CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

The Impact of CRT and LatCrit on the Perceptions of Teachers

Implementing an ELD Curriculum with ELL Students with Learning

Disabilities in a K-8th Classroom at an Urban School Setting

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Doctorate of Education, in Educational Leadership

By

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents. For the sacrifices that they both made to ensure that their children had an opportunity for a better life. To my father, for always being an amazing example to his sons of what a father should be. Also, to my mother who gave everything to her children. It is because of your sacrifices that we are the strong individuals that we are today. Thank you so much and I love you both very much.

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Abstract

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There is a gap in the research when it comes to the experiences of English Language Learners

(ELL) with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in the public-school setting. This dissertation

attempts to gain a better understanding of how the English Language Development (ELD)

curriculum that dually identified students (ELL and SLD) receive, can effectively lead to their

reclassification from English Language Learners to English-only students. This qualitative,

phenomenological case study utilized the collection of classroom observation data and teacher

interview data to identify the factors that influence the effectiveness of English Language

Development (ELD) curriculum that is provided to ELL students who are also identified with a

learning disability. The sample consisted of five first grade through seventh grade teachers who

were observed in their classrooms as they delivered an ELD lesson, and a follow-up semi-

structured interview was conducted with each of the teachers. A mixed sampling approach was

used combining criterion sampling and opportunistic approach to recruit potential research

participants from four traditional English-only schools, and thematic analysis provided the

framework to answer the research questions regarding the factors that impact the delivery of the

ELD curriculum, differences in the reclassification rates, and the challenges that arise for teachers working with this student population. Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) provided the lens in which this study explored the ways that so-called race-neutral practices and policies perpetuate racial and/or ethnic subordination. The results of this study show that several factors such as changes, modification, or complete deviations from the ELD curriculum have led to its inconsistent implementation throughout the district. Teacher uncertainty with their ability to deliver the ELD curriculum and a feeling that the ELD curriculum is just another curriculum that has to be included in their already busy schedules were also found to impact the delivery of the ELD curriculum. The teachers in this study discussed their frustrations with a lack of district support and the lack of resources that are available to guide teachers in the delivery of the ELD curriculum. The uncertainty surrounding the federal and state level expectations for the required daily instruction time that should be allocated towards ELD instruction was identified as one of the biggest challenges by the teachers in this study. Other challenges included the varying academic levels of students, the large number of students within a classroom during the ELD lesson, and insufficient time to deliver the ELD lessons. The factors identified in this study are believed to have a direct influence in the delivery of the ELD curriculum and impact the reclassification of Latinx students with learning disabilities.

Chapter I: Statement of the Problem

As an English Language Learner (ELL) going through the public-school system, I encountered challenges early on in my education. However, I also gained valuable insight by overcoming these challenges. Navigating through these barriers was difficult, but I feel as though I was one of the lucky ones. Unfortunately, many ELLs and students with disabilities have not been able to overcome these challenges, which is one of the reasons that I chose a career in education. Several factors such as lower-level tracking, teacher perceptions of ELL student abilities, and a lack of culturally responsive teaching pedagogy have contributed to an inconsistency in supports for ELL students and students with disabilities (Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005). I made a decision long ago that I would do my part to identify and address these barriers. My current role as a bilingual school psychologist has put me in a position to advocate for students who are faced with similar challenges. Now after ten-plus years of working in public schools I realize that there is still so much that needs to be done.

As a student, in my early elementary grades, I recall getting pulled out from regular instruction to join a small group of students in a separate classroom. At the time, I did not understand why my friends would remain in the general education classroom, while I had to be taken away to a different room. I recall that the assignments or activities that I was asked to participate in were very easy and didn't really require much effort on my part. The incentives for my efforts included candy bars or other treats that were frequently and easily earned, which eventually lead to me becoming an English proficient student. In contrast, my brother who should have been one grade level higher than I was but was retained in kindergarten, had a much different experience. For reasons unknown to me at the time, he was placed in a classroom where the majority of students were identified as ELL. I remember wondering why my brother,

who was in the same grade as I was, never shared the same classes as me. What I eventually realized was that our early experiences in education contributed to the type of students we would eventually become. This experience highlights the purpose of this dissertation, which is to examine the delivery of English Language Development (ELD) curriculum and the factors that can influence its effectiveness. I am convinced that my early reclassification as an ELL student put me on a track towards college enrollment after high school, but my brother, who struggled to reclassify eventually earned his high school diploma after attending adult school and went into the military.

When I first began working as a school psychologist, I worked for a semi-rural district with a large Latinx population. One pattern that I began to notice was that many of the ELL students who were identified with disabilities were only assessed in English despite their limited English language proficiency. Bal, Sullivan, and Harper (2013) suggest that Hispanic students and English Language Learners (ELLs) are under- and over-represented at the state level when considering special education identification. When working with these students, I realized that their language barrier contributed to their academic difficulties which often resulted in frustration in the form of disruptive behaviors. Although special education is intended to help students with suspected disabilities by providing additional supports and services, the identification process may also stigmatize these students, segregate them from their peers, expose them to low expectations and a weak curriculum and depress post-school outcomes such as employment options and access to higher education (Harry & Klinger, 2006). Many of these students and their families did not understand why they were placed in these smaller classrooms and why they were presented with tasks that were far below their ability levels. When reviewing their initial

special education evaluation documents, I realized that many of these students were improperly assessed and, therefore, wrongfully labeled as having a disability.

My experiences as a student and now as a school psychologist are what brought me to the focus of this dissertation. I want to investigate the experiences of ELL students with disabilities in the public-school setting. More specifically, I would like to gain a better understanding of how the instruction that they receive (English Language Development curriculum), can effectively lead to their reclassification as English-only students.

Research Problem

In this study, I investigated how the delivery of the English Language Development (ELD) curriculum that is provided to students who are identified as being English Language Learners (ELLs) with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) at four traditional English-only schools can influence the reclassification process. The problem in practice is in the consistency in implementation of the ELD curriculum for students identified with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). This dissertation looks to fill a gap in the research that overlooks effective strategies for increasing the English language proficiency of ELL students with learning disabilities, which should eventually lead to their reclassification (Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005). Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) provide the lens in which this study explores the ways that so-called race-neutral laws and policies perpetuate racial and/or ethnic subordination (Bernal, 2002). By considering these theories, I investigate how race and ethnicity, influence the delivery of the ELD curriculum and the reclassification of Latinx students with learning disabilities.

Throughout my experience in public education I have encountered several approaches/interventions that are used to improve English language acquisition. As an

elementary student I was pulled from my general education classroom in order to work in a small group with other ELL students on basic, almost too easy exercises. However, the setting where I received my general education instruction exposed me to peers who spoke English as their first language. Unfortunately, my brother was placed in a classroom where he could not benefit from English speaking peers. Furthermore, my experiences as a school psychologist working with ELL students who may have been wrongfully identified with disabilities leads me to wonder how, if at all, student strengths and weaknesses are considered when determining appropriate services/interventions. This leads me to question the consistency and fidelity of the supports that are intended to improve English language fluency for students with learning disabilities.

The procedures for the reclassification of ELLs from English Language Learners (ELL) to English-only are proposed at the state level, but it is up to each school district to determine when and how a student meets the criteria (CDE, Section 313). The reclassification criteria as outlined by the California Department of Education (CDE) includes an assessment of language proficiency, teacher recommendation/evaluation, parental consultation, and a comparison of performance with English proficient peers (California Department of Education, 2019). California law requires that an assessment of achievement in English reading, speaking, and written skills be administered to any student with a home language other than English for the initial identification of an ELL student and similar tests are administered on an annual basis in order to measure a student's progress. However, school districts have the option to include achievement scores as part of the reclassification criteria. The California Practitioners' Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities manual (2019) provides specific guidelines for the reclassification of students with disabilities. These guidelines outline the process for reclassifying ELLs with disabilities through the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process.

The state criteria can be modified to include different measures of language proficiency that take student weaknesses into account in order to ensure that reading or writing deficits are considered when making reclassification decisions for ELL students with learning disabilities. The guidelines established by the manual for reclassifying ELLs with special needs includes the use of alternative measures, such as language dominance assessments, formative assessments, progress on IEP goals, and parent/teacher input.

Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate the factors, including race and ethnicity, that influence the effectiveness of the ELD curriculum that is provided to ELL students identified with an SLD, which is intended to help them reclassify. The theoretical frameworks of CRT and LatCrit suggest that racialized and racist practices lead to inequitable experiences and outcomes for Latinx students. Ladson-Billings (1998) argues that current instructional strategies presume that students of color are deficient, which results in a never-ending quest by classroom teachers to find the "right strategy or technique" to deal with "at-risk" students. Therefore, this study compared four schools in order to determine what, if any differences are occurring in the implementation of the ELD curriculum and the processes used for reclassifying all students including those identified with a Specific Learning Disability. These findings can be used to help other schools within the district to identify the effective strategies and techniques that are being utilized at each of the schools in order to increase the number of students who meet the reclassification criteria district wide and to recognize and address how unfair practices may be disproportionately impacting Latinx students. The findings from this study can improve the way that schools within the district and beyond identify, service, and reclassify ELLs with learning disabilities.

There is a disproportionate representation of ELLs in special education in California schools (Lieberman, 2016). During the 2014-2015 academic year, 10% of California students qualified for special education services, but 9.1% were English proficient and 14.4% were ELLs. The data above shows that ELLs were identified for special education services at a rate that is 60% higher than non-ELLs (Lieberman, 2016). Furthermore, there is evidence showing that ELLs are under-identified for special education in the early grades. The data from the 2012-2013 academic year shows that California ELL students were identified for special education at a slightly lower rate in the early grades (first and second grade). Lieberman (2016) indicates that data from the CDE shows that beginning in the third grade, the identification rate for ELLs becomes increasingly disproportionate, and by the time these students make it to the secondary grades, the percentage of ELLs in special education rises to exceedingly high levels. Lieberman (2016) also reports that by 7th grade, the rate of ELLs in special education is more than two and half times that of non-ELLs (23% vs 9.1% for non-ELLs) and by 12th grade, 26.2% of ELLs are in special education, compared to 9.9% of non-ELLs. Furthermore, Lieberman (2016) found that California has an above average percentage of ELLs in special education compared to other states. The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) reports that during the 2011-2012 academic year, California identified 13.3% ELLs, compared to a national average rate of 11.9%. OCR data also shows that California enrolls 35% of all ELLs in special education in the country. Several research studies have shown that ELLs are likely to be identified for special education services in later grades compared to their non-EL peers (Hibel & Jasper, 2012) and ELLs are underrepresented in most disability categories (Morgan et al., 2015). Many ELLs who are not able to easily acquire English language fluency and struggle academically for several years are referred for special education services (McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, & Leos, 2005). Therefore,

when considering these numbers, we can see that current educational practices are resulting in a disproportionate number of ELLs being assessed and identified for special education services in California. This highlights the significance of this study, which hopes to identify effective strategies which contribute to the early and efficient reclassification of ELLs, with or without suspected disabilities.

Research Questions

Given the focus of my research study on the factors that influence the effectiveness of English Language Development (ELD) curriculum that is provided to ELL students who are also identified with a learning disability, the research questions below were created to further investigate this topic.

- When considering Critical Race Theory and LatCrit, what are the factors that impact the delivery of the ELD curriculum for students identified with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) in an urban school setting?

- What contributes to the differences in the reclassification rates in a K-8 setting and how is the IEP process utilized when considering the reclassification of ELL students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)?

- How do teachers implementing the ELD curriculum describe the challenges that they encounter when working with students identified as English Language Learners (ELL) who have also been identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD)?

Overview of Conceptual Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino/Latina critical theory (LatCrit) provide a powerful lens that can help us understand how the subordination and marginalization of people of color is created and maintained in the United States (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). This CRT

and LatCrit lens can be used to explain why Latinx children are tracked into low-level classes, are overwhelmingly the recipients of low teacher expectations, and the importance of using a culturally responsive teaching pedagogy. It is through this lens that this study explored the ways that so-called race-neutral laws and policies perpetuate racial and/or ethnic subordination (Bernal, 2002). By considering these theories, I investigated how race and ethnicity, can influence the delivery of the ELD curriculum and student reclassification at the schools that have been selected for this study. The three research questions listed above show how this conceptual framework informed this study and gave context to how the factors of race and ethnicity influence the reclassification outcomes of Latinx students with disabilities.

Overview of Methodology

The study was conducted at four traditional English-only schools located within the Valleydale School District (a pseudonym) which is geographically located in a suburban area North/East of Los Angeles, California. I selected these English-only school sites for the purpose of comparing the ELD curriculum delivery and the reclassification practices between the schools. A mixed sampling approach was used combining several sampling methods. Criterion sampling uses a set of specific predetermined criteria in order to identify and recruit only those participants that meet the inclusion requirements (Durdella, 2019). This is a qualitative study which utilized a multi-tradition approach (phenomenological, grounded theory, and case study). The problem that I investigated relates to a gap in knowledge and/or practice because a review of the literature shows limited investigations on the effective strategies for increasing the English language proficiency of ELL students with learning disabilities (Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005). Using the mixed sampling strategy, I selected five teachers who are involved in the implementation of the ELD curriculum to participate in a semi-structured interview and

observations. I used the following instruments: a consent form, a semi-structured interview

protocol, and a structured observation protocol. I used a formal invitation in order to detail for

the participants the purpose of the study and included the informed consent form. The

information gathered from the in-person observations provided first-hand experiences of how the

ELD curriculum is delivered, which was used in the triangulation process to support or

contradict the information collected through the interview process and review of the

reclassification data.

Limitations and Delimitations

One of the potential drawbacks of labeling students as ELLs and/or disabled has to do

with how teachers perceive student skills. Which also leads me to wonder if teachers worry

about the number of ELL and special education students on their classroom rosters and how this

could potentially influence their end of year state scores and possibly influence how others

perceive their skills as an educator. Another potential drawback would be the self-perceptions of

the students themselves. If a student is referred to as being an English Language Learner and is

pulled for small group instruction, does this make the student feel as though they are not capable

of learning like the English-only students in their classes? The process for reclassifying students

as English-only can be another barrier to overcome. The criteria is made up of several different

measures that need to be met in order to remove the ELL label from a student. My

understanding of the reclassification process at the district where this study is being conducted is

that a student has to score at the overall intermediate or advanced range on the English Language

Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC) for two consecutive years and maintain a C

average in all academic areas. There is also a teacher feedback component, where the teacher

must acknowledge that the student is ready for reclassification. This criterion might change

depending on the district, because the state has left it up to the individual districts to establish their own criteria.

Another drawback regarding the current ELL identification process has to do with false negatives. These are students who learned Spanish as their first language, but their parents decided not to indicate that on the home language survey during the enrollment process because they were afraid that their students would miss out on English instruction at school. Therefore, these students are sitting in a classroom with a teacher speaking a language (English) that they do not understand and are more than likely struggling in many, if not all academic areas, due to not receiving the much needed ELD curriculum.

Accessing teachers for face-to-face interviews and conducting in-person observations was a challenge due to the safety restrictions that were put in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the methodology section of this dissertation outlines how this data was collected using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during in-person observations and the teleconferencing tool Zoom during the teacher interviews. Unfortunately, there are several limitations related to using PPE such as masks or face covering when conducting in-person classroom observations. The inability to see non-verbal facial gestures of students and teachers and voice clarity are just a few examples of the limitations that were experienced during the classroom observation process. Although conducting the teacher interviews using the Zoom teleconferencing tool made it more convenient for both the teacher participants and researcher, there were some limitations that resulted from collecting the interview data using Zoom. One of those limitations was an inability to pick up on social cues that are not so apparent via video teleconferencing when compared to having a conversation with someone who is in the same room as you. Another limitation had to do with the quality of the audio that was captured using

the Zoom teleconferencing tool. Although the interviews were audio recorded, on several occasions, the responses provided by the teacher participants were unintelligible and could not be included as valid data in this study.

Organization of the Dissertation

The problem investigated in this dissertation relates to the factors that influence the effectiveness of the English Language Development (ELD) curriculum that is provided to ELL students who have been identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and how it's delivery can impact reclassification rates. In this study I highlight the importance of providing effective ELD instruction to ELL students who have been identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) in order to meet reclassification requirements and investigated the factors that prevent these students from meeting the required level of English proficiency, such as lower-level tracking, teacher perceptions, and the importance of using a culturally responsive teaching pedagogy.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation provided some personal background information about myself and the factors that brought me to the dissertation topic that was investigated. The research problem was described in detail followed by the significance and purpose of the study. In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the current literature along with an overview of the theoretical models with a primary focus on the factors that may influence the effectiveness of the ELD curriculum. In Chapter 3, I review the methodology of this study, including the research design, data collection instruments, analysis procedures, and the role of the researcher. In Chapter 4, I present the data that was collected and discuss the themes that emerged from the classroom observations and teacher interviews. Finally, in Chapter 5 I evaluate the research questions

through the CRT and LatCrit lens and offer recommendations for future practices and potential

studies.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

This literature review will connect previous research findings to the three research questions listed below. As I stated in the previous chapter, the purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the factors that influence the effectiveness of the ELD curriculum that is provided to ELL students who are also identified with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). The following questions will be addressed:

- When considering Critical Race Theory and LatCrit, what are the factors that impact the delivery of the ELD curriculum for students identified with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) in an urban school setting?

- What contributes to the differences in the reclassification rates in a k-8 setting and how is the IEP process utilized when considering the reclassification of ELL students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)?

- How do teachers implementing the ELD curriculum describe the challenges that they encounter when working with students identified as English Language Learners (ELL) who have also been identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD)?

This literature review begins by establishing the significance of this study by considering the growing trends in the identification of ELLs nationwide and the connection between ELL identification and referrals for special education services, which results in dually identified students (ELL and identified as disabled through an IEP). Next, the origins of the California English Language Development framework is discussed. The review of the literature that follows shows that there is an existing gap on effective strategies for increasing the English proficiency of ELLs who have been identified with Specific Learning Disabilities. Next, a brief overview of the identification requirements for ELL and Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) is

presented along with a discussion about the reclassification criteria that ELL students with and without disabilities need to meet in order to reclassify as English-only. Several studies are reviewed that will highlight the importance for reclassifying ELLs and the barriers that prevent them from meeting the required level of English proficiency, such as lower-level tracking, teacher perceptions of ELL student (in)abilities, and the importance of using a culturally responsive teaching pedagogy. Finally, the conceptual frameworks of Critical Race Theory and Latino/a Critical Theory are discussed along with an explanation of how they inform the current study.

Study Significance and Research Gap

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2018) the percentage of public school students in the United States who were identified as English Language Learners (ELL) was higher during the fall of 2016 (9.6 percent, or 4.9 million students) than in the fall of 2000 (8.1 percent, or 3.8 million students). Furthermore, a significant percentage of students who have been identified as ELLs will at some point in their education be identified as having a disability (NCES, 2018). In fact, in 2018, 14% of ELLs in the United States were identified with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which was slightly higher than the 13% of the overall population of K-12 students (NCES, 2018). With the number of dually identified students (ELL and IDEA disability) continuing to grow, I was surprised to find a limited amount of research that focuses on examining effective strategies for increasing the English language proficiency of ELL students with learning disabilities (Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005). Therefore, this dissertation looks to fill that gap by investigating the factors that may influence the successful implementation of the English Language Development (ELD) curriculum on students identified with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) in a local public

school setting by considering teacher reports, classroom observations, and reclassification outcomes.

Origins of the California English Language Development Framework

On January 21, 1974, the Supreme Court of the United States made a unanimous decision ruling in favor of 2,000 non-English-speaking, Chinese students stating that the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) illegally discriminated against these students by failing to help them surmount the language barrier (Steinman, 1974). By interpreting the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Supreme Court ruled that the failure of any school system to provide English-language instruction to its non-English-speaking students constitutes a denial of "a meaningful opportunity to participate in the education program" (Steinman, 1974, p. 8). This ruling lead to what is known as the Lau Remedies, which was created by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights in order to ensure that all school districts complied with the rights of non-English-speaking students.

In accordance with the Lau Remedies, California established Education Code, Sections 300-340, which require effective and appropriate instruction methods for pupils, the establishment of language acquisition programs, a structured English immersion program for English learners, and opportunities to be instructed in another language (California Department of Education, 2020). Specifically, section 305 stipulates the process for determining individual student English language proficiency, establishing a language acquisition program, and ensuring that English learners have access to core academic content standards and certified teachers with appropriate authorizations and experience. Section 313 establishes guidelines for the annual assessment of ELL student's English language proficiency and the necessary steps to follow for the reclassification of these students.

In California, English Language Development (ELD) instruction is framed by the 2012 California Department of Education (CDE) state ELD standards (CDE, 2014). Furthermore, in 2015, the state adopted the CDE's English language arts/English language development framework for California public schools (CDE, 2015), which established the "blueprint" for the implementation of California ELA and ELD standards (Umansky, 2018). The CDE provides assistance to local schools and districts to ensure that ELLs acquire full proficiency in English as rapidly and effectively as possible and ensures that ELLs achieve the same rigorous grade-level academic standards that are expected of all students (CDE, 2018). In order to meet these goals, all ELLs are provided with designated and integrated English language development (ELD) instruction targeted to their English proficiency level and appropriate academic instruction in language acquisition program (CDE, 2018). The following program options provide examples of ELD delivery methods but are not limited to these examples. Dual-Language Immersion Programs provide language learning and academic instruction for native speakers of English and native speakers of another language, with the goals of high academic achievement, first and second language proficiency, and cross-cultural understanding (Education Code Section 306 (c)(1)). Transitional or Developmental Programs provide instruction to ELLs that utilizes a student's native language for literacy and academic instruction and enables an ELL to achieve English proficiency and academic mastery of subject matter content and higher order skills. Structured English Immersion programs provide all classroom instruction in English but include a curriculum and presentation designed for students who are learning English.

Identification of ELLs, Learning Disabilities, and ELLs with Disabilities

The term English Language Learner (ELL) is defined as a pupil who is "limited English proficient" by the California Department of Education (CDE, 2019). The English Learner Tool

Kit (2016) that was published by the U.S. Department of Education outlines the criteria that Local Educational Agencies (LEA) must follow for the identification of ELLs. As part of the student enrollment process, all parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s) are asked to complete a home language survey (HLS), which includes questions about the language(s) the student first learned, understands, uses, and hears, and in what context (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The responses on the HLS are used to determine if the student is an English-only speaker or if a placement/screener test needs to be administered to the student. The U.S. Department of Education has determined that the placement/screener test is a valid and reliable assessment (2016) that can be used to determine if students are indeed ELLs. These tests are designed to measure the student's proficiency in all four language domains, which are speaking, listening, reading, and writing (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Once the placement test is administered and scored, parents are provided with their student's English language proficiency level followed by a discussion of available English Language Development (ELD) program options based on the student's areas of need.

Federal guidelines under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) establish the eligibility criteria for special education services (CDE, 2019). According to the California Education code section 56026, an evaluation by appropriately trained school personnel is administered in order to determine if a student meets the criteria as a child with a disability and to determine the educational needs of the student (CDE, 2019). Once parent or legal guardian consent is received, Local Education Agencies (LEA) are required to use a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child, including classroom and playground observations and parent and teacher reports (CDE, 2019). The data that is gathered through assessments and evaluations is used to determine

if the child meets eligibility criteria and to develop the Individualized Education Program (IEP), which is intended to enable the child to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum (CDE, 2019). IDEA has established 13 areas of disability and students should be assessed for eligibility in all suspected areas. The eligibility criteria for Specific Learning Disability (SLD), which is relevant to this dissertation, is outlined below (EC 300.8(c)(10)). SLD is a "disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations" (Electronic Code of Federal Regulations, 2020). A student may be identified as having an SLD if he or she does not achieve adequately for his or her age or does not meet the State-approved grade-level standards in one or more of the eight established academic areas (oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, and/or mathematics problem solving) when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the child's age or State-approved grade-level standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). The student must exhibit a pattern of strengths or weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both, relative to the student's age State-approved grade-level standards, or intellectual development that is determined by the IEP team to be relevant to the identification of an SLD. Also, the IEP team must agree that the student's underachievement is not due to a lack of appropriate instruction in reading or math.

Terms Used in this Dissertation

A review of the literature reveals several variations of the terms that are used to refer to students who have not reached the established levels of English language proficiency. The term "emergent bilingual" is used to refer to students who receive instruction in two languages while

attending a dual language program (Wiemelt & Welton, 2015). A term that is used almost as often as English Language Learner is "English Learner", which appears to be synonymous with ELL when considering how it is used throughout the literature (Umansky & Reardon, 2014; Umansky, 2016a; Umansky, 2016b). The acronym ELL will be used throughout this dissertation to refer to a pupil who is limited English proficient (CDE, 2020). The term "Dually identified" will be used to refer to students who are identified as ELLs and as having one of the thirteen disability categories under IDEA (Umansky, Thompson, & Diaz, 2017). The English proficiency of students that are identified as ELL can vary significantly. Students who enrolled in school post-kindergarten and have been in the United States for less than two years are considered "newcomer" ELL students (Umansky, 2016b). In addition, Umansky (2016b) defines "long term" ELL students as those who have been classified for more than five years and have not been able to meet the reclassification criteria. Finally, "developmental" ELLs are students who have been enrolled in a district between two and five years (Umansky, 2016b). It is important to note that the requirements for participation in this study was that each classroom had at least one ELL student and at least one student who was identified with a learning disability through an IEP or had a suspected learning disability, especially for students in the early grades (first and second grade).

ELL Reclassification

The process for reclassification, which involves removing the ELL label from students with and without disabilities will be reviewed in this section. The California Department of Education (CDE) has established the reclassification procedures for removing the ELL designation from students with or without disabilities who previously demonstrated limited English language proficiency; however, it has been left to each individual school district to

determine when and how a student meets the criteria (CDE, 2019). The reclassification criteria

as outlined by the CDE includes an assessment of language proficiency, teacher

recommendation/evaluation, parental/legal guardian consultation, and a comparison of

performance with English proficient peers (CDE, 2019). However, school districts have the

option to include achievement scores as part of the reclassification criteria for students identified

with a disability. The California Practitioners' Guide for Educating English Learners with

Disabilities manual (CDE, 2019) provides specific guidelines for the reclassification of students

with disabilities. This Practitioners' Guide provides guidelines on the reclassification of ELLs

through their IEP. The manual also details how the state criteria can be modified to include

different measures of language proficiency that take student factors into account in order to

ensure that reading or writing deficits are considered when making reclassification decisions for

ELL student who have been identified with a disability. The guidelines also include the use of

alternative measures, such as language dominance assessments, formative assessments, progress

on IEP goals, and parent/teacher input.

Importance of Early Reclassification

A study by Umansky and Reardon (2014) evaluated the reclassification patterns of Latinx

ELL students in Bilingual, Dual Immersion, and English Immersion programs. As previously

mentioned, students classified as ELL receive specialized ELD curriculum intended to help them

become proficient in English, but there are several unintended barriers that come with the ELL

label such as tracking practices and limited access to core curriculum (Gougeon, 1993; Spack

1997; Vollmer, 2000). Prior research studies have also determined that reclassification can range

from 4 to 10 years or more, when considering Spanish-speaking students, with lower English

proficiency levels from poverty communities (Conger, 2009). Several studies have shown that

ELL students in bilingual classrooms perform better than ELL students receiving English-only

instruction because students who receive bilingual instruction are able to acquire English more

effectively due to linguistic transfer from their home language (Cummins, 1991). The results

from Umansky and Reardon's study (2014) found that ELL students take many years to become

proficient in English and to reach district reclassification requirements. Specifically, they

determined that it took eight years for half of the ELL students in their study to be reclassified as

English-only students. Umansky and Reardon (2014) also found that ELL students in English

Immersion programs showed more favorable outcomes in the elementary grades, but that ELL

students who received two-language instruction eventually caught up and surpassed their English

Immersion peers in middle school. Some of the factors that Umansky and Reardon (2014) point

to as impacting reclassification are ELL tracking practices, which prevent ELL students from

receiving high-level academic instruction. Another factor is the window of limitation when

districts consider students for reclassification, which usually happens at the end of 5th, 8th or 11th

grade. If students do not meet all of the required reclassification criteria during these snap shots

in time, they will not reclassify even if they had previously met the criteria.

Teacher Perceptions of Dully Identified Student Skills and Tracking Practices

A major factor supporting the early reclassification of ELL students has to do with the

stigma and discrimination that comes with the ELL and special education labels (Umansky,

2016a). Although there are obvious intended benefits that are triggered once a student meets the

criteria for both designations, there are several unintended factors that may impact English

language acquisition and overall student outcomes. Umansky (2016a) looked at the impact that

comes with classifying students (without disabilities) as ELLs. Umansky considered how

teacher perceptions of student abilities diminish when a student carries an ELL label, how access

to core academic instruction is replaced by much less challenging ELD course work, the internalization of negative stereotypes that come with the ELL label, and the limited access that students have to non-ELL peers due to the tracking that results from the specialized services that come with these labels. Umansky (2016a) found that students who have been identified as ELL, received lower scores on both math and English Language Arts tests than those identified as fluent English speakers (Umansky, 2016a).

Umansky (2016b) also looked at how exclusionary tracking influences the access of academic content for ELL students. This study is important because student success in school depends on exposure to high-level instruction and core content. Unfortunately, prior research suggests that ELL students face inequitable opportunity to learn due to being disproportionately placed in lower track classes (Dabach & Callahan, 2011). Schools are faced with the challenge of providing ELL students with English language instruction for the purpose of improving their English proficiency as well as providing students with accessible academic content instruction so that they can reach grade-level standards. In California, schools have been given a mandate to include designated ELD curriculum as part of the daily instruction for all ELL students (CDE, 2019). The California ELD curriculum has been specifically designed to teach ELLs the English language by focusing on oral English skills (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Marcelletti, 2013). Unfortunately, federal and state guidelines for the required equitable access to academic content for ELL students are not clear, which may result in the temporary disruption of an ELL student's access to academic content in order to provide these students with concentrated English language instruction. However, the expectation is that the student will eventually "recoup any deficits that they may incur in other areas of the curriculum as a result of spending extra time on ELD" (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015, p.17). This becomes a problem because federal and state laws do not

place a limit on what is allowable and appropriate in regard to academic delays. Umansky's (2016b) study found that ELL students are placed in fewer high-level classes and more low-level courses when compared with their non-ELL peers, which can depress their achievement and the likelihood of graduation in the long run (Umansky, 2016b).

As mentioned above, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino/Latina critical theory (LatCrit) provide a powerful lens that can help us understand how the subordination and marginalization of people of color is created and maintained in the United States (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). A CRT and LatCrit lens can help to explain why Latinx children are tracked into low-level classes and are overwhelmingly the recipients of low teacher expectations. A study by Kangas and Cook (2020) looked at the curricular access of 10 ELL students with disabilities in the middle school setting. Although the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 promised increased funding to improve the English language proficiency of ELLs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), previous studies have found that ELLs with disabilities receive limited opportunities after being placed in special education (Kangas, 2014). Furthermore, once students have been dually classified, the mandated supportive services that are intended to increase their linguistic development and improve their academic progress, limits their access to content-area courses (due to scheduling limitations) placing them in lower-level tracks throughout their middle and high school education (Kanno & Kangas, 2014). The results of Kangas and Cook's 2020 study determined that ELLs with disabilities continued to be placed in lower academic tracks due to reliance on high-stakes academic assessments, inclusionary classrooms, and perceptions of students' (in)abilities. Consistent with CRT and LatCrit, once placed in these lower tracks, ELLs with disabilities received limited exposure to rigorous

academic content and robust linguistic interactions, which exacerbated their academic underperformance.

The lens formed by Critical Race Theory (CRT) and LatCrit acknowledges and supports systems of knowing and understanding that counter the dominant Eurocentric epistemology (Bernal, 2002). A study by Harrison and Lakin (2018b) explored the implicit and explicit beliefs of pre-service teachers towards ELLs, using an Implicit Association Test (IAT). In a previous study, Harrison and Lakin (2018a) found that general education teachers held slightly negative attitudes about ELLs. However, their current study (Harrison & Lakin, 2018b) found that pre-service teachers showed a slight preference for working with ELL students. When considering the IAT data, half of the sample had slightly to strongly positive associations. These findings are significant because positive perception attitudes toward ELLs can help change the trends and prevent the disproportionate referrals of ELLs for special education consideration and lower-level track placements. Valencia (1997) talks about how Mexican American students were segregated because they were believed to have "language handicaps" and if allowed to remain with white students, they would only slow the learning process down. Once labeled, ELL students automatically receive daily ELD interventions which cause them to miss out on regular class curriculum. Ullucci and Battey (2011) bring up the idea that teachers often see their students of color as liabilities because they may be using a deficit lens, which can be counterproductive and contaminate the teaching and learning in the classroom.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP)

As mentioned above, Section 305 of the California Education Code (CEC) stipulates that English Language Learners are required to have access to core academic content standards and certified teachers with appropriate authorizations and experience. Ladson-Billings (1998) makes

the argument that CRT "sees the official school curriculum as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist script" (p.10). Therefore, this section highlights the importance of including a teaching pedagogy that is culturally responsive to the Latinx student because the implementation of the adopted ELD curriculum is not enough. A study by Orosco and O'Connor (2014) looked at the culturally responsive instruction that was provided by a special education teacher to Latinx ELL's that were identified as having learning disabilities. The study considered how the teacher's knowledge of culturally responsive pedagogy influenced the special education instruction that was provided to students. The results of the study determined that the success of special education instruction with ELL's may be dependent on how well the special education teacher integrates culturally responsive instruction when considering the cultural and linguistic needs of the students. Piazza, Rao, and Protacio (2015) examined the use of culturally responsive pedagogy with special education and ELL students. The findings from this study revealed that equitable learning opportunities were increased in classrooms that promoted the use of culturally responsive and effective instruction.

Conceptual Frameworks: Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Theory

Glesne (2016) defines conceptual framework as the "theories, ideas, and definitions, often from multiple disciplines, that inform one's research." (p. 295). These are the actual ideas and beliefs that are held about the phenomena that is being studied (Maxwell, 2013). This study is guided by two theoretical lenses, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit). CRT and LatCrti will allow us to explore the ways that so-called race-neutral laws and policies perpetuate racial and/or ethnic subordination (Bernal, 2002). Critical Race Theory is an "outgrowth or and a separate entity from an earlier legal movement called critical legal studies (CLS)" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p.10). However, CLS failed to include racism in its critique,

making CRT the logical outgrowth for the discontent of legal scholars of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

CRT sprang up in the mid-1970s with the early work of Derrick Bell who was frustrated with the limited gains that came from traditional civil rights strategies like conducting protests and marches (Delgado, 1995). Bell's major premise in his work titled, Faces at the Bottom of the Well (1992) is that racism is a permanent fixture of American life. Therefore, the strategy of CRT is to unmask and expose racism in its various permutations (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Storytelling is used in CRT in order to "analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render blacks and other minorities one-down" (Delgado, 1995, p.xiv). Barnes (1990) adds that "Critical race theorists…integrate their experiential knowledge, drawn from a shared history as 'other' with their ongoing struggles to transform a world deteriorating under the albatross of racial hegemony" (pp. 1864-1865). CRT also argues that Whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation. An example provided by Guy-Sheftall (1993) suggests that the affirmative action policy has benefited Whites when considering the actual numbers that show that White women have been the major beneficiaries of hiring policies that have been initiated through affirmative action.

CRT scholars use parables, chronicles, stories, counterstories, poetry, fiction, and revisionist histories in order to illustrate the false necessity and irony of much of current civil rights doctrine (Ladson-Billings, 1998). In the field of education, CRT sees the official school curriculum as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script, which results in stories from people of color being muted and erased because they challenge dominant culture authority and power (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT also suggests that

current instructional strategies presume that students of color are deficient, which results in a never-ending quest by classroom teachers to find the "right strategy or technique" to deal with "at-risk" students (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Resulting in instruction becoming a generic set of teaching skills that should work for all, but when these strategies fail to achieve the desired outcomes, the students, not the techniques, are found to be lacking (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) is similar to CRT; however, LatCrit addresses issues that are often ignored by CRT. For example, LatCrit focuses on issues such as language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality (as cited by Bernal, 2002). By integrating additional lenses pertinent to Latinx experiences, such as oppression stemming from immigration status, language, ethnicity, and culture, LatCrit enhances CRT's focus on inequality (Slorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). LatCrit was conceived as an anti-subordination and antiessentialist project which attempts to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and academy with the community (LatCrit Primer, 1999). LatCrit builds off CRT and is more useful for specific situations in which Latinx find themselves, going beyond racial oppression and accounting for immigration status and language (Cooper Stein et al., 2018). "LatCrit is a theory that elucidates Latinx multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression" (Solorzano., & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p.312). Valdes (1996) argues that LatCrit is supplementary and complementary to CRT, related to CRT in real and lasting ways, but not necessarily living under the same roof (as cited in, Solorzano., & Delgado Bernal, 2001). CRT and LatCrit in education can be defined as a framework that challenges the dominant discourse on race, gender, and class as it relates to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups (Solorzano & Yosso, 2000). During the current pandemic, CRT has reached the

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mainstream media after the unfortunate death of George Floyd while he was under police custody. This has led to a spread of misinformation and a misunderstanding of the principles of CRT. CRT and LatCrit will be used as the lens in which the collected data will be analyzed and interpreted in order to identify how the established curriculum and teaching pedagogy are influenced by the society in which we live.

Summary of Literature Review

This chapter began by reviewing the research questions that are addressed by this dissertation. Next, a brief discussion of the significance of this study and the research gap that it intends to fill was presented. Followed by a review of the origins of the California English Language Development framework. Then, the processes for the identification requirements for ELL and SLD, as well as the ELL reclassification criteria were discussed. This literature review considered several studies that specifically look at the work that is being done to support dually identified students. The theoretical lens created by CRT and LatCrit is used to shine a spotlight on the importance for efficiently and effectively reclassifying ELLs and the barriers that prevent them from meeting the required level of English proficiency, such as lower-level tracking, teacher perceptions of ELL student (in)abilities, and the importance of using a culturally responsive teaching pedagogy. As mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, the problem in practice has to do with the consistency in implementation of the ELD curriculum for dually identified students. The review of the current literature shows that there is in fact an availability gap in effective strategies and practices that effectively increase the English proficiency of dually identified students with learning disabilities. The current focus has been on acknowledging the need to support this student population, but this study intends to shed light on the inconsistencies in the current practice, and hopes to identify some real world solutions for future practice.

Chapter III: Methodology

The problem investigated in this dissertation relates to factors that influence the effectiveness of the English Language Development (ELD) curriculum that is provided to ELL students who have been identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and how it's delivery can impact reclassification rates. The research questions below were used to investigate this topic.

- When considering Critical Race Theory and LatCrit, what are the factors that impact the delivery of the ELD curriculum for students identified with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) in an urban school setting?

- What contributes to the differences in the reclassification rates in a K-8 setting and how is the IEP process utilized when considering the reclassification of ELL students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)?

- How do teachers implementing the ELD curriculum describe the challenges that they encounter when working with students identified as English Language Learners (ELL) who have also been identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD)?

This study highlights the importance of providing effective ELD instruction to ELL students who have been identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) in order to meet reclassification requirements and investigated the factors that prevent these students from meeting the required level of English proficiency, such as lower-level tracking, teacher perceptions, and the importance of using a culturally responsive teaching pedagogy.

In this chapter, I will describe the school sites and the processes that I used for their selection. In this qualitative case study I utilized a combination of phenomenological and grounded theory tradition. The problem that was addressed relates to a gap in knowledge and/or

practice because a review of the literature shows limited investigations on the effective strategies

for increasing the English language proficiency of ELL students with learning disabilities

(Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005). Next, the process that I used for identifying the teachers that

participated in this study will be discussed. Followed by a detailed description of the instruments

that were used and my process for collecting the data. I will also discuss the procedures that

were used to analyze the results. Last, I include a brief explanation of the roles that I as the

researcher played in this study.

Research Tradition

This multi-traditional (phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study), qualitative

case study draws from multiple research theoretical traditions. Maxwell (2012) defines theory as

a set of concepts and ideas and the proposed relationships among these, with a structure that is

intended to capture or model something in the world. Furthermore, a major function of a theory

is to provide a road map of why the world is the way that it is (Strauss, 1995). Theory is simply

a statement about what is going on with a phenomena that you would like to understand

(Maxwell, 2012). A research tradition is a "plan that serves as a guided set of steps to implement

a study grounded in a problem from the empirical literature" (Durdella, 2019, p. 93). Therefore,

the research traditions that I utilized in my dissertation are phenomenology, grounded theory,

and case study.

A phenomenological research approach takes an in-depth look at a topic with a small

number of homogeneous participants in order to seek to understand the experiences and

perceptions of each participant, which results in an examination of similarities and differences

(Glesne, 2016). Phenomenology focuses on lived experiences and I examined the perceptions of

teachers who deliver the ELD curriculum to dually identified students (ELL/SLD) and how their

perceptions influence decisions regarding student reclassification. This research study is an in-depth inquiry into the meaning that teachers attribute to their interactions with English Language Learner (ELL) students who have also been identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). Phenomenology uses sequenced interviews with small groups of participants, which guided my investigations to understand how a handful of teachers' feelings are felt and experienced in the moment in an effort to uncover how these factors influence the effectiveness of the English Language Development (ELD) curriculum that is provided to a specific student population.

Grounded theory focuses on understanding how relationships, people, processes, events, and so on shape the outcomes in places of work (Durdella, 2019). Grounded theory structures inquiries so that relationships among factors can explain patterns of social problems (Durdella, 2019) and in this study, I investigated the relationships between teachers who deliver the ELD curriculum to students who are dually identified in order to identify the factors that impact reclassification outcomes. This was accomplished through classroom observations, which allowed for the collection of data on teacher and student interactions during the delivery of the ELD curriculum.

As a case study, my dissertation focused on the specific experiences of the teachers who provide the ELD curriculum to the specific student population described above at four selected school sites (Durdella, 2019). As a phenomenologist, I examined how the teachers that are providing the ELD curriculum to these students make sense of their specific experiences in order to gain insight as to how these experiences influence the effectiveness of the curriculum and decisions regarding student reclassification. Grounded theory was used to guide the collection of teacher interactions with their dually identified students and provided a systemic framework for

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analyzing the data. This multi-traditional approach provided the framework that was used to better understand the phenomenon that is investigated in this study, which is how the perceptions of teachers who deliver the ELD curriculum influence its delivery and affects student reclassification decisions.

Research Setting

As mentioned above, the multi-traditional approach (phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study) that guides this study dictates an in depth look at a phenomenon through interviews with a small group of participants. Therefore, I used a mixed sampling strategy to identify the sites where I gathered the data for this study. I used Criterion sampling to identify the sites that met the inclusion criteria based on my research questions. I used an opportunistic approach because of the importance of understanding the daily academic schedules, community influences, and political/historical occurrences that can potentially influence the data that is collected.

Valleydale School District (a pseudonym) is located in a suburban area North/East of Los Angeles, California. Valleydale School District serves students from Transitional Kindergarten to eighth grade. The four schools that were selected for this study are traditional schools that provide English-only instruction throughout the school day. Three of the schools are Elementary schools that serve Kindergarten through fifth grade students and one school is a Middle School that serves sixth through eighth grade students.

School A

The student enrollment for the 2021-2022 academic year for School *A* is 600 Kindergarten through fifth grade students. The student demographics at School *A* are 60 % Hispanic, 25% African American, 0.5% Asian, 0.5 % American Indian, and 14% White. Over

90% of the students at School *A* fall in the socioeconomically disadvantaged category. School *A* has 12% of its total student population identified as English Language Learners (ELL) and 13% of its student population has been identified with a disability.

School B

The enrollment for the 2021-2022 academic year for School B is just over 600 Kindergarten through fifth grade students. The student demographics at School *B* are 50 % Hispanic, 35% African American, 5% Asian, 5 % American Indian, and 5% White. Over 90% of the students at School *B* fall in the socioeconomically disadvantaged category. School *B* has 15% of its total student population identified as English Language Learners (ELL) and 8% of its student population has been identified with a disability.

School C

The enrollment for the 2021-2022 academic year for School *C* is 600 Kindergarten through fifth grade students. The teacher participant at School C teaches in the Special Day Class setting. The student demographics at School *C* are 60 % Hispanic, 25% African American, 2% Asian, 8 % American Indian, and 5% White. Over 90% of the students at School *C* fall in the socioeconomically disadvantaged category. School *C* has 12% of its total student population identified as English Language Learners (ELL) and 20% of its student population has been identified with a disability.

School D

School enrollment for School *D* was just under 900 sixth through eighth grade students. The student demographics at school *D* are 55% Hispanic, 35% African American, 2% Asian, 1% American Indian, and 7 % White. Just over 90% of the students at School *D* fall in the socioeconomically disadvantaged category. School *D* has 15% of its total student population

identified as English Language Learners (ELL) and 15% of its student population has been identified with a disability.

Participant Selection

One of the reasons for choosing these school sites is the high number of English Language Learners (12% to 15%) that are enrolled at each site. There were four school sites selected for the purpose of comparing the ELD curriculum delivery and the reclassification practices between the schools. A mixed sampling approach was used combining several sampling methods. Criterion sampling uses a set of specific predetermined criteria in order to identify and recruit only those participants the meet the inclusion requirements (Durdella, 2019). Therefore, using criterion sampling strategies, I sought out teachers in an urban public-school setting as a data source who deliver English Language Development (ELD) curriculum to ELL students with a primary language of Spanish who are currently receiving special education supports through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Durdella (2019) defines an opportunistic approach, as the process used to recruit research participants who are available or are proximate to you at the moment. Therefore, I used an opportunistic approach to recruit potential research participants who meet the criteria described above and who are also employed at the identified school district.

Using the mixed sampling strategy described above for the selection process, five teachers who are involved in the implementation of the ELD curriculum participated in an interview through the Zoom teleconferencing tool. The line of inquiry included questions that were designed to help determine the staff's perceptions of working with special education students and questions that sought to identify the challenges that they encounter when delivering the ELD curriculum. The duration of these interviews averaged about 45 minutes and

permission to audio record the interview was obtained from each participant, which allowed for

the transcription of the interview. Several of the questions that were asked during the interview

focused on the participant's confidence in their ability to appropriately deliver the curriculum

and their involvement with the student reclassification process.

Data Collection Instruments

The following data collection instruments were used: a consent form, a semi-structured

interview protocol, and a structured observation protocol. A formal invitation was used in order

to detail to each participant the purpose of the study along with the informed consent form.

These documents can be found in the Appendices section of this dissertation. A semi-structured

interview protocol that is consistent with the phenomenological research theory that guides this

study was developed, which was used in order to explore the meaning that teachers attribute to

their experiences in delivering the ELD curriculum to ELL students with learning disabilities

(Durdella, 2019). The information gathered from the in-person, classroom observations provides

first-hand experiences of how the ELD curriculum is delivered, which is used in the triangulation

process to support or contradict the information collected through the interview process and

review of the reclassification data.

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Five teachers who are involved in the implementation of the ELD curriculum with ELL

students who have been identified as having a Specific Learning Disability participated in the

interview process. The line of inquiry included questions that were designed to capture each

teacher's perceptions of working with students with learning disabilities and these questions

were used to identify the barriers that they encounter when delivering the ELD curriculum. The

interview questions focused on teacher perceptions of the strengths and challenges that they have

encountered when working with students identified as English Language Learners (ELL) who have also been identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). The interview questions also inquired about the different strategies that are used by teachers in order to overcome any identified challenges and to improve student reclassification, especially after considering individual student strengths and weaknesses. Further questioning investigated how student IEP goals and accommodations (and English learning needs) are taken into account when considering the reclassification of ELL students identified with SLD. The interview protocol can be found in the Appendices section of this dissertation proposal.

Structured Observation Protocol

In-person observations were conducted in five different classrooms while the teacher participant delivered of the ELD curriculum to ELL students with SLD. As mentioned above, grounded theory offers researchers a framework to generate theory (Durdella, 2019). Therefore, the focus of these observations was on the interactions between the students and the teachers as they delivered the ELD curriculum. I noted the time of day in which the curriculum was provided during each observation. The participant's role was to conduct the lesson as usual and to ignore the presence of the observer as much as possible. My role as the observer was to take notes on teacher and student interactions and to avoid interfering with the implementation of the curriculum. During some of the observations, I was able to follow along using a copy of the lesson plan that was provided to me in advance by the teacher. In those cases, I was able to determine if the teacher appropriately followed the student engagement strategies as indicated by the teacher's guide, which are intended to improve student accesses to the ELD instructional materials.

I used criterion sampling in order to schedule the location and time of each in-person observation. The health and safety guidelines that were adopted by the school district where this study was conducted called for the use of PPE equipment such as plexiglass dividers between students and face coverings for all individuals. The date and time of each observation was determined based on the availability of the teacher participant and during the time when the ELD curriculum was delivered to their ELL students.

Data Collection Procedures

As mentioned in the previous section, the interviews that were conducted as part of this study were used to identify the factors that influence the effectiveness of the ELD curriculum that is provided to ELL students who are also identified with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD), especially when considering reclassification decisions. The interview protocol that was used is consistent with the phenomenological research theory that guides this study, which explores the meaning that teachers attribute to their experiences in delivering the ELD curriculum to students identified with an SLD (Durdella, 2019). All data collected was stored in a password protected laptop. The data as anonymized in order to protect the identity of the participants and will be destroyed once the study has concluded.

All five of the teachers who participated in the interview process signed the consent form indicating that they agreed to participate in this study. All five of the interviews were conducted outside of each teacher's regular work hours using the Zoom teleconferencing tool. I used my private home office to conduct each Zoom interview session. The participants were advised to find a private location of their choosing during the interview session. Conducting each interview at a predetermined time and location limited the amount of interruptions that occurred during each interview. I began each interview by greeting the participant using a welcoming tone and I

reminded each participant that their involvement was strictly voluntary and that they had the option to discontinue any part of the study at any time. I also informed the participant that the interview session should last no more than 45 minutes. Each participant was reminded that they had previously given permission for the audio recording of the interview session. Before getting into the interview questions, I made sure to ask each participant if they had any questions or concerns regarding their participation in the study.

After addressing any questions or concerns and with the permission of the participant, I began each interview with several questions about each teacher's demographics and professional background in order to help the participant feel comfortable with the interview process and in order to begin the conversation. Next, I asked several open-ended introductory questions that were intended to introduce the topic, which also helped each participant to begin thinking about how their role as a teacher who delivers the ELD curriculum is related to the topic of discussion. Following that, I asked transition questions with the intention of moving the conversation into the key questions of the study. I asked questions related to the purpose of the study, which were developed to help answer the research questions listed at the beginning of this chapter. I asked questions related to the strengths and barriers that are encountered while delivering the ELD curriculum to students with SLDs, considerations of student strengths or weaknesses, and the reclassification process for students with Individual Education Programs (IEP). I ended each interview with a set of questions that were developed to close the discussion and to facilitate participant reflections on what they shared during the interview. I concluded each interview by giving the participants an opportunity to ask any final questions regarding anything that was discussed or if they felt that they needed to contribute other information that did not come up during the discussion. The audio recording from each Zoom interview session was uploaded and

submitted for transcription. Once received, each word document transcription was saved on my password protected laptop computer.

Data Analysis Procedures

In this study, qualitative interviews and observations were conducted in order to explore the perceptions of teachers who deliver the ELD curriculum to ELL students with Specific Learning Disabilities attribute to the effectiveness of the curriculum. I began the preliminary data analysis process by submitting the Zoom interview files for transcription. Next, I used a thematic data analysis process in order to code the transcribed interviews and observation notes, which identified similar words or phrases into themes. In concluding the data analysis process, I connected the themes that emerged to the related themes previously established by the literature review.

Preliminary Data Analysis

After conducting the interviews, I used the transcription service TranscribeMe in order create a word document for each interview session. This service was selected based on their privacy and confidentiality guarantees. Once the files were converted into a Microsoft Word document, I reviewed the transcripts to check for errors or mistranslations while simultaneously playing the video/audio recordings of each interview. A similar error checking process was used to organize the observation filed notes that were collected during the data collection process.

Thematic Data Analysis

After making the necessary changes to the transcriptions and the observation filed notes, I imported these documents into the computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) ATLAS.ti in order to facilitate the data analysis process. This software program was highly recommended as an efficient and effective way to categorize and shape qualitative data

(Durdella, 2019). Although ATLAS.ti was a good tool for organizing the collected data, as the researcher, I took full responsibility for segmenting, coding, and connecting the emerging themes to the existing empirical data from the review of literature. As the patterns began to emerge across the different data sources, I began to sort and compile these themes to increase my understanding of how the perceptions of the teachers that work with ELL/SLD students influence their ability to deliver effective ELD interventions.

Interpretation

Once the themes from the analytical procedures were identified, I was able to conceptualize the experiences of teachers who work with ELL students with learning disabilities and interpreted the data by identifying those relationships or similar experiences, which have led to some significant findings which will be discussed in the following chapters.

Roles of the Researcher

As a school psychologist that was formerly employed in the school district where this study was conducted, I view my subjectivity as a potential strength, but also a weakness to be monitored. Subjectivity is how one's experiences, knowledge, training, and emotions relate to the focus of a dissertation study. Campbell and Stanley (1963) view subjectivity as one of the main weaknesses of qualitative research. It is also viewed as the process of inserting our own values, judgments, and biases into the research. However, qualitative researchers view subjectivity as a potential asset to the qualitative research design. It can be seen as a useful and personal quality of a researcher. I realized that in order to monitor my subjectivity, I needed to transition from a school psychologist to a researcher during the data collection and data interpretation process. One technique that I was able to utilize in order to monitor my subjectivity was member checking. This process was used to check my own biases from

becoming part of the interview responses and produced participant responses that accurately reflected their intended meanings.

As a former employee in the district where this research study was conducted, I was reminded of several assumptions that I have towards factors that influence ELL/SLD student identification, interventions, and reclassification. The first assumption that I have is that the ELL/SLD student population is viewed as a burden by several of the teachers throughout the district where this study was conducted. Although this assumption was formed during my employment in that district after listening to actual comments made by some of the teachers when expressing their hesitations to include another curriculum (ELD) into their already overwhelmed daily schedules. I acknowledge that this does not necessarily represent how all teachers in the district feel about working with this student population. A second assumption is that there is a lack of teacher understanding of the importance of delivering the ELD curriculum with fidelity in order to facilitate student, English language fluency. This assumption is also based on teacher responses toward available training for implementing the ELD curriculum that has recently been adopted by the district. Finally, a third assumption has to do with my own personal belief that not all of the students that are identified as ELL's require the ELD curriculum and that these students could potentially increase their English proficiency by receiving increased instruction in other content areas instead of receiving the daily ELD curriculum. This assumption is based on my own experiences in working with ELL and SLD students at my district over the past several years.

As a researcher, I was able to separate myself from my day-to-day role as a school psychologist and from my previous experiences with the district staff so that my perceptions were not influenced. In order to help address this, I kept a research journal which I used to

monitor my own thoughts and interpretations throughout the data collection and data analysis process so that I could identify and address any possible misinterpretations. During the data collection process, I was able to avoid asking leading questions by following the semi-structured interview protocol during the teacher interviews. I also gave each participants an opportunity to elaborate on their ideas by asking open-ended questions. During the data analysis process, in order to mitigate researcher bias effects, I used inter-rater reliability when coding the data that was collected by involving a trusted colleague and using confidentiality measures.

Chapter IV: A Look at the Data

The purpose of this multi-traditional (phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study) qualitative study is to investigate the factors that influence the effectiveness of the English Language Development (ELD) curriculum that is provided to ELL students who have been

identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and how it's delivery can impact

reclassification decisions. The research questions below were used to investigate this topic.

- When considering Critical Race Theory and LatCrit, what are the factors that impact the delivery of the ELD curriculum for students identified with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) in an urban school setting?

- What contributes to the differences in the reclassification rates in a K-8 setting and how is the IEP process utilized when considering the reclassification of ELL students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)?

- How do teachers implementing the ELD curriculum describe the challenges that they encounter when working with students identified as English Language Learners (ELL) who have also been identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD)?

Changes from Virtual to In-person Observations

The original plan for the collection of the data was to identify at least 8 teachers from

four different schools (two teachers from each school) in order observe their delivery of the ELD

curriculum. However, due to the health and safety restrictions caused by the COVID-19 virus,

which prompted a sudden switch to distance learning instruction during the 2020-2021 academic

year, I had to make adjustments to the methodology procedures involving in-person

observations. However, after receiving approval from CSUN's Institutional Review Board

(IRB) committee to conduct virtual classroom observations via the Zoom or Google Meets

teleconferencing tools, I soon realized that potential teacher participants were hesitant in

participating in a study that would include the observation of a distance learning lesson by an

outside party for research purposes. Therefore, once the distance learning instruction

requirements were removed at the beginning of the 2021-2022 academic year, I did not hesitate

to resubmit for IRB approval to allow for the collection of data via in-person observations, which I feel, increased the comfort levels of the teacher participants that eventually agreed to participate in this study.

Fieldwork Experiences in Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to entering the field, I made a huge assumption about the delivery of the ELD curriculum. For example, I assumed that all teachers would be using the district adopted Wonders curriculum during the classroom observations. In fact, the observation tool that I created was intended to capture any deviations that were made by the teachers during their implementation of the curriculum and the tool also had a column to document teacher/student engagement factors. However, what I found during the in-person, classroom observations was that two out of the five teachers completely deviated from the district adopted ELD curriculum and instead used a lesson that was created with the intention of targeting the specific needs of the students, as explained by these two teachers. Therefore, the semi-structured observation tool could not be used as a way to collect the data and instead, I decided to use detailed field notes as a means of collecting my observation data. Another challenge that I faced in my attempts to collect the classroom observation data was that three of the five teachers, did not provide me with the Wonders ELD lesson plan with sufficient time to allow for the preparation of the observation tool. This once again made it difficult for me to anticipate when the curriculum called for variations in the lesson as well as the identification of deviations from the lesson plan, which I did not have access to prior or sometimes during the observation. This forced me to deviate from my plan to use the observation tool as my primary source of data collection and instead rely heavily on detailed field notes.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I used several approaches to separate myself from my day-to-day role as a school psychologist and from my experiences while working for the district in this study in order to mitigate my previous assumptions. The research journal, which I used to monitor my own thoughts and interpretations throughout the data collection, allowed me to reflect on the actually data that was collected and acknowledge and remove any of my own biases. I also used the research journal during the data analysis process so that I could identify and address any possible misinterpretations. Although this proved to be a challenge, during the teacher interviews, I was able to avoid asking leading questions or adding my own opinions that might have influenced the responses that were provided by the teacher participants. This was accomplished by following the semi-structured interview protocol and asking the questions in the same order and manner during all five of the interviews. During the data analysis process, in order to mitigate researcher bias effects, I used inter-rater reliability when coding the data that was collected by involving a trusted colleague and I used several confidentiality measures in order to respect the identity of the teacher participants.

Participant Profiles: Introducing the Teachers

Ms. Smith

Ms. Smith (pseudonym) is a female teacher in her early 60s who teaches a third grade Special Day Class (SDC) for students with Mild to Moderate disabilities at School *C*. She was born in the United States and she considers her ethnicity to be Caucasian. The highest level of education achieved by Ms. Smith is a Master's degree and she currently holds credentials for working with learning handicapped students, special education, and a multiple subject teaching credential. When asked if she holds any other titles or roles at her school or district, Ms. Smith indicated that she is the program chair for special education, which means that she helps other

special education teachers throughout the district. When I asked Ms. Smith to list the grade levels that she has taught in the past she laughed and stated that she has taught them all. She provided further explanation and stated that she has taught from Kindergarten through sixth grade. The only grades that she has not taught in the district are seventh and eighth grade. Ms. Smith continued on to say that she has been teaching at School C for 35 years and that she has taught a self-contained special education classroom during each of those years. When asked how long she has been teaching English Learners, she stated that maybe for the last 25 years, where she believes they have been officially identified as ELs. In regards to specialized training that she has received specifically focused towards teachers who work with EL students, Ms. Smith stated that she recalls attending a mandatory 40-hour training about 20 years ago that was provided by the district to those who had not received this training through their credentialing program.

Ms. Smith mentioned that she was inspired to become a teacher by one of her good college friends. Ms. Smith explained that she was majoring in business at the time and admits that she was not doing well, but because she was able to observe her friend's classroom she was motivated to leave business and began taking classes towards a degree in special education. The biggest motivator that gets Ms. Smith to school is working with her students, but she admits that being able to pay the bills with her paycheck is also a motivating factor.

Ms. Aranda

Ms. Aranda (pseudonym) is a female teacher in her mid-30s who teaches a general education, first grade classroom at School A. Ms. Aranda teaches Language Arts, ELD, Math, Social Studies, Science, Art, Performing Arts, Computer Science, Physical Education, and Social Emotional Learning to the students in her general education class. Ms. Aranda was born in the

United States and she considers her ethnicity to be Hispanic or Latin. The highest level of education achieved by Ms. Aranda is a Master's degree in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis in foundational reading intervention. Ms. Aranda currently holds a multiple subject teaching credential and an early childhood administrative permit. When asked if she holds any other titles or roles at her school or district, Ms. Aranda indicated that she is the first grade team lead at School A and that she is on the instructional leadership team at the district level. She is also on the school site council team and on the district English Learner design team, which means that she was involved in writing the district master plan for the ELD program. She was also on the team that created the district benchmark assessments for that ELPAC that are used twice a year district wide and she was involved in the revisions that were made to the home language survey that is used district-wide for identifying English Learners upon their enrollment. Ms. Aranda also indicated that she has presented several district-wide workshops on English Language Development for providing integrated and designated ELD instruction. Ms. Aranda is also the ELAC representative to the school site council and a member of the district ELAC group. When I asked Ms. Aranda to list the grade levels that she has taught in the past she indicated that she has the most experience with teaching at the first grade level and explained that she has taught first grade for the past six years that she has been at School A. Prior to that, Ms. Aranda taught a second grade class at another school within the district. Ms. Aranda stated that she has been teaching for a total of eight years and she indicated that she has been teaching English Learners every year for the past eight years. In regards to specialized training for working with EL students, Ms. Aranda stated that she attended a professional development that was offered by LACOE on English Language instruction that focused on writing a master plan, the EL road map, and how to teach ELs in a COVID environment during on-line instruction.

However, Ms. Aranda feels that her district has not provided adequate training for teachers working with EL students until recent. She believes that the team that she is a part of is now providing ELD professional developments to teachers within the district, when in the past, these trainings were provided by an outside company. Unfortunately, Ms. Aranda explained that those trainings that were presented by the contracted company felt more like product selling then professional development because the people who delivered those presentations were not able to answer any questions regarding the actual ELD instruction or California ELD requirements.

Ms. Aranda mentioned that she was inspired to become a teacher by her sixth grade teacher. Ms. Aranda explained that her teacher at that time would give her and other students the opportunity to reteach what they were learning to the lower grade classes. She credits those opportunities for the development of her love for teaching. The biggest motivator that gets Ms. Aranda to school is getting to work with her students and finding ways to get them excited about learning.

Ms. Martin

Ms. Martin (pseudonym) is a female teacher in her early 40s who teaches a second grade classroom at School B. This is the second year that Ms. Martin has taught at this grade level. Ms. Martin mentioned that she teaches every subject area to her general education students, which includes Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science, and Physical Education. Ms. Martin was born in the United States and she considers her ethnicity to be White. The highest level of education achieved by Ms. Martin is a Master's degree in education. Ms. Martin currently holds a teaching credential, but she did not elaborate on any other specialized areas. When asked if she holds any other titles or roles at her school or district, Ms. Martin indicated that she is the ELD site Chair for School B. She is also on several district-level committees

which include the safety committee and a committee that was created to revamp the student report cards. When I asked Ms. Martin to list the grade levels that she has taught in the past she indicated that she has taught at the first, fourth, and fifth grade level, and that she is currently teaching a second grade class. Ms. Martin stated that she has been teaching for a total of eighteen years and she mentioned that she has been teaching English Learners every year for the past eighteen years. In regards to specialized training for working with EL students, Ms. Martin stated that early on in her career the district brought in a specialist which presented on the process for building lessons using grade level standards and using assessment data in order to pinpoint student weaknesses that need to be addressed. Ms. Martin feels that her district has done a pretty good job of providing teachers who work with EL students with the necessary training and now she gets to be a part of delivering that support.

Ms. Martin mentioned that she is a third-generation educator and that her grandfather and her father both retired as superintendents so she jokes that education is her family's business. She was inspired to become a teacher by the people that were around her when she was growing up, especially because her father was the principal and there were many teachers that worked with him when she herself was in elementary. Ms. Martin explained that she would see all of the work that they did to teach somebody how to do something that they couldn't do before. She feels that this is why teaching is instilled in her. Ms. Martin indicated that getting to work with her students is what motivates her to come to work every day. She really enjoys seeing their little faces every morning and appreciates how excited they are to be at school every day.

Ms. Andrews

Ms. Andrews (pseudonym) is a female teacher in her mid-30s who teaches at the seventh grade general education level at School D. Ms. Andrews teaches seventh grade Language Arts,

seventh grade designated ELD in a self-contained pullout setting, ELD integrated strategies throughout the school day, and Visual/Performing Arts. Ms. Andrews was born in the United States and she considers her ethnicity to be mixed between Mexican and Jewish. The highest level of education achieved by Ms. Andrews is a Master's degree in Criminology, Law, and Society with some graduate work in Public Policy. Ms. Andrews currently holds a multiple subject teaching credential and she has an authorization to teach in a single-subject setting. When asked if she holds any other titles or roles at her school or district, Ms. Andrews indicated that she is a member of several district-level committees. Ms. Andrews was the English Learner chair for three years, but she had to leave the position due to her commitments to the other committees that she is a part of. Ms. Andrews is on the district's EL design team, which is tasked with writing the master plan for the district's English Learners program, building a newcomers program, and purchasing supplemental materials and applications to support the primary curriculum. Ms. Andrews is also on the standard-based report card committee and on the district equity team. When I asked Ms. Andrews to list the grade levels that she has taught in the past she indicated that she has taught at the second, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eight grade level. Ms. Andrews has taught at the general education level for most of her career, but she indicated that during her undergraduate work she served in a resource specialist program classroom setting where she provided small group instruction. Ms. Andrews stated that she has been teaching for a total of fourteen years and she indicated that she has been teaching English Learners every year for the past fourteen years. In regards to specialized training for working with EL students, Ms. Andrews stated that she began her teaching with a different district and that she received basic ELD instruction training using the Open Court curriculum, which had a module for English Learners. Ms. Andrews also received training in using SDAIE Strategies

which were presented by a neighboring district's superintendent. Ms. Andrews has attended multiple trainings offered by LACOE on supporting EL students.

Ms. Andrews mentioned that there are several teachers in her family. Her grandparents were teachers and her mother was a teacher. However, Ms. Andrews explained that she decided that she was going to become a teacher when she was in high school because she had so many bad experiences with some of her teachers and she wanted to grow up and become the type of teacher that was equitable, fair and loving. She decided then and there that she was going to be the kind of teacher where kids actually wanted to be in her classroom because they would share a love for learning like she did when she was in high school. The biggest motivator that gets Ms. Andrews to school every day is that she gets to work with her students and the spark that they bring into her classroom.

Ms. Ramirez

Ms. Ramirez (pseudonym) is a female teacher in her late 30s who teaches at the second grade level at School A. Ms. Ramirez stated that she teaches all areas of general education. Ms. Ramirez was born in the United States and she considers her ethnicity to be Latino. Ms. Ramirez has two Master degrees. One is a Master's of Science in Education with an emphasis in bilingual education. The second Master's degree is in Education with a preliminary administrative certificate. Ms. Ramirez currently holds a multiple subject teaching credential, a bilingual authorization, and an EL authorization. She is currently in the process of submitting the paperwork for a computer science authorization. When asked if she holds any other titles or roles at her school or district, Ms. Ramirez indicated that she is a member of the EL Design Team, which focuses on developing and presenting professional development for teachers who work with EL students. When I asked Ms. Ramirez to list the grade levels that she has taught in

the past she indicated that she has only taught in the general education setting and that she has taught at the first, second, third and fourth grade levels. Ms. Ramirez has had the opportunity to teach in dual language classrooms, transitional bilingual classrooms, and maintenance bilingual classrooms. However, Ms. Ramirez indicated that during her first two years of teaching she was in an integrated co-teaching classroom where she was a general education teacher working with a special education teacher. Ms. Ramirez stated that she has been teaching for a total of fourteen years and she indicated that she has been teaching English Learners every year for the past fourteen years. In regards to specialized training for working with EL students, Ms. Ramirez stated that she attended the Project GLAD training, which focused on supporting EL students.

Ms. Ramirez mentioned that she was attending law school and working in a lawyer's office when she realized that she didn't really like that line of work. During that time, Ms. Ramirez was tutoring a middle school student who did not speak much English. She had submitted an application to become a Teaching Fellows in New York City and she learned that there was a high need for bilingual educators and because of her experience while tutoring that student, she was motivated to complete the application process to become a teacher. The biggest motivator that gets Ms. Ramirez to school every day is that she gets to work with her students and watching their growth throughout the school year.

Results: Developing and Using Analytical Strategies

The study consisted of four elementary and one middle school teachers ranging from grades first through seventh. The teacher interviews were conducted following the semi-structured interview questions via the Zoom teleconferencing platform. The audio from the interviews was recorded and transcribed into a Microsoft Word document. The in-person

classroom observations were documented by following along with the teacher provided lesson plans and capturing teacher prompts and student responses in the field notes.

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews and in-person observations was analyzed using the computer-aided qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti. By using this tool, I was able to organize the collected data by segmenting, coding, and connecting the emerging themes. The process began when I uploaded each individual interview transcript into the program. I read through each interview transcript and created codes that appeared to be relevant based on teacher responses to the questions that were asked using the semi-structured interview protocol. I began to group several codes forming the themes that began to emerge as I read through each of the interview transcripts. One thing that I found as I was going through each of the individual interview transcripts was that some of the teacher participant responses resulted in new codes that were not identified when I was going through the first set of transcripts. Therefore, I decided to go back and search through each interview transcript a second time, in order to capture any codes that were not identified during the first read.

After concluding the analysis of the interview transcripts, I moved on to the observation field notes. The process for collecting the data for the in-person observations had to be adjusted from my initial plan. As I mentioned in the methodology section of this dissertation, I anticipated that I would have access to the lesson plan prior to each ELD lesson observation. However, what I found was that two of the five teachers that were observed did not use the district adopted Wonders ELD curriculum. Although I was provided with the lesson plan for these two observations prior to my arrival to the classroom, I had to adjust my thinking when collecting my field notes during these observations. For the three teachers who used the Wonders ELD curriculum, two of those teachers provided me with a detailed copy of their lesson

plan, which included the written prompts that they used as they presented the lesson. This made it easy for me to follow along with the lesson and to capture each teacher prompt as suggested by the teacher's manual, along with the corresponding student response for each prompt. The analysis process for each observation involved a review of the handwritten field notes that were collected, which were used to create a Word document that included the date and time of each observation. This document also included the number of students that participated in each ELD group along with the estimated number of students that were in the classroom and the number of adults supporting these students. The observation Word document also included a narrative of the ELD lesson which included teacher prompts as they were given and corresponding student responses and/or student clarification questions. In some cases, teacher redirection of students was used and on occasion, a few of the teachers deviated from the lesson in order to set limits for students to return to the ELD activity. Portions of the field notes were used to guide the development of the themes that were eventually identified. I was able to use the observation field notes from each observation to strengthen my interpretation of the teacher comments that were made during the interview process. After going through and identifying the various codes and groupings from each of these documents using the ATLAS.ti program, a report was generated that showed direct teacher quotes grouped together in the emerging themes which will be discussed in the following section.

Thematic Patterns

Theme 1: Critical Race Theory and LatCrit

This first theme that we will be examining is connected to the theoretical lenses, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) that guide this dissertation study. As

discussed in the literature review section in Chapter 2, CRT and LatCrit in education can be defined as a framework that challenges the dominant discourse on race, gender, and class as it relates to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups (Solorzano & Yosso, 2000). As I was reviewing the teacher interview transcripts and observation field notes, I began to notice that some of the teacher/student interactions and teacher responses during the interview related to the ideas behind these theoretical lenses. For example, when explaining why she decided to create her own ELD lesson instead of using the district adopted ELD curriculum, Ms. Smith, the only Special Day Class teacher in this study stated, "not all curriculums fit, and you find that you have to do a lot of adapting, modifying and sometimes creating." Ms. Smith explained during the teacher interview why she decided that the district adopted ELD curriculum would not be implemented with her students.

The other teacher in the study that completely deviated from the district adopted ELD curriculum, Ms. Andrews from School *D*, provided a brief example as to why she felt that she needed to create her own lesson:

> We actually had a writing prompt assignment assigned through a program called My Access, and we were supposed to be doing writing benchmarks. And after reviewing some of the prompts, I actually emailed the district and the representative from the program that we purchased because one of the prompts said something that was really hostile towards immigrants. It said something like, "Do you think that we should let illegal immigrants stay in America?" It was something like that. And first of all, the terminology was extremely problematic. No human is legal in stolen land.

The middle school teacher, Ms. Andrews used this explanation to justify why she felt it was appropriate to abandon the adopted ELD curriculum and instead, she used the established ELD benchmarks to create her own lesson. During the interview, Ms. Andrews expressed her concerns about the perceptions that some of the other teachers in the district have about working with ELL students and about their own limitations, "Many people will express feelings like, 'well, I don't speak that language. How can I help them?' or 'I don't know why I'm teaching this because I don't even have a background in it.'" Ms. Andrews also shared some of the comments that she has heard from several teachers about their feelings towards ELD instruction as captured in the following statement, "I feel like a lot of the feeling behind ELD instruction is, 'I'm being forced to do this,' instead of 'I have a passion for helping students acquire language.'" She followed this statement with, "how can you get teachers passionate about language acquisition if they have that mindset already that they don't want to do it and they're not the right person for it?" Although Ms. Andrews came across as a teacher who is passionate about working with ELD students and helping them achieve English proficiency, she expressed some deficit thinking of her own in the following statement about ELL students, "the kids are not in a literacy-rich environment most of the time at home." She also made an assumption about her students' prior instruction by saying, "you maybe didn't always have teachers that cared about helping you, but we can work together." This relates to LatCrit because it assumes that all ELL students have received inadequate instruction in the past.

One of the teachers at School *A,* Ms. Ramirez explained why she had to make changes to the ELD Wonders curriculum, in preparation for delivering the lesson to her first grade students:

I kind of knew that they might not know what habitat was or a forest, not they might not

know, but that maybe they're not familiar, maybe they would need some more support

with that. So I tried to make sure that I provided extra visuals and supports or words,

During my observation of Ms. Ramirez's lesson, the fieldwork notes show that Ms. Ramirez

repeated the learning intention about five times and she took an extra amount of time to ensure

that the students understood the definition for habitat and forest, which eventually caused her to

run out of time before she had to dismiss the class for recess. Ms. Ramirez's assumption that her

students would not know these definitions lead her to modify the delivery of the lesson, which

resulted in her inability to deliver the entire lesson within the allotted time as it was scripted on

the teacher's manual.

During the teacher interviews I asked several questions that would help me to get a better

understanding of the knowledge and/or understanding that each of the teacher participants had

regarding CRT and LatCrit. The SDC teacher, Ms. Smith explained her limitations by saying,

"Since I'm not familiar with that, I'm not really.. I don't think I'm knowledgeable enough to

speak on that." The second grade teacher at School *B*, Ms. Martin made a similar comment

when she was asked if she was familiar with these two theories, "No, I don't think so." The

second grade teacher at School *A*, Ms. Ramirez admitted that she was more familiar with CRT

than LatCrit as she attempted to explain with the following, "I don't even know if it's total CRT

stuff, but making sure that it is authentic and more representative of students and experiences and

things like that." The other teacher at School *A,* Ms. Aranda expressed a slightly better

understanding of CRT and LatCrit with the following comments, "But it kind of mirrors how I

feel the district has seen English Language Learners as secondary, and like, okay, let's just use

this curriculum and do it because we have to." Ms. Aranda went on to share about the first time

that she heard about CRT in the following statement:

> The first time I heard the district talk about Critical Race Theory was in a board meeting
>
> at the beginning of this school year because that's somewhere they're moving towards.
>
> But I will also tell you that we had lots of parents of certain demographics who were
>
> upset about the idea of the district implementing CRT.

Ms. Aranda also explained some of the perceptions of the other teachers in her district who

deliver the ELD curriculum, "there are a lot of teachers who don't feel like this is something

important, so they just go, 'Yeah, yeah. Okay. Yeah. I'm doing it. Yeah. I'm doing it,' and

that's it."

The middle school teacher, Ms. Andrews, who appeared to have the best understanding

of the two theories responded with "Absolutely not!" when she was asked if she felt that the

ELD curriculum at her district considered the ideas behind CRT and/or LatCrit. However, she

followed her response up by saying, "but I think there's a big just misunderstanding between the

differences between Critical Race Theory and having a critical lens towards cultural realities in

your classroom." Ms. Andrews was able to explain her understanding of CRT as detailed in this

statement, "it's a theory that, in a nutshell, says that there are systemic barriers in our society that

prevent people of certain races from getting ahead in life." Ms. Andrews went on to explain her

views of what ELD instruction means to her with the following:

> I think a very important part of teaching ELD is making sure not to shame students for
>
> their home language, for their home culture. To not try and assimilate them. The goal of
>
> ELD is not to take away a student's primary language. It's to help them obtain a second
>
> language.

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Theme 2: ELD Curriculum

The second theme that emerged from the teacher interviews and observations relates to the benefits, modifications, and challenges when using the district adopted ELD curriculum. When talking about some of the benefits that come with presenting the Wonders ELD lessons, Ms. Aranda stated that "at the first grade level, it has lots of visuals. It has talking points you can use to get your students to speak about a specific topic." Ms. Aranda continued to say that "it helps them make connections with what we're doing in Language Arts, and also gives them the opportunity to explore the vocabulary." Ms. Aranda believes that the curriculum helps to develop student vocabulary beyond the lesson and helps them to use language to express themselves. Ms. Aranda also explained some benefits that she sees in her students' writing, "it also gives them opportunities to write in a scaffolded way that has less stress for them. It gives them the graphic organizers and spaces to draw their ideas." Ms. Aranda goes on to talk about the different components offered by the Wonders curriculum, "it has lots of different components that can be used to provide ELD instruction. There's the workbook. There's oral language frames. There's oral stories. There's visual cards…" Ms. Aranda explains that the curriculum is user friendly even if you are someone who has never taught ELD, "it kind of tells you, okay, this is kind of what you can expect in the response form this level student, or this level student, or this level student." Overall, Ms. Aranda agrees that the district adopted ELD curriculum is adequate.

Ms. Martin, the second grade teacher at School *B* agrees with Ms. Aranda regarding connections between the Language Arts curriculum and the Wonders curriculum, "the benefit of that curriculum is it breaks it down into smaller pieces so that they can have the opportunity to say, 'Okay, we saw this this morning. I had a question about it.'" Ms. Martin went on to say

that one of the reasons that the Wonders curriculum was adopted by the district team that she was on was that "we adopted it, but I think it was because of how it was set up… The workbooks are set up in sentence framing, and it has a lot more examples, a lot more pictures." Ms. Martin explained that she is beginning to see the benefits of the curriculum in her students' comprehension exams, "their comprehension tests are starting to be more 100% than 60%." Ms. Ramirez, the second grade teacher at School *A,* provides a similar response when explaining why she decided to use the Wonders ELD curriculum with her students, "Well, I chose to use it because the way it works is connected to the core content in the Language Arts… so it is a way to integrate it with what's happening during core instruction." Ms. Ramirez agrees with the other teachers, "The biggest benefit is that it's related to what's happening during core instruction and that's important."

As I mentioned above, two of the five teachers in this study admitted that they do not use the district adopted Wonders ELD curriculum and the three teachers that use it explained during the interviews and observations how and why they decided to make modifications. Ms. Smith, the SDC, second grade teacher felt that "not all curriculums fit" when she considered if her students would be able to grasp the concepts and instead, she decided to create her own lesson plans as she explained, "and then I look at what ELD has and what I have and try and blend it together." Ms. Smith further explained during the interview why she decided to abandon the Wonders curriculum with the following:

> Well most of my students are at the lower level. I can't tell you specifically what it is at
> the moment. Why do I do it the way I do it? I look at needs before anything else, and
> right now the need is, "How do I put a sentence together? How do I create a sentence?
> How do I speak in a complete sentence?"

She also mentioned that the decision was made after consulting with other special education teachers as she explained, "we found as sped teachers, that it wasn't working. It was not meeting needs. Kids were not getting practice with their sounds or their letters sentence structures." Ms. Smith continued to explain that "there's not a lot of practice, when it comes to speaking, listening, reading at the level that the students are at. So again, we're still adapting, or, at least, I am. Ms. Smith justified her deviation from the Wonders curriculum by saying, "With sped kids it's not always linear, if that makes sense. There's times where you have to zig and zag, and then step back, and then zig and zag."

Ms. Aranda, who uses the Wonders ELD curriculum with her first graders explained why she is able to make the necessary changes, "that's why we know how to do what we do. We [use] trial and error. We've tried it out. We see what works. We see what didn't." Ms. Aranda also explained why writing is an area of need for her students, "Because we were online last year, I have a lot of students that writing, putting a pencil to paper, is the most difficult thing for them. They can't. They don't know how to hold a pencil or write on a line."

Ms. Martin, who teaches second grade at School *B* mentioned how she modifies the delivery method of the lessons, "It has workbooks also that came with it. I don't use them very much. I find that using the whiteboards instead of the workbook works better when you're in a small group." Ms. Martin also explained that because of the fast pace of the lessons and the limited time in the daily schedule, she has to make time to incorporate the oral component with her students, "It doesn't leave a lot of time for the talking part of ELD, which is what I really want. So, some weeks I'll just schedule, like today is conversational ELD." She continued to explain this in the following statement:

When you push through something so hard like that, you don't know if they're actually

getting it. And so sometimes I'll just take all three groups and we'll just sit together and

say, "Okay, let's talk about the story. What do you guys remember? What do you need?"

And no, that's not in the curriculum book but I think it's necessary to do that check in.

During the interview she explained that her changes vary as needed, "I might not deviate 100%.

I might modify. I might take it apart, switch things around to make it fit. If I can't, then I tell the

kids we're going to freestyle it today."

As I mentioned previously, the middle school teacher, Ms. Andrews develops her own

lessons. During the interview she explained how the lesson that she presented during the

observation was created, "I used my own curriculum that I designed myself. I incorporate a lot

of outside media, a lot of outside resources. And the reason I do that is because although the

ELD curriculum is embedded and it's actually leveled well." Ms. Andrews also agrees that

writing is a significant area of need for her students, which is not addressed by the adopted ELD

curriculum, "there's not really anything within the core curriculum of the ELD materials that

addressed those needs…. I felt the need to really structure my ELD classroom in a way that

addresses all four domains of language." She added an explanation of how she structures her

lessons, "each week we focus on reading, writing, speaking, and listening. So, the lesson you

observed was on a speaking and listening day." However, Ms. Andrews admits that these

changes result in an inconsistency of ELD instruction throughout her school, "To be honest,

there's not really a unified way of doing things. Some teachers are doing novel studies. We

have ELD classrooms that are part of the AVID program."

The second grade teacher at School *A*, Ms. Ramirez explained her process for modifying

the Wonders ELD curriculum due to student needs and time constraints, "I kind of just started

going through all of the different components in the curriculum and pulling out the ones that I thought would be the most beneficial and I could do in 30 minutes." During the interview, Ms. Ramirez explained why she decided to continue to use Zoom to deliver her ELD lessons, even while her students are now in-person, "In Zoom, they do participate. I was really surprised when I started doing it like, 'Oh, they do speak up, and they volunteer.' Because in class they're not doing that as much." She also gave an example of the trial and error process that is used, "Someone mentioned Zoom for small groups, not for EL, but general small groups… I don't know. It was just someone mentioned it, and I was like, 'Oh, I could do that for ELD time, so I'll just try it out.'"

Some of the biggest challenges mentioned by the teachers in this study have to do with time constraints and the number of students in their classrooms during the ELD instruction. Ms. Martin, the second grade teacher at School *B*, made this point during the interview by reminding me of the size of her class during the observation, "The biggest challenges is the other kids in the room, if that makes sense. I mean, you were in there, you saw how many kids there were." She explained how this creates a distraction for the students in the ELD group, "It they know the other kids in the room are doing something different, they try to check out on you because they want to do what everybody else is doing." She explained how she needs to ignore the needs of the other students in the classroom, "So, to make it happen, I had to ignore the other kids in the room. I just had to trust that the other adults were handling it and pretend that it was just the six kids at my table." She further expressed her frustrations with her inability to meet all of the specific needs of her students in the following comments:

It's been a struggle this year because they're so low academically that it's been a struggle to really figure out like how do you like to learn? Are you hands on? Do you need the

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pictures? What do you need? It's been really hard to figure that out because we're all over the place with our separation.

Ms. Martin continued to talk about her inability to support all of her ELD students due to the limited time of instruction, "having all three groups in the room at the same time, I can only meet with some of the groups once a week instead of every day." Time constraints with delivering the ELD lessons is a big problem for Ms. Martin, "It's a big curriculum, and it could be its own thing by itself, that we could take an hour on…20, 30 minutes is not enough time to get through." She reminded me of the observation, "Well, you saw the book, it's humongous… I would say you would need a good 45 minutes a day if you were going to do everything on the page, that it wanted it." She talked about her desire to let the district know how she feels about the time limitations, "It's an email like, 'Hey, this isn't working. What can we do as a district? If I'm having this problem, then all the new teachers are having this problem. What do we need to do.?'" The middle school teacher, Ms. Andrews explained the following in her interview when asked about the biggest challenge with delivering the ELD instruction to her students, "Wow. One, I feel like there's never enough time. I wish we had an extended school day. There's just so much." However, Ms. Andrews also feels that the discrepancy between her students in regards to their English fluency levels presents a big challenge, "The biggest challenge, though is really just the discrepancy between where my students are performing at and even what the curriculum provides." She continued to explain, "The curriculum is kind of assuming that students are closer to grade level and the materials are aligned to the ELD level but their actual reading comprehension level." Ms. Aranda, the first grade teacher at School *A*, feels that one of the biggest challenges has to do with the perceptions that some of the teachers have about ELD

instruction, "And there was a big challenge with particular teachers who kind of see ELD as this is something else I have to do, why?"

Theme 3: District Resources and Peer Teacher Support

Ms. Andrews talked about the limits in resources that there are at the district level for supporting ELL students. For example, she explained how the materials for supporting these students are outdated, "The ELPAC is fairly new as far as tests. I know it shifted from the CELDT test. And I think a lot of the old programs that people were using were designed around the CELDT test." She also talked about how difficult it is to acquire the funding needed for supporting ELL students:

> Our English Learner director has actually expressed that. She said it's really easy to get funding for things like tier two and tier three instruction but when it comes to the needs of English learners, they're kind of put on the back burner and we have to fight a battle at the board to say, "Well, this is why we need this."

Ms. Andrews also explained the limitations in ELD support staff, "So we have about 30 coaches in our district and none of them are specializing in English learners." She continued to explain, "but we don't have any bilingual or ELD instructional coaches in the district presently, so I can assume that most people feel like they can't really turn to anyone." Instead, she explained that it is up to the teachers to find ways to meet ELL student needs, "So when teachers themselves are asked to lead ELD courses or to teach EL students, there's definitely a feeling of discomfort in our district with meeting their needs."

Ms. Aranda agrees with Ms. Andrews that the district is lacking in guidance regarding ELD instruction, "I think the biggest challenge is that lack of specificness in how you're supposed to deliver ELD instruction." Ms. Aranda expressed that the district has failed to

provide teachers with an exact range of time of instruction for the ELD daily curriculum, "They don't even give you a clear amount of time that you need to give ELD instruction." In the following statement she continued to talk about the lack of district guidance regarding time of instruction:

> And although it says that it's required to give English language instruction to English learners every day, there's not that specific that tells districts or teachers or administrators how many minutes it should be a day. Should it be 30 consecutive minutes? Should it be 5 minutes here, 5 minutes there, 10 minutes here?

She further explained her frustrations with the district and administration, "the district-level people knowing what ELD instructions should look like and should be, administrators knowing what ELD instructions should look like and should be." Ms. Aranda compared the support available for other instructional areas to that of ELD Instruction, "We have an entire department on curriculum and instruction. Their entire job is to provide teachers with support on how to provide instruction, but they will not do that for ELD." She also talked about the lack of district level personnel in the following statement:

> If they've been giving ELD instruction and want to better their ELD instruction, no. Because there's nobody they can go to for support, or even like is this appropriate for English language development, yes or no?

When asked about the biggest challenge regarding ELD instruction, Ms. Aranda flat out said that it was the lack of support from the district, "it's the district's fault for not giving special programs the resources to be able to provide these supports to the teachers." Ms. Aranda feels that this has impacted the use of the ELD curriculum by the teachers at her school, "So, honestly,

our campus probably doesn't use it as much as they should. And I know if they did, they would start to see maybe not a huge difference in test scores."

Ms. Andrews, who creates her own ELD lessons, explains how the district provides helpful Professional Development (PD) training regarding ELD instruction, "we've been taught how to use our assessment data to pinpoint some problems and work on those. But our district is pretty good at getting stuff up for us." Ms. Andrews also explained how the ELD support teams created at the district level have addressed the lack of ELD support, "part of the work our EL design team has been doing in the past 2 years is realizing that PDs haven't existed for English Learner issues." She continued to explain, "We delivered some last year district-wide and had really positive outcomes. The teachers left wanting more." The second grade teacher at School *A*, Ms. Ramirez appeared to be grateful for a district training that she attended about the ELPAC, "I actually attended this training, this ELPAC training, maybe three years ago. And that one, it was really helpful, just kind of, how is the ELPAC laid out?" Ms. Ramirez also explained that the district provides time for teachers to seek training outside of the district. "And I've also done some workshop, too, with Sacramento Department of Education."

Theme 4: IEP

The only special education teacher in this study, Ms. Smith, who teaches a third grade SDC class at School *C* indicated that she is "it" when it comes to developing the IEP for the students in her class, "I test. I write. I impalement. I'm it." Ms. Smith gave a specific example of how she tailors her ELD lessons based on the needs of one of her students as indicated in the IEP, "okay, you learn best auditorily, so let's make the directions as clear as possible" and for another one of her students, "you need visual, let's make sure the visuals are understandable." She also explained how she uses the specific student IEP goals to guide her lessons:

For instance, one of the goals one of the kids have is a comprehension goal. So, the goal might read something as, "When listening--" instead of reading, "When listening to a story at your instructional level, so-and-so will identify the character and what that character did." Where the general ed goal or the general standard might be, "Include story plot and main idea in details." So, I take the reading goals and I break them into parts.

Unfortunately, Ms. Aranda, who teaches a general education, first grade class at School *A*, feels that the special education staff at her school are not very effective, "their goals were always, I don't know, for being considered specialists, every student had the same goals. Every speech student had the same goal. Every RSP student had the same goal." Ms. Aranda continued by expressing her frustrations with her inability to access special education supports for her students in the following statement that she made about the special education referral process at her school:

That's not enough documentation. You did not collect enough data for us to assess. So go ahead and do this sticker chart and write and track everything that the student does, and we'll meet again in six weeks and see if there's enough information now to test.

However, Ms. Aranda feels that because of her efforts, her students eventually receive the support in the follow grades, "I've given teachers files inches thick of all my documentation and they'll get assess in second or third grade." When asked about her involvement in the IEP development process or goal writing process, Ms. Aranda explained, "None. I mean…. They have never, in the entire time I've been a teacher at School *A*, sought out my expertise as the EL chair or the person who knows the ELD Curriculum." She further explained that, "no student

ever in my teacher at School *A* has been given an ELD goal when they have an IEP, even if they're ELD students."

Ms. Martin, who teaches a second grade general education class at School *B*, makes sure to review the IEPs of the students in her ELD groups, "If they have an IEP, I ask for their goals. That way I have them and then I can accommodate and modify as needed." She also explained, "So when I'm planning the lessons, like I said, I keep the goals with me. If they are not my own students, then they're in my EL folder." Ms. Martin talked about how she uses her students' IEP goals when preparing her lessons, "and if it was specifically towards writing, then I make sure that during ELD we would match that writing goal that they were working towards." However, Ms. Martin explained that she is not really involved in writing the IEP or creating the goals, "I don't usually have any involvement in creating unless they specifically ask for an EL advocate to come in and make sure because it's language goals." Ms. Andrews, the middle school teacher explained her involvement in the IEP process, "When I attend their IEP meetings, I always review the goals that the case manager is providing and determine whether they're targeted to that student's needs or if they're appropriate for that student's levels." She also explained how she modifies her lesson based on the specific IEP goals of her students, "for example, I have two kiddos that have writing goals. And so even though we're working on our writing strategies and being able to pass the ELPAC, I will scaffold the writing for those students." She continued to explain how she tries to meet the needs of her students with IEPs, "My special education students really need it broken down into steps still. So, we'll do graphic organizers, two and three column charts, all color coded, different parts of speech, I will model for them, and I will shorten their assignments."

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Ms. Ramirez, the second grade teacher at School *A*, talks about how she reviews her students' IEP goals to ensure that she is meeting their needs in the following example:

> For example, the student needs extended wait time. I think that's a very common one I usually experience, maybe shortened assignments is another one. So that would be more if maybe we're answering some questions, and maybe they modify the amount of questions that they have to answer or maybe the responses that they have, right? I feel like those are the main [ones that?] I encounter.

When asked about her involvement in creating the IEP and goals, Ms. Ramirez also explained that as a second grade teacher, she really hasn't had a lot of students qualify for special education services, "As far as IEP creations, I feel like I haven't really had a lot of students make it the entire way." Ms. Ramirez also indicated that she has not seen any ELD goals in her students' IEPs, "Honestly, well, I don't think I've ever had a student who has ELD goals in their IEP."

Theme 5: Reclassification

This dissertation looks at the factors that impact student reclassification rates which is why I included several questions regarding teacher involvement in the reclassification process. However, based on the responses that I received from the teachers in this study, it seemed like there is very little involvement on the part of these teachers. For example, when asked about her involvement in reclassifying students through the IEP process, the SDC teacher Ms. Smith responded with, "Me, personally, none." Ms. Smith continued to explain that she is somewhat familiar with the process, "I do know with sped kids, one of the things we try and look at is, is it a learning problem when it comes to ELD, or is it a language problem?" However, she was able to indicate the steps that she would need to take if she ever felt it appropriate to reclassify through the IEP process:

If I thought reclassification was needed, I would first talk to our ELD coordinator, then I would talk to the ELD para and have work samples and collaborate then, and see, "Do you think this would be?" yes or a no. And then I would also include parent in the discussion, "Do you think this would be important? Yes or no."

The second grade teacher at School *B*, Ms. Martin acknowledged that the process is an option but she herself has only been involved in a couple of reclassifications, "I've only used it like once or twice, but there is a special like not opt out, but like a special reclassification that we can do for sped." Ms. Martin talked about her involvement in the reclassification process for IEP students, "Yeah. So, I help with that a little bit. The district will tell us who's eligible, and then I work with the teachers on filling out the forms and stuff." However, when she further explained the process she seemed a little unsure as detailed in the following:

The year before. We did a couple for the severe kids that the teacher was like, "Stop sending me this form. They're never going to qualify for this." I'm like, "Okay, well, let's see. There's got to be something," and there is. The state has a form they can attach the IEPs. I just don't remember what it's called.

However, Ms. Martin seemed to understand the necessary components for reclassifying general education students, "So, they have to have four on their ELPAC. They have to be on grade level with their i-Ready, and then teacher recommendation and parent."

Ms. Andrews, the seventh grade teacher at School *D* explained that the ELD classes at the middle school setting are set up to increase the reclassification of EL students, "the design of the ELD classroom setting, our focus in middle school is getting these kids our of ELD." Ms. Andrews also explained how they have used the process for reclassifying students through their

IEP, "So we can exit them early. We've done that on several occasions, especially with our moderate, severe students in sped." She further explained the process:

> So, with students with disabilities, they can actually be exited from the ELD program early if we have enough evidence and if the EL chair, and the teaching team, and the parent as a school team decide that a student is not passing the ELPAC and reclassifying due to their disability versus a language discrepancy.

Ms. Andrews talked about her teaching strategies to help prepare her EL students to reach the reclassification criteria, "giving them sample questions, giving them feedback then scoring, to me, that's the biggest way to help them reclassify is teaching them what to expect and teaching them how to pass."

Ms. Aranda was able to provide a vague understanding of the reclassification criteria for general education students, "the ELPAC targets those four domains. And so, if they're not getting the practice, they're not going to reclassify." Ms. Aranda also explained, "But for students in grades three and up, which are the state-testing grades, if they receive a 4 on their California State Assessment in Language Arts, they can reclassify." Ms. Aranda also explained her understanding of the process for reclassifying students with IEPs, "students with disabilities, depending on the type of disability they have, can be reclassified without having to meet the testing goals. They don't have to receive a proficient on the ELPAC." She continued by saying, "their disability is used as the reason why they would never reach proficiency." Ms. Aranda also talked about how a previous director established the reclassification criteria, "we had a director of the language arts program that kind of made up her own requirements for reclassification" and how that impacted the reclassification numbers, "she magically reclassified the highest percentage of students ever…. and all the students she reclassified that probably should have

never been reclassified are failing." Ms. Aranda explained that the level of support for students who leave ELD instruction through reclassification is nonexistent, "And we have lots of students who reclassify and fail because the district has no system set up to support reclassified students."

Ms. Ramirez, the second grade general education teacher at School *A* seemed unsure when talking about the reclassification criteria for general education students, "Yes. I want to say yes, but I know they change. So, I was aware of them when we were classifying as EL chair, I feel like." She later added, "I might not be 100% sure of what they are." She was also hesitant when talking about the reclassification process through the IEP as detailed in the following:

Not 100%. I know that when you're meeting with students who have, when you're

meeting for [an IEP?], I know you can, I think you can reclassify them at the meeting. I

know that's something, I think I've heard that's something you can do. I've never actually

experienced that before, but that's one thing I've heard [that is?] one way to reclassify

students.

Chapter V: Results, Limitations, and Recommendations

The influence of CRT and LatCrit which form the theoretical framework that guides this study is highlighted in a response provided by one of the teachers in this study when she was asked to explain her understanding of Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory. Ms. Aranda stated that the first time that she heard about CRT was at a district board meeting at the beginning of the academic year. Ms. Aranda explained that the district was considering "moving towards" that direction, but she indicated that parents of certain demographics were upset with the possibility of the district discussing CRT within its schools. Although Valleydale School District appears to be making an effort to acknowledge how CRT influences the instruction provided within its schools, several of the teachers that participated in this study expressed their frustration with the lack of district support and the limited resources that are allocated towards ELD instruction. It is because of this that Ms. Aranda and several of the other teachers in this study believe that the district and some of its teachers see the needs of ELL students as "secondary" and the curriculum is seen by many as something they just "have to" do. Furthermore, Mrs. Aranda also explained that some of the other teachers who deliver the ELD curriculum in her district have expressed that ELD instruction is just another thing that the district is forcing them to implement. Several other examples and indirect quotes like this one were expressed by four out of the five teachers in this study, which shows that there continues to be a resistance to racial equity and justice from many practicing teachers and a reproduction of the racialized status quo.

The three research questions that were created to help investigate how the delivery of the English Language Development (ELD) curriculum provided to students identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) can influence the

reclassification process are answered in this chapter. The sections below provide direct evidence that was collected through the classroom observations and teacher interviews in attempt to answer each of these questions.

Evaluating Research Questions

Research Question 1: Factors that Impact the Delivery of ELD Curriculum

The district adopted Wonders ELD curriculum was selected by a team of teachers and administrators to increase the English proficiency of the English Language Learners throughout Valleydale school district. ELD curriculum is specifically designed to teach ELLs the English language by focusing on oral English skills (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Marcelletti, 2013). However, several factors that directly impact the fidelity of the implementation of the curriculum were identified through the classroom observations and teacher interviews. Factors such as changes, modification, or complete deviations from the ELD curriculum have led to its inconsistent delivery throughout the district. Most of the teachers in this study indirectly identified another factor, which has to do with teacher uncertainty about their ability to deliver the ELD curriculum and a feeling that the ELD curriculum is just another curriculum to be included in their already busy schedules. Another factor that will be discussed in this section is the lack of district support and a lack of resources that are available to guide teachers in the delivery of the curriculum.

Although the Wonders ELD curriculum was adopted by Valleydale School District, the teachers in this study explained why it "doesn't fit" or has to be modified in order to "work" for their students. Ladson-Billings (1998) argues that current instructional strategies presume that students of color are deficient, which results in a never-ending quest by classroom teachers to find the "right strategy or technique" to deal with "at-risk" students. Ms. Smith gave an example

of why she felt that she had to completely deviate from the lessons in the district adopted ELD curriculum for her Special Day Class students. She explained that "not all curriculums fit" and she felt that she has to "adapt, modify, and sometimes create" her own lessons in order to reach her students at their level. Ms. Andrews, who teaches at the middle school level, also admitted during the teacher interview that she has completely abandoned the district adopted curriculum and she justified creating her own lessons by explaining that this year has been a "struggle" because her students are "so academically low" and she explained that she tries her best to figure out how "they like to learn." Ms. Andrews admits that these changes result in an inconsistency of ELD instruction throughout her school as she stated that there is "not a unified way of doing things" throughout the district. Ullucci and Battey (2011) suggest that teachers often see their students of color as liabilities because they may be using a deficit lens, which can be counterproductive and contaminate the teaching and learning in the classroom. Although Ms. Andrews appeared to have the best understanding of how CRT and LatCrit influence teacher perceptions and student instruction, during the teacher interview, Ms. Andrews showed some deficit thinking about her ELL students assuming that they were not in "literacy-rich environments" in their homes and that many of her students didn't have teachers that "cared" about them in the past. Another example of how the ELD curriculum was modified by a teacher to "fit" her students' needs was apparent during my observation of a second grade class at School *A*. In preparation for delivering the ELD lesson, Ms. Ramirez explained during the teacher interview that she had to deviate from the Wonders manual in order to make sure that her students understood the vocabulary that would be presented in the lesson. Therefore, instead of following the prompts provided in the manual, Ms. Ramirez created her own slides presentation which she presented to her ELD group using the Zoom teleconferencing tool even though they

were in-person. During her 40-minute lesson, she repeated the learning objective five times and she took an extra amount of time to make sure that the students understood the definitions for habitat and forest, which eventually caused her to run out of time before the students had to be dismissed for recess. Another teacher, Ms. Aranda at School *A*, talked about using "trial and error" in order to see "what works" with her students and "what doesn't work" when implementing the ELD curriculum, which can make a significant impact in the consistency of its implementation between classrooms and schools. The second grade teacher at School *B,* Ms. Martin mentioned during the teacher interview, that she modifies the delivery method of the lessons and she explained that she decided to use individual whiteboards with her students instead of using the workbooks that are provided with the ELD curriculum, due to time constraints. She further explained that she does not deviate 100%, but she admitted to "taking the lessons apart" and "switching things around to make it fit" for her students and if it doesn't fit, she tells the kids that they are going to "freestyle it" for the day.

As mentioned above, several of the teachers in this study expressed a lack of confidence in their teaching peers, who work with ELL students with disabilities, and their ability to deliver the ELD curriculum with fidelity. During the teacher interview, the middle school teacher, Ms. Andrews expressed concerns about how some of the teachers in the district perceive their own limitations in working with these students. She indicated that these teachers feel that they are not able to help ELL students because they don't speak their language or that they lack the solid background needed for working with this student population. Ms. Andrews also shared some of the comments that she has heard from several teachers about their feelings towards ELD instruction as captured in the following statement, "a lot of the feeling behind ELD instruction is, 'I'm being forced to do this,' instead of 'I have a passion for helping students acquire

language.'" She followed this statement with, "how can you get teachers passionate about language acquisition if they have that mindset already that they don't want to do it and they're not the right person for it?" Ms. Aranda, the first grade teacher at school *A* also expressed some concerns with how other teachers in the district view the importance of the ELD curriculum stating that "a lot of teachers don't feel like this is something important" and she believes that they only "do it" because ELD is just something else that the district is telling them to do.

Ms. Andrews talked about the limited resources that are available at the district level for supporting ELL students. She gave the example of outdated programs that were designed around the CELDT, which was the previous test that was replaced by the current ELPAC for measuring the English proficiency of ELL students. Ms. Andrews also believes that funding for supporting ELL students is difficult to acquire when compared to other forms of interventions and she believes that the needs of English learners are "put on the back burner" by the district. Ms. Andrews also compared the discrepancy of support staff that is available for other departments when compared to ELD specific support staff indicating that none of the 30 district coaches specialize in supporting English Language Learners, which leaves teachers who deliver the ELD curriculum feeling like they have nowhere to turn for support. Ms. Aranda, the first grade teacher at School *A,* expressed her frustration with the lack of guidance at the district level, complaining that the district has failed to provide the required duration of the daily ELD lessons and "specificness" in how the ELD instruction should be delivered. She also expressed her frustration with the administrators who should know what the ELD instruction should look like, but fail to provide guidance for the school level implementation of the curriculum. Ms. Aranda also mentioned that there is a lack of personnel support for ELD instruction when compared with

other areas of instruction as she stated during the teacher interview, "it's the district's fault for not giving special programs the resources to be able to provide these supports to teachers."

Research Question 2: Differences in Reclassification Rates and Utilizing the IEP Process

The criteria that an English Language Learner has to meet in order to reclassify as an English-only student is described in detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. The process for reclassifying students through their IEP is also discussed. In this section, I will discuss the data that was gathered in this study from the teacher participants regarding their understanding and involvement in the ELL reclassification process. I will also discuss the teacher participant's involvement with the IEP process for reclassifying ELL students in an attempt to explain the differences in the reclassification rates between the four schools that were a part of this study. Umansky and Reardon (2014) describe the window of limitation when districts usually consider students for reclassification, which generally happens at the end of fifth grade, eighth grade, or eleventh grade. It is important to note that all five of the teachers in this study teach at grade levels that do not fall within their established reclassification windows.

Conger (2009) found that ELL student reclassification can range from 4 to 10 years or more, especially when considering Spanish-speaking students, with lower English proficiency levels from poverty communities. This study included three elementary (Kindergarten through fifth grade) schools and one middle school (sixth through eight grade). When considering the findings from Conger (2009) regarding the average range of time that it takes Spanish-speaking English Language Learners to meet the reclassification criteria, it is no surprise that the reclassification data from Valleydale School District for the current academic year, strongly favors the middle school (School *D*). In fact, the only middle school teacher in this study, Ms. Andrews demonstrated a strong understanding of the reclassification process and appeared to be

the teacher participant who is the most involved in her students' IEP development and implementation, with the exception of Ms. Smith the Special Day Class teacher. During the teacher interview, Ms. Andrews mentioned that she attends her students' IEP meetings on a regular basis. Ms. Andrews described how she actively reviews the proposed goals and how she recommends necessary changes based on her students' academic performance in the classroom. Ms. Andrews provided examples of how she modifies her lessons in order to address the IEP goals of her students. She described how her teaching strategies are targeted at helping her ELL students meet the reclassification criteria. Ms. Andrews, also demonstrated the best understanding of the reclassification process for general education students and how the IEP process can be used to reclassify those students who are not able to meet the criteria because of their identified weaknesses. Ms. Andrews described how her students have been reclassified through the IEP process "on several occasions" and she is also aware that the process is occurring at her school for some of the students identified with moderate to severe disabilities.

The Special Day Class, third grade teacher, Ms. Smith explained during the teacher interview that she is "it" when it comes to developing and implementing the IEP for her students. Ms. Smith provided examples of how she tailors her ELD lessons based on the needs of her student as indicated in their IEPs. Ms. Smith demonstrated a pretty good understanding of how the IEP process for reclassifying students can be used to differentiate between a student's disability or their lack of English proficiency. She was also able to provide a step-by-step account of how she would go about reclassifying one of her students through the IEP process. Unfortunately, when Ms. Smith was asked about her involvement in reclassifying students using the established criteria or through the IEP process, Ms. Smith explained that she personally has

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not reclassified any students. This is concerning because Ms. Smith has been teaching special education students at School *C* for 35 years.

The two teachers at School *A,* Ms. Aranda and Ms. Ramirez both teach classes in the early Elementary grades. Ms. Aranda, who teaches a first grade general education class, explained during the teacher interview that she has lost faith in the special education staff at her school and she provided examples of how she has noticed that identical IEP goals are used for different students and she expressed her frustration with challenges that she has faced when trying to gain access to special education services for her students. When asked about her involvement in the IEP development process, Ms. Aranda explained that she has "never been sought out" by the IEP team at her school to be involved in any student IEP meetings, even as the EL chair. Ms. Aranda made a comment that was concerning during the teacher interview when she stated that she has not seen any ELD goals written for her ELL students. If this were to be true, it would be in violation of the California Education Code, which requires that all ELL students with an IEP have an ELD related goal. Ms. Aranda was able to provide a vague understanding of the reclassification criteria for general education students explaining the four domains that are targeted by the ELPAC. She was also able to explain how students with an IEP can be reclassified if it is determined that their disability prevents them from reaching the required proficiency levels. However, because Ms. Aranda teaches at the first grade level, her students do not fall in the reclassification window that usually opens around fifth grade.

When compared to the other teachers in this study, Ms. Ramirez, who teaches a second grade classroom at School *A*, showed the lowest level of understanding regarding the reclassification criteria for general education students and she appeared to be uncertain when describing the process for reclassifying students through their IEP. During the teacher interview,

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Ms. Ramirez was very hesitant when responding to questions about these processes, stating that she wasn't "100%" sure about what the criteria is, but she explained that she knows that it changes. Ms. Ramirez admitted that she has never been involved in the IEP reclassification process for any of her students. Once again, these findings make sense because Ms. Ramirez's students fall outside of the window of when reclassification usually begins. Ms. Ramirez explained that she is not involved in the IEP development process because, as a second grade teacher, she really hasn't had a lot of students "make it the entire way" to IEP eligibility. Consistent with Ms. Aranda's report about ELD goals, Ms. Ramirez also stated that she does not recall ever seeing any ELD goals as part of her ELL students' IEPs.

Ms. Martin, the second grade teacher at School *B,* indicated during the teacher interview that she is aware of the process for reclassifying students through their IEP, but admitted that she has only used it once or twice to reclassify her own students throughout her entire 18 years of teaching ELL students. However, she did explain that as the ELD site chair, she is involved with the IEP reclassification process for students with IEPs at her school. She mentioned that someone at the district level usually notifies her of the students at her school who are eligible for reclassification through their IEP and she provides support to the IEP team with completing the necessary forms. Ms. Martin seemed to understand the necessary components for reclassifying general education students and was able to give some details such as the required ELPAC scores and the other components. Ms. Martin also explained how she makes sure to review the IEP goals for the students in her ELD groups and she mentioned how she uses the individual student goals when planning her lessons. However, Ms. Martin explained that she is not really involved in the development of the IEP or the goal writing process for any of her students.

Research question 3. Challenges Faced When Working with Dually Identified Students

Unfortunately, federal and state guidelines for the required equitable access to academic content for ELL students are not clear, which may result in the temporary disruption of an ELL student's access to academic content in order to provide these students with concentrated English language instruction. However, the expectation is that the student will eventually "recoup any deficits that they may incur in other areas of the curriculum as a result of spending extra time on ELD" (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015, p.17). The uncertainty surrounding the federal and state level expectations for the required daily instruction time that should be allocated towards ELD instruction for ELL students has been identified as one of the biggest challenges by the teachers in this study. Other challenges include the varying academic levels of students, the large number of students within a classroom during the ELD lesson, and insufficient time to deliver the ELD lessons.

In the previous section, I discussed how several of the teachers in this study were frustrated with the lack of guidance from the district regarding ELD instruction. For example, Ms. Aranda expressed that the district has failed to provide teachers with an exact range of time for the daily ELD lessons. Ms. Aranda understands that ELD instruction should be delivered on a daily basis, but she could never get a clear answer from the district regarding the exact number of required minutes for the duration of her lessons. Ms. Aranda feels that the lack of guidance from the district has impacted the implementation of the ELD curriculum by the teachers at her school, which she believes has directly impacted student reclassification numbers.

The changes that are made to the district adopted Wonders ELD curriculum and the reasons why some of the teachers felt that they needed to completely abandon the curriculum and create their own are directly related to teacher perceptions of their students' low abilities. Ms. Smith, the third grade SDC teacher talked about her students' needs that were far from the ELD

curriculum's expectations, such as the fundamental skills needed to create sentences or for speaking in complete sentences. Ms. Smith explained that after consulting with the other special education teachers in the district, they determined that the district adopted ELD curriculum was "not meeting the needs" of their students because they were not getting the practice that they needed with letter sounds or sentence structures. The middle school teacher, Ms. Andrews, who also completely abandoned the district adopted ELD curriculum also related it to the needs of her students. Ms. Andrews stated during the teacher interview that the discrepancy between her students regarding their English fluency levels presented a huge challenge when planning her ELD lessons. She further explained that the curriculum "assumes" that ELL students are closer to grade level then they actually are, which makes it difficult to engage all of her students when attempting to implement the ELD curriculum.

Several of the teachers in the study complained about the number of students in their classrooms during their ELD lessons. For example, during the teacher interview, Ms. Martin reminded me of the size of her class at the time of my in-person classroom observation. A review of my field notes shows that she worked with 7 students at a small table near the back of the room, but that there were more than 30 total students in the room at the time of the ELD lesson. Although, the other students worked on a different lesson with the support of two teacher's aides, Ms. Martin explained that the large number of students creates a distraction for the students in her ELD group. In fact, one of the reasons that second grade teacher, Ms. Ramirez decided to modify the delivery method of her ELD lessons was because of the large number of students in her classroom during her ELD instruction time. Ms. Ramirez explained that even though her students are now in-person, she felt that student participation when using the Zoom teleconferencing tool increased. She further explained that her students are more

willing to volunteer when speaking through their individual computers. She also mentioned that using an individual device keeps the students on task during the ELD lessons and limits the amount of distractions caused by the other students around them who are working on different assignments.

An insufficient amount of time for delivering the daily "fast paced" ELD lessons appears to be the biggest challenge that all of the teachers in this study discussed. Ms. Martin, the second grade teacher explained that the limited time in the daily schedule makes it difficult for her to incorporate the oral component of the ELD lessons with her students. She feels that the time constraints do not leave a lot of time for the much needed "talking part" of the ELD lesson, which is what she believes is what her students need. She feels as though sometimes she has to push through difficult concepts in order to deliver the entire lesson to her students, but she worries if they are actually "getting it," which is why she has decided to include time to revisit the lessons with her students to make sure that they understood the content, even though these "check-ins" are not included in the Wonders ELD curriculum. The middle school teacher, Ms. Andrews agrees that there is "never enough time" to appropriately deliver the ELD instruction to her seventh grade students. During the teacher interview she wished that there was a way to extend the school day in order to cover everything that her students need. The second grade teacher, Ms. Ramirez explained that part of the reason that she has to modify her ELD lessons has to do with time constraints. She explained during the teacher interview that she decided to go through all of the different components of the ELD curriculum in order to pull out the ones that would be most beneficial for her students and created a lesson that she could deliver in the allotted 30 daily minutes.

Recommendations

This study investigated how the delivery of the English Language Development (ELD) curriculum that is provided to dually identified students (ELL and SLD) at four traditional English-only schools can influence the reclassification process. The problem in practice is in the consistency in implementation of the ELD curriculum for dually identified students. This dissertation looked to fill a gap in the research that overlooks effective strategies for increasing the English language proficiency of ELL students with learning disabilities, which should eventually lead to their reclassification (Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005). Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) provided the lens in which this study explored the ways that so-called race-neutral laws and policies perpetuate racial and/or ethnic subordination (Bernal, 2002).

The results of this study show that several factors such as changes, modification, or complete deviations from the ELD curriculum have led to its inconsistent implementation throughout the district. Teacher uncertainty with their ability to deliver the ELD curriculum and a feeling that the ELD curriculum is just another curriculum that has to be included in their already busy schedules were also found to impact the delivery of the ELD curriculum. The teachers in this study discussed their frustrations with a lack of district support and the lack of resources that are available to guide teachers in the delivery of the ELD curriculum. The uncertainty surrounding the federal and state level expectations for the required daily instruction time that should be allocated towards ELD instruction was identified as one of the biggest challenges by the teachers in this study. Other challenges included the varying academic levels of students, the large number of students within a classroom during the ELD lesson, and insufficient time to deliver the ELD lessons. The factors identified in this study are believed to

have a direct influence in the delivery of the ELD curriculum and impact the reclassification of Latinx students with learning disabilities.

Some of the limitations of this study include single observations and a lack of participation by upper elementary grade level teachers. Another limitation is that the teacher participants may have adjusted the delivery of their ELD lessons or teaching style during the in-person observations because they knew that they were being watched. Teacher interview data may have also been impacted because teachers understood the purpose of the study prior to the interviews, which may have caused them to answer the interview questions in a favorable manner or what they perceived to be expected by the researcher.

When considering the findings of this study, it seems that there is a breakdown in communication between the district and teachers at the school sites who are providing the ELD instruction. One of the challenges expressed by most of the teachers in this study indicated that the teachers did not have a clear answer from the district or administration of what the expected daily duration of the ELD lessons should be. Also, several of the teachers expressed frustration because they had no one to go to at the district level for direct support when working with ELL students with disabilities. The district could benefit from creating several district level coaching positions with personnel who have a strong background in working with ELL students and who also have a good understanding of the reclassification process for general education students and for reclassifying students through the IEP process. Through collaborative meetings, these designated coaches could create district policy that would outline the expectations of the ELD instruction, which would solve the problem of the lack of guidance that was mentioned by several of the teachers in this study.

Future Research

In this qualitative case study, classroom observations and teacher interview data were used to identify the factors that impact the implementation of the ELD curriculum and the reclassification of dually identified students. Although the findings showed a lack of support from the district and teacher uncertainty when working with this student population, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study that involved the participation of teachers at the fifth, eight, and eleventh grade levels who fall in what Umansky and Reardon (2014) call the established windows of limitation for the reclassification of ELL students. Most of the teachers in this study taught classes from first to third grade, which also limited their involvement with students who have been identified with a learning disability through an IEP. Based on teacher responses during the interviews, it seemed as though many of the lower grade students with suspected disabilities had not officially gone through the IEP evaluation process. The only middle school teacher in this study, Ms. Andrews showed a strong understanding of the reclassification process and she appeared to be the teacher who was the most involved in her student's IEP development. Therefore, a recommendation for a future study would be to involve teachers from the upper elementary grades, which may show a different perspective of how these identified student disabilities influence the implementation of the ELD curriculum and a better look of teacher involvement with the student IEP process.

Another recommendation would be to increase the number of classroom observations so that the researcher is able to see how the different aspects of the ELD lessons are presented. The current study allowed for the teacher participant to dictate when the researcher would be allowed to come into the classroom to observe the ELD lesson. In a future study, perhaps setting some guidelines for the different types of ELD lessons (reading, oral discussion, writing) that will be

observed for each teacher participant could provide more data to show consistency or deviations with the district adopted curriculum.

At the opening of this dissertation, I described how the different experiences that my brother and I had during our early elementary grades would eventually shape our educational journey. I am proud to say that during the writing of this dissertation, my brother has since received an undergraduate degree, with a major in business. I initially used this real life and very personal example to demonstrate how leveled tracking resulting from ELL labeling can impact a student's educational trajectory. The findings from this study show that, even after 35 years since I was in elementary, these practices continue. Students who are labeled as ELL and SLD, continue to receive a different type of education then their English-only, general education peers.

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Appendix A

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

December 10, 2019

Dear Participant,

I am writing you to seek your permission to participate in a dissertation study that I am conducting for my doctoral Educational Leadership program at California State University, Northridge. My study explores teachers' perceptions while delivering ELD interventions to students with learning disabilities. As part of my work, I will conduct an interview and observation of eight second or third grade teachers in order to analyze the data. There are multiple parts to this research.

The first part of this research will involve interviews and classroom observations. The interviews will take no more than 45 minutes and the classroom observations should take approximately 30 minutes each. The participants for the interview will be invited to participate and will include only second and third grade classroom teachers who deliver ELD interventions to students identified with learning disabilities. Each participant will be contacted separately in order to make arrangements for the interview and classroom observation.

The compensation for participating in the interview/observation process (if selected) will include a $20 Target gift card. There are no known risks for your involvement in this study. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Thank you for your time.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments about this research study or your participation in this study, you may contact me at the following:

Luis Carmona (Doctoral Student Researcher)
Via email at luis.carmona.92@my.csun.edu

Appendix B

Structured Observation Protocol

Date _____   Start Time _____   End Time _____

School _____   Participant _____   Number of Students _____

Item Presented	Consistent w/Manual	Adaptation	Student Engagement

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

I. Pre-interview Session: Introduction/Background

Introduction:
Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we begin the interview session, I'd like to give you the opportunity to read and review the consent to participate in this research study that you previously signed.

Purpose of the interview:
This interview is intended to collect information for a research study that examines teacher-to-student interactions. During this interview, I will ask you questions about your own background, teacher strategies, challenges faced, and understanding of the IEP and ELL reclassification processes.

Consent:
Please review, sign and date the attached consent form. I can answer any questions that you may have regarding this form.

Timing:
Today's interview will last approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

II. Interview Session

Demographics Questions
1. What is your gender? Male, Female, Prefer not to say?
2. What is the year of your birth?
3. What do you consider your ethnicity to be?
4. What do you consider your race to be?
5. What is your country of birth?

Credential/Educational Background
1. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
2. Which credentials do you currently hold?
3. Do you hold any other titles or role with the school/district?
4. What grade levels have you taught in the past?
5. What types of classrooms have you taught?
6. ELL confidence
7.

Main Questions

1. Can you tell me, what or who inspired you to be a teacher?
   a. How long have you been a teacher?

b.   How long have you taught at this school?

c.   What motivates you to come to work every day?

Delivering ELD interventions to ELL students with SLD

2.   What are some of the benefits of the ELD curriculum that you deliver to your students?

     a.   Can you give me some examples? If not, why do you think this curriculum was adopted by the district?

     b.   Do you think that all of the teachers who deliver the ELD curriculum in this school see similar benefits?

3.   What are some of the challenges that you have encountered while delivering the ELD curriculum?

     a.   What are some of the resources that are available for addressing these challenges?

     b.   What steps have you taken in order to address these challenges yourself?

     c.   Do you think that all of the teachers who deliver the ELD curriculum in this school struggle with these challenges?

     d.   If so, can you give us some examples? If not, what do you think that they are doing differently?

Strategies to overcome challenges

5.   Since you identified some challenges, what is your biggest challenge with delivering the ELD curriculum?

     a.   Can you provide a specific incident where you overcame a challenge?

     b.   How did you determine the best approach for alleviating this challenge?

     c.   Do you ever consider your students' learning characteristics when delivering the ELD curriculum?

     e.   If so, can you tell me more? If not, what types of support would you like to receive in order to learn how to use this information about students?

6.   Are you aware of the state/district reclassification requirements for ELL students?

     a.   If so, do you know how these requirements are different for students with disabilities?

IEP goals and accommodations

7.   Do you take into account how a student's IEP goals or accommodations would influence the ELD curriculum? If so, can you provide a specific example?

     a.   What's your involvement in the IEP creation and implementation for the students in your class?

     b.   To what extent do you collaborate with special education teachers in regards to ELD lesson planning?

     c.   When planning the delivery of the ELD curriculum do you consider your student's IEP ELD goals?

9.   What specific steps have you taken or are willing to take to increase ELL student reclassification?

Conceptual Framework

10. Are you familiar with LatCrit or CRT?
    a. Do you feel that the ELD curriculum at your school considers the ideas behind CRT and/or LatCrit? If so, can you identify what those ideas are?
    b. What strategies do you use as a teacher to ensure that you are supportive of your ELL students with Learning Disabilities?
    c. Have you ever had to deviate from the ELD curriculum because you felt that it was not supportive of all of your students?

Closing Questions

I would like to give you a final opportunity to help me examine these issues. Before we end today, is there anything that you feel was missed? Do you have anything else to add at this time? Have you said everything that you wanted to say but didn't get a chance to say? Have you shared everything that is significant about these interactions with me? If there's anything else that you recall after our interview session, I invite you to share it by contacting me.

III.   Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you for participating in today's interview session. I appreciate your taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying information will be used in any report or document. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview. Do you have any questions at this time?