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WORKING TOWARDS PROFICIENCY: INVESTIGATION OF
RECLASSIFICATION AND GROWTH RATES FOR HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH
LEARNERS IN AN ASSET AND RESEARCH-BASED ENGLISH LEARNER
DEVELOPMENT COURSE

By
AMY CORREIA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND
AND
RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

2021

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DISSERTATION

OF

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2021

Abstract

This study evaluated the impact of a newly-developed asset and research-based English Learner Development (ELD) course on high school English Learners' (ELs) likelihood of reaching reclassification or showing growth on an annually-administered state assessment of English language proficiency (ELP). Logistic regression was used to calculate the probability that an EL would reach reclassification while controlling for the student-level variables of gender, lunch status, and time in country. Linear regression was used to calculate growth rates in literacy. The findings of this study revealed that ELs who participated in the ELD course were 1.6 times more likely to reach reclassification status than ELs who did not. The relationship between ELs' growth in ELP and participation in the ELD course yielded both positive and negative relationships and is in need of future investigation. This study has implications for those interested in evaluating EL programming at the local level.

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Preface

Use of Terminology

The U.S. Department of Education defines English Learners (ELs) as school-aged individuals whose native language is not English and whose difficulties in the English language prohibit them from demonstrating English Language Proficiency (ELP) on a state-approved standardized assessment, achieve success in English-speaking classrooms, and fully participate in society (U.S. DOE, Title IX General Provision 9101 [25]). In the context of the Federal definition, the label “English Learner” (EL) implies that speaking a primary language other than English is a deficit for students and an instructional challenge for educators (Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006; Valencia, 1997). I prefer the term Multilingual Learner (MLL) to more accurately describe and honor students’ linguistic and cultural repertoires as assets (Brisk, 2006; Calderón et al., 2020; Mitchell, 2012). However, because I am exploring identification and reclassification labels of students whom the District and Federal guidelines classified as “EL,” I will use the term “EL” throughout the paper for consistency.

Positionality Statement

"Sometimes advocacy is loud and demanding. Sometimes it is silent and powerful. It burns deeply in the heart of an educator who sees a child judged by a standard that discounts her very being" (National Education Association, 2015, p.8).

This research is a work of advocacy. As a white, middle class, monolingual English-speaking female, I share the demographics of 76-79% of U.S. public school educators (USDOE & NCES, 2018). I do not understand the experience of emigrating to a country that, by and large, does not value non-English home languages or non-

European-American cultures as basic human rights (Rojas & Reagon, 2003). Therefore, I acknowledge that I do not know what it is like to be a marginalized person in U.S.

schools. I also believe, like many other scholars and advocates (e.g. Hartman, 2003), that the U.S. education system is designed to reproduce the academic and economic success of White-Americans. As such, I have had significant advantages to achieve academic and professional success when compared to non-White and non-English speaking people.

Although I cannot truly understand the perspective of an EL, I can understand my experiences of teaching high school level ELs in an urban community for over ten years. During that tenure, I developed a deep love and respect for ELs. I primarily taught new arrival and beginner-level ELs, but I also oversaw the language program. In this role, I was the first point of contact at the school for every new EL and their family. I felt an enormous sense of responsibility that the student and their family felt safe, welcomed, and valued during their introduction to a new school. I interviewed the student and family, with a translator, about their personal and educational backgrounds. Then I, in conjunction with their guidance counselor, developed the EL's class schedules after they completed initial ELP screening. I explained their EL identification status, the language services available to them, and their parents' rights to opt out of language programming. Because I ended these welcome-to-school conversations with, "Please come back to see me if you need anything," ELs returned to me to discuss the struggles they were having in their classes. They also came to me when they wanted to share feelings of homesickness, like missing the sound of thunder in the Dominican Republic, or successes, like convincing their protective mom that it was okay to join the tennis team.

As I reflect back on my teaching experience and leadership role, I recognize that I was able to develop strong personal connections with my students through the help of a Multilingual Learner Specialist who worked at the school, Ms. Correia. As a former EL who spoke Cape Verdean Creole, Spanish, and English, Ms. Correia was instrumental in providing the language bridge that I needed to connect with the majority of my ELs. Our sharing the same surname was also intriguing to students. Ms. Correia and I joked with our students that we were sisters, but my ELs often reminded me, “But, Miss, you’re White.” Fortunately, many of my ELs overlooked my white monolingualism and confided in me anyway.

This research is for my former ELs. I recognize that I cannot overthrow the U.S. education system that was systematically designed for them to fail, but I did have power and privilege to design the language program they had access to during their high school years. This research is to evaluate the programmatic decisions I made to help them achieve the academic success they deserved.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of the Problem

The most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (USDOE & NCES, 2019) showed that nearly one million English Learners (ELs) were enrolled in U.S. high schools in the fall of 2017. All identified ELs have the right to access a language assistance program in schools (*Lau v. Nichols*, 1974). Such programs fall under the purview of federal law *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981), which requires that language programs are (a) based on experts' sound educational theory, (b) implemented according to the theory with sufficient resources, and (c) annually evaluated for effectiveness (USDOE, OCR & USDOJ, 2015, p. 6). *Castañeda's* (1981) three-pronged requirements do not dictate the type of program model a district should implement. However, they do mandate that programs support ELs' development of English Language Proficiency (ELP), which the federal government describes as "overcoming language barriers," so that ELs can access content area curriculum in a "reasonable" amount of time (USDOE, OCR, USDOJ, 2015, p. 6). This mandate generates two important questions: (a) What does it mean to "overcome language barriers," and (b) What is a "reasonable" amount of time? I will address these questions in the following sections.

Overcoming Language Barriers

When an EL reaches reclassification status by demonstrating ELP on a standardized assessment, the state determines that the EL has "overcome language barriers" to participate in grade-level curriculum without the support of a language assistance program (USDOE, 2017). Although the results of the ELP assessment provide descriptions of an EL's proficiency, each state determines its own benchmark for an EL

to reach reclassification status, which is when the EL is reclassified and no longer considered an EL (Boyle et al., 2010). In this study, I view reclassification as a positive, earned accomplishment of the EL. Appendix A highlights the distinction between EL identification status and reclassification status relevant to this study.

While the concept of language proficiency is multidimensional, dynamic, and contextual (Cummins, 1979; Snow, 1991), I use the definition of English language proficiency that is aligned to ELP standards and assessment for the purpose of this study. English language proficiency is the “strategic set of language functions (what students do with language to accomplish content-specific tasks) and language forms (vocabulary, grammar, and discourse specific to a particular content area or discipline)” that are necessary for ELs to be successful in schools (Bunch et al., 2013; CCSO, 2012; Lee et al., 2013; Moschkovich, 2012; van Lier & Walqui, 2012, as cited in CCSSO, 2014, p. 1). This definition emphasizes ELP within the context of school.

Schools must assess ELs’ ELP each year with a standardized assessment. Each state has the latitude to select the assessment, as long as it includes the four language domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening (ESSA, 2015; NCLB, 2001; USDOE, 2017). The results of the annual assessment determine if the EL is making progress towards ELP, or has attained ELP (i.e. reached reclassification status) (USDOE, 2017).

The impact of overcoming language barriers. ELs’ ELP performance on the annual assessment can be a predictor of their future academic success (Cimpian et al., 2017; Estrada & Wang, 2018; Thompson, 2017). ELs who met a state’s reclassification status had significantly smaller achievement gaps than currently-identified ELs in content

area testing (Saunders & Marcelletti, 2013). Additionally, ELs who reached reclassification benchmarks prior to high school graduation were more likely to have access to college preparatory and AP courses than ELs who did not (Haxton & O'Day, 2015; Thompson, 2017). Researchers have also found that reaching reclassification status by the end of tenth grade, providing the student two years of traditional high school curriculum, had a positive effect on ELs' ACT scores, and an increased likelihood of high school graduation and enrollment in postsecondary education (Carlson & Knowles, 2016).

Findings are also positive for ELs who do not reach reclassification benchmarks, but demonstrate growth on ELP assessments. Growth means that ELs have increased their ELP score/s over time—at least two consecutive points of testing data (Castellano & Ho, 2013). Researchers have found that ELs who demonstrated growth of ELP had increased access to college preparatory courses and, in some cases, growth was a greater predictor of academic success than reclassification status (Callahan, 2016; Callahan & Shifrer, 2016).

Reasonable Amount of Time

Cummins (1979) identified the concepts of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) to distinguish the types of language students use in the classroom. Extant research indicates that ELs need one to three years to develop BICS and five to seven years to develop CALP from the time an EL enters school where instruction is in English. However, a variety of external and internal factors can impact the time it takes an EL to develop BICS or CALP, such as time in country, age, motivation, aptitude, native language literacy, and access to quality

education (Brown, 2014; Cummins, 1979; 2000; 2008; Collier & Thomas, 2009; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Studies also suggest that ELs need at least five to seven years to develop enough academic language proficiency to achieve reclassification status. Within that five to seven year range, ELs can develop academic language proficiency more quickly if provided native language support (Collier & Thomas, 2009; Cummins, 2008; Genesee et al., 2006; Hakuta et al., 2000; Thomas & Collier, 2002; Thompson, 2017).

Cummins' research that it takes five to seven years to develop academic English is alarming at the high school level. High school ELs do not have five to seven years of education left, as the typical high school career is four years. Additionally, ELs without home language literacy, consistent access to schooling, or who arrived to the country before age eight need an average of seven to ten years to develop CALP (Cummins, 2008; Collier & Thomas, 2009). Furthermore, many ELs who arrived to the United States prior to developing native language literacy never reach reclassification benchmarks because they "ran out of school years first" (Collier & Thomas, 2009, p. 22).

Research on the length of time ELs need to reach reclassification status is timely because of the fastest growing, most vulnerable population of ELs—Long-Term ELs or LTELs (Shin, 2020). While there is no Federal definition, it is widely accepted that LTELs are students who have not reached a state's reclassification criteria after completing five years of school from initial EL identification (USDOE, 2016). Experts estimate that anywhere between 25%-50% of all identified ELs will become labeled as LTELs during their academic career (Thompson, 2015). More recently, researchers concluded that the percentage of LTELs at the high school level was 70-80% of the total

EL population (Calderón et al., 2020). Researchers found that once an EL was labeled as an LTEL, the student had fewer opportunities to take college preparation classes, decreased likelihood of college acceptance, increased likelihood of special education identification, and increased negative feelings towards school when compared to their EL peers (Shin, 2020). When language programs have a growing population of LTELs, they are failing to help ELs overcome language barriers in a reasonable amount of time (i.e. taking more than five years of school to do so).

Statement of Problem

The growing number of LTELs who have been unable to overcome the language and cultural barriers embedded in ELP assessments (Brooks, 2015; Menken & Kleyn, 2010), has given legitimacy to the numerous school districts that have been deemed in violation of ELs' rights to access effective language programs to overcome language barriers (Calderón et al., 2020; Office of Civil Rights, 2020). The difficulties in assisting ELs to achieve reclassification or demonstrate growth in ELP has also led to a persistent, nation-wide achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs (USDOE, n.d.).

Two primary problems impact high school ELs reaching ELP prior to high school graduation: (a) a history of inadequate, deficit-based language programming, and (b) assessment bias, in that the primary tool to measure ELP to determine reclassification and growth not only measures academic language and literacy, but also U.S. cultural capital. I will address each of these in turn.

Language programming

Most school-based English language assistance programs can be categorized as either bilingual or English-medium programs (Wright, 2019). Large-scale studies

overwhelmingly indicate the advantage of bilingual programs over English-medium programs with respect to ELs' performance on ELP and content area assessments (Calderón et al., 2011; Collier & Thomas, 2009; 2017; Council of Great City Schools, 2009; Rolstad et al., 2005; Thompson, 2017; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). Though informative, this research predominately focuses on elementary programs and elementary-aged students. There are key differences between elementary and high school students with regard to factors that impact the development of ELP. Students in the early grades, unlike high school students, are just beginning to form their cultural and linguistic identities. Elementary ELs build language and literacy as part of their daily curriculum, are given more opportunities to practice social language development, have potentially lower inhibitions and anxiety when acquiring a new language, experience less frustration when their cognitive processes and linguistic output do not match, and have less of a demand to accelerate academic and content specific language development than high school ELs (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Therefore, these studies do not help us understand the effects of bilingual programming at the high school level.

Limited research exists on bilingual programs at the high school level due to practical and logistical challenges that hinder a high school's ability to implement bilingual models. Challenges include student factors, such as linguistic diversity and a broad range of academic skills and needs. Challenges also include school, district, and state-level factors, such as teacher certification requirements, local-level graduation requirements, schedule restrictions, and segregation of course tracks between ELs and non-ELs (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016). Staffing with appropriately qualified teachers is of significant concern as effective teachers can increase EL test performance (Apthorp et al.,

2012; Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011; Yoon et al., 2007). Due to these challenges, most high schools are unable to offer bilingual programs for ELs, but instead provide English-medium programs (Calderón et al., 2011).

Two types of English-medium programs are common at the high school level: English Language Development (ELD) and Sheltered Content-Area Instruction (SI), both of which serve only identified ELs and have been largely criticized as deficit-based approaches to EL education (Calderón et al., 2020). There are valid shortcomings to implementing either an ELD or an SI program as the sole model at the high school level.

ELD programs are designed to explicitly teach the four language domains of English (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and interdisciplinary academic vocabulary in offerings that range from a singular course to an extended block of time during the school day (Goldenberg, 2008). Critics argue that ELD programs segregate ELs from their non-EL peers, prioritize English acquisition over content, promote the mindset that educating ELs is not the content teachers' responsibility, and prohibit ELs from completing graduation requirements if the ELD course is non-credit bearing or the teacher is not properly certified (Callahan, 2016; Mellom et al., 2018; Newcomer & Collier, 2015; Umansky, 2016).

Conversely, SI programs embed English language instruction within the content area courses (Echevarria et al., 2017; Wright, 2019). Because ELs receive their content instruction within the SI program, they are likely to be segregated from their non-EL peers for longer periods of time than ELs enrolled in ELD programs—potentially the whole school day and/or for several years of school. This segregation can lead to limited access to college preparatory courses, increased likelihood of ELs retaining EL status

throughout their high school career (i.e. become or remain LTELs), and increased likelihood that they will need remediation coursework in college (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016; Flores, 2014; Gándara & Orfield, 2012). Additionally, content area teachers who teach in sheltered programs are often not trained on how to support ELs with “rigorous systematic instruction,” so ELs in such programs continue to fail to reach reclassification status (Calderón et al., 2020, p. 115).

In addition to the issue of a growing number of LTELs, other metrics have also shown that English-medium program models in isolation at the high school level have not been successful. Ongoing research suggests high school ELs struggle in mainstream courses outside of their English-medium programs, which means the language programs are not properly preparing students for grade-level content or postsecondary education (Calderón et al., 2011; Callahan & Hopkins, 2017; Koelsh, et al., 2014). Additionally, English-medium programs have historically operated from a deficit-lens with low expectations that “purge students of their identities and strengths—their home languages and cultures” (Calderón et al., 2020, p. 4).

Testing barriers

The ELP assessment measures proficiency in the four language domains, which means that ELP assessments are measures of both language and literacy, predominately *academic* language and literacy (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b). While it is widely accepted that the complexity of academic language creates barriers for ELs to demonstrate proficiency on standardized assessments, an additional challenge of measuring academic language is that it exists within a sociocultural context (Gottlieb, 2016; Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014). As such, ELP assessments do not measure ELs’ full

linguistic repertoire to determine proficiency, but they measure a student's use of academic language in contextually-specific ways across all content areas (Boyle et al., 2015).

Lea & Street's (2006) Academic Literacies Model describes the complex constructs of academic language and literacy with three overlapping concepts: study skills (language forms), academic socialization (acculturation to the language of the content-area), and academic literacies (meaning making within nuanced, complex, and situated contexts that inform identity and power dynamics) (p. 368-369). The third concept, academic literacies, is informative in this study because to be successful in schools, a person must also have broader institutional knowledge, in addition to academic language and content-area literacy (Lea & Street, 2006). ELs are less likely to share the same institutional knowledge as their non-EL peers because they have different cultural capital (Gee, 2004; Hos et al., 2019).

The Academic Literacies Model's focus on academic literacies as knowledge of situated context helps us understand why proficiency in academic English and literacy in reading, writing, speaking, and listening is not sufficient for ELs to overcome the barriers of standardized assessments. U.S. cultural norms are also explicitly and implicitly embedded in standardized ELP assessments (Abedi, 2004; 2014; Cummins, 2008; Gottlieb, 2016; Luykx et al., 2007; Mahon, 2006; Solano-Flores, 2008). Therefore, the tests require knowledge of U.S. cultural capital, which is the accumulation of experiences and preferences of a cultural group that form over time (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (1984) asserts that cultural capital is developed through social origin or through education.

The Need to Redesign and Evaluate Programs for ELs

There is an urgent need to improve language programming at the high school level to help ELs reach reclassification status in a reasonable amount of time. High school practitioners must leverage research-based practices to support ELs' development of the academic language necessary to reach reclassification status or demonstrate growth in ELP prior to high school graduation. Additionally, practitioners must provide ELs with meaningful opportunities to build U.S. cultural capital and explicitly teach institutional knowledge (Hos et al., 2019; Lea & Street, 2006). Therefore, language programs must utilize assets-based instructional practices that build ELs' U.S. cultural capital, in addition to academic language and literacy, to help students overcome the barriers of the ELP assessment and ensure that they are not systemically denying ELs the same opportunities of academic success as their non-ELs peers.

To ensure that programs are meeting the goal of helping ELs develop ELP, programs also have the responsibility to analyze their ELs' progress in such programs. Existing research using ELs' reclassification status to evaluate the effectiveness of language programs in helping ELs reach reclassification is insufficient. These studies cannot be generalized between or among states due to two important factors: state-level autonomy to select the ELP assessment, and frequent changes in reclassification benchmark policies (Cimpian et al., 2017; Boyle et al., 2010; Estrada & Wang, 2018; Thompson, 2017). Because of this, Callahan & Shifrer (2016) argue that local level leadership, such as an EL coordinator or curriculum director, should evaluate EL programs within their own context and use ELs' linguistic and academic growth as indicators of successful programming. Due to the high stakes involved with the education

of high school ELs, and the inefficacy of current structures to do so, it is imperative that schools complete these local-level evaluations to ensure their language programs help ELs overcome language barriers on the annual ELP assessment.

As such, I undertook this study as a follow up to designing an ELD course, *Academic Literacy*, meant to build high school ELs' academic language, literacy, and U.S. cultural capital to assist them in overcoming language barriers in a reasonable amount of time. The purpose of this investigation was for me to learn if ELs' participation in this asset- and research-based ELD course, when was added to a pre-existing SI program, had an impact on ELs' likelihood of achieving reclassification status and/or demonstrating growth on the state's annual ELP assessment prior to high school graduation.

Development of ELD course: *Academic Literacy*

In 2010, I taught English in the SI program at This High School (THS) and was the local level program leader. Like other high schools across the nation, THS offered an English-medium program model to service ELs because logistical complexities prohibited the implementation of a bilingual model. As the administrator of the EL program, my responsibilities included ensuring compliance with federal and state mandates, properly staffing the SI program with teachers who had training in research-based instructional practices, aligning the SI curriculum to content area and ELP standards, measuring adequate yearly progress for ELs' growth and reclassification rates, and evaluating the program to determine if ELs were overcoming language barriers to participate in grade-level content-area courses.

While the EL program at THS was in compliance with all Federal requirements of SI program implementation and evaluation (USDOE, 2017), my former EL students were returning to me distraught when they enrolled in mainstream courses outside of the SI program. They were expressing frustration that aligned with the research, namely, that they were experiencing academic struggles that they attributed to the fast-paced content coverage and the lack of language support outside of their English-medium program (Calderón et al., 2011; Callahan & Hopkins, 2017; Koelsh et al., 2014). ELs were refusing to complete common but complex academic tasks in mainstream classes, such as writing a research paper or preparing an oral presentation. As a result, many of the ELs' Grade Point Averages (GPA) dropped when they took mainstream classes, which was negatively impacting their access to post-secondary enrollment. Additionally, ELs expressed frustration with their lower-than-desired SAT scores and their failure to reach the state's reclassification benchmark year after year. Because of students' concerns, I sought ways to improve the instructional programming for ELs at THS. I based instructional decisions on research, and with three main issues in mind.

First, the research was clear that implementing English-medium programs in isolation, such as sheltered instruction or English language development, have not been successful based on metrics of ELs' performance on standardized tests, ELs' success in mainstream classrooms, and districts' lack of compliance with federal law (Callahan & Hopkins, 2017; Office of Civil Rights, 2020; USDOE, n.d.). Therefore, I developed an ELD course, *Academic Literacy*, as a potential approach to help ELs overcome language barriers (i.e. reach reclassification status) in a reasonable amount of time (i.e. prior to high school graduation). Although it was structurally similar to an ELD course, *Academic*

Literacy was not a stand-alone program. Rather, *Academic Literacy* was integrated alongside an existing SI program to combine the benefits of the two English-medium models. The SI program allowed ELs to access grade-level content, while *Academic Literacy* provided explicit instruction in academic language and literacy. In thinking about this design, I borrowed from research that demonstrated elementary ELs performed better on ELP assessments when they had a separate block of time to develop oral language as opposed to integrating language instruction within the content areas (Saunders et al., 2006).

Second, ELP assessments measure ELs' U.S. cultural capital in addition to academic language and literacy across the content-areas (Boyle et al., 2015; Gottlieb, 2016). The ELP tests embed broader institutional knowledge and U.S. cultural norms, and ELs often do not share the institutional knowledge or cultural norms of their non-EL peers or the test developers (Gee, 2004; Lea & Street, 2006; Solano-Flores, 2008). While I could not change the confines or challenges of the ELP assessment, I could design effective instruction that integrates academic language and culture to help ELs overcome the barriers of the assessment (Staeher Fenner, 2014). With this in mind, I designed *Academic Literacy* to leverage ELs' current funds of knowledge and provide explicit instruction on the types of academic literacy, cultural capital, and institutional knowledge that is needed to overcome the cultural bias prevalent in U.S. assessment practices (Abedi, 2004; 2014; Cummins, 2008; Gottlieb, 2016; Lee & Street, 2016; Luykx et al., 2007; Mahon, 2006; Solano-Flores, 2008). As an example, in one curricular unit, ELs examined factors that influenced people's decisions both in historical contexts (e.g. the experiences of Black Americans during Jim Crow or the Jews during the Holocaust) and

in current-lived experiences, (e.g. cheating, bullying). Within this context, ELs examined and debated commonly valued U.S. themes, such as overcoming adversity, self-reliance, and heroism. Students discussed how their own cultural values aligned or diverged from those U.S. norms and used evidence from texts or personal experiences to defend their position and choice.

Third, research has shown that language programs for ELs have not provided access to rigorous grade-level content and/or built their academic language and literacy across the content areas (Callahan & Hopkins, 2017; Koelsh, et al., 2014). Rather, EL programs are typically deficit-oriented models that aim to remediate ELs' lack of English, set low expectations for academic success, or assimilate students to U.S. culture (Calderón et al., 2020; Herrera & Murry, 2016; Gibbons, 2009). Therefore, I created *Academic Literacy* from an asset-perspective that honors and builds upon ELs' home languages, cultures, identities, and experiences to support students' linguistic and academic gains in a "high-challenge, high-support" environment (Calderón et al., 2020; Gibbons, 2009, p. 16; Herrera & Murry, 2016; Mariani, 1997).

As the EL program leader, it was critical that I ensured *Academic Literacy* held the ideology that valued multilingualism over monolingualism, and that English-medium programs should not be synonymous with English-only programs (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2015; Calderón et al., 2020). The course was designed to leverage asset and research-based practices in language, literacy, and culturally responsive instruction.

Dissertation Overview

As stated in the preface, the research was one of advocacy, but this is also a work of hope. I hope that this research, which is to evaluate programmatic decisions I made to

help ELs achieve academic success, can serve as an example of how local level leadership can improve education for ELs.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters; the first chapter introduced the topic of study. In Chapter Two, I will review the literature relevant to the foundational concepts related to the development of the ELD course, *Academic Literacy*. I will also provide the specific research questions that guide this study. In Chapter Three, I will describe the research site, participants, ELP assessment used to measure reclassification and growth, and the procedures and methods I used to answer the research questions. In Chapter Four, I will present my findings relevant to the study. Finally, in Chapter Five, I will discuss the conclusions, the implications of the study, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, federal law *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981) requires that language programs are (a) based on experts' sound educational theory, (b) implemented according to the theory with sufficient resources and personnel, and (c) annually evaluated for effectiveness (USDOE, OCR & USDOJ, 2015). Therefore, in this study, I will evaluate the effects of adding the newly developed, research-based *Academic Literacy* course to the English-medium program at THS. The evaluation of *Academic Literacy* is based on whether ELs who took the course were more likely to reach reclassification status or demonstrate growth in literacy on the state-selected standardized assessment of ELP.

To provide the background necessary to understand this evaluation study, I will first summarize how the evolution of federal policies, standards, and ELP assessments changed local-level instructional practices. Then, I will provide a brief overview of issues involved in the use of the ELP assessment as the sole measure to determine reclassification and growth. Next, I will discuss the theoretical frameworks related to the ELP assessment, which include academic language, literacy, and cultural capital, and contextualize these within the broader literature on the intersections of language and culture. I will then discuss how both theory and research informed the guiding principles and overall curriculum design of *Academic Literacy*. Finally, I will provide context for the ways in which *Academic Literacy* will be evaluated for effectiveness in this study.

Policies, Standards, and Assessments: Implications on Practice

Since the inception of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, federal policy has required an annual measurement of ELs' English language proficiency (ELP) in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (NCLB, 2001; USDOE, 2017). All federally mandated assessments must align to national organizational standards, but these standards have undergone significant revisions since 2001. In 2010, the College and Career Readiness Standards launched, and were designed to reflect what students should know and be able to do as a result of participating in U.S. schools (Gottlieb, 2016). In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act required states to adopt ELP standards that aligned with the new content area standards to ensure that ELs were ready for college and careers by high school graduation.

The evolution of content area and ELP standards sparked a significant shift in the design of ELP assessments, resulting in more emphasis on academic language proficiency across the content areas and less emphasis on social language proficiency outside of school contexts (Gottlieb, 2016; Lee, 2018). These revisions yielded ELP assessments that measure a students' institutional knowledge (Lea & Street, 2006) rather than their full linguistic repertoires (Boyle et al., 2015). Additionally, the revised standards and assessments at the federal-level led to changes in curriculum development and instructional practices at the local-level (Gottlieb, 2016). These types of changes were exemplified in the development of the current program under study—*Academic Literacy* at THS.

Bias in the English Language Proficiency Assessment

The ELP assessment purports to measure academic language and literacy (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b). However, it is widely accepted that the constructs of academic language and literacy cannot be easily defined or measured (Gottlieb, 2016). In addition to the challenge of measuring the constructs of academic language and literacy, the ELP assessment creates additional barriers for ELs because the test measures these constructs across all content areas (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b). Therefore, ELs' demonstration of language proficiency on the ELP assessment is highly contextualized and highly dependent on a students' exposure to content area knowledge, broader institutional knowledge, and cultural norms of U.S. schools (Hos et al., 2019; Lea & Street, 2006; Solano-Flores, 2008).

Empirical studies (e.g. Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003) have found significant concerns with the reliability and validity of assessments for ELs because language and cultural factors interact with test items. While no assessment is completely free from bias, there is a multitude of literature that has demonstrated cultural bias in assessments for ELs (Wright, 2019). Researchers have found that when an ELs' cultural beliefs and norms differ from the mainstream norms of test creators, those mismatches negatively impact their test performance (Gottlieb, 2016; Luykx et al., 2007).

To highlight bias on ELP assessments, Solano-Flores (2008) posed the question, "Who is given the tests in what language, by whom, when, and where?" as a conceptual framework to examine the relationship, or lack thereof, between ELs and the ELP test developers (p. 189). This framework brings to light several components involved with language testing (who, what, where, etc.), and posits that ELs themselves are widely

misunderstood by the test developers. As such, when test developers do not understand the population they are testing, the ELP assessments cannot fully measure ELs' language/s, cognitive capacities, and cultures.

Regardless of the known bias in ELP assessments, the reality faced by ELs in U.S. schools is that reaching the goal of reclassification is dictated by performance on these assessments. Therefore, I designed *Academic Literacy* to not only help ELs reach their goal of reclassification, but also to address two critical areas that can impact ELs' performance on the ELP assessment: (1) academic language and literacy that spans across content areas, and (2) U.S. cultural capital. I discuss these in the following sections.

Academic Language and Literacy

The research literature does not provide a singular definition of academic language, yet several frameworks help better describe the construct. Cummins (1979) identified the concepts of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) to explain the social and academic distinctions in language. While Cummins argued that BICS and CALP should be developed simultaneously (Cummins 2000; 2008), his distinction between social and academic language faced criticism as Cummins claimed that BICS was more contextual and less cognitively demanding than CALP. Because the concept of CALP insinuated cognitive capacity, critics argued that ELs who had not yet developed CALP were viewed from a deficit perspective (e.g. Edelsky, 2006). Other critics argued that the binary distinction between BICS/CALP did not address the full linguistic repertoire ELs needed to be successful in school (e.g. Bailey, 2007). Additionally, scholars posit that Cummins' categorization of language in binary terms supports a long history of marginalization

between ELs and non-ELs where ELs are framed as “linguistically deficient and in need of remediation” because they do not possess idealized English academic language (Flores, 2020, p. 22).

Cummins (2008; 2016) pushed back on such criticism and argued that the conceptual distinction between BICS/CALP was not proposed to fully describe a person’s language proficiency. He argued that there is interdependence between the two constructs, and societal practices that assess one as having “low CALP” (i.e. biased testing practices) are related to deficit thinking rather than Cummins’ distinction between BICS/CALP (2016, p. 943). Cummins argued that the distinction was a way of “naming and talking about the classroom realities” and “highlighting the discriminatory assessment and instructional practices experienced by many bilingual students” (2008, p. 5). These discriminatory practices included limiting ELs’ exposure to academic English and rigorous content curricula to focus on BICS, falsely assuming ELs who demonstrated BICS also demonstrated CALP, denying ELs’ access to their native language in English-only programming to meet the demands of federal assessments that measure CALP, and assessing ELs’ content knowledge in academic English before they have had time to develop such skills.

While Cummins (2008) 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” (p. 67), additional perspectives help us more fully understand the complexity of the types of academic language measured on the ELP assessment. These perspectives include systemic linguistic perspectives, language skills perspectives, and sociocultural perspectives (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014). Systemic linguistic

perspectives highlight the distinctions between language functions and language forms, that is, how students use language for different purposes (e.g. Halliday, 1978). These perspectives emphasize the importance of knowing the linguistic system (i.e. phonology, semantics, syntax) and how these components are used in tandem to communicate. Language skills perspectives focus on school-specific tasks, skills, vocabulary, and cognitive knowledge that is required within and across grade-levels and content areas (e.g. Bailey & Heritage, 2008). These perspectives emphasize the oral and written language needed to develop deep content knowledge and communicate that content knowledge with others, which often works in concert with language functions (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014). Sociocultural perspectives address language as a social practice. These perspectives emphasize that one's culture and social environment are an integral part of the language development process and carry over into the classroom setting (e.g. Gee, 2004).

Collectively, these perspectives informed the definition of academic language used by CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, in its test development of the ELP assessment, *LAS Links*, used to determine reclassification status at THS. CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC (2013b) defined academic language as:

- situated language used within and across specific academic disciplines or content areas
- embedded in sociocultural contexts that involve activities, practices, and language users
- characterized by specific discourse and textual features such as genre, register, functions, syntax, and vocabulary

- integrated across different mediums and modes of communication
- used at different levels of complexity across grade spans (p. 3).

To perform well on the annual ELP assessment, which is intended to measure academic language and literacy as defined above, ELs must pull from their entire linguistic and cognitive repertoires to demonstrate their use of language within a variety of contexts.

Two theoretical frameworks shed light on linguistic and cognitive repertoires: Cummins' (2000; 2008) theory of common underlying proficiency (CUP) and García's (2009) theory of translanguaging. CUP posits that because one has cognitive processes, academic skills, and linguistic knowledge, one can transfer those skills when developing an additional language. For example, if an EL is literate or numerate in their native language, they will be able to transfer the already existing skills and knowledge to a new language. As such, CUP theory proposed that people have separate internal language systems and people transfer linguistic and cognitive features between each language. Cummins' (2000) also argued that ELs will acquire additional languages more quickly if they are supported in their native language and are provided explicit instruction to bridge or transfer their pre-existing skills between languages. This call for explicit instruction in language and skill transfer, as well as the advocacy for ELs' to use their native languages, is supported by numerous scholars who advocate to embed metacognition and metalinguistics into instruction (Chamot & O'Malley, 1986; Flavell, 1976; Turner & Herriman, 1984)—that is, develop self-awareness and knowledge about one's own thinking, skills, strategies, and language to help foster learning (Nodoushan, 2008).

A translanguaging framework examines how multilingual people use language to communicate with others (García & Kleyn, 2016). Unlike CUP, translanguaging posits

that multilingual people have one linguistic and cognitive repertoire. Multilinguals fluidly use their languages, skills, or cognitive processes for a particular use, a particular audience, and within a particular context without considering their languages as separate entities. As such, translanguaging theory highlights a multilingual's ability to effectively communicate with others by using their total linguistic repertoire and cultural practices as a natural practice (García & Kleyn, 2016). Also unlike CUP, a translanguaging stance does not consider using students' native languages as a bridge or as a holding place to transfer ideas to a newly acquired language. A translanguaging stance sees one's total languages as an interconnected system (García et al., 2017).

Both CUP and translanguaging theories offer practitioners pedagogical practices to support and validate ELs' native languages, cultures, and sociocultural experiences while building language proficiency within an asset-based, English-medium program. These asset and evidence-based practices were used to develop *Academic Literacy* and will be explained in greater detail throughout this chapter.

Cultural Capital

For several decades, scholars have used Bourdieu's (1986) notion of cultural capital as a theoretical framework to understand how power and privilege are reproduced through measures of educational success, and conversely, how those same measures perpetuate social and economic inequality (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Bourdieu (1986) coined the term cultural capital to describe a person's accumulation of experiences by being part of a social group. His explanation of cultural capital draws attention to class-based social values, norms, skills, and preferences. Bourdieu (1986) categorized cultural capital into three forms: embodied, institutionalized, and objectified. Embodied cultural

capital encompasses how a person understands and reacts to the world, which they understand through and express with language. Institutionalized cultural capital includes a person's formal recognition of their academic or professional qualifications, like reaching reclassification status. Objectified cultural capital includes a person's physical property that demonstrates wealth or valued cultural capital.

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, particularly embodied and institutionalized cultural capital, is relevant to understanding the challenges of ELP assessments in two ways. First, because culture and language are intertwined (e.g. Neuliep, 2015), the ELP assessment measures culture in addition to language. Second, the dominant culture's norms are naturally embedded within any assessment (Solano-Flores, 2008). Students experience difficulty in academic performance when their culture varies from that mainstream culture (e.g. Luykx et al., 2007), which makes it difficult for ELs to convert their embodied capital into institutionalized capital. Bourdieu's explanation also provides important information on which to base EL program development—namely, that cultural capital is acquired and learned through education, so deliberate structures to build ELs' U.S. cultural capital may assist them in overcoming the barriers of the ELP assessment (e.g. Hos et al., 2019).

The relationship between language and culture

The embodied state of cultural capital is most relevant to explain how a person's culture and language are intertwined. The embodied state, like language, cannot be quickly or easily transferred or taught—both develop slowly over time. The acquisition of the embodied state becomes a person's habitus, or a person's state of being (Bourdieu, 1986), much like the stance of translanguaging (García & Kleyn, 2016). The habitus is so

embedded within a person that their thoughts and actions fall below levels of consciousness and are beyond one's control (Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

While many scholars agree that there is an undeniable link between language and culture (e.g. Kuo & Lai, 2006) there is disagreement between whether a person's embodied state is metaphorically trapped below the surface or can be consciously controlled. Agar (1994) used the term "languaculture" to describe the inseparability of language and culture, but unlike Bourdieu, he called upon people to consciously recognize their culture in order to better navigate difficulties with language. He argued that when people realize cultural mismatches, they can use their cultural awareness to recognize and rectify their linguistic output. However, a person must be conscious of cultural differences to negotiate meaning making with others (Agar, 1994; Scollon, 1995).

Developing cultural awareness, particularly of oneself, in order to understand linguistic output is prevalent in Neuliep's (2015) work on intercultural communication. Neuliep (2015) defined culture in a way that both mirrors Bourdieu's (1986) explanation of the embodied state of cultural capital and includes Agar's (1994) conscious connections between culture and communication. Neuliep (2015) wrote:

Culture provides the overall framework wherein humans learn to organize their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in relation to their environment. Although people are born into a culture, it is not innate. Culture is learned. Culture teaches one how to *think*, conditions one how to *feel*, and instructs one how to *act*, especially how to *interact* with others—in other words, how to communicate. In

many respects, the terms communication and culture can be used interchangeably.
(p. 48)

Neuliep's work is important for practitioners because it reveals a space between Agar's call for heightened cultural awareness to make conscious linguistic choices and Bourdieu's unconscious habitus. This spectrum of thinking about culture ranges from "culture is learned" (Neuliep, 2015, p. 48) to "culture is acquired" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244), both of which can inform instructional practice.

Empirical studies have examined both learned and acquired cultural capital perspectives and their impact within the field of education (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Findings that supported learned cultural capital recommended that educators help students become conscious of their own capital and teach them how to navigate the field of education by selectively using valued cultural capital within particular contexts (e.g. Collier & Morgan, 2008). Findings that explored acquired cultural capital recommended that educators resist making assumptions about students' cognitive abilities based on cultural capital mismatches. Educators should leverage these mismatches to "reconceptualize intelligence" and embrace an asset-based perspective (Oakes et al., 1997, p. 496). I developed *Academic Literacy* with both learned and acquired cultural capital perspectives in mind. I had the hope that the course would provide a space where the ELs' home culture was valued, but the content and practices of the course would implicitly and explicitly build ELs' U.S. cultural capital to potentially increase the likelihood that they could overcome the cultural barriers of the ELP assessment.

Assessments as Measurements of Valued Cultural Capital

All people have cultural capital, but the value of one's cultural capital relies on the field in which it is being measured (Bourdieu, 1979/1984). A field is any space where a person's norms, preferences, or dispositions are measured. The field determines the rules and whose cultural capital has value (Bourdieu, 1993). The rules of the game are the unwritten rules that institutions use to determine the value of one's cultural capital within that field (Lareau et al., 2016). For example, in the field of ELP assessment in the U.S., the rules are determined by the test developers and the cultural capital of value is the culture of those in power (Delpit, 1988; Solano-Flores, 2008).

Bourdieu (1986) posits that within a field, people convert cultural capital for rewards. This conversion is known as objectifying the embodied form of cultural capital into institutionalized cultural capital—the formal measurement and recognition of academic credentials. The reward, in the context of ELP assessments, is when an EL reaches reclassification status based on their performance on that assessment. Research (Luykx et al., 2007) suggests that ELs are more likely to achieve the recognition of reclassification if their cultural capital aligns with the assessment, or if they are privy to the rules of the game within the field of the ELP assessment.

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, particularly his discussion of how one's capital has more or less value depending on the field, became a call for practitioners to explore the impact and inequities that a student's culture has on their success in U.S. schools. Additionally, scholars who used Bourdieu's theoretical framework provided insight into how educators can help students build U.S. cultural capital and transfer it to institutionalized capital. As a result, Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital became

embedded in evidence-based practices used to design the curriculum for *Academic Literacy*.

I used Bourdieu's (1986) concept of field and rules of the game as an argument to study how culture impacts language and can reveal itself within an ELP assessment. I coupled that lens with Agar (1994) and Neuliep's (2015) perspective to understand that cultural awareness and its connection to language need to be explicitly taught. Neuliep (2015) described five dimensions of cultural variability to compare and contrast how culture impacts language output: individualism-collectivism, high-low context, valued orientations, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. He noted that these cultural dimensions fall along cultural continua, and no person is fixed entirely on one side of the continua. Additionally, Neuliep states that "culture is dynamic, fluid, not static entities" (p. 47) which aligns with many scholars' description of language (e.g. García & Kleyn, 2016).

Neuliep (2015) provided several scenarios to exemplify how language and culture are intertwined based on each cultural dimension. Through these scenarios, such as individual-collective, small-large power distance, etc., educators can better understand how an ELs' embodied state of cultural capital can hold value, or not, depending on the field. In the hypothetical example I explain below, I use Neuliep's descriptions of how people use language differently based on their individualistic or collectivist tendencies to suggest how one's culture can manifest themselves through language on an ELP assessment.

Scenario: the ELP assessment asks a student to respond to the following writing prompt, "Compose a speech to run for class president." A student with an individualistic

tendency would be more likely to discuss their individual strengths and use the word “I” to highlight their personal actions and accomplishments. Conversely, a student with a collectivistic tendency would be more likely to discuss the school community and use the word “we” to highlight class goals and promote group harmony over personal gain (Neuliep, 2015). Because the test developers created the scoring rubric to determine the quality of a student’s written response, they control the field, the value of the student’s response, and the reward of a certain proficiency score. If the test developers required students to provide evidence of personal accomplishments to earn a perfect score, they are placing value on a student’s cultural tendencies by favoring an individualistic perspective.

Summary

I drew on aspects of each aforementioned theoretical framework to guide the development of *Academic Literacy*. Below is a summary of the implications of theory on the practices within EL education:

- Academic language is complex, contextualized, and takes years to develop (Cummins, 1979; 2000; 2008).
- Academic language and skills can be explicitly taught and develop more quickly with native language support (Cummins, 2000; 2008).
- ELs need time and space to use their native language how language users do—within their sociocultural contexts to develop language, skills, and cognitive processes (García, 2009).

- Language and culture are intertwined, which impacts one's internal value system, preferences, norms as well as how one communicates their ideas (Agar, 1994; Neuliep, 2015).
- Culture is learned, so it is possible for educators to build one's culture awareness and analyze its impact on linguistic output (Agar, 1994; Neuliep, 2015).
- Culture is acquired, and all students come to school with cultural capital. Educators must value students' capital and give time and space for one's cultural norms, preferences, and assets to be shared in the classroom environment (Bourdieu, 1986; Oakes et al., 1997).
- Cultural capital has value based on the field in which it is being measured, and if students have awareness of fields (e.g. the ELP assessment), then they are more likely to convert their embodied cultural capital to institutionalized cultural capital (e.g. reach reclassification status) (Bourdieu, 1986).
- The ELP assessment requires ELs to demonstrate English academic language and literacy, but it in effect highlights cultural mismatches between ELs and non-ELs to perpetuate marginalization and deficit thinking (Luykx et al., 2007; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003).

Evidence-based Approaches Embedded in *Academic Literacy*

The purpose of *Academic Literacy* was to improve the English-medium programming at THS to support ELs reach reclassification status prior to high school graduation. The course was also designed to leverage asset and research-based practices

to help ELs reach that goal. In addition to the theory discussed above, three seminal and comprehensive texts undergirded much of the development of the course: *Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth* (August & Shanahan, 2006); *Educating English language learners: A synthesis of research evidence* (Genesee et al., 2006); and *Double the Work: Challenges and Solutions to Acquiring Language and Academic Literacy for Adolescent English Language Learners* (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). I drew on these texts for sources to infuse research-based practices into the curriculum development of *Academic Literacy*.

I, together with faculty members at THS, leveraged these texts and the theoretical frameworks on language and culture presented previously to create principles to guide us in developing *Academic Literacy*. These principles provided a framework as we created each instructional unit. Also, to adhere to federal law, we aligned our curriculum to the newly revised ELP standards (ESSA, 2015). In Figure 1, I list the ten ELP standards used within THS' state. Beneath those, I explain each guiding principle used in developing *Academic Literacy* and its corresponding research and application within the course. In Appendix B, I provide an example of one instructional unit from the *Academic Literacy* curriculum guide to demonstrate how the ELP standards and guiding principles were operationalized.

Figure 1

English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century Standards (ELPA21)

1	Construct meaning from oral presentations and literary and informational text through grade-appropriate listening, reading, and viewing
2	Participate in grade-appropriate oral and written exchanges of information, ideas, and analyses, responding to peer, audience, or reader comments and questions
3	Speak and write about grade-appropriate complex literary and informational texts and topics
4	Construct grade-appropriate oral and written claims and support them with reasoning and evidence
5	Conduct research and evaluate and communicate findings to answer questions or solve problems
6	Analyze and critique the arguments of others orally and in writing
7	Adapt language choices to purpose, task, and audience when speaking and writing
8	Determine the meaning of words and phrases in oral presentations and literary and informational text
9	Create clear and coherent grade-appropriate speech and text
10	Make accurate use of standard English to communicate in grade-appropriate speech and writing

Note. Source (CCSSO, 2014)

Principle 1: Provide explicit instruction of academic language and literacy across all language domains

We drew from many sources of research suggesting that explicit instruction is important. First, programs must integrate skill development in all four language domains through direct instruction, with particular focus given to oral language development (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Second, instructional programs must also include explicit instruction in academic language and literacy to assist ELs developing language proficiency and be able to engage with content area curriculum (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006).

In developing the *Academic Literacy* curriculum, we specifically outlined instruction in all four language domains, as well as the skills and practical applications within each domain. This sample instructional unit in Appendix B highlights several opportunities for ELs to practice oral language development by listening to and presenting about fiction and nonfiction topics. In each instructional unit, we required students to give at least one formal oral presentation focused on a specific skill. The skill within the sample unit in Appendix B is understanding of audience, intonation, and expression. All ten ELP standards that guide the full curriculum include connections to oral language development, so it is an integral component of the course (Figure 1).

With regard to direct instruction of academic language and literacy, Snow et al., (2009) empirically investigated the impact of explicit instruction for ELs. They studied the relationship between ELs participation in the vocabulary intervention program *Word Generation* and standardized test performance. *Word Generation* isolates five academic terms and skills each week (e.g. analyze, evaluate, synthesize, etc.) across each discipline (math, ELA, science, and social studies). They found that ELs who received explicit and repeated instruction in academic language through *Word Generation* had improved performance on the ELA standardized assessment when compared to peers who did not receive the same intervention.

We borrowed two features from the *Word Generation* program to develop the *Academic Literacy* curriculum: (a) ask essential questions to frame a unit, and (b) select academic vocabulary that spans across content areas. Appendix B highlights three essential questions in this sample unit and three academic vocabulary words that span across all content areas (e.g. describe, imagine, organize). Because *Word Generation* was

developed for middle school students, THS faculty used Burke & Gilmore's (2015) *The A-List: Essential Academic Words*, which was designed from grades 6-12, to select critical vocabulary words within each instructional unit. They composed the *A-List* with fifteen academic words that were used with high frequency across all content areas (i.e. Tier Two words). The words reflected what students should be able to do in academic contexts, so they reflect both academic vocabulary and academic literacy. All fifteen of Burke & Gilmore's (2015) *A-List* words were included in the full *Academic Literacy* curriculum.

Principle 2: Support multilingual practices to transfer knowledge and skills

Effective translanguaging strategies can be implemented by monolingual or multilingual educators in English-medium programs (Wright, 2019). These strategies include encouraging ELs to use their native languages, in addition to the target language of English, throughout the learning process to discuss content, research topics, listen to presentations, etc. (Wei, 2018). When such translanguaging practices are implemented through strategies such as preview-review, Freeman & Freeman (2008) found that ELs increased their reading comprehension. During both preview and review, ELs used their native language to briefly discuss a text to activate prior knowledge or build background and to check for comprehension after reading a text in English.

Academic Literacy includes activities and assessments that provide time and space for ELs to employ their native languages while developing English proficiency and learning content. While not explicit in the curriculum, teachers were expected to have students discuss the essential questions in their native languages with their peers. Students were encouraged to use translated texts, as needed, to support any of the fiction

or non-fiction reading in the course. ELs were also allowed to conduct research in their native language, which was encouraged for the sample unit assessment (Appendix B) where they researched a myth or legend from their home country.

Additionally, both CUP and translanguaging theories highlighted the benefits of supporting multilingual learners to engage in their full range of linguistic and cognitive skills. In their comprehensive review of the literature on the relationships between native language literacy and the development of English, Dressler & Kamil (2006) supported the CUP theory. They specifically mentioned that one way to support bridging native and new languages is through vocabulary instruction focusing on cognate relationships. ELs receiving such instruction achieved “higher levels of reading proficiency, cognitive flexibility, and metalinguistic awareness” (p. 215). Beck et. al. (2013) also concurred that ELs need explicit and repeated vocabulary instruction using Tier Two words (i.e. Burke and Gilmore’s *A-List*) across multiple contexts, both oral and written, and incorporating cognate instruction. While not explicit in Appendix B, teachers of *Academic Literacy* were expected to incorporate cognates alongside Burke and Gilmore’s *A-List* of Tier Two words.

Principle 3: Build background on U.S. cultural norms with a culturally responsive curriculum that validates student’s home culture and language and connects to their previous experiences

It is widely supported notion that background knowledge is essential in literacy and language education (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). While building background is essential for all learners, it is particularly important for ELs who might not have had exposure to U.S. cultural norms

embedded within ELP assessments (Calderón et al., 2020). Building background on U.S. cultural norms is linked to the “knowledge is power” framework, where people who have exposure to various academic concepts, information, or terminology were more likely to have higher paying and higher status occupations later in life (Sticht et al., 1997, p. 3).

Although building background on U.S. cultural norms is necessary, it is important for educators to simultaneously honor home languages and cultures through culturally responsive practices (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2014). For example, Edyburn et al., (2019) conducted a case study to compare the language instruction and culturally responsive practices in three dual language classrooms in California. These researchers used observations, interviews, and language proficiency assessments to measure the impact the instruction had on student performance. Students in the more culturally responsive classrooms with explicit language instruction outperformed their like-peers on both the Spanish and English standardized assessments.

The *Academic Literacy* curriculum included numerous opportunities for students to build background knowledge on U.S. cultural norms. For example, ELs learned to annotate nonfiction texts through reading about topics such as Uncle Sam and Lady Liberty. The purpose of embedding such topics was to provide ELs exposure to U.S. background knowledge that they might later experience on the ELP assessment or outside of school context. Additionally, all instructional units within *Academic Literacy* include an evaluation of ethos based on cultural norms. In the sample unit (Appendix B) ELs must evaluate the credibility of eyewitness accounts. In this space, ELs discuss their own cultural norms, U.S. cultural norms, and connect their perspectives to lived experiences.

Academic Literacy also included culturally responsive practices by using student-selected topics throughout the unit and within the summative unit assessment. Appendix B provides an example of essential questions that provide space for students to discuss how myths and legends reveal information about peoples' cultures. The unit assessment allows students select a myth or legend from their home countries. In these ways, students discussed both their home cultures and U.S. culture as they engaged with texts to build background on U.S. cultural norms while validating their own culture.

Principle 4: Provide curricular and instructional flexibility, diversity of topics, autonomy, and structure to motivate student engagement and promote meaningful connections to content

Content and ELP standards drive assessment and educational practices. Ideally, language and literacy instruction are skillfully embedded within each content area. Although a long history of sub-par programming for ELs has revealed that this ideal is not the norm (Calderón et al., 2020), the intent of these standards remains: support ELs to overcome language barriers in order to reach rigorous content area standards and be college and career ready by high school graduation (Lee, 2018; USDOE, 2017). The federal legislation requires that English language proficiency (ELP) standards align with content area standards in ELA, math, and science. Lee (2018) evaluated the ELP standards from WIDA and ELPA21, the two biggest consortiums in the United States, and compared the language and cognitive demands of ELP standards to content area standards. Her findings suggest that ELP standards fall far below grade-level content and cognitive expectations. Therefore, Lee (2018) recommended collaboration between content area and EL educators to ensure high-quality and rigorous education for ELs.

The development of *Academic Literacy* addressed the call for collaboration between content area and EL teachers. The curriculum was designed by five educators at THS: three educators were dually certified in Secondary English and TESOL, one educator was dually certified in Secondary Social Studies and TESOL, and one educator was dually certified in Secondary Social Studies and Secondary English. The course was taught by two teachers, one English/TESOL certified, the other social studies/TESOL certified. The English educators developed the fiction aspects of the course while the social studies educators developed the non-fiction. Their expertise in their respective content areas, and their experience teaching college preparatory courses outside of the EL program, led to the development of a rigorous course curriculum for *Academic Literacy*. For example, English teachers selected instructional materials that non-ELs receive in their grade-level curriculum (e.g. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*) to provide access to content. Likewise, social studies teachers selected materials to highlight the distinction between primary and secondary sources when discussing *Area 51*, as indicated in Appendix B. Additionally, the curriculum included *suggested* topics or materials as opposed to *required* topics or materials to provide teachers flexibility and autonomy to select topics or materials that are relevant and engaging to their students each year.

Jang et al. (2010) investigated the importance of autonomy, support, and structure to increase engagement for high school students. They found that teachers who both supported students' choices, perspectives, interests and needs, as well as provided structure (i.e. clear directions, expectations, and rationale for learning), led to students being more engaged with the learning and the content. These findings were foundational to the development of *Academic Literacy*. Namely, *Academic Literacy* was not a required

course. ELs had the autonomy to choose if the course aligned with their academic interests and needs. Within the course curriculum, the flexibility of topics allowed teachers to work with students to select materials based on students' preferences. Additionally, all unit assessments were designed for students to select their own topics within a structured framework.

Principle 5: Maintain high expectations for all learners as a form of social justice

Designing and implementing instruction with high expectations and high levels of support is a form of social justice for ELs (Gibbons, 2009). ELs have been historically placed in low track coursework or in language remediation that prohibits their access to challenging content area curriculum (Calderón et al., 2020). As a result, performance gaps between ELs and non-ELs remain due to insufficient program placement, scheduling, or access to college preparatory coursework (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016). To combat deficit-model programming, ELs must have access to challenging content in a highly supportive learning environment.

The Academic Literacies Model (Lea & Street, 2006) emphasized that students encounter shifts throughout their educational experience and teachers must adjust their instruction with these shifts. For example, as students make academic progress, they move from simple to more complex academic tasks, such as recording notes on a topic to delivering an oral, research-based presentation on that topic. Throughout these shifts, all learners, including ELs, benefit from scaffolded instruction. Effective instructional scaffolds address language, cognitive, and content area demands (Staeher Fenner & Snyder, 2017). Scaffolds for ELs include materials that are accessible (such as adapted text or text excerpts) native language support, and modeled expectations of tasks

(Calderón et al., 2020) that allow ELs to access the rigor of grade-level texts and tasks. In addition, teacher scaffolding supports ELs through their periods of growth without watering down content (Gibbons, 2009; Singer, 2018).

Academic Literacy embedded scaffolds throughout the curriculum. For example, ELs could have access to text excerpts or adapted texts for fiction or non-fiction materials, native language supplemental resources, audio clips with closed captions, etc. Teacher and other types of modeling were also included in the curriculum. For example, in preparation to deliver an oral presentation, students might watch and listen to several examples; prior to developing a story map, students may read multiple excerpts of model stories. These types of scaffolds allowed students to access challenging content throughout a unit.

Principle 6: Teach, explicitly and implicitly, systems of power, bias, and injustice to build agency and motivation in marginalized students to combat deficit-thinking

Valencia (1997) argued that school failure is mainly attributed to deficit-thinking, which is blaming the student for their shortcomings (i.e. low test performance) as opposed to blaming the educational policies and practices (i.e. biased testing practices) that defined and perpetuated those shortcomings. To combat deficit-thinking, the student should be at the center of education, not the system.

Language as a social action perspective supports this shift and argues that learners must be situated at the center of the teaching and learning process (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014). In this perspective, ELs must have agency to engage in relevant, meaningful, and interactive tasks to build language and skills (van Lier & Walqui, 2012). One example to actualize this perspective is that teachers can provide ELs numerous

opportunities to practice speaking with high-interest, student-selected topics and explicit instruction on academic oral language (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2009). This type of instruction should also coincide with efforts to build ELs' U.S. cultural capital and institutional knowledge by teaching them the "rules of the game" (Hos et al., 2019, p. 112; Solano-Flores, 2016). For example, if the state's ELP assessment uses a scoring rubric that favors long, detailed responses for the speaking domain, which is not a universal communication style, an educator can coach students to elaborate oral responses for the purpose of assessment, but to not sacrifice their own communication style outside of that context. In this way, students understand the purpose of specific tasks and develop agency to navigate bias and systems of power to overcome the bias of the ELP assessment.

Borden (2014) and Delpit (2006) also called upon practitioners to place ELs at the center of learning in spite of the unequitable and biased practices of the U.S. education system at large. Within the classroom walls, educators can value ELs' languages and cultures to build community. Educators can also advocate for ELs by developing and implementing culturally responsive practices that combat deficit-thinking.

Academic Literacy was developed with these perspectives in mind. The course fit within the confines of English-medium programming and federal law, but it also provided ELs time and space to develop their language proficiency in an asset-based program. The curriculum excerpt provided in Appendix B highlights several opportunities for students to share their language and cultural values within the class community. For example, students were asked to share stories of myths and legends from their home countries for both formative and summative learning and assessment

practices. The course was proposed to elevate ELs' linguistic, cognitive, and cultural repertoires, not to remediate their language development or assimilate their cultural dispositions.

Evaluation of *Academic Literacy*

Throughout Chapter 2, I have provided the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of the development of *Academic Literacy*, which also meet *Castañeda's* (1981) first and second prongs of language program requirements for ELs: (1) programs are based on experts' sound educational theory, and (2) programs are implemented according to the theory with sufficient resources and personnel. Prong three of *Castañeda* (1981) requires that programs are annually evaluated for effectiveness, which will be addressed in this study. Additionally, research reveals that we need to evaluate language programs within their local context (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016) and that student test performance is a common measurement of program effectiveness (USDOE, 2017). The research questions of the study will guide *Academic Literacy's* program evaluation.

Research Questions

Through this study, I hope to learn if adding the asset and research-based ELD course, *Academic Literacy*, had an impact on ELs' likelihood to reclassification status or demonstrate growth in literacy on the annual ELP. Therefore, I pose the following research questions to understand the differences in reclassification status and growth rates based on ELs' participation in *Academic Literacy*:

1. Are ELs who participate in *Academic Literacy* more likely to reach reclassification status prior to high school graduation than ELs who do not?

2. Are ELs who participate in *Academic Literacy* more likely to reach reclassification status prior to high school graduation than ELs who do not after adjusting for factors that can impact standardized test performance, such as gender, time in country, and free and reduced lunch status?
3. Are LTELs who participate in *Academic Literacy* more likely to reach reclassification status prior to high school graduation than LTELs who do not?
4. For ELs who do not reach reclassification status, do students who participate in *Academic Literacy* demonstrate more growth in literacy composite scores than ELs who do not?

Student-level Factors That Impact Test Performance

Despite educators' best efforts to use instructional practices to help students overcome the barriers of assessments, student-level factors have historically impacted standardized test performance. Three student-level factors that have been found to impact test performance are time in country, gender, and free and reduced lunch (FRL) status.

Research on the time it takes ELs to develop academic language and reach reclassification revealed common findings. ELs need approximately five to seven years to develop academic ELP for reclassification (Collier & Thomas, 2009; 2017; Cummins, 2008; Thomas & Collier, 2002; Thompson, 2017). ELs demonstrate significant growth in ELP during their initial years in U.S. schools, from one to five years (Collier & Thomas, 2009; 2017; Cummins, 2008; Thomas & Collier, 2002). However, those growth rates plateau after ELs exceed five years in U.S. schools (Thompson, 2015; Thompson, 2017).

The *Brown Center Report on American Education* has reported on student achievement test scores, including performance gaps, over the past twenty years. In 2015,

they reported that females consistently outperform males in language and literacy assessments both domestically and internationally (Loveless, 2015). van der Slik et al., (2015) conducted a global, large-scale study to explore the gender gap in the field of language acquisition. They found that females outperformed males in speaking and writing proficiency, but there was no gender gap in reading and listening.

In 2018, *Brown Center Report on American Education* reported significant and sustained achievement gaps between students on FRL and students ineligible for FRL in both reading and mathematics assessments, where students with FRL scored below their non-FRL peers (Hansen et al., 2018). Other empirical studies yielded similar findings, namely, that students who qualified for FRL had initial achievement gaps in mathematics and readings and those gaps widened as students progressed through the grades (Shin et al., 2013).

Hypotheses

I predict that ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* will have higher reclassification and growth rates than ELs who did not. The increased likelihood of reclassification and growth will hold even after controlling for the factors of gender, free and reduced lunch status, and time in country. However, I predict that ELs who have been in the country six or more years (LTEs) will have the highest likelihood of reaching reclassification status when they participate in the course. These predictions are based on the course leveraging research-based practices to improve outcomes for ELs.

Conclusion

Regardless of the complexities to define and measure academic language and literacy, and the impossibility of eliminating cultural bias in assessments, the ELP

assessment is the gatekeeper of ELs' identification and reclassification status. As such, educators must design programs to support ELs overcome the barriers of assessment and reach reclassification status. The design of *Academic Literacy* addressed the pragmatic need to improve ELs' test performance, but it also included research and asset-based practices to help them more fully develop their linguistic, cognitive, and culture repertoires in the process. This study will measure the effectiveness of such practices as they relate to measured reclassification status and growth in ELP.

Chapter 3: Research Design

Research Site

The research site, This High School (THS), is located in an urban community in New England. THS is its own district, and is considered an independent school of choice with a public-school population. Students from nine towns attend the school with their community funding the tuition (98% of students). From these nine towns, THS accepts all student who choose to enroll. THS also accepts private tuition students and international students (2% of students). THS does have an admission process for international students whereby students demonstrate English language proficiency in written and oral communication.

In 2019, approximately 2,300 students attended THS. The total student population, as reported by THS was 51.3% female and 48.7% male. At that time, the student body was comprised of White (50.2%), Hispanic (16.5%), Black (14.9%), two or more races (8.7%), Asian (7.7%), American Indian or Alaska Native (1%), and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (1%). The majority of students qualified for free or reduced lunch status (51.7%). Identified ELs were 8.3% of the total student population. THS followed the EL identification and reclassification policies outlined in Appendix A.

With regard to performance, THS consistently scored below the State on a variety of measures. Furthermore, ELs at THS demonstrated many opportunity gaps when compared to their non-EL peers with regard to graduation rates, college acceptance rates, and content area testing. Table 1 highlights these gaps.

Table 1

Comparison of Performance between THS, ELs at THS, and State

Performance Measures	THS	ELs at THS	State
Graduation Rate in %	86.1 ^a	78.8	88.3
College Entrance Rate in %	66.5 ^a	44.4	71
Mathematics (PI) ^b	52.8	36.6	75
Science (PI) ^b	59.8	42	75
ELA (PI) ^b	57.3	36.2	75

Note. The data in Table 1 were retrieved from the State’s public portal for education data

^aData includes ELs.

^bPerformance Index (PI) scale ranges from 0-100. The State set the target score at 75.

THS resides in a state that classifies districts into groups, called District Reference Groups (DRGs), to make more meaningful comparisons between similar populations rather than comparing singular districts to the entire state. The State updated the classifications in 2016 based on cluster analysis methodology that included socioeconomic status, parents’ education, parents’ occupation, family structure, lunch status, home language, and gross district enrollment (State Finance Project, 2016). The State identified nine DRGs. THS was classified into a DRG with eight other districts that are described as “larger towns and suburbs” and share the following characteristics: second lowest income level of all other DRGs, second highest rate of low-income students and students from single-parent homes, and second lowest education attainment rate (State Finance Project, 2016, para 3).

The State has used the same ELP assessment and reclassification policy since 2015. Therefore, 2015 is the start date of this study. Table 2 shows the percentage of ELs who achieved reclassification at THS compared to other districts within its DRG and the

State. Table 2 does not include data for 2015 because the DRGs were updated in 2016, so 2015 was excluded from DRG comparisons.

Table 2

Percentage of ELs to Reach Reclassification at THS, State, and within the DRG

Test Year	THS	State	DRGAvg	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7
2016	12.3	9.9	7.3	*	*	8.2	7.8	9.4	5.9	5.2
2017	9.3	6.3	5.9	*	*	4.7	6.1	*	6.9	*
2018	10	7.4	6.9	*	*	13.5	3.5	5.4	*	5.3
2019	5.2	5.1	4.9	*	*	*	3.2	4.6	7	*

Note. The data in Table 2 were retrieved from the State’s public portal for education data.

D1-D7 represent seven different districts within THS’s DRG.

*Data were unavailable for District. The public education portal noted, “State suppressed data to ensure confidentiality.”

Table 2 highlights that between 2016-2019, ELs at THS had a higher percentage of reaching reclassification status when compared to other ELs within the DRG and State. Table 2 demonstrates that within the context of the State, ELs at THS performed well on the annual ELP assessment, which is in contrast to the gaps in performance measures displayed in Table 1.

Table 2 also demonstrates a decrease in reclassification rates across the state, the DRG, and at THS in 2019. Because this study includes reclassification rates in 2019, it is important to note that there were two forms of the ELP assessment, and the second form was released for the first time in 2019. However, analyzing the impact test format has on reclassification rates is outside the scope of this study.

Overview of EL Programming at the Research Site

During the data collection period (2015-2019), all ELs at THS had access to three English-medium program models: sheltered instruction, *Academic Literacy* (ELD, described in Chapter 2), and a New Arrival Center. The sheltered instruction program primarily served ELs who had been in the country between one and four years. The New Arrival Center was designed to support ELs who had been in the country less than one year and had beginner-level ELP. ELs in the New Arrival Center participated in the sheltered instruction program for mathematics, social studies, and science. Additionally, just as all students at THS, ELs had access to a three-tier reading program where reading specialists scheduled students based on results of a standardized reading assessment.

The sheltered instruction program included over twenty diverse course offerings in four content areas (English, social studies, mathematics, and science). The sheltered instruction schedule was purposefully designed for ELs to be able to move within or out of the language program at any point during the school year based on a change in student performance, teacher/parent recommendation, or student request. ELs had great agency to develop and change their schedule, and many students had hybrid schedules between the sheltered instruction program and mainstream classes. Within the sheltered program, all content area courses had two sections to group ELs based on a variety of factors: ELP levels, grade level, content area placement assessments, or teacher recommendation.

The EL Program was staffed with a team of twenty-three teachers, four multilingual specialists (multilingual paraeducators), three designated guidance counselors, and an EL Team Leader who oversaw and instructed in the program. The EL Team Leader held both a TESOL and administrative certification, which aligned with

literature that local level leaders need extensive professional development in TESOL to move schools from “compliance to excellence” and increase student outcomes (Calderón et al., 2020, p. 19). I served as the EL Team Leader at THS from 2009-2018.

The majority of teachers who taught in the EL Program were not exclusively teachers of ELs, but they had access to professional development to support ELs within their content areas. All teachers in the EL program were certified in their base content area (e.g. secondary mathematics), and 40% were fully TESOL and/or bilingual education certified. THS offered free tuition to any teacher who wanted to earn their TESOL certification, and all teachers had access to in-house TESOL professional development. Additionally, THS reimbursed teachers 50% tuition for advanced degrees, and per state mandate, all THS teachers needed to earn their master’s degrees within five years of hire.

It was common practice for all teachers at THS to teach a diverse range of courses (e.g. sheltered instruction, college preparation, AP) and to work with a diverse student population (e.g. racially, linguistically, culturally). All teachers at THS taught a total five courses each year. Of the 23 teachers that taught in the EL Program, 12 taught one course of sheltered instruction (52.3%), nine taught two courses of sheltered instruction (39%), and two exclusively taught ELs in either sheltered instruction or in the New Arrival Center (8.7%). THS maintained the philosophy that all teachers are teachers of ELs, and they staffed their sheltered instruction program with this philosophy in mind.

Sample

Participants in this study included all identified ELs (n=418) at THS who took the annual ELP assessment between 2015-2019. These students originated from 22 different

countries and spoke 15 different native languages. Tables 3 and 4 provide further information about ELs' countries of origin and native languages.

Table 3

Countries of Origin for ELs at THS

Countries	Frequencies	
	Count	% of Total ELs
Haiti	109	26.1
Puerto Rico	76	18.2
China	62	14.8
United States	51	12.2
Dominican Republic	32	7.7
Cape Verde	24	5.7
Guatemala	22	5.3
Other Countries ^a	20	4.8
Peru	15	3.6
Mexico	7	1.7

^a If fewer than five ELs originated from one country, the country was collapsed into the category "Other Countries" to maintain anonymity. The other countries of origin included Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, India, Iran, Jordan, Panama, Philippines, Syria, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

Table 4

Native Languages of ELs at THS

Languages	Frequencies	
	Count	% of Total ELs
Spanish	189	45.2
Haitian Creole	116	27.8
Mandarin	43	10.3
Cantonese	25	6
Cape Verdean Creole	25	6
Other Languages ^a	20	4.8

^a If fewer than five ELs spoke a language, the language was collapsed into the category "Other Languages" to maintain anonymity. The other native languages included Arabic, Bengali, Farsi, French, Gujarati, K'iche, Portuguese, Turkish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Tables 3 and 4 highlight the linguistic and cultural diversity of ELs at THS. The linguistic diversity provides validation that a bilingual program could not sufficiently support all ELs' native languages, so THS elected to use English-medium programming.

Sample's Participation in Academic Literacy

Chapter 2 provided detailed information about the structure and content of *Academic Literacy*, the ELD course at THS. Of the total ELs (n=418), 147 participated in *Academic Literacy* (35.2%), whereas 271 did not (64.8%). Table 5 provides several comparisons between these ELs.

Table 5

Comparisons of ELs Based on Participation in Academic Literacy

		Participation in <i>Ac. Lit.</i>		ELs at THS (n=418)		ELs in <i>Academic Literacy</i> (n=147)	
Descriptives		Yes	No	Count	% Total	% of <i>AcLit</i>	Dif.
Reclass	Yes	41	53	94	22.5	27.9	+5.4
	No	106	218	324	77.5	72.1	
Female	Yes	68	114	182	43.5	46.3	+2.8
	No	79	157	236	56.5	53.7	
Lunch	F/R	121	231	352	84.2	82.3	-1.9
	Paid	26	40	66	15.8	17.7	
Time in Country	< 1 yr	35	65	100	23.9	23.8	+0.1
	1-3 yrs	32	71	103	24.6	21.8	-2.8
	4-5 yrs	38	33	71	17	25.9	+8.9
	6+ yrs	42	102	144	34.4	28.6	-5.8
GPA	Cul.Avg.	2.82	2.54				+0.3

Table 5 demonstrates that there were some student-level differences between ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* and those who did not. These measures will be described in greater detail in the “Measures” section of Chapter 3. Research questions 1-3

will address reclassification rates (rows 1-2). Research question 2 and 4 will control for the student-level differences of gender, lunch status, and time in country (rows 3-10). Research question 3 will address reclassification rates for LTELs, who are represented in the time in country category of 6+ years (row 10).

High school GPA has been found to be a predictor of academic success (Allensworth & Clark, 2020; Hill et al., 2019). ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* had a slightly higher cumulative GPA average than ELs who did not. THS did not provide GPA pre or post participation in *Academic Literacy*, so this information is merely descriptive of the ELs' final recorded GPA while at THS.

Instrument

LAS Links is the primary data collection instrument of the study. *LAS Links* is a criterion-referenced standardized ELP assessment that has two forms in publication, C and D. It is used within the State and at THS as the annual ELP assessment. Like all ELP assessments, *LAS Links*' primary purpose is to measure the four language domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b; USDOE, 2017). From those four language domains, five composite scores are calculated by combining language domains: comprehension (listening and reading), productive (speaking and writing), oral (speaking and listening), literacy (reading and writing), and overall (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 1). Appendix C overviews the language domains and composite scores relevant to the study.

Forms C and D include assessment tasks where students demonstrate content specific academic register, discourse, and vocabulary in school contexts (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b). These tasks are categorized into four context strands: (1) Foundational

Skills, (2) Language Arts, Social Studies, and History, (3) Math, Science, and Technical Subjects (4) Social, Intercultural, and Instructional Communication. All context strands focus on language used for instructional purposes (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 22). The only context strand that includes language for interpersonal purposes is strand four, and interpersonal tasks within that strand are embedded within school contexts (e.g. listening to announcements, requesting information from a teacher, etc.) (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 23).

The State determines when the ELP assessment is administered and which form and format of the test will be used each year. *LAS Links* is administered to all identified ELs in February, and the results are returned to the State and THS in May. From 2015-2018, the State required THS to use Form C. In 2019, the State required THS to use Form D. The test is untimed, per the State, and has been computer-based since 2018. Prior to 2018, *LAS Links* was administered on paper/pencil for reading, writing, and listening and one-on-one (i.e. student and test administrator) for speaking.

Both forms of *LAS Links* include 88 total questions. The 88 questions are divided amongst the language domains and included three types of test questions: multiple choice, short constructed-response, and extended constructed-response. Below identifies the number and types of questions for each language domain:

- Reading: 30 questions (26 multiple choice and 4 short constructed-response)
- Listening: 23 questions (23 multiple choice)
- Speaking 18 questions (17 short constructed-response, 1 extended constructed-response)

- Writing: 17 questions (10 multiple choice, 6 short constructed-response, and 1 extended constructed-response)

All test items went through a field test item pool and met the test developer's minimum requirements for item selection outlined in their technical manual (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 30-45).

LAS Links yields two different numerical values to describe an EL's ELP: (1) scale scores and (2) proficiency levels. Scale scores and proficiency levels are calculated in the four primary domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and the five composite scales (literacy, oral, comprehension, productive, and overall) (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013a). Scale scores are three-digit values that represent proficiency in each language domain. Scale scores are used to measure growth. Proficiency levels range from 1-5 and are a categorization of proficiency within each language domain and composite score. Proficiency levels are used to determine reclassification status. Within the State and at THS, an EL must score a proficiency level of 4 or higher in reading, writing, and overall to reach reclassification. CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC (2013b) labels a proficiency level 4 as "proficient" (p. 17).

ELs in grades 9-12 take the same form of *LAS Links*. However, each grade uses a different scoring table to convert a scale score to a proficiency level. A range of scale scores will fall within one of the five proficiency levels. An EL must earn a minimum scale score (i.e. a cut-off score) to reach a proficiency level band. The variations in cut-off scores do not impact growth, but they do impact proficiency levels for reclassification status. There is a slight increase in the cut-off scores required for reclassification as ELs progress through grades 9-12. Table 6 displays the descriptive statistics of the scale

scores and the cut-off scores required to reach a proficiency level 4, the minimum proficiency level to reach reclassification status.

Table 6

Descriptive Properties of Forms C/D Scale Scores, Grades 9-12

	Obtainable Scale Scores		Scale Score Descriptive Statistics			Cut Off Score for Reclassification (ELP Level 4)			
	Lowest	Highest	Mean	SD	Median	GD9	GD10	GD11	GD12
Reading	390	715	543	55.09	544	581	582	583	584
Writing	310	720	545	51.99	548	549	549	550	550
Speaking	370	650	537	47.17	530	515	516	517	518
Listening	370	730	535	55.79	536	546	550	555	560
Overall	360	703	N/A	N/A	N/A	547	549	551	553

Source: CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b

CTB/McGraw-Hill developed the cut off scores to determine proficiency levels through a two-phase review process: (1) a committee of EL educators determined the English language skills ELs are expected to have within each language domain, at each proficiency level, and across grade spans, and (2) a subcommittee of EL educators collaborated with CTB Content Development and Research staff to review cut scores from grades K-12 and complete a policy-based review of the cut scores (e.g. comparing cut scores from Forms A/B to Forms C/D) (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, pp. 62-65).

Psychometric properties

LAS Links used Item Response Theory (IRT) to calibrate and scale *LAS Links* items. Multiple choice and constructed responses were placed on a “single scale, using the three-parameter logistic (3PL) model (Lord & Novick, 1968; Lord, 1980) and the two-parameter partial credit model (2PPC)” (Muraki, 1992; Yen, 1993 as cited in

CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 46). Multiple choice items were “calibrated and scaled with the 3PL model because it estimates student guessing in addition to item location (difficulty) and allows for differences in item discrimination” (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 46). Constructed responses were calibrated and scaled with the 2PPC model to determine the probability a student would earn a nominal score based on a range of difficulty levels. Each item was examined with Chi-squared to determine goodness of fit. The multiple choice and constructed responses yielded different degrees of freedom, so scores were transformed into z -scores. CTB/McGraw-Hill then eliminated items based on z -scores (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 47-48). Additionally, PARDUX software (Burket, 2002, as cited in CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 46) was used to estimate marginal maximum likelihood of the IRT models (3L and 2PPC) after items were eliminated from the procedures described above. Items that did not show satisfactory fit statistics were also removed (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 48).

LAS Links used the IRT approach to also establish a common scale for grades K-12. The common scale allows for comparison of individual students over time (i.e. track growth) and groups of students within the same grade spans. The common scale also recognized that students have various proficiency levels at all grade spans, so it was not assumed that the higher the grade level the higher the proficiency level. CTB/McGraw-Hill examined the common scale with a common-examinee design where some groups of students received an on-level test form and others received test forms that were higher, lower, or on-level with their grade span. A concurrent calibration method assumed that various abilities were equally distributed in the groups. “This method estimated the mean and standard deviation of the ability distribution for each grade span along with the item

parameters for all items across all levels” (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 49).

Proficiency level 3 was assumed to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. The concurrent calibration method was checked against three vertical scaling methods of the same data sets, and CTB/McGraw-Hill determined that common scaling provided better estimates in terms of standard error, growth, level variability, and separation of scores between grade spans (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 49). Table 6 presented the mean, standard deviation, and highest and lowest obtainable scale scores for grades 9-12 that this method produced.

LAS Links identified several measures of test reliability. Each are highlighted in Table 7.

Table 7

Measures of Reliability in LAS Links, Forms C/D

Domains	Alpha		Standard Error		Interclass Corr. Avg.		Kappa Avg.	
	Form C	Form D	Form C	Form D	Form C	Form D	Form C	Form D
Reading	0.85	0.88	2.39	2.36	1.01	0.97	1	0.93
Writing	0.81	0.82	2.4	2.44	0.93	0.95	0.85	0.88
Speaking	0.93	0.92	2.15	2.38	NA	NA	NA	NA
Listening	0.68	0.76	2.09	2.04	NA	NA	NA	NA

Source: CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b

Cronbach’s alpha was used to measure each test item’s reliability. High-stakes tests are considered reliable when the coefficient alpha is 0.8 or higher in a range of 0.0-1.0 (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 80). Most alpha values in *LAS Links* Forms C/D were greater than 0.8 with exceptions in listening, which were 0.68 for Form C and 0.76

for Form D (Table 7, columns 2-3, row 4). A standard error of measurement determined the reliability of *LAS Links* in each language domain; the smaller the standard of error, the more accurate the test score. All language domains had a standard error of measurement below 2, where listening had the smallest standard of error and writing had the largest (Table 7, columns 4-5, rows 2 and 4). Inter-rater reliability was measured for reading and writing constructed responses to ensure consistency across scorers. Weighted Kappa and interclass correlation were used to determine reader agreement. Strong interclass correlations are greater than 0.9, and all language domains scored above 0.9 (Table 7, columns 6-7, rows 1-2). +1 Kappa means perfect agreement, and Kappa values above 0.8 indicate very strong agreement. The average weighted Kappa for reading and writing items on Forms C and D were all above 0.8 (Table 7, columns 8-9, rows 1-2) (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 80-93 and Appendix C, E, and G).

LAS Links Technical Manual emphasized three aspects of validity that also included reliability, and were informed by the approach of an assessment use argument (AUA; Bachman & Palmer, 2010 as cited in CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 95) (1) consistency of test records (e.g. consistent results regardless of testing location, form, etc.), (2) appropriateness of score interpretations (e.g. scores are generalizable beyond the test and impartial across subgroups), and (3) fairness of decisions (e.g. how people use the scores should reflect current educational/societal values and laws and be equitable). Consistency of test required that test administration and scoring procedures were standardized, the test items were reliably scored, there was internal consistency of the test, and the psychometric properties between Forms C and D were comparable. Appropriateness of score interpretations required that the test measures the language skill

it intended to measure and that the common scale score can be used across grade spans and with different test takers. The IRT method used to calibrate and scale *LAS Links* items addressed this measure of validity. Fairness of decisions required that cut scores are accurate to inform decisions. Collaboration between test users and CTB/McGraw-Hill is required to ensure the assessment meets policy requirements, and local level practices support fair score-based decisions (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013b, p. 95-98).

Measures

THS provided the scale scores and proficiency levels for every EL who took *LAS Links* between 2015-2019. THS also provided additional data that I requested to control for student level variables, such as gender, lunch status, time in country, and other student level descriptors, such as native language, country of origin, and GPA. Finally, THS indicated whether or not the EL ever participated in the course *Academic Literacy*. The data were organized into wide data set in which each deidentified EL had a unique ID number with one row of data that contained the aforementioned variables.

To increase the strength of analysis, I used multiple years of data to compare ELs' reclassification and growth rates at THS. Multiple years of data provides a more precise observation of the impact participation in *Academic Literacy* had on annual ELP performance because testing occurs in February, which is halfway through the academic year. Therefore, it is likely to assume that a student who took *Academic Literacy* in year 1 might demonstrate more significant growth or reach reclassification after full participation in the course, which would be during testing year 2.

Outcomes

RECLASS is a categorical variable that represents whether the EL reached the state's reclassification status, which is defined in Appendix A. I included a dummy variable set (0 = no, 1 = yes). The dependent variable is binary because there are only one of two outcomes possible.

GROWTH is a continuous variable that determines if the EL is making progress in ELP even if they have not met the state's reclassification requirements. If an EL reached reclassification status during the data collection period, they were excluded from the analysis of growth because their reclassification status inherently demonstrated growth in ELP. A growth rate could only be calculated for an EL who had at least two or more years of testing data. After eliminating ELs who reached reclassification status or had less than two years of testing data, 183 ELs remained out of the original 418 (44%). I calculated a growth score for the remaining 183 by subtracting the student's first literacy composite scale score with the student's last literacy composite scale score. Growth data included both positive and negative numbers.

I used literacy composite scale to determine growth because the State's growth model report states, that with regard to measuring growth, "composite scores are inherently more reliable than the individual domain-level scores because they are based on student performance on a larger number of items" (State Department of Education, 2017, p. 9). Additionally, the literacy composite score reflects the combined domains of reading and writing, two of the three language domains that determine reclassification. Therefore, the literacy composite score provides insight as to whether the EL is was making gains in ELP to move them closer to reclassification status.

As part of data preparation to analyze growth in literacy composite scores, I compared the descriptive statistics of ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* to those who did not. These statistics are included in Table 8.

Table 8

Comparison of Growth in Literacy Based on Participation in Academic Literacy

Descriptives	Participation in <i>Academic Literacy</i>	
	Yes	No
N	82	101
Mean	11.2	12.8
Median	14.5	16
Standard Deviation	42.4	38.3
Minimum	-120	-70
Maximum	173	142
Range	293	212

Table 8 highlights that ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* had a lower mean and median growth score than those who did not (Table 8, columns 2-3, rows 2-3). Those who participated also had a wider range and greater standard deviation of literacy growth scores than ELs who did not (Table 8, columns 2-3, rows 4 and 7). The wide range of growth scores can also be identified in the minimum and maximum growth scores for each group, where ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* had a lower minimum score and a higher maximum score than ELs who did not (Table 8, columns 2-3, rows 5-6). In Chapter 4, I will discuss the difference in growth scores.

Predictor Variable

ACLIT is a categorical variable that represents if the student ever participated in *Academic Literacy* or not. I included a dummy variable set (0 = no, 1 = yes).

Control Variables

FEMALE is a categorical variable that represents the EL's gender. EL's parents or guardians report gender to THS at initial registration. Male or Female were the only two gender selections in this data set. I included a dummy variable set (0 = male, 1 = female).

LUNCH is a categorical variable determined by students' socio-economic status and their completion of paperwork to qualify for free or reduced lunch. THS provided ELs' lunch status as F (free), R (reduced), or P (paid). I combined F and R into one category. I then included a dummy variable set (0 = paid lunch, 1 = free or reduced lunch).

TIMECAT is a categorical variable used to represent the length of time an EL lived in the United States when they took *LAS Links* for the first time at THS. At initial school registration, ELs' parents or guardians report their date of entry into the United States. THS provided this date in month/day/year format. I created four distinct time in country categories to align with the research on the length of time it takes to develop academic English and the determination of LTEL status: less than 1 year, 1-3 years, 4-5 years, and 6+ years (Calderón et al., 2020; Cummins, 1979; 2008). Students' TIMECAT was calculated from the student's first testing date at THS, which occurred February 1 each year. So, if the student took *LAS Links* in 2015, their TIMECAT was calculated based on the difference between February 1, 2015, and their date of entry into the United States. TIMECAT is a control for research question 2 and question 4 and is a predictor for question 3. ELs with the TIMECAT 6+ years were considered LTELs for research question 3.

Data Analysis

To complete a program evaluation of the asset and research-based ELD course, *Academic Literacy*, I needed to learn about ELs' likelihood of reaching reclassification status or demonstrating growth in literacy on the annual ELP. Therefore, I posed the following research questions to understand the differences in reclassification status and growth rates based on ELs' participation in the course.

Research Questions

1. Are ELs who participate in *Academic Literacy* more likely to reach reclassification status prior to high school graduation than ELs who do not?
2. Are ELs who participate in *Academic Literacy* more likely to reach reclassification status prior to high school graduation than ELs who do not after adjusting for factors that can potentially impact standardized test performance, such as gender, time in country, and free and reduced lunch status?
3. Are LTELs who participate in *Academic Literacy* more likely to reach reclassification status prior to high school graduation than LTELs who do not?
4. For ELs who do not reach reclassification status, do students who participate in *Academic Literacy* demonstrate more growth in literacy composite scores than those who do not?

To answer research questions 1-3, I will use binomial logistic regression to observe, through statistical analysis, if ELs who participate in *Academic Literacy* have a higher likelihood of reaching reclassification status than ELs who do not. Binominal

logistic regression measures the log of odds (probability) that an EL reached reclassification over the course of the study.

I propose the following hypothesized population model for research question 1:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{RECLASS}_i | \text{ACLIT}_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ACLIT}_i$$

Regression allows the study to include several covariates to control for and strengthen the analysis of the study (Gelman & Hill, 2006). Question 2 will control for variables that could impact ELs' performance on an ELP assessment, such as gender (Loveless, 2015; van der Slik et al., 2015), time in country (Cummins, 1979; 2008; Thomas & Collier, 2002; 2009), and lunch status (Kieffer, 2012; Shin et al., 2013; Snow et al., 1998).

For research question 2 and 4, the vector of student level fixed effects (FEMALE, LUNCH, and TIMECAT) will be labeled as $\mathbf{X}$ in the hypothesized population models. All statistical analyses will be conducted in Jamovi (2020).

For research question 2, I propose the following hypothesized population model to control for student level fixed effects:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{RECLASS}_i | \text{ACLIT}_i, \mathbf{X}_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ACLIT}_i + \beta \mathbf{X}_i$$

For research question 3, I propose the following hypothesized population model where TIMECAT is a predictor:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{RECLASS}_i | \text{ACLIT}_i, \text{TIMECAT}_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ACLIT}_i + \beta_2 \text{TIMECAT}_i$$

I will interpret the fitted log odds and estimated marginal means to understand the magnitude and direction of the relationship between reclassification and $\beta_1 \text{ACLIT}_i$ for questions 1 and 2. For question 2, I will observe if the relationship holds and if it yields a more precise estimate by adding student level fixed effects $\beta \mathbf{X}_i$. I will discuss the

deviance, AIC, BIC and p values interpret the precision of the estimates. I will use those same measures to observe the relationship between reclassification, $\beta_1 ACLIT_i$, and $\beta_2 TIMECAT_i$ for question 3.

For question 4, I will use linear regression to measure ELs' growth in literacy composite scores. Linear regression also allows me to control for student-level fixed effects βX_i .

$$GROWTH_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ACLIT_i + \beta X_i + \varepsilon_i$$

I will compare the magnitude and direction of the estimate of $\beta_1 ACLIT_i$ to describe the difference, if any, in $GROWTH_i$. I will add βX_i to the model to observe if the precision of the model strengthens by interpreting the R^2 value with each model.

Chapter 4: Findings

Overview

In this chapter, I will provide key findings for each research question organized by the order in which they were posed. For each question, I will describe the findings based on the tables and plots generated in Jamovi, version 1.6 (2020). These findings are based on the fitted statistical models I presented in Chapter 3. For Research Questions 1 and 3, I will first explore the marginal means of the data to establish the pattern in the data and discuss its related figures. I will then describe the fitted model table. In Chapter 5, I will present further discussion on these findings.

Research Question 1

Are ELs who participate in Academic Literacy more likely to reach reclassification status prior to high school graduation than ELs who do not?

The estimated marginal means table, Table 9, shows the range of likelihood that an EL at THS met reclassification status. On average, the probability an EL would reach reclassification if they participated in *Academic Literacy* was 27.9%, whereas the probability an EL would reach reclassification if they did not participate in *Academic Literacy* was 19.6% (Table 9, column 2) for a difference of 8.3 percentage points. The confidence intervals display positive values in reclassification rates for students that range from 15.3-24.7% (Table 9, columns 4-5, row 1). There is slight overlap in the confidence intervals when the probability of reclassification falls between 21.2-24.7%, which is displayed in Table 9 and Figure 2. Additionally, the estimate is much greater than the standard error, which indicates strong accuracy of the measurement.

Based on the fitted results of a binomial logistic regression model (Table 10), I found that, on average, ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* were 1.6 times more likely to reach reclassification status than ELs who did not (Table 10, column 6, row 2). The odds of *Academic Literacy* students reaching reclassification compared to non-*Academic Literacy* students ranged from equal odds (i.e. 1) to 2.5 times more likely based on their participation in the course (Table 10, columns 7-8, row 2). The observed relationship between participation in *Academic Literacy* and reaching reclassification was marginally significant ($p \leq 0.052$).

The data strongly suggests that ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* reached reclassification at the same rate or higher than ELs who did not. Additionally, the average probability of reaching reclassification was higher for *Academic Literacy* students compared to non-*Academic Literacy* students.

Table 9

Estimated Marginal Means for Reclassification and Participation in Academic Literacy

ACLIT				
ACLIT	Prob.	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
0	0.196	0.0241	0.153	0.247
1	0.279	0.0370	0.212	0.357

Figure 2

Likelihood of Reclassification Based on Participation in Academic Literacy

Table 10

Results of Fitted Log Odds for Reclassification and Participation in Academic Literacy

Model Fit Measures

Model	Deviance	AIC	BIC	R ² _{McF}	Overall Model Test		
					χ^2	df	p
1	442	446	454	0.00834	3.72	1	0.054

Model Coefficients - RECLASS

Predictor	Estimate	SE	Z	p	Odds ratio	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Intercept	-1.414	0.153	-9.2	<.001	0.243	0.180	0.328
ACLIT	0.464	0.239	1.94	0.052	1.591	0.995	2.543

Note. Estimates represent the log odds of "RECLASS = 1" vs. "RECLASS = 0"

Research Question 2

Are ELs who participate in Academic Literacy more likely to reach reclassification status prior to high school graduation than ELs who do not after adjusting for factors that can potentially impact standardized test performance, such as gender, time in country, and free and reduced lunch status?

In Model 1 (Table 10), I found that, on average, ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* were 1.6 times more likely to reach reclassification status than ELs who did not. In Model 2 (Table 11), I found that the rate of reaching reclassification based on participation in *Academic Literacy* holds at 1.6 times more likely after controlling for student-level factors. The range of likelihood expanded slightly from that of Model 1. After adding the controls, the odds of *Academic Literacy* students reaching reclassification compared to non-*Academic Literacy* students ranged from equal odds (i.e. 1) to 2.6 times more likely based on their participation in the course (Table 11, columns 7-8, row 2). The observed relationship between participation in *Academic Literacy* and reclassification was marginally significant ($p \leq 0.06$). However, Model 2 results in better model fit, based on the decrease in the deviance and AIC (Table 11) and the Model comparison p value ($p \leq .001$).

Based on the fitted results of binomial logistic regression model with controls, the average reclassification rates show that ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* had increased likelihood of reaching reclassification status than ELs who did not.

Table 11

Results of Fitted Log Odds for Reclassification, Participation in Academic Literacy, and Controlling for Student-Level Variables

Model Fit Measures

Model	Deviance	AIC	BIC	R ² _{McF}
1	442	446	454	0.00834
2	422	436	464	0.05312

Model Coefficients - RECLASS

Predictor	Estimate	SE	Z	p	Odds ratio	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Intercept	-1.675	0.376	-4.45	< .001	0.187	0.0896	0.392
ACLIT	0.466	0.251	1.86	0.063	1.594	0.9750	2.605
FEMALE:							
1 – 0	0.867	0.244	3.55	< .001	2.380	1.4745	3.840
LUNCH:							
1 – 0	-0.740	0.313	-2.36	0.018	0.477	0.2585	0.881
TIMECAT:							
1-3 Yrs – < 1 Yr	0.543	0.362	1.50	0.134	1.722	0.8466	3.502
4-5 Yrs – < 1 Yr	0.473	0.406	1.16	0.244	1.605	0.7238	3.557
6+ Yrs – < 1 Yr	0.612	0.349	1.75	0.079	1.844	0.9310	3.654

Note. Estimates represent the log odds of "RECLASS = 1" vs. "RECLASS = 0"

Research Question 3

Are LTELs who participate in Academic Literacy more likely to reach reclassification status prior to high school graduation than LTELs (i.e. TIMECAT 6+years) who do not?

The estimated marginal means table, Table 12, shows that on average, the probability a LTEL would reach reclassification if they participated in *Academic Literacy* was 23.8%, whereas the probability a LTEL would reach reclassification if they did not participate in *Academic Literacy* was 23.5% (Table 12, column 3, rows 7-8) for a difference of 0.3 percentage points. The confidence intervals for LTELs to reach reclassification based on participation in *Academic Literacy* is wide and includes significant overlap. For example, the confidence intervals overlap when the probability of reclassification falls between 16.3-32.7% (columns 5-6, rows 7-8), which is displayed in Table 12 and Figure 3.

I added the interaction effect of ACLIT * timecat to the fitted log odds model. LTELs are students who were in the TIMECAT 6+ years. Table 13 shows that adding the interaction effect to the model did not improve model fit as it increased the AIC and BIC (Table 13, columns 3-4, rows 1-2). However, there is slight increase in the R² (Table 13, column 5, rows 1-2). Together, the strength of the model fit and the data yield inconclusive results.

Gelman et al., (2020) requires sixteen times the sample size to determine interaction effects. The data in this study do not provide enough evidence to answer Research Question 3. Therefore, given the data, I cannot determine if participation in *Academic Literacy* had an impact on LTELs reaching reclassification status at THS.

Table 12

Estimated Marginal Means for Reclassification, Participation in Academic Literacy, and Time in Country

Estimated Marginal Means - ACLIT * timecat

timecat	ACLIT	Probability	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
< 1 Year	0	0.123	0.0407	0.0628	0.227
	1	0.257	0.0739	0.1396	0.425
1-3 Years	0	0.225	0.0496	0.1429	0.337
	1	0.313	0.0819	0.1771	0.490
4-5 Years	0	0.152	0.0624	0.0645	0.316
	1	0.316	0.0754	0.1889	0.478
6+ Years	0	0.235	0.0420	0.1630	0.327
	1	0.238	0.0657	0.1332	0.389

Figure 3

Likelihood of Reclassification Based Interaction of Academic Literacy and Time in Country

Table 13*Fitted Log Odds of Interaction Effects for Academic Literacy and Time in Country*

Model Fit Measures

Model	Deviance	AIC	BIC	R ² _{McF}
1	439	449	469	0.0143
2	437	453	485	0.0198

Model Comparisons

Comparison				
Model	Model	χ^2	df	p
1	- 2	2.45	3	0.484

Model Coefficients - RECLASS

Predictor	Estimate	SE	Z	p	Odds ratio	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Intercept	-1.9636	0.378	-5.201	< .001	0.140	0.0670	0.294
ACLIT:							
1 – 0	0.9027	0.540	1.670	0.095	2.466	0.8551	7.114
TIMECAT:							
1-3 Years – < 1 Year	0.7289	0.472	1.542	0.123	2.073	0.8211	5.232
4-5 Years – < 1 Year	0.2408	0.615	0.391	0.695	1.272	0.3811	4.247
6+ Years – < 1 Year	0.7850	0.444	1.768	0.077	2.192	0.9185	5.233
ACLIT * timecat:							
(1 – 0) * (1-3 Years – < 1 Year)	-0.4565	0.720	-0.634	0.526	0.634	0.1545	2.597
(1 – 0) * (4-5 Years – < 1 Year)	0.0468	0.806	0.058	0.954	1.048	0.2159	5.086
(1 – 0) * (6+ Years – < 1 Year)	-0.8872	0.691	-1.283	0.199	0.412	0.1062	1.596

Note. Estimates represent the log odds of "RECLASS = 1" vs. "RECLASS = 0"

Research Question 4

For ELs who do not reach reclassification status, do students who participate in Academic Literacy demonstrate more growth in literacy composite scores than those who do not?

I calculated growth scores in literacy for ELs who met the following criteria: (1) they did not reach reclassification status, and (2) they had at least two or more years of testing data in literacy composite scores. The restrictions of those two criteria reduced the original sample of 418 ELs to 183 ELs. Table 8, in Chapter 3, overviewed the descriptive statistics of growth in literacy composite scores, which included a wide range of positive and negative scores.

To answer Research Question 3, I fitted a model including the fixed effects of student-level factors and an interaction effect between ACLIT * timecat. I added the interaction effect because adding TIMECAT in Model 4 increased the R² value from approximately 3% to 10%, so time in country was a factor to explain the variance in scores. When I added the interaction in Model 5, it accounted for 13% of the variability in ELs' growth scores.

Table 14, row 2 shows that students who participated in *Academic Literacy* scored, on average, 0.23 standard deviation units higher than their peers, controlling for student level variables. The confidence interval shows that participation in *Academic Literacy* yields more positive growth scores than negative (-0.14 to 0.61). While the observed difference (19.05) was not statistically significant ($p = .212$), I note that the magnitude of the estimate is about 1.25 times that of the standard error (15.22) (Table 14, row 2). As such, there is some statistically compelling evidence that ELs who

participated in *Academic Literacy* with less than one year in the country out performed their peers.

Figure 4 shows that there is a positive relationship between growth in literacy and *Academic Literacy* for time categories <1 year and 4-5 years. Conversely, there is a negative relationship between growth in literacy and *Academic Literacy* for time categories 1-3 years and 6+ years.

Overall, Model 5 establishes a positive, yet complex relationship between growth in literacy and participation in *Academic Literacy*. I will present further discussion on these findings in Chapter 5.

Table 14

Results of Growth in Literacy Based on Participation in Academic Literacy

Model Fit Measures

Model	R	R ²
1	0.0204	4.16e-4
2	0.1742	0.0303
3	0.1747	0.0305
4	0.3155	0.0995
5	0.3562	0.1269

Model Comparisons

Comparison							
Model	Model	ΔR^2	F	df1	df2	p	
1	-	2	0.0299	5.5562	1	180	0.019
2	-	3	1.61e-4	0.0298	1	179	0.863
3	-	4	0.0690	4.4955	3	176	0.005
4	-	5	0.0274	1.8089	3	173	0.147

Model Coefficients - GROWTH

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	Stand. Est	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Intercept ^a	8.34	14.00	0.59	0.552			
ACLIT	19.05	15.22	1.25	0.212	0.236	-0.136	0.610
Female:							
1 – 0	14.20	6.03	2.35	0.020	0.354	0.057	0.650
Lunch:							
1 – 0	2.92	9.42	0.31	0.757	0.072	-0.390	0.536
timecat:							
1-3 Years – < 1 Year	13.55	13.50	1.00	0.317	-0.014	-0.486	0.456
4-5 Years – < 1 Year	-17.43	14.33	-1.21	0.226	-0.566	-1.051	-0.080
6+ Years – < 1 Year	-6.32	12.48	-0.50	0.613	-0.556	-0.998	-0.115
ACLIT * timecat:							
ACLIT * (1-3 Years – < 1 Year)	-31.55	19.04	-1.65	0.099	-0.392	-0.859	0.074
ACLIT * (4-5 Years – < 1 Year)	-11.77	19.41	-0.60	0.545	-0.146	-0.622	0.330
ACLIT * (6+ Years – < 1 Year)	-35.74	18.04	-1.98	0.049	-0.444	-0.886	-0.001

^a Represents reference level

Figure 4

Direction of Growth Rates Based on Interaction of Academic Literacy and Time in Country

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

I designed the course, *Academic Literacy*, to improve the English-medium programming at THS. I added the course at THS because ELs were expressing frustration with their academic struggles outside of our language assistance program. Their struggles aligned with the nation-wide trend that subpar programs have been found to inadequately support ELs' development of ELP and access to grade-level content (Callahan & Hopkins, 2017; Koelsh, et al., 2014). To combat this trend, I developed *Academic Literacy* to leverage asset and research-based practices to build ELs' academic language, literacy, and U.S. cultural capital to assist them in overcoming the barriers of the ELP assessment prior to high school graduation. In these ways, the creation of *Academic Literacy* adhered to the first two prongs of federal law *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981), which requires that language programs are (1) based on experts' sound educational theory, and (2) implemented according to the theory with sufficient resources and personnel (USDOE, OCR & USDOJ, 2015).

In this current evaluation study, I address *Castañeda's* (1981) third prong, which is that language programs are annually evaluated for effectiveness (USDOE, OCR & USDOJ, 2015). Therefore, in this study, I evaluated the effectiveness of adding *Academic Literacy* to the preexisting English-medium program at THS. The evaluation reveals if *Academic Literacy* supported ELs' in reaching reclassification status or demonstrating growth in ELP. I used ELs' performance on the annual ELP assessment as the measurement of the course's effectiveness based on previous literature that found ELs' reclassification status and growth, as measured by the ELP assessment, to be predictors

of ELs' academic success (Callahan, 2016; Carlson & Knowles, 2016; Cimpian et al., 2017; Estrada & Wang, 2018; Haxton & O'Day, 2015; Saunders & Marcelletti, 2013; Thompson, 2017).

In this chapter, I will provide a summary of the findings presented in Chapter 4. I will then discuss the significance of these findings as they relate to policy and practice for ELs. I will also overview the limitations and assumptions of the study and present suggestions for future research. I will conclude with final thoughts on the importance of improving language programming for ELs.

Summary of Findings

The main finding of this study is that ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* were as likely or up to 2.6 times more likely to reach reclassification status than ELs who did not (Research Questions 1 and 2, Tables 10-11). On average, ELs who participated were 1.6 times more likely to reach reclassification status. In this study, ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* had a 27.9% chance of reaching reclassification, whereas the ELs who did not had a 19.6% chance of reaching reclassification (Table 9). These findings remained stable even after controlling for student-level factors that impact test performance, such as gender, free and reduced lunch status, and time in country (Table 11).

Although there may not have been a large enough sample size to determine if participation in *Academic Literacy* supported LTELs in reaching reclassification status (Research Question 3), the data showed that participation in *Academic Literacy* did not negatively impact LTELs' likelihood of reaching reclassification. Those who

participated had a 23.8% chance of reaching reclassification whereas those who did not had a 23.5% chance.

There were mixed results with regard to growth scores (Research Question 4). ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* had a wide range of growth scores (-120-173) with both positive and negative gains (Table 8). On average, ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* scored 0.23 standard deviation units higher than their peers on their literacy composite scores (Table 14). However, the difference in growth scores between the groups is not statistically significant (Table 14).

The relationship between growth and the interaction of *Academic Literacy* and time in country accounted for 13% of the variance in the scores (Table 14). There were both positive and negative relationships when considering this interaction effect. Time categories <1 year and 4-5 years demonstrate a positive relationship between growth in literacy and participation in *Academic Literacy*. Conversely, time categories 1-3 years and 6+ years demonstrate a negative relationship between growth in literacy and participation in *Academic Literacy* (Figure 4).

Discussion

High school ELs face particular challenges in attaining ELP, included limited time to access language assistance programs to gain proficiency and isolated program models. Research indicates several problems associated with offering one type of ELD model in isolation at the high school level. These problems include limiting ELs' access to grade-level content, retaining EL-status throughout their high school career, prohibiting ELs from completing graduation requirements if the courses are non-credit bearing, and reducing ELs' exposure to trained and certified teachers (Calderón et al.,

2020; Callahan, 2016; Mellom et al., 2018; Newcomer & Collier, 2015; Umansky, 2016).

This study reveals that harnessing benefits of both English-medium models through an asset and research-based ELD course to the preexisting sheltered instruction model at THS positively impacted ELs' development of ELP for reclassification while at THS.

Theory and research in English language learning outline a host of effective instructional practices for ELs. I developed *Academic Literacy* utilizing a wide range of theoretical frameworks and empirical studies to employ multiple perspectives and approaches to support ELs' with overcoming the barriers of the ELP assessment. These effective practices for language development ranged from explicit instruction of academic English to leveraging students' home languages (August & Shanahan, 2006; Cummins, 2000; García, 2009; Genesee et al., 2006; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). The effective practices for building U.S. cultural capital ranged from purposeful selection of materials and discussion topics to teach ELs' U.S. cultural capital to providing ELs time and space to share their own cultural and lived experiences (Calderón et al., 2020; Edyburn et al., 2019; Gay, 2018; Hos et al., 2019). Consequently, this study is one example of how to strategically apply theory and research to instructional design. The results of this study, with regard to reclassification status, emphasize the importance of dynamic, and rigorous curriculum that utilizes research and puts students at the center of the teaching and learning process (Gibbons, 2009; Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014; Jang et al., 2010).

These findings reveal a broader problem for LTELs—even with the additional, research-based support of *Academic Literacy*, LTELs still struggled to reach reclassification status while at THS. Participation in *Academic Literacy* did not

negatively impact LTELs' likelihood of reclassification, but fully understanding the relationship between participation in the course and reclassification for this subgroup of ELs was not possible in this study. LTELs at THS followed the nation-wide trend of being a unique and complex population of ELs that need urgent and transformative changes in their educational programs to help them overcome the barriers of the ELP assessment prior to high school graduation (Calderón et al., 2020; Shin, 2020; USDOE, 2016).

Significance

The significance of this study extends to policy and practice at the research site and beyond. Locally, THS can use this study as part of their language assistance program development process and program evaluation mandated under *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981). *Academic Literacy* is a research-based program model (i.e. *Castañeda* prong 1) that was not offered in isolation (Calderón et al., 2011; Callahan & Hopkins, 2017; Koelsh, et al., 2014). The course's effectiveness at THS (i.e. *Castañeda* prong 3) is reflected in this study's findings that ELs' participation in *Academic Literacy* helped them reach reclassification status prior to high school graduation. As a result, these findings are promising for the practitioners at THS. Educators cannot control many student-level factors, like those included in this study, that impact language development and test performance (Brown, 2014; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). However, this study is an example of how instructional practices can positively impact student performance despite those student-level factors.

Beyond THS, this study could address some of the gaps in the literature on effective English-medium programs for high school ELs (Calderón et al., 2011; Callahan

& Shifrer, 2016). If the model and ideology of *Academic Literacy* works within a local district's context, it could inform other practitioners of the potential benefits of using asset and research-based practices to improve English-medium program models for high school ELs.

Limitations and Assumptions

Local level leaders must evaluate their high school EL programs within their local context to determine the strengths and weaknesses in their programming (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016). With this in mind, one limitation of this study is that it is specific to the research site of THS, so the results cannot be generalized to other high school language programs. Therefore, I caution educators against adding an ELD course to their English-medium programming based solely on the results of this study. The ELD course at THS was thoughtfully designed to leverage effective research and asset-based instructional practices by a team of educators with content area and TESOL expertise. I encourage local level leaders to evaluate their own English-medium programs to determine if adding an ELD course with the same foundational concepts of *Academic Literacy* could support ELs' reclassification rates or growth in ELP prior to high school graduation.

A second limitation of this study is that the EL population at THS yielded a wide range of student-level variables that were not included in this study. Variables such as native language literacy, previous educational experiences, motivation, special education status and family support have impacted student's performance on the annual ELP assessment in previous research (Brown, 2014; Collier & Thomas, 2002; 2009; Cummins, 2008; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Therefore, future investigations should include additional student level variables to more precisely measure the impact of

participation in *Academic Literacy*. Additionally, this study may not have included a large enough sample size to detect effects for LTELs. In this study, growth in literacy for time categories <1 year and 4-5 years, and the lack of growth for time category 6+ years align with previous research that showed patterns of steady growth in ELP for ELs up to five years of instruction, and then a plateau of growth after 5 years (Hakuta et al., 2000; Thompson, 2015; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). However, ELs in the 1-3 year/s time category at THS diverged from that trend of positive growth in ELP. They showed negative growth whereas research shows a positive growth. A deeper investigation of this subgroup would help THS explore why ELs in this time category showed negative trends in growth.

A third limitation of this study is that I did not physically observe the instructional practices in the *Academic Literacy* classroom between 2015-2019. As a result, I make the assumption that the *Academic Literacy* teachers followed the course curriculum and the ideology that participation in course was to elevate ELs' academic language proficiency, literacy, and U.S. cultural capital to help them overcome the barriers of the ELP assessment. The instructors should have been valuing students' languages, cultures, and interests when planning daily instruction and assessments, but this evidence was not included in this study.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study was a preliminary look at how adding *Academic Literacy* to the English-medium program at THS impacted reclassification and growth for ELs. While these initial findings are promising, they also point to the need for future investigations at THS and throughout the broader context of English-medium programming at the high

school level. At THS, follow-up studies should include the following components: (a) additional student-level data, (b) observations of *Academic Literacy* classroom, and (c) interviews with teachers and ELs.

Additional student-level data could provide further control for factors that affect student test performance, which would increase our understanding of the impact *Academic Literacy* had on reclassification and growth. For example, I do not know whether the ELs who participated in *Academic Literacy* also participated in the sheltered instruction program or other existing academic programs. Because *Academic Literacy* was not a required course, nor was it offered in isolation at THS, ELs had the autonomy to participate in *Academic Literacy*, or not, as an extension of their other existing academic programming (e.g. sheltered instruction, general education, new arrival center, etc.). Future studies at THS should include which academic programs the EL participated in to more clearly reveal, and to what degree, participation in *Academic Literacy* impacted their reclassification or growth. Additionally, future research at THS should include other student-level factors that impact test performance, such as native language literacy, previous educational experiences, and special education status (Brown, 2014; Collier & Thomas, 2002; 2009; Cummins, 2008; Lightbown & Spada, 2013) to learn if these factors impact reclassification and growth.

Classroom observations could address whether, and to what degree, the teachers of *Academic Literacy* adhere to the course curriculum and implement asset and research-based practices. Follow-up interviews with teachers would provide context to the instructional choices identified during classroom observations. Observations coupled with interviews would more deeply address *Castañeda's* (1981) second prong, which is

that language programs are implemented according to the theory with sufficient resources and personnel (USDOE, OCR & USDOJ, 2015). This study assumes implementation according to the research and asset-based guiding principles of *Academic Literacy*, but observations of the course would more accurately reveal fidelity of implementation.

Interviews with ELs who chose or chose not to participate would help shed light on ELs' perspectives. Through these interviews, educators at THS could learn if there were institutional or personal barriers that prohibited students from taking *Academic Literacy*. For example, institutional barriers could reveal scheduling conflicts or insufficient guidance in course-taking patterns, whereas personal barriers could reveal stigma-related issues of participation in the course or motivation. Interviews with ELs could also reveal whether and how students who participated felt that *Academic Literacy* helped them with success or confidence in their other content area courses.

This additional research at THS would address the fidelity of program implementation (Calderón, et al., 2011; *Castañeda vs. Pickard*, 1981), the motivation of student participation (Jang et al., 2010), and the impact of participation in *Academic Literacy* outside the context of the reclassification and growth (Haxton & O'Day, 2015; Thompson, 2017).

This study is also a call for future research beyond the context at THS, particularly for local level leaders to conduct evaluations of their language assistance programs. Considering that the ELP assessments are the gatekeepers for reclassification and growth, an educator's first step is to explore the linguistic and cultural barriers embedded within their state-selected ELP assessment before designing and evaluating their language program (Brooks, 2015; Cimpian et al., 2017; 2015; Menken & Kleyn,

2010). The ELP assessments have drastically changed since the revision of content area and ELP standards in 2015, and local level curriculum and instruction must reflect those changes (Gottlieb, 2016; Lee, 2018). Educators must understand how well, and to what degree, their local-level curriculum and instructional practices reflect the academic language and institutional knowledge measured on the ELP assessment (Boyle et al., 2015; Gottlieb, 2016; Lea & Street, 2006; Lee, 2018). If there is a mismatch between instructional practices and the state-wide ELP assessment, student performance on the ELP assessment will not be an accurate measurement of a language program's effectiveness (USDOE, 2017).

Within a broader context, additional research must also investigate at how to support LTELs reach reclassification status and/or demonstrate growth in ELP prior to high school graduation (Shin, 2020). As the growing number of LTELs at the high school level is a nation-wide concern, any local level program evaluation should include disaggregating their data by time in country or LTEL status (Calderón et al., 2020).

Conclusion

As mentioned in the preface, the research was one of advocacy and a work of hope. I hope that this research will serve as an example of how local level leadership can improve education for ELs. I recognized that I could not overthrow the U.S. education system that was systematically designed for ELs to fail. However, I did have power and privilege to design the language program ELs had access to during their high school years at THS. With regard to reclassification, the effectiveness of *Academic Literacy* demonstrates that local-level instructional practices *can* help ELs overcome the linguistic and cultural barriers embedded within the federally-required annual ELP

assessment. This study reveals a promising finding: educators, both local leaders and classroom teachers, can have a positive impact on ELs' development of ELP to reach reclassification. Therefore, I encourage local level leaders to do work similar to this study—evaluate your local program for effectiveness and find ways to improve programming for ELs even if when the program already adheres to measure of compliance. Only when educators “are driven by a profound sense of justice and a moral imperative that takes them beyond compliance” can the likelihood of student outcomes improve (Calderón et al., 2020, p. 21).

Appendix A

English Learner (EL) Identification and Reclassification Policies and Procedures at This High School (THS)

Additional Identification and Reclassification Policies Relevant to this Study:

- Parents/Guardians can “opt out” their child of English language services, but they cannot opt out of EL identification (USDOE, 2017).
- Parents /Guardians can “opt in” their child to language assistance services at any time during the identification period (USDOE, 2017).
- ELs remain identified until they meet the state's reclassification criteria (State of X Board of Education, n.d.).
- Reclassified ELs are monitored for four years to ensure the child has successfully mainstreamed into a non-EL academic program (USDOE, 2017).
- Reclassified ELs who do not make academic progress can be retested for ELP to determine resuming English language services (USDOE, 2017).

Appendix B

Excerpt from *Academic Literacy Curriculum Guide*

Unit Title: Myths, Monsters, and Legends	
Essential Questions	ELP Standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do myths and legends convey beliefs of various cultures? Why do people believe in myths, monsters, and legends? What types of evidence are used to prove or justify such stories? 	1. Construct meaning from oral presentations and literary and informational text through grade-appropriate listening, reading, and viewing. 3. Speak and write about grade-appropriate complex literary and informational texts and topics. 7. Adapt language choices to purpose, task, and audience when speaking and writing.
Vocabulary and Morphology	
annotate, archetype, describe, imagine, inference, legend, myth, organize de, dis, mal, cred, er, ize	
Language Domain & Skill Development	Learning & Assessment Activities
Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to annotate fiction and nonfiction text Make an inference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annotate nonfiction texts- identify author's purpose, bias, opinion, and facts Annotate fiction texts- identify foreshadowing, similes, metaphors, and symbolism Analyze mood and tone to make an inference
Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to write a fictional short story Explore organizational strategies to retell a story (e.g. chronological, climactic, spatial) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify an organizational strategy Develop a story map Compose the ending of a fictional story
Speaking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize the importance of audience when giving an oral presentation Focus on fluency: intonation and expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver a short oral presentation (e.g. give an eyewitness account, provide evidence to support a story, argue the importance of oral tradition, etc.) Orally share ending of fictional story to peer
Listening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize the importance of oral tradition on culture and language Evaluate the credibility of eyewitness accounts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen and view examples of oral storytelling Listen to myths and monster encounters through interviews with storytellers and eyewitnesses
Suggested Topics or Materials	
Excerpts from the following (fiction) texts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Legend of Sleepy Hollow</i> <i>The Sword and the Stone</i> <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> "The Monkey's Paw" Excerpts from various (non-fiction) sources:	

- Sea Monsters (e.g. Loch Ness Monster, Monasaurus)
- Land Monsters (e.g. Bigfoot, Yeti)
- U.S. examples (e.g. Uncle Sam, Lady Liberty, The Mothman, Area 51)

Selected texts from student recommendations. Samples might include:

- Chupacabra (Puerto Rico)
- Sūn Wùkōng (China)
- Ti Malice and Bouqui (Haiti)

Unit Assessment Activity

Prompt: Imagine you have been asked to research and retell a myth or legend from your country to include in a book titled: *Monsters, Myths, and Legends Around the World*. Research details of your myth or legend in order to create a one-to-two-page document with text and an image to submit to the agent. You will be graded on the following criteria:

- **Content and Development:** Writing is compelling in depth and tone. Writing captures reader's attention instantly and throughout the piece. The approach is creative and sophisticated. An appropriate image is included.
- **Details and Research:** Many strong and appropriate details show thorough research and incorporate well-chosen facts, concrete evidence, and quotations as necessary. Adds credibility and avoids plagiarism with a correctly formatted Works Cited.
- **Description and Style:** Elements such as imagery, word choice, and vocabulary strongly enhance the description throughout the response.
- **Voice and Clarity:** Clear, logical, and original writing.
- **Conventions and Mechanics:** Syntax, grammar, conventions, and spelling are correct and add to the effectiveness of the piece. Clear formatting adds to the effectiveness of the piece.

Appendix C

LAS Links Testing Domains

Term	Definition
Reading	Measures ability to read content-specific academic texts (e.g. excerpts from a mathematics workbook) or general school tasks (e.g. reading school notices or classroom directions). ELs identify main idea, interpret vocabulary, and understand tone. Questions are multiple choice or “dichotomous constructed-response questions” to complete a timeline, table, or chart using exact words from a reading passage (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013a, p. 11).
Writing	Measures ability to complete sentences with proper grammar, punctuation, or word choice; summarize an academic passage from the reading section of the test; explain a table, timeline, chart, or checklist; and provide an opinion or comparison of content. Questions are multiple choice or an extended response to “personal communication” in the form of email, note, or blog to “describe, explain, report, compare, narrate, persuade, or express ideas” (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013a, p. 13).
Speaking	Measures ability to have a conversation in school or a social setting, identify vocabulary or objects in an academic setting, describe and ask for information in a social and academic setting, make requests in an academic setting, present information with academic vocabulary and content, compare and contrast academic content, and tell a sequential story. Questions are open-ended (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013a, p. 9).
Listening	Measures ability to listen to a variety of audio passages (e.g. “announcements, classroom directions, conversations, content-based discussions,” and excerpts of teacher lectures) to make predictions, identify main idea, interpret idiomatic expressions, and make inferences. Questions are multiple choice. The question stem is provided in audio form only (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013a, p. 10).
Overall	The unweighted scores of the four domains (Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing) and “an indicator of students’ general English language proficiency” (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013a, p. 17).
Literacy	The combination of the reading and writing scores that “can be traditionally defined as the process of gaining and conveying meaning from written text.” The literacy skills are measured through “written text at grade-appropriate levels and through tasks that reflect literacy events and practices that students encounter in social and academic contexts” (CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC, 2013a, p. 17).

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