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RUNNING HEAD: LONG TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS

A Case Study of Long Term English Learners in One Middle School

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	7
List of Figures.....	8
Abstract.....	9
Acknowledgement.....	11
Chapter One: Introduction.....	12
Background Information	12
Definition of LTELs	13
Research About LTELs	14
Statement of the Problem	17
Purpose of Study.....	17
Rationale	18
Research Question	19
Significance of Study	19
Applications.....	20
Limitations.....	20
Definition of Terms	21
Adequate yearly progress (AYP).....	21
California English language development test (CELDT).	22
California standards tests (CST).....	22
Disaggregated data.	22
Education code (EC).....	23

English language development.....	23
English language proficiency assessments for California (ELPAC).....	23
English learner (EL).....	23
English language learner (ELL)	24
English language proficiency (ELP)	24
Free or reduced price meal (FRPM).....	24
Grade point average (GPA)	24
Limited English proficient (LEP).....	25
Local educational agency (LEA).....	25
Long term English learners (LTELs).	25
Lunch status.....	25
Performance levels.	25
PowerSchool (PS).....	26
Program improvement (PI).....	26
Reclassification.....	26
Reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP).	26
Subtractive education.....	27
Summary.....	27
Chapter Two: Literature Review	28
History of Educational Policies and Standards	28
Proposition 227.....	29
No Child Left Behind.....	31

Common Core State Standards.....	36
California ELD Standards	38
Senate Bill 1174.	39
ELs, LTELs, and Their Instructors.....	40
EL identification process.....	40
EL testing process.....	41
EL reclassification process.....	43
LTELs and their instructors.....	46
Summary.....	51
Chapter Three: Methodology	53
Methodological Design	53
Quantitative instruments.....	54
Qualitative instruments.....	54
Research setting and participants.	55
Data Collected	55
Instruments and Procedures of Data Collection	56
Methods for Data Analysis	57
Summary.....	57
Chapter Four: Data Analysis	59
Quantitative Data.....	59
Descriptive statistics: students.....	59
Descriptive statistics: teachers.....	66

Qualitative Data: Teacher Survey	70
Instructional strategies.....	71
Characteristics.	72
<i>Home</i>	72
<i>School</i>	73
<i>Peers</i>	74
Home barriers.	74
Biggest home barriers.....	76
School barriers.....	76
<i>School structures</i>	76
<i>Educators</i>	77
<i>Students</i>	78
<i>Academics</i>	79
Biggest school barrier.....	80
Interpretations.....	80
Quantitative data.....	80
<i>Students</i>	81
<i>Teachers</i>	83
Qualitative data.....	84
<i>Instructional strategies</i>	84
<i>Characteristics</i>	85
<i>Biggest home barriers</i>	85

<i>Biggest school barriers.....</i>	86
Educational Benefits.....	86
Insights	87
Summary.....	87
Conclusion	88
Chapter Five: Thesis Recommendations	90
Findings and Interpretations	92
Lessons Learned and Educational Implications	94
Recommendation to Educators.....	95
Recommendation for Best Practices and Educational Research	95
Limitations of Research.....	98
The Ideal Study of LTELs	99
Future Research Directions	100
Research Extension	101
Potential Research, Curriculum, and Instruction.....	101
Summary and Conclusion.....	102
Chapter 1 summary.....	102
Chapter 2 summary.....	104
Chapter 3 summary.....	106
Chapter 4 summary.....	106
Conclusion	107
References	109

Appendices	122
Appendix A	122
Appendix B.....	124

List of Tables

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages for Categorical Demographic Information, n = 364	60
Table 2: One-Way Analysis of Variance of Average GPA by LTEL, Grade Level, and Gender	61
Table 3: Chi-Square Test of Independence Between Country Birth Place, Speech, and English Proficiency Level by LTEL Status.....	63
Table 4: One-Way Analysis of Variance of English Proficiency Level by LTEL, Grade Level, and Gender.....	65
Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation for Grouped Frequency Distribution	69

