read, “hammock” and I asked, “Have you ever heard this?” Keith understood and then was able to figure out that the letter /c/ should go somewhere. By process of elimination they found the correct spelling. Keith and his partner looked forward to using the I-pad, however, they mentioned that they had not done any work in Spanish in their D-block.

Citlali. Citlali spoke Spanish and English and was in the fourth grade ELA-E room. Citlali mentioned to me that she was in ELA-S, but was transitioned out in the middle of 2nd grade because her teacher told her that she spoke too much English (informal conversation, December 6, 2013). She mentioned that she was happy to be in ELA-E, but she also mentioned that when she moved from ELA-S that she felt that she didn’t know English. Citlali’s teacher considered her to be one of his high performing students, because although she was only on the “cusp” of grade level proficiency in reading, in writing she had a good command of English grammar and spelling. She also worked hard and was often paired to provide help to students who might be struggling. Citlali entered 4th grade reading at DRA2 level 38 (grade level for 4th grade is a 40). In third grade she tested overall at a level 4 (expanding) on the ACCESS test. As a

result, Citlali was still considered an English Language Learner. She also scored partially-proficient on the state assessment program in reading and writing in the third grade.

In this study, I classified Citlali's classroom as *language before interaction* in the way her teacher provided ELD.

From Table 4.1

Typology of ELD in Classrooms at Willow Elementary

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Type III	Language through interaction, <i>intended</i>	Practice included Type I instruction, but shifted toward Type II when preparing students for high stakes testing	Classroom3E

Teacher4E provided daily ELD that consisted of paragraph editing and spelling exercises. These activities did not connect to any literacy objectives, in fact, they were absent from the literacy block, which in this room averaged over 80 minutes daily of silent sustained reading. During independent reading, Citlali often made remarks or asked clarifying questions to her tablemates in Spanish. I noted that Citlali was a leader in the way she was able to manage table work. During ELD, I observed how the teacher assigned paragraphs to students for them to edit. On the board, the teacher wrote the number by types of errors students should look for. As I sat with Citlali and her table, most students started to work by reading the paragraph, while Citlali supervised and cross-referenced the table work with what the teacher had written on the board. She noted that the table found two capitalization words, one punctuation error, and two spelling errors (the teacher indicated that there should be two punctuation errors). Because of this, the

table was able to work with me to focus on finding the second punctuation error. After this ELD exercise, students moved to do independent reading while Citlali was selected to do guided reading with her instructor. Citlali was able to complete the reading of her section of the book, *Building Bridges*, but did not seem very interested in talking about the different types of bridges.

After guided reading, Citlali moved to her D-block group. Citlali was assigned to; Intervention Group 3, in this group, there were 6 students who were identified as CUSP kids, meaning they were on the “cusp” of being proficient on the state assessment program. This D-block group met in a tight cubicle in the intervention room and was expected to use the Next Step in Guided Reading Lesson Book to work on comprehension strategies in English. Students were to be progress monitored using STAR. The paraprofessional leading this group, Mrs. R, was a certified teacher with a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction, in math. She was hired to support the implementation of a grant that would provide a daily intervention for all 4th grade students in math so that all 4th grade students could be proficient in math on the state assessment. For now, Mrs. R was working as a reading interventionist.

In Group 3, students worked on more guided reading with the book *Math in the Garden*. Students were asked to read pages 12-23 two times, silently. As they read, Mrs. R asked each student to take a turn reading a passage aloud, in a whisper voice. As Citlali read, Ms. Ryden said, “you have very good fluency, but you need to heed punctuation.” Citlali was asked to re-read the passage and to pay attention to the punctuation. Every student received a positive comment and a correction. After they read, Mrs. R. turned the students to the objective written on the white board: “To speak in complete sentences related to a topic” (oddly, this objective was not written in a complete sentence). Mrs. R. gave each student a passage from the pages they read and asked, “What is the most important thing to know from this passage?”

At least half of the students discussed that “in order to make a garden, you need a big _____ (spot, box, space...)” Students could make the sentence but could not remember the word (plot) that was used in the text. One student used her hands to signal what a plot would look like. She described it as sunny, while another student added, “it’s like, um, land, like, um...” Mrs. R waited for students to finish sharing their sentences, and then directed students to a T-chart also on the white board. This was a missed opportunity to develop language around the vocabulary word, plot. On the left, the column was titled “-en.” On the right, the column was titled “-in”. This also could have been an opportunity for Citlali to make a connection to the word *en* in Spanish and understand that in this instance –en was instead of suffix in English. However, not all of the students in the group were bilingual nor was the teacher. Instead, students were asked to come up with words, maybe from the story, which ended in –en but sounded like –in. For example *garden* has the ending sound –in. Students came up with a list of words that ended in –en but did not have the –in sound (ken), they were able to list words that ended in –in (fin, bin, win). The activity did not succeed in helping students identify the difference between –en and –in, and Mrs. R admitted that she didn’t know how to explain what she was looking for and would have to talk to the literacy coach later. After the above activity, the students were handed I-pads in groups of 3. They played a word game. The group on my side with Citlali spent 3 minutes unscrambling letters to make the word. Citlali announced to her neighbor, in Spanish, that she was tired of reading.

Ezequiel. Ezequiel was a 5th grade ELA-S student. He was an ELA-E student during early elementary, but he was moved into ELA-S when a new biliteracy program was adopted at Willow that aimed at keeping students in the ELA-S program through the 5th grade. According to the literacy coach, Ezequiel was moved into ELA-S because he was a strong student. In spite of

scant opportunities for Spanish literacy in the lower grades, after 4th grade where he was an ELA-S student, Ezequiel tested at a 38 in reading in English (DRA2) and 40 in Spanish (EDL2). Ezequiel also tested proficient in reading and writing on the state assessment program in grade 4. He was also tested at a level 5 on the ACCESS test for his language proficiency. Ezequiel was still considered an English Language Learner, but he is advanced. Teacher5S suggested I focus on Ezequiel because he was described as a good student.

I classified Classroom5S as a *language before interaction* based on the type of ELD instruction provided.

From Table 4.1

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Type III	Language through interaction, <i>intended</i>	Practice included Type I instruction, but shifted toward Type II when preparing students for high stakes testing	Classroom3E

Teacher5S had been in K-12 education continually almost 20 years, but had been out of the classroom for 12 years prior to the present school year. He was assigned to 5th grade ELA-S because he is a native Spanish speaker; however, he provided few opportunities for Spanish literacy. At times Teacher5S would use a bilingual text, but work and discussion around the book was only completed in Spanish if the students elected to do so. In one literacy block, Teacher5S introduced the book *¿Quien Soy?/Who am I?* Written by George Rivera and illustrated by a local artist, Tony Ortega. There were no posted or discussed literacy objectives, and despite this being

the block time for Spanish literacy, and despite having a bilingual book, the teacher did a read aloud of *¿Quien Soy?* in English. Afterward, students were asked to use a reading reflection strategy called, “Describe it” to write about features of the book. To do the “Describe it” activity, Teacher5S asked students, in English, to identify the purpose of adjectives:

- (1) Teacher5S: What is an adjective?
- (2) Students: -----
- (3) Teacher5S: (takes out name cards and calls on students)
- (4) Student 1: An action
- (5) Student 2: An action is a verb.
- (6) Student 3: Like something that describes a noun.
- (7) Teacher5S: How would you describe a choke cherry?
- (8) Student 4: It’s time to go to tech club.

The students reminded the teacher about technology and the discussion ended abruptly. When students returned, Teacher5S returned to a discussion about *¿Quien Soy?* again in English. Teacher5S digressed and returned students to his story about choke cherries, which he picked off the river bottoms in Alamosa when he was a child. He code switched, using Spanish at times, but the conversation was mostly in English. He was surprised at students’ lack of awareness about the flora in their neighborhoods. After, he directed students to a small group exercise where students would identify adjectives used in the book to describe the setting. As a class, students identified, warm oven, hard adobe, and hairy dogs. However, when working in small groups, only about one table participated. The other tables were off task. No students wrote in Spanish although some wrote the title *¿Quien Soy?* and explored the Spanish part of the text, while Ezequiel wrote the English version, Who am I?

Ezequiel was assigned to D-block Group 1 (enrichment). He worked with a 5th grade ELA-E teacher with 21 students who were identified as being “at or above grade level-reading” based on the DRA2. The literacy coach suggested that these students should focus on building comprehension and writing about reading, and that they should be progress monitored with

STAR reading. Teacher5E worked with students in literature circles where groups of 5 or 6 shared reading and discussing a text. For one week students would silently read a few chapters out of their books. The following week, the students would explore the text further, much like a book club. Within a literature circle, there were 6 jobs to which students were assigned:

Discussion Director, Clever Connector, Word Wizard, Super Summarizer, Artful Adventurer, and Marvelous Mapper. Students had jobs and homework assigned specific to each role. The rules for participation included keeping eyes on the speaker and using Accountable Talk. Each time the group finished their reading students would switch jobs. During the time I observed, I watched students spend part of their block doing independent reading of the book *Bridge to Terabithia* (Fountas and Pinnell level T, DRA2 level 40, Scholastic, 5th grade level) and later trying to participate in the literature circle. Ezequiel was the Marvelous Mapper. For his homework he was asked to, “complete story maps to help your group learn the elements of the story. By identifying characters, plot, setting, problem, and solution, you will read carefully to learn details. You will then share your complete story map with the group” (reading response packet instructions). Students were fluent in using their Accountable Talk frames and I often heard them say, “I agree with _____, and I would like to add _____.” Beyond statements such as these, authentic conversations about the text did not seem to evolve. When it was his time to share, Ezequiel, like the other students, simply regurgitated what he had written and waited quietly for their classmates to share their work. Although Ezequiel was an ELA-S student, Teacher5E did not speak Spanish and all books in his D-block were written in English. As a result, Ezequiel had very little opportunity to read in Spanish.

Ray. Ray was a 5th grade ELA-E student whose primary home language was Spanish. When Ray entered 5th grade, he was reading at a DRA2 level 28, which is equivalent to where

students should be reading at the end of second grade. In the 4th grade, Ray tested as unsatisfactory in reading and as partially proficient in writing on the state assessment. Ray was also a 3 overall on the ACCESS, language proficiency test. He is an intermediate English Language Learner, who struggled more with reading and writing and was higher in listening and speaking, as per my observations of him and per his sub-section scores on the ACCESS test, where he scored a 3 and 4 respectively on reading/writing and listening/speaking. Ray was an eager student who participated well and who often lead his table by directing small group work.

Classroom5E was a *language before interaction classroom*.

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Teacher5E expressed great interest in learning how to provide English language development, but she was often frustrated by the amount of time she spent planning for language, and the lack of success she found in her ability to develop students' vocabulary, and in her ability to help students learn how to write. Teacher5E also reminded students that the purpose for certain classroom activities was to perform well on the state assessment. I found evidence of this directly affecting Ray' group work. During my observations, Ray was working on writing opinion essays and using information from a non-fiction text to support their opinions.

The topic of their essays was obesity. In whole group, students read a short article “What is obesity?” After reading, the teacher assigned students to their whole group where they would answer the following guided questions from the article:

1. What is obesity?
2. What characteristics does an obese person have?
3. Why is obesity a problem?
4. Why does it occur?
5. What are the effects of it?

Before continuing with this activity, Teacher5E decided to “squeeze in” the 2nd half of their districts’ math interim assessment. While students took their interim assessment, Teacher3E took the opportunity to work with me about how to teach a guided repeated reading on the obesity article. Teacher3E was always looking to include opportunities to support language in her literacy units, but was often unsure of how to do so. When students finished their interim assessments, Teacher3E returned to discussing important concepts and vocabulary from the article, as she and I had planned, before getting them started on their small group activity. Ray and his table partner discussed question 1, “What is obesity:”

- (1) Ray: Obesity is when you don’t eat healthy.
- (2) Student 1: No, obesity happens when you don’t eat healthy.
- (3) Ray: Put that for number 4.
- (4) Student 1: Obesity is when you weigh more than you should.

Ray was recording these responses, and began to struggle writing the word “weigh,” student 1 tried to help him. Upon hearing her students work on spelling, Teacher5E interjected, “When you are answering questions, you should be *stealing to rock the test!*” She reminded them of this test-taking strategy, which suggests that students should look to use words in the questions to make sentences (much like CSIQ). The students didn’t completely understand since the word “weigh” was not written in their questions. However, I think it was the timing of this test-taking strategy shortly after finishing their math interims that helped to promote the data

driven culture in a way that overshadowed the significance of their discussion about obesity. It also may have tacitly implied that the reason why students should learn to write opinion essays on obesity was to prepare for tests.

Because Ray was reading well below grade level in English, he was placed in Intervention Group 4, which was intended for 5th grade students reading at DRA2 20-28 (grade two), there were 5 boys in this group. All five boys were English Language Learners and at least one of the students was in special education as well. Each day, students in Intervention Group 4 worked on guided reading, paired with a comprehension, spelling, or phonics activity. I observed students do a guided reading of the leveled non-fiction book, *From Milk to Ice Cream*. Students first looked at a cycle diagram with 6 pictures and one student re-told the story about how ice cream is made from milk. Their interventionist directed students to a chart behind her with the transition words she wanted them to use (in the beginning, next, then, after that, and in the end). Students were asked to write the story of how ice cream was made. Students would use the left side of the notebook to practice words they don't know and the right side to write their assignment. They were given a strategy, *doing a slow-check*, for learning how to spell a word correctly. Students were also directed to use a word list in their notebooks with "all the words they need to know to spell correctly." As students wrote, they become caught up with spelling

- (1) Student 1: How do you spell a lot? (He moved his finger through the word list to no avail).
- (2) Interventionist: Sound it out. Now, look at it, does it look right?
- (3) Student 1 (looking at the next word): How do you spell, then?
- (4) Interventionist: Try and write it.
- (5) Student 1 (writing): T-H-A-N
- (6) Interventionist: I'll show you how to do a slow check with your finger.
- (7) Student 1: THAN
- (8) Interventionist: Is that the word you wanted?
- (9) Student 1: I forgot my word....then!
(Switching to help Ray)

- (10) Interventionist (now to Ray): Is that how you spell customer? (Customer is spelled costomer)
- (11) Ray (trying again): Coestemer
- (12) Interventionist: CU _____. Now can you finish it?
- (13) Ray: Customer.

The interventionist asked the students to re-read their paragraphs and look for CUPS errors (Capitalization, Usage, Punctuation and Spelling). When she noticed the amount of capitalization errors in their writing, she spent the remaining time reviewing capitalization rules. When students finished their writing, they were directed to re-read their paragraph to double-check their spelling. The interventionist always wrapped-up D-block with positive feedback, however, I found that Ray often appeared bored. In both his general classroom and in D-block, Ray appeared to be interested in the topic of what he was reading (obesity and making ice-cream), but, as a 5th grader, his interest seemed lost when the purpose of his reading and writing shifted to preparing for tests or practicing basic spelling and conventions.

Summary of Focal Students. All of my focal students were late elementary students who spoke Spanish and English. They were continuing ELLs, and based on the findings I presented in chapters 4 and 5, opportunities to develop language varied greatly in their general classrooms. Furthermore, the focus of their D-block was to “plug holes” in English reading. As a result, instead of having opportunities to develop language or to receive enrichment in Spanish (Ezequiel, Keith and Gladys), these students had another hour to practice reading in English. As in the case of Citlali and Ray, four hours of reading appeared to bore them especially when instruction focused less on meaning and more on basic skills that were intended for early-elementary readers. Additionally, D-block perpetuated the testing Discourse where students often spoke about their skills in fluency (Citlali) and the opportunity to talk with their classmates about

how many words per minute they could read, or how to do a running record while reading (Reyna).

Conclusion

My interpretation of the above data is that the relationship between low DRA2 scores and low levels of language proficiency across three grade levels and approximately 200 students, indicates that students need access to instruction to either improve their opportunities to develop language, or provide an opportunity for students to make meaning of literature regardless of their language abilities. This approach might be more productive than using D-block to focus on phonics, fluency, or more guided or leveled literacy instruction, which they are already receiving during the first 3 hours, or 3/4, of their literacy block in their regular classroom. Additionally, with the exception of one D-block group (3rd grade, ELA-S, Group 2), no students had the structured opportunity to use Spanish as a resource to developing their language and literacy skills in English. Moreover, there were no enrichment groups in Spanish.

In grades 3, 4, and 5, only 31, 21, and 25 (38.5%) of students in these respective grade levels were able to receive enrichment opportunities with a certified classroom teacher. This means that the vast majority of upper-elementary students at Willow receive intervention or skill based instruction lead by a paraprofessional who was not fully certified but yet we charged with improving literacy outcomes in English-only. This is a missed opportunity for students to participate in a more robust form of literacy than would enrich or at least differ from the type of instruction they received in their general classrooms. Clearly, learning activities that are truly considered to be enrichment opportunities were limited to those students who were demonstrating grade-level achievement in English. Further, most students were receiving remedial literacy instruction focusing on decoding and not comprehension. Sadly, the

assumption was that low achieving students could not benefit from enrichment activities in literacy.

Because of the different opportunities available to students based on their assessment outcomes, it is important to understand how students get labeled as ‘low achieving.’ While assessment is a critical component of Willow’s data driven model, the assessments used to progress monitor and the scales used to make inferences about students, may not be valid and reliable for bilingual students. At Willow, D-block is initially organized by outcomes of Pearson’s DRA2-English and EDL2-Spanish assessments. Unfortunately, progress monitoring for the remainder of the year is conducted primarily through Renaissance Learning’s STAR reading tests (D-block Groups 1-3), and DIBELS (D-block Groups 4-7). Both STAR and DIBELS measure for reading achievement in English. Further, the validity of these tests for use with ELLs is not strong (refer to appendix E). I found that the most widely used progress monitoring tools at Willow lack strong evidence that these assessments are valid for ELLs, rendering them useless for making inferences about the reading behaviors of students like Gladys, Reyna, Citlali, Keith, Ray and Ezequiel. Finally, a technical report prepared by a research team implementing the school’s biliteracy program documented that 65% (26 students) of incoming 3rd ELA-S students, and 68% (15 students) of incoming 4th grade ELA-S students, had reached grade level biliterate benchmarks. However, only 11 3rd grade, ELA-S students, and 12 4th grade ELA-S students were identified for possibly being on a trajectory toward biliteracy and were placed accordingly¹⁶. These data show that even though the tools exist for identifying

¹⁶ Because the biliteracy program at Willow is still being phased in, biliteracy trajectories/growth have not been documented report at the 5th grade level, nor were students considered for D-block based on their Spanish reading levels, although they could have been based on their Spring ELD2 scores.

students' abilities to read in Spanish as well as in English, measuring reading achievement in English-only is relied upon almost exclusively. Finally, as mentioned, even if students were identified correctly, there were no Spanish enrichment groups in reading for them to attend. Instead For Gladys, Reyna, Keith, Citlali, Ray and Ezequiel, this means that their pathways toward becoming proficient readers in English and Spanish were significantly narrowed through the use of invalid progress monitoring tools and a lack of knowledge about instructional practices to support bilingual readers.

Chapter 7
***Language Development in a Data Driven Culture:
 Discussion and Implications for Teachers and Researchers***

Through the analyses in this dissertation I refined my understandings about bilingual students' opportunities to learn and to develop language in era of high-stakes testing. In this chapter I will discuss what I have learned about the politics of language development and implications for both the research community as well as for K-12 educators. A major goal of this dissertation was to identify educational inputs at an urban school serving large numbers of students classified as ELLs. In my review of literature I identified how national conversations about the educational achievement of Latino students largely revolve around performance standards, and how there is an on-going need for examinations of language development that take into consideration the larger social context of schooling (Valdés, 2004). My goal was to disentangle the variables affecting under-achievement where I suspected that language proficiency and reading proficiency were two constructs that were often conflated erroneously. In the process, my central argument emerged as I discovered that without reliable instruction for ELD, academic language involuntarily develops as a reflection of the overall school culture. While this may be viewed as problematic for such schools as Willow Elementary where the school culture is constructed around performance data, this finding highlights an opportunity for educators to think critically about the connections between school culture and the language that develops naturally in such contexts.

I ground my discussion in the theories of language socialization where Schiefflin and Ochs (1986) distinguish between language socialization and language acquisition:

The study of language acquisition has as its ultimate goal an understanding of

what constitutes linguistic competence at different developmental points. Researchers have investigated processes that underlie and strategies that organize language comprehension and production over developmental time. In contrast, the study of language socialization has as its goal the understanding of how persons become competent members of social groups and the role of language in this process. Language in socializing contexts can be examined from two perspectives. We can investigate how language is a medium or tool in the socialization process. In addition we can investigate acquisition of the appropriate uses of language as part of acquiring social competence. With respect to the role of language as a socializing tool, it is important to note that the organization of language use is a powerful socializing force. To quote Corsaro "Language and discourse become the most critical tool for the child's construction of the social world, because it is through language that social action is generated" (55, p 74). In understanding the socializing process, not only what someone is verbally communicating but how the communication is structured must be considered (p. 167).

Further,

The processes of language acquisition and the process of socialization are integrated. The process of acquiring language is deeply affected by the process of becoming a competent member of society. The process of becoming a competent member of society is realized to a large extent through language, by acquiring knowledge of its functions, social distribution and interpretations in and across socially defined situations (1986, p. 168).

This perspective (1986) contributes to my understanding of the implications for language development in planned and unplanned instructional events at Willow Elementary. I have documented strategies, often unplanned, where teachers privileged grammatical correctness and taught, in implicit ways, that linguistic competence was required in classroom interactions. Additionally, in at least one room (Classroom4E), a student who could demonstrate grammatical competency in his or her writing was identified as a highly performing student. Planned language development activities in several classrooms involved spelling and discrete grammar as teaching points, and students who demonstrated mastery of these conventions were identified as proficient (Classroom5E) or as meeting the standard (Classroom4E). While strategies supporting language acquisition varied from classroom to classroom, attention to data and reading

proficiency remained constant across all rooms. As Willow became increasingly data driven, I found pervasive a testing Discourse where the language which students had opportunities to practice included words and phrases related to the school's data driven culture. In this way, language was a tool used by teachers and practiced by students that socialized them into the process of learning for the purpose of becoming proficient on tests. In this process, communication was structured so that students could read, record and talk about progress, hold themselves accountable, and participate as a competent member of a school that was constructing a data driven culture.

Opportunities for ELD and Academic Language Development: Contributions and Discussion

This study contributes to our understanding of specifically how opportunities for English Language Development are compromised in the era of high-stakes accountability. After carefully observing six focal-classrooms, I identified how data drives instruction through the tracking of students and through the construction of a culture where the reason for activities was to show growth on reading outcomes in English. The absence of progress monitoring tools for English Language Development (or Spanish literacy) meant that teachers and administrators did not talk about growth in language or in Spanish literacy. In this way, proficiency in English reading became a source of cultural capital and proficiency in language or Spanish literacy did not. Classrooms and hallways were adorned with growth charts in English reading, some of which were observed by district and school administrators in the presence of the children. Furthermore, English reading proficiency was privileged by the district's overall performance framework where schools were awarded a public rating based on growth and performance on reading outcomes. The school's data driven model (Bambrick-

Santoyo, 2010) required that teaching be organized to address the type of learning that the data show is needed. Because language-proficiency was not measured in an on-going, regular basis, and because language proficiency was not a heavily weighted category in the district performance framework, there was no data on language proficiency beyond the mid-year ACCESS test. As a result, ELD, as a type of learning that may be necessary, was not addressed in the classroom to the same extent as English literacy.

As Teacher3S noted in her interview, ELD was not treated as a thing, or an area that teachers should worry about. And, as the school administrator noted, as long as teachers were meeting the minimum time requirement for ELD, it would not be made a school-wide focus. Interestingly, I did not find that all teachers were meeting the minimum time requirements. While teachers, the literacy coach, and the administrators maintained their focus on improving English reading achievement, I observed many differences across classrooms in practices and planning for teaching English Language Development. Additionally, where knowledge of how to teach language varied greatly across teachers, I also noted inconsistencies in what administrators believed should occur during scheduled time for ELD. Greater attention was placed on improving the school's literacy program and on providing support and training for collecting and interpreting data showing student progress toward becoming proficient in reading. As a result, two-thirds of teachers taught language by monitoring language production during literacy for grammatical correctness, and did not have a planned time devoted to ELD apart from the literacy block. Practices organized in this way often-privileged language competence over meeting content objectives. Another teacher who allotted time each day for English language development, used this time for teaching paragraph editing and spelling in ways

that matched the format of state and district interim assessments. Finally, while third grade teachers more often provided interactive language development experiences that supported literacy objectives, the closer we moved toward the state assessment window, I noticed a shift in practices that included such test preparation activities as teaching students to read test prompts. The consequence, then, was that in spite of a stated priority by teachers and school leaders, and the legal protection for providing instruction for ELD, a lack of progress monitoring tools, and a lack of knowledge of how to teach language compromised the fidelity of Willow's ELD program.

An additional contribution of this study is an awareness that academic language involuntarily develops as a reflection of the school's culture. Schieffelin & Ochs (1986) note how language and culture are deeply tied to one another (p. 169). I found that Willow's school culture could be characterized as data driven where participation in such culture requires norms for analyzing and engaging with outcomes on informal measures of reading proficiency. In this way, student-student and teacher-student interactions often centered on talking about data and on proficiency in reading and writing. Additionally, the school's data driven culture controlled the types of literacy activities that were available to children to those that were connected to independent reading and to those that isolated children to groups where they might be limited by interventions that sought to remedy their reading problems rather than to create opportunities for enrichment. In this culture, children did not have the opportunity to construct their literary environments where language and literacy could develop in reciprocal and meaningful ways.

Language socialization considers that "what a child says and how he or she says it will be influenced by local cultural processes" (Schiefflin & Ochs, 1986, p. 183). It

became very evident how students and teachers frequently interacted with activities designed to improve performance on tests (at least, the stated purpose of many activities was to increase rates of proficiency). Even independently, students were taught to self-assess and compare themselves to their peers and to benchmark reading scores and to curriculum standards. Students' levels of language proficiency affected their participation in school activities; likewise, the data driven culture influenced their language development process. As seen in chapter 6, I found a relationship between language proficiency and access to enrichment activities. Students with low levels of language proficiency tended to participate in remedial literacy activities where there was a greater focus on talking about fluency and reading skills such as comprehension, whereas students with higher levels of language proficiency were placed in literacy groups where they could interact with texts and with their peers using and developing language in more authentic ways. Finally, because the data driven culture was constructed on outcomes on tests in English only, literacy development occurred primarily in English. From a functional language perspective, if academic language is defined as the language used to navigate the school setting in general (Bailey and Huang, 2011), then a significant implication for the way language develops in a school with a data driven culture is that bilingual students' may have limited opportunities to develop academic Spanish if only a specific type of English is required to interact with performance data.

Recommendations

To return to the first chapter of this dissertation, students who are identified as ELLs and who speak Spanish and English are the fastest growing segment of K-12 public schools (Bassiri and Allen, 2012). There has been a long-standing consensus that ELLs' opportunities to learn in school depend upon clearly defined standards for English Language Development that would

help teachers provide students access to the language they need to succeed in school (McLaughlin&Shepard, 1995; Cummins, 2008; Bailey, 2007). However, prior to NCLB, it was identified that two-thirds of ELLs were not given access to instruction for language development to succeed in school (Valdés, 2001). One benefit of NCLB has been that it includes ELLs in the testing pool so that schools and teachers are held accountable for providing them access to content while they are still learning English. However, districts with language-as-a-problem (Ruiz, 1984) orientation see limited English proficiency as a deficit toward students' pathways to proficiency in English reading, this is because ELLs are often compared to non-ELLs on large scale and classroom-based formative assessments (Behizadeh, 2014).

In chapter 4 I noted that Rocky Mountain Schools has a stated language-as-a-resource orientation where culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families are considered full members of the community whose "capital" is valued (RMPS, 2012). Additionally, it is found in district documents an understanding that ELD is a foundation to maintain learners' access to equitable academic rigor (2012). However, in spite of the teacher and school leadership's stated belief toward the importance of providing ELD, lack of knowledge or guidance for implementing a school-wide plan for providing it has meant that ELD has not been actualized as a priority. Specifically, at Willow Elementary I discovered inconsistent levels of ability to define ELD and to identify language objectives, as well as unclear expectations for what block times for ELD should consist of. I found that methods for teaching ELD ran the gamut from explicit and interactive activities to intense language monitoring during literacy to teaching isolated grammar and spelling in ways that matched the format of state and district assessments. I would argue, then, that one recommendation is a stronger collaboration between researchers and school leaders in finding ways to support teachers as they plan for ELD and to

make ELD a school wide priority. This would include understanding the role of language proficiency as an indicator of how well students would perform in content classes such as literacy (Bailey and Huang, 2011), and helping teachers find methods for paying explicit attention to the features of academic language knowing that making academic language an instructional focus can have a significant impact on the achievement of second language learners (National Literacy Panel, 2006).

Recent work on the role of formative assessment for enhancing teaching and learning for language learners (Alvarez, Ananda, Walqui, Sato, and Rabinowitz, 2014), highlights an opportunity grounded in the idea that effective instruction for ELLs begins with a sound theory of language learning. Citing Lier and Walqui (2012), three perspectives on the way language is developed include language as form, language as a discrete set of functions, and language as action (Alvarez et al., 2014). Taken together, these three perspectives support a second recommendation for the explicit teaching of vocabulary and grammar while at the same time acknowledging the role of language in interaction. The language as action perspective maintains teaching and learning as part of a larger social system that may include grammatical and situational competence, but also supports focusing on the language user and the way he or she uses language to realize key purposes (Hakuta & Santos, 2012, as cited in Alvarez et al., 2014). This framework for understanding the way language is developed matches Goldenberg's (2008) recommendation that teaching language requires a balance between methods that support teaching vocabulary and grammar in addition to supporting students using language as a tool for classroom learning. Small group editing activities in Classroom4S as well as structured dialogues documented in Classroom3E showed how students can support each other's development of language by using their prior experiences with language (using Spanish to distinguish between

white and *while* in Classroom4S, and questioning a non standard term, *noticing*, in Classroom3E). In these instances individual experiences with language helped students move closer toward grammatical competence when students were given the opportunity to interact with one another in meaningful ways.

My third recommendation includes asking educators to question the ethics of making students a part of the data driven school culture especially when some guides to improving instruction using data (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010) were neither grounded in sound theory nor empirically tested for use with culturally and linguistically diverse students. While typically used as a framework for determining the validity of large-scale assessments of ELLs, one might consider applying the concept of consequential validity (Messick, 1995), to ground a discussion about in-school, formative assessments that are weighted very heavily in data driven models (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010). Messick (1995) defined consequential validity as the validity of assessments based on the interpretation and use of tests scores. For an assessment to hold consequential validity, there should not be adverse affects for test-takers. As I showed in Chapter 6, student pathways at Willow elementary are adversely affected by the types and use of on-going formative assessments (largely Star Reading and Dibels) to track gains in literacy. D-block groupings demonstrated the Matthew Effect where students with high levels of language and literacy proficiency had access to enrichment-activities, while students with lower levels of language and literacy proficiency were assigned to remedial reading groups. In addition to consequential validity, the formative assessments used at Willow should be more closely examined for content and construct validity. Considering the impact formative assessments play in their data driven school culture, it would be productive for school leaders to investigate whether the tests they are using to measure literacy are really tests of language proficiency, and

if all students have access to and equal opportunities to learn the content measured by test items.

While all teachers and school leaders at Willow Elementary admitted to their struggles in knowing how to provide ELD, I think they lacked an awareness about the role of language socialization and the unintentional creation of testing Discourse through which students develop language and use language in order to participate in the process. Findings from this study may reveal an opportunity for teachers to think critically about the use of performance data in planning instruction and when talking with students. In my research I found evidence of district documents that included school improvement plans connected to the states' Educational Accountability Act (2009). In these documents I found that creating data-driven dialogues (Center for Transforming Learning and Teaching, 2010) and Transforming Students Into Learners (TSIL, RMPS, 2010) were a part of district action plans for school improvement. Creating a data-driven dialogue was intended to help teachers analyze, interpret and use data, while TSIL was intended to help students be accountable for knowing their achievement levels. It may benefit teachers and school leaders to examine the role of language in data-driven dialogues, the extent to which these dialogues have been shifted to students, and how these dialogues require additional language demands to be placed on students. A framework for analyzing language development in schools that rely heavily on performance data might ask whether academic vocabulary should include such words as proficient, standards, fluency and comprehension, and if so, what language opportunities are being subtracted or lost in the process?

The conceptual framework for this study illustrated how language ideologies affect bilingual students' opportunities to learn. As such, my final recommendation includes the reconstruction of Willow's school culture to where students' opportunities would be

grounded with a re-mediation perspective as opposed to taking a remediation approach to instruction. Willow Elementary's data driven culture was grounded in deficit notions about students' abilities. Central to deficit-oriented instruction include remedial approaches aimed at repairing students' underachievement in English literacy by focusing on reading skills such as phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Skills-based (or bottom up) instruction while supported by federal policy, specifically NCLB's Reading First Act, were found to be detrimental to the students at Willow because they focused on the skills students lack. This was evidenced in Gladys and Keith's case where they received remedial phonics and vocabulary instruction to improve their English reading outcomes in spite of test scores indicating that they were already reading at grade level in Spanish. Rather than using remediation as a central form of instruction, Gutierrez et. al (2009) suggest a sociocultural approach to literacy that shifts school cultures toward a notion of re-mediation where students are invited to co-construct valuable spaces for literacy that are constitutive of robust forms of learning. In this way, Gladys and Keith could be provided a space to participate in a literacy environment where Spanish would be used as a resource, and their knowledge about reading in their first language as well as their cultural ways of being would be leveraged to enrich and make their learning opportunities more expansive.

Limitations of the Study: Length and Scope of the Study

While an important component of my research design was to observe instruction as it naturally occurred prior to the third quarter when pressure to prepare students for the state assessment might have increased, future work could be done that would ensure that observations included time to, first, understand the general organization of the classroom and then to observe classroom instruction in greater depth. While this study benefited from observations in both

English-only and bilingual classrooms at each grade level (Grades 3-5), the number of classrooms observed also limited the amount of time I could spend in each room. Fortunately, because of the way teachers co-planned, I was able to observe the beginning of one instructional unit in one room, and the end of the unit in the other room at the same grade level. However, activities and assessments differed between bilingual and English-only rooms. This presented challenges in being able to identify the alignment between standards, objectives, lesson delivery and student work as I had originally intended. Additionally, a lengthier research project may have allowed me to identify potential shifts in teaching and learning. Student placement in the differentiation block changed every six-weeks. A major goal of this study was to track students' pathways to proficiency. It would have been meaningful to track student's progress over time in order to monitor changes in their placement during the differentiation block. Additionally, attending future D-block planning meetings could have revealed how teachers' planning for individual students may have shifted based on the way students were progressing. The types of shifts and teachers' rationale for shifting student placements throughout the year would have been meaningful to document.

I selected to observe upper-elementary classrooms because the pressure to show academic performance and growth on the state assessment program is heavily emphasized in these grades. Additionally, language proficiency rates tend to plateau in upper elementary (Crawford, 2011) presenting a compounded challenge for teachers to both improve language proficiency as well as academic performance. However, observations in early elementary became of interest when I learned that student tracking began in kindergarten. A longitudinal design may help to document what student pathways look like not only through the course of one academic year, but from early to late elementary. This could help to confirm the reliability of the

quantitative data used in the analysis in this study as we could document how changes in language proficiency may correlate with greater opportunities to read. Also, we may be able to document a correlation between the onset of plateaus in language proficiency and a failure for students to remain on par with peers in meeting grade level benchmarks in reading. Further, the READ Act that was passed by the state legislature in 2012, requires teachers to rely even more heavily on data-informed decisions to identify supports needed for individual students in grades K-3. Understanding how this Act is increasing the attention to data may reveal additional ways teachers used data to drive instruction, as well as implications for language development for students in earlier grades. Overall, I found these limitations to be areas for potential opportunities for future research.

Areas for Further Research

The purpose of this study was to examine opportunities for language development in the context of high-stakes accountability. Part of my study included defining academic language in order to observe the way it was taught and the opportunities for students to learn and practice it. What I have learned is that when examining the politics of language development, it is important to also define academic language beyond form and its lexical and grammatical features. We need to consider that the language demands of K-12 classrooms may include the language required for students to participate in assessment systems and data-driven dialogues. This is in addition to traditional views of language use that include content and specialized academic vocabulary related to content area instruction. Through this dissertation I have seen a change in schools that is both predictable and impactful, but not very well understood. The role of assessments has grown increasingly high-stake since 2001 and with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. The impact of high-stakes testing has been well documented (Amerin and

Berliner, 2002; Rosenshine, 2003; Menken, 2006; Au, 2007; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Nichols, Glass, Berliner, 2012). However, the increased use of informal progress monitoring at the classroom level on a regular bases has additional implications (especially for schools serving large proportions of language learners as informal assessments may or may not be valid for all students). Research that can document not only the pervasiveness of data at the classroom level, but also the validity of such data for culturally and linguistically diverse learners is needed, especially since many teachers and administrators have learned that teaching to the test is a well-known problem.

As I have seen in this study, the use of informal data to drive instruction may amass problems more far-reaching. Part of the problem that I am identifying is that increased progress monitoring and reliance on data is a reform oriented process that may or may not have strong theoretical and empirical foundations (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010). The other part of the problem is that schools and classrooms (as evidenced by Willow Elementary) are driven by data and have cultures that create unique language demands. These additional demands placed on students should be identified as they may have implications on the way students' academic identities are constructed and on the way students participate and co-construct these new school cultures.

Conclusion

Willow Elementary is a school full of vibrant educators, both new and veteran, whose daily work to improve students' potential for academic achievement is paired with their concern over each student's personal well-being. Managing the intersectionality of language, culture, and learning is no easy task, and I want to end my dissertation by acknowledging the amount of hard work put forth by all urban educators. I hope findings from this study result in greater

opportunities for the students, at schools similar to Willow, by contributing to an understanding of the totality of language demands at bilingual, data-driven schools.

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Appendix A

Documents used in analysis

- 2013-2014 LEAP Handbook
- Application of the Common Core for ELLs- RMPS
- Consent Decree (2012) of the U.S. District Court, RMPS, English Language Acquisition Program
- District English Language Acquisition (ELA) Position Paper 2012
- District ELA Department ELD Profile (student characteristics)
- District ELA (2013-2014) Language Allocation Guidelines
- District ELL Considerations
- District Human Resources ELA Staff Development, Teacher Training Schedules
- District Improvement Planning & Data-Driven Decision-Making
- District Innovation Fact Sheet
- District Plan, 2010
- District School Improvement Planning Forms
- Educator Evaluation Rules (SB-191) Approved by the CO State Board of Education, District PPT
- English Language Proficiency Act (CO HB 13-1211)
- From Compliance to Commitment: District Program Guidelines for ELA
- Literacy Curriculum, Grade 3, Scope and Sequence
- Literacy Curriculum, Grade 4, Scope and Sequence
- Literacy Curriculum, Grade 5, Scope and Sequence
- READ Act and ELLs, CO Department of Education, Guidance for 2013-2014
- School Performance Framework, Report Cards, Willow Elementary
- School Performance Framework, Summary, 2013
- State Assessment Program, Assessment Framework, Grade 3, Reading and Writing
- State Assessment Program, Assessment Framework, Grade 4, Reading and Writing
- State Assessment Program, Assessment Framework, Grade 5, Reading and Writing
- Willow School Innovation Application

Appendix B

Interview Protocols

I. Teacher and Literacy Coach

Part 1:

1. Can you define ELD?
2. How do you provide ELD instruction?

Part 2:

Each educator will be asked to review the achievement data and a work sample from an anonymous high and a low performing student.. After reviewing the data, each educator will be asked the following questions:

1. What are your observations about this student's abilities to read and write?
2. How would you group this student during classroom activities?
3. What instructional strategies would you use for this student?
4. Why would you try these strategies?
5. (For classroom teachers) What strategies would your literacy coaches, administrators or people from the school district recommend?
 - a. If different, how do you (as a classroom teacher) make decisions about what strategies you can/should use?

Part 3:

Each educator will be asked to review their Literacy Guide, specifically for the units taught during my observations. They will be asked the following:

1. What language objectives do you need to set in order to teach these standards?
2. What language do students need to know in order to teach these standards?
3. Did you feel that you used L1 to help students participate during this lesson?
 - a. How generally do you leverage L1 or invite students to leverage their L1 as a resource during literacy instruction?

II. Administrator

1. What do you see as the function of ELD, in general?
2. What is your orientation toward language planning? (I will describe the difference between language-as-a-problem, versus language-as-a-resource).
3. What innovations did you propose in your innovations schools application?
 - a. What do you suspect will close the achievement gap/improve performance and Willow Elementary? Describe the perfect scenario minus any politics or pressures from outside sources.
4. Describe the District school performance framework in relation to Willow Elementary.
 - a. What is working?
 - b. What is concerning?

Appendix C

Codes as seen in Code Charts

Code Weight Statistics

	Count	Min	Max	Mean	Median
How ELD is constructed	52	5	5	5	5
Language BEFORE interaction	20	5	5	5	5
High levels of acceptability	18	5	5	5	5
Language through interaction	8	5	5	5	5
ELD in Context	10	5	5	5	5
Spanish connected to English	18	5	5	5	5
Students Getting Things Done	9	5	5	5	5
Testing Culture	43	5	5	5	5
Test connections					
Teachers Getting things done	18	5	5	5	5

Parent Code	Child Code	Description
Testing Culture		This includes observations and references to testing
	Teachers Getting things done	"why we do things"
	Data Driven	Talking about and using data
	Test Connections	Classroom graphs, conversations and activities that connect directly to the test that perpetuate the testing culture
	ELD Connects to Testing	Reference to testing while teaching ELD
What Policy (testing) Says		How the testing culture is constructed in policy documents
Language through interaction		relates to instruction that allows students to learn through interaction and possibly respond flexibly
	Students Getting Things Done	Students using whatever language; kitchen Spanish; non standard English to accomplish classroom objectives

	ELD in Context	Observed ELD activities connected directly to literacy activities
	Spanish connected to English	language environments are mutually supportive and allows for L1 development to support L2 development
Language BEFORE interaction		How teachers require students to learn and display certain language forms before they interact (either with the teacher or in class activities)
	Isolated Grammar Activities	Relates to activities to teach grammar when it is not connected to larger literacy goals
	How Academic Language is constructed	As explicitly defined by teachers or when AEL is referenced in class or in interviews
	High levels of acceptability (Sub-codes: CUPS, Accountable Talk, CSIQ)	Teachers explicitly ask for academic language in order for students to participate
	Academic Spanish	Explicit Teaching of Academic Spanish
What Policy (AL) Says		How the teaching of Academic language is represented in Policy documents
I don't know what language is		"We don't even know that ELD is a Thing!" Interviews and observations where teachers get confused; trouble selecting language objectives
	How ELD is constructed	When teachers explicitly define ELD; what qualifies as ELD during instruction
	Curriculum	Use or mention of Avenues, DLI, informal Packets

Materials and Resources	Mainly relates Preparation. (Teacher knowledge of and access to materials and ideas to support their instruction of ELD)
Administration of ELD	Administrative or district support or directives
What Policy (ELD) says	How ELD is constructed in policy documents

Appendix D

Accountable Talk, (Michaels, et al., 2013)

Agreement

Accountable Language Stems

- ☐ "I agree with _____ because _____."
- ☐ "I like what _____ said because _____."
- ☐ "I agree with _____; but on the other hand, _____." ☐ **Disagreement**
- ☐ "I disagree with _____ because _____."
- ☐ "I'm not sure I agree with what _____ said because _____."
- ☐ "I can see that _____; however, I disagree with (or can't see) _____." ☐ **Clarifications**
- ☐ "Could you please repeat that for me?"
- ☐ Paraphrase what you heard and ask, "Could you explain a bit more, please?"
- ☐ "I'm not sure I understood you when you said _____. Could you say more about that?"
- ☐ "What's your evidence?"
- ☐ "How does that support our work/mission at _____?" ☐ **Confirmation**
 - ☐ "I think _____."
 - ☐ "I believe _____." ☐ **Confusion**
 - ☐ "I don't understand _____."
 - ☐ "I am confused about _____." ☐ **Extension**
 - ☐ "I was thinking about what _____ said, and I was wondering what if _____."
 - ☐ "This makes me think _____."
 - ☐ "I want to know more about _____."
 - ☐ "Now I am wondering _____."
 - ☐ "Can you tell me more about _____?" **Review**
- ☐ "I want to go back to what _____ said."

Features of Accountable Talk**Accountability to the Learning Community**

- a. Careful listening to each other
- b. Using and building each other's ideas
- c. Paraphrasing and seeking clarification
- d. Respectful disagreement
- e. Using sentence stems

Accountability to Accurate Knowledge

- f. Being as specific and accurate as possible
- g. Resisting the urge to say just "anything that comes to mind."
- h. Getting the facts straight
- i. Challenging questions that demand evidence for claims

Accountability to Rigorous Thinking

- j. Building arguments
- k. Linking claims and evidence in logical ways
- l. Working to make statements clear
- m. Checking the quality of claims and argument

Appendix E

Information on primary progress monitoring tools for reading at Willow Elementary and their validity for use with ELLs:

STAR Reading, DRA2/EDL2 and DIBELS

Name of Assessment	Assessment Company	Purpose	What aspects of reading does it test?	Research on the validity/reliability for ELLs
STAR Reading	Renaissance Learning	Initial screening, progress-monitoring, and instructional planning. Screening Reports can interpreted as Which students are responding well to core instruction and which need to be considered for intervention Benchmarks are aligned to RTI and state exams, and show whether or not students are making progress toward meeting standards CORE Progress Learning Progressions College Readiness Skills iGrowth Percentile: Student growth toward meeting standards/performing at grade level. (Renaissance Learning, 2011)	Seven major skill domains: general readiness graphophonemic knowledge phonemic awareness phonics comprehension structural analysis vocabulary Note: Fluency is not directly tested, because “it is highly correlated with other reading skills such as comprehension” (Renaissance Learning, 2011).	“Our experience with ELLs has shown that students at the advanced proficiency level or higher can take STAR reading assessments successfully...For students with lower levels of English proficiency, their assessment results may be “unstable”...Additionally, reference points and progress goals set through STAR Reading are “based on data for native speakers” (Renaissance Learning, 2013, p.2).
DRA2/EDL2 Developmental Reading Assessment 2/ evaluación del desarrollo de la lectura	Pearson	Formative, criterion-referenced reading assessment in which teachers are able to systemically observe, record, and evaluate changes in student reading performance.	EDL2: Reading Engagement, Oral Reading Fluency, Accuracy, Comprehension (in Spanish) DRA2: Reading	“Multiple methods were used to examine the construct validity of the DRA2 Word Analysis, with an emphasis being placed on examining the relationship between the theoretical pattern expected and the observed

Name of Assessment	Assessment Company	Purpose	What aspects of reading does it test?	Research on the validity/reliability for ELLs
		<p>“DRA2 Word Analysis tasks are designed to measure the underlying construct of word analysis, defined by the following strands: 1) phonological awareness; 2) phonics; 3) metalanguage (or printed language concepts); 4) letter/word recognition; and 4) structural analysis and syllabication” (Pearson, 2011).</p>	<p>Engagement, Oral Reading Fluency, Accuracy, Comprehension (in English)</p>	<p>pattern” (Pearson, 2011). “The DRA2 Word Analysis test also was able to differentiate between English Language Learners and non-English Language Learners. In sum, the results presented indicate that the DRA2 Word Analysis test is a valid measure of word analysis skills” (Pearson, 2011).</p>
DIBELS-Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills	<p>Center for Teaching and Learning, Dynamic Measurement Group The University of Oregon</p>	<p>Indicator of critical early literacy skills Identify students who need additional instruction Progress monitoring</p>	<p>Phonemic Awareness Alphabetic Principle and Phonics Accurate and Fluent Reading Vocabulary Comprehension</p>	<p>“The results from the present study are promising (n=423; 1 urban district in Illinois); however, more research is needed on the relationship between reading growth and high-stakes outcomes and should include larger samples with equal subgroups (e.g., LEP students, students with special needs, etc.)... Whether these results are generalizable to minority racial and ethnic groups (e.g., English Language Learner or nontraditional student), is yet to be determined. Future research should expand these findings across participant demographics, including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and native language of students” (Goffreda et al., 2009).</p> <p>DIBELS was developed primarily to identify students who are at-risk for</p>

Name of Assessment	Assessment Company	Purpose	What aspects of reading does it test?	Research on the validity/reliability for ELLs
				reading difficulties in English (Shaw and Shaw, 2002).
				Correlation Study DIBELS and State Assessment Program (n=58) Correlation Coefficients Spring SAP and DIBELS Fall- .73 Spring SAP and DIBELS Winter- .73 Spring SAP and DIBELS Spring- .80 (Shaw and Shaw, 2002).

Appendix F

RMPS GUIDE TO “active and appropriate use of academic language” (LEAP Handbook)

DOMAIN: INSTRUCTION EXPECTATION: MASTERFUL CONTENT DELIVERY

INDICATOR I.4: Ensures all students active and appropriate use of academic language*

Examples of evidence for effective teacher and/or student behaviors may include:

- Students explaining their thinking by using prompts such as: “Tell us more about that”; “How do you know?”; “Why do you think that?”; and “What evidence do you have of_____?” to promote speaking, listening, reading and writing. ★★↑
- Facilitating Classroom Talk (in pairs, Collaborative Groups, and as a whole class) to introduce, reinforce and encourage the use of academic language. ★★↑
- Providing opportunities for structured and purposeful academic conversations (e.g., Cooperative Grouping, Collaborative Small Groups, Think-Pair-Share, Turn and Talk, Talk a Mile a Minute). ★★
- Explicitly using and holding students accountable for the use of content-specific language (e.g., *angle* instead of *corner*, *staccato* instead of *choppy*). ★★
- Explicit modeling and labeling of academic language. ★★↑
- Linking vernacular to academic language to support listening and speaking. ★★
- Using sentence stems, cloze sentences and/or paragraphs to promote speaking and writing. ★★↑
- Utilizing a “Writing to Learn” strategy so students experiment often with written language to increase their fluency and mastery of written conventions.
- Displaying and referencing visuals that show academic vocabulary in words and graphic representations. ★★↑
- Using graphic organizers to clearly define vocabulary and/or concepts (e.g., Frayer models, concept maps) that allow students to make connections. ★★↑
- Providing methods for students to capture academic language (e.g., personal dictionaries, learning logs, word walls, double-entry journals) to promote listening, reading and writing. ★★↑
- Offering multisensory experiences to promote listening and speaking. ★★↑
- Teaching “code switching” so that other forms of language are valued and students understand the reasons to use different forms in different settings. ★★↑
- Whenever students speak in incomplete sentences, reflecting concepts back in complete sentences as appropriate. ★★↑
- Having students utilize forms, functions, and content vocabulary appropriately in written responses to increasingly complex texts.
- Demonstrating explicit attention to vocabulary, as evidenced by:
 - Spending time defining, discussing and clarifying vocabulary words unlikely to be familiar to students prior to tasks to promote reading, writing and understanding. ★★↑
 - Emphasizing vocabulary through intonation, prior knowledge, visuals (e.g., illustrations, photographs, word wall). ★★↑
 - Limiting the number of vocabulary items presented to students at any one time. ★★↑
 - Modeling correct phonetic and fluent pronunciation through a slower pace and appropriate enunciation and intonation as necessary. ★★↑

■ Cultural Competency • ★ ELLs • ★ Spanish Native Language Instruction • ↑ Students with Disabilities or Gifted/Talented • Information Literacy/Technology • CCSS Shifts



Appendix G

Biliteracy Target Zones
(Escamilla, et al. 2014)

Scaffold to Biliteracy Targeted Zones	
EDL2 Level, Spanish	DRA2 Level, English
A-6	A-2
8-10	3-6
12-16	8-10
18-28	12-16
30-38	18-28
40	30-38
50-60	40+