List of Figures

Figure 1: Frequency of Students who Have not Reclassified.....	69
Figure 2: Frequency of Students who are LTELs	70
Figure 3: Mean GPA by Gender and Grade Level	81
Figure 4: LTEL and Non-LTEL English Proficiency Levels by Grade Level and Gender	83

Abstract

This study analyzes factors that contribute to students remaining long term English learners (LTELs). Although the educational research on LTELs is limited, studies show a current increase in the number of EL students who are unable to reclassify and who remain LTELs, particularly in the secondary school setting. Further, research shows that LTELs are not successful academically and that their unique academic needs are not being met in the classroom. In addition, recent governmental policies have emerged that influence and highlight LTEL students. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the LTEL population by investigating why LTEL students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences.

For this study, a mixed method research design was conducted at a middle school in Southern California to determine which factors cause LTEL students to remain LTELs and not reclassify. Qualitative and quantitative research was conducted via a confidential survey. In addition, quantitative research was used to analyze student academic and demographic data. As perceived by twenty-seven teacher respondents to the survey from this sample school, the results show that LTELs are fluent in conversational English, but they struggle with reading and writing. Although LTELs are capable, some teachers believed that students tend to remain LTELs because they lack the motivation to succeed academically. Another reason for students remaining LTELs was teacher-based; survey participants reported

that they lacked professional development aligned with research-based strategies to meet the needs of LTELs. Further some teachers in this study felt that parents contribute to children remaining LTELs because they do not help their children with schoolwork. Based on the analysis of student data points, in comparison to other ELs, LTELs possess higher English proficiency skills and yet they have lower GPAs. Among LTELs, male Latinos are at greatest risk of academic failure. The next step in this study will be to use the results to better educate teachers and parents about LTELs so that LTEL students can improve academically, reclassify, and ultimately become competitive and successful 21st century learners.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background Information

Across the nation, the English learner (EL) student population has historically been unsuccessful in the U.S. public school system. ELs are students who have not developed their speaking, listening, reading, and writing proficiencies in English sufficient for participating in regular school programs (California Department of Education [CDE], 2014a, p. 42). Olsen (2010b) describes that, "...throughout the nation, English Learners continue to disproportionately end up in the lowest quartiles of achievement" (p. 6).

In the state of California, there are over a million ELs in the California public school system (CDE, 2014c). In 2013, there were 1,346,333 ELs in the state of California consisting of 21.6% of the total enrollment in public schools (CDE, 2014c). In 2014, the EL population increased by over 60,000 students rising to 1,413,549 total EL public school students (CDE Educational Demographics Unit, 2014b). Of those students, 84.2% of the total EL population spoke Spanish (CDE Educational Demographics Unit, 2014a). In the following study, the term EL at times will be referred to as English language learner (ELL) or limited English proficient (LEP) if described as such by a given researcher.

Within this large EL population exists an EL subgroup that has become the focus of recent educational research and government policies: long term English learners (LTELs). These are students who have attended schools in the U.S. for many years, who are not yet English proficient, and who have "major academic deficits"

(Olsen, 2010b, p. 1). Many of these students do not demonstrate “behaviors associated with academic success”; they have learned to be passive, non-engaged, and invisible students (p. 24).

Definition of LTELs

In September of 2012, California Governor Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill 2193 into law which provides an educational code section that defines LTEL students (CDE, 2014a, p. 3). The following summarizes the bill’s definition of the LTEL population (Cal. Assemb. B. 2193, 2012, section 1, para. 1):

- Students who are enrolled in any of grades six to twelve, inclusive.
- Students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years.
- Students who have remained at the same English language proficiency (ELP) level for two or more consecutive years based on the English language development (ELD) test (California English language development test [CELDT]), or any successor test.
- Students who score far below basic or below basic on the English language arts standards-based achievement test, or any successor test.

Assembly Bill 2193 (2012) also provides a definition of EL students who are at risk of becoming LTELs (section 1, para. 1):

- Students enrolled in any of grades five to eleven, inclusive.
- Students in U.S. schools for four years.
- Students who score at the intermediate level or below on the ELD test (CELDT), or any successor test.

- Students in the fourth year who score at the below basic or far below basic level on the English language arts standards-based achievement test, or any successor test.

Senator Ricardo Lara, the bill’s writer, was the “first in the nation” to write a bill that defined LTEL students (“Lara’s bill,” 2012, para. 1).

Research About LTELs

Similar to these efforts to define LTEL students at the state level, recent educational studies highlight the existence and growth of the LTEL population and assert that LTELs are underserved. Menken and Kleyn (2009) state that although there is a lack of national data about LTELs, there appears to be “significant numbers” of LTELs attending U.S. middle school and high schools and that this number is increasing (para. 1). In a large study of forty California school districts—*Reparable Harm: Fulfilling the Unkept Promise of Educational Opportunity for California’s Long Term English Learners*—Olsen (2010b) contends that in secondary schools, the majority (59%) of ELs are LTELs and that in one of every three districts more than 75% of ELs are LTELs (p. 1). In an investigation of New York City high schools, Menken, Kleyn, and Chae (2012) claim that the needs of LTELs in high school are different from other “emergent bilinguals,” and that LTELs need “distinctive” educational programs (p. 123). Based on their research of five California school districts, Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix, and Clewell (2000) argue that ELs are underserved over time and that the LTEL population is provided inadequate instructional materials in the secondary school setting.

Although LTELs have similarities to other EL groups, such as newcomers and standard ELs, they also have unique academic characteristics. Unlike some of their EL counterparts, LTELs are “orally bilingual” in social settings with both English and their home languages (Olsen, 2010b; Menken et al., 2012, pp. 122-123; Menken & Kleyn, 2010, p. 400). Although LTELs are socially proficient, they struggle with academic language, reading, and writing, and the majority of them are stuck at an intermediate or below level of proficiency on the CELDT (Olsen, 2010b). When LTELs arrive in high school, they have limited academic literacy, which causes difficulties in being successful in all subject areas (Menken & Kleyn, 2010). Freeman, Freeman, and Mercuri (2002) say that although LTEL students may have conversational English skills, they “face the task of developing academic language” (p. 38). They often “...do not know how to talk, read, and write about school subjects in their first language or in English” (p. 38).

LTEL students have specialized academic needs that are often not met in the classroom. Their unique needs are not the same as those who are new to the country (Olsen, 2010b). LTELs need improved language developments skills that will aid them in becoming proficient (Olsen, 2010b). Yet, these needs are not being met. Menken et al. (2012) maintain that the educational inconsistencies among U.S. schools and programs contribute to students being classified as LTELs over time. Schools have varying language policies and programs or they lack language support programming (pp. 128-130). Often improperly placed, LTELs spend most of their educational career inside of remedial classes (Olsen, 2010b). They are placed in

classrooms with newcomers, immigrant students who have been in the U.S. for fewer than twelve-months. LTELs are also placed inside of mainstream classrooms with little to no language development instruction (Olsen, 2010b).

These inconsistent educational experiences can cause LTELs to develop habits that are not beneficial to their academic growth. Menken et al. (2012) associate the poor performance of LTELs throughout their schooling with “lowered personal expectations” (p. 134). Olsen (2010b) describes habits of “non-engagement” and “learned passivity and invisibility in school” (p. 24). Despite this tendency for disengagement, the majority of LTELs want to attend college but are unaware that they are in “academic jeopardy” and not prepared to achieve this goal (p. 25). LTEL students have misperceptions of their academic performance levels and what “doing well” in school means (Menken et al., 2012, p. 134). For example, in the Menken et al. (2012) study, one 10th grade student was quoted as saying, “‘The only two classes that I’m failing is math and English, but other than that I think I’m really doing good’” (p. 134).

In order to better support the needs and challenges of LTELs, Olsen (2010a) encourages districts to educate administrators, teachers, EL students, and their parents about the criteria for reclassification and the purpose and implications of CELDT scores (p. 33). To become redesignated as reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP), students must meet the reclassification requirements of each district which includes four criteria: 1) assessing English language proficiency through the CELDT assessment test results, 2) teacher evaluations, 3) parent opinions, and 4) comparison

of performance in basic skills (Cal. Educ. Code 313, 2013; CDE, 2014a, pp. 43-44).

Students must be able to perform successfully in academic subjects and no longer need English language development (ELD) support (CDE, 2014a, p. 43). When they become RFEP students, they are no longer classified as LTELs or ELs.

Statement of the Problem

As Menken and Kleyn (2009) indicate, LTELs are a “significant and growing secondary population” (What Can We Do? section, para. 5). Although LTELs share some similar characteristics to other categories of EL students, they also have unique language needs (Olsen, 2010b). LTEL students are “frequently misperceived as ‘failures’ of ESL and bilingual programs” (Menken et al., 2012, p. 124). The research shows that LTEL students are not successful because their needs are not being met. For example, Olsen (2010b) finds that the instructional needs of LTELs in language and literacy development are currently not being addressed. With the size and increase of the LTEL population, “it is of pressing concern that schools take notice of them and meet their needs” (Menken & Kleyn, 2009, What Can We Do? section, para. 5).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the LTEL population by investigating why LTEL students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences. In recent years, the LTEL population has become a focus area of educational research. Olsen’s (2010b) study of 40 California school districts provides

great insight into the needs of the LTEL population. Research on the LTEL population in New York City high schools indicates that there is a dire need for more educational support of LTEL students (Menken et al., 2012). However, the educational research about LTELs is limited. Menken et al. (2012) state that LTELs are largely invisible in research: "Despite the reality that large numbers of such students currently attend U.S. schools, there has been practically no research conducted about them to date, nor do specialized educational programs exist to meet their needs" (p. 122). Similarly, Ruiz-de-Velasco et al. (2000) argue that more research is needed to meet the instructional needs of LTEL students at the secondary level. This current thesis study, *A case study of long term English learners in one middle school*, will use a survey to investigate teacher opinions and knowledge about LTELs, and their experience with LTELs. It will also study student academic and demographic data points in PowerSchool to help build upon factors that contribute to the growing number of students who remain as LTELs.

Rationale

There are a significant number of LTEL students attending U.S. schools in grades 6-12 and the numbers are growing (Menken & Kleyn, 2009). These students have been enrolled in school for more than six years and have not been able to reclassify (Cal. Assemb. B. 2193; CDE, 2014a; Olsen, 2010b). Although the majority of LTELs have the desire to attend college, LTELs and their parents are often unaware of the high school academic requirements for attending a university and the deficiencies they have as LTELs, such as low scores, low grades, or a lack of college-

preparatory credits (Olsen, 2010b, p. 25). LTELs are a “high risk population for grade retention and dropout” (Menken et al., 2012, p. 136). These are real-world issues that schools, districts, and state governments must solve in order to move all students towards college and career readiness.

Research Question

This study investigates the question, “Why do some LTEL students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences?” To answer this question, this study will attempt to find factors that contribute to the growing number of LTEL students who remain LTELs and are not able to reclassify.

Significance of Study

This study is significant to the field of education because it addresses a current and problematic issue in U.S. public schools; many LTEL students remain LTELs throughout their secondary experiences. Menken et al. (2012) reference “striking national statistics” about the percentage of LTELs in the U.S. For example, through personal communication with a Chicago Public School administrator, they discovered that one-third of ELs are LTELs (p. 122). Olsen (2010b) cites an even larger number of LTELs in California, with 59% of secondary school ELs being classified as LTELs. In reference to the U.S. overall, Olsen (2010b) explains that,

... the vast majority of English Learners currently in middle schools and high schools have been enrolled in United States schools since kindergarten — and most were born in the United States. This group is struggling academically,

failing to progress in English proficiency, and facing disproportionately high dropout rates. (p. 6)

In a study of three years of statewide student data, Kim (2011) contends that the longer students are designated as limited English proficient (LEP) or English language learners (ELLs), the more likely they will drop out (p. 48). These findings on LTEL dropout rates make the current study even more significant; it is imperative that we understand why students become LTELs so that we can help them be successful academically.

Applications

These statistics about LTELs and the common traits among LTELs translate into the public schools having a significant percentage of students who are not college-ready. With the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that focus on college and career readiness and 21st century skills (CDE, 2014a), it is even more critical that LTEL students become reclassified and become academically competitive. The practical application of this study is that instructional leaders and content-area coaches can use the results of this study to provide teachers a better understanding of why their students become LTELs. With this knowledge, teachers can better meet the academic and social-emotional needs of their LTEL students and assist them in moving them towards reclassification and academic success.

Limitations

One limitation of this study involves time constraints. Since this survey was sent out during the last week of school, there was an extremely short window of time

to receive teacher feedback. If the survey had been sent out earlier in the school year, there would have been a better chance to receive full participation from teachers. The study was conducted via an online survey rather than informational interviews. While focus group interviews can provide rich results, interviews were too time-consuming for the time constraints of this study. A second limitation is that this study focused on the responses of teachers at one middle school rather than multiple schools. Although it would be helpful to study more than one school, accessing information from other schools or districts would have been extremely difficult. Therefore, it is hard to generalize the opinions of such a small sample group of teacher participants. A third potential limitation to the study is that the PowerSchool academic and demographic data points did not represent a comprehensive description of the LTEL students. Another significant limitation to the study is that despite the fact that this is a confidential survey, since I am the EL coordinator at the school where I am conducting the study, this may have influenced teacher responses. Also, in this small sample of participants, there may have been biases that influenced the results.

Definition of Terms

Adequate yearly progress (AYP). This was a series of annual academic performance goals established for each school, Local Education Agency (LEA), and the state (California Department of Education [CDE], 2013a, p. 5). States had to develop and implement a single, statewide accountability system that would be effective in ensuring that all districts and schools make adequate yearly progress, and hold accountable those that did not (“Office of the Under Secretary,” 2002, 17).

California English language development test (CELDT). This test measures limited English proficient students' achievement of California English Language Development (ELD) Standards in kindergarten through grade twelve (CDE, 2014a).

California standards tests (CST). These tests were developed exclusively for California public schools as a part of the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program to measure how well schools are providing instruction covering—and how well students are achieving—the knowledge, concepts, and skills that students should acquire at each grade level identified in the content standards (STAR Program Office, 2013, p. 28). The performance levels are: advanced, proficient, basic, below basic, and far below basic. A performance level of proficient or advanced indicates that a student is meeting or surpassing the state's target for academic achievement. A performance level of basic, below basic, or far below basic suggests an area of learning that needs improvement (p. 30).

Disaggregated data. Disaggregate means to separate a whole into its parts. In education, this term means that test results are sorted into groups of students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English fluency. This practice allows parents and teachers to see more than just the average score for their child's school. Instead, parents and teachers can see how each student group is performing (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2004).

Education code (EC). The California Education Code lists the statutes passed by the State Legislature and signed into law by the Governor (“Acronyms, Abbreviations,” 2010).

English language development. This is a specialized program of English language instruction appropriate for the English learner (EL) students (formerly LEP students) identified level of language proficiency. This program is implemented and designed to promote second language acquisition of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (CDE, 2014d).

English language proficiency assessments for California (ELPAC). It is a potential system to replace the CELDT that will be designed to assess California’s diverse population of English learners in accordance with the new ELD Standards and state and federal requirements for assessment accountability (CDE, 2014a, p. 3).

English learner (EL). A student in kindergarten through grade twelve who, based on objective assessment, has not developed listening, speaking, reading, and writing proficiencies in English sufficient for participation in the regular school program (CDE, 2014a). State and federal law require that local educational agencies administer a state test of English language proficiency to newly enrolled students whose primary language is not English and to English learners as an annual assessment. Since 2001, this test for California’s public school students has been the CELDT (p. 42). English learner is also referred to as limited English proficient (LEP) or English language learner (ELL) (Menken, Antunez, Dilworth, & Yasin, 2001, p. 43).

English language learner (ELL). Another term used to describe English learners (Menken, Antunez, Dilworth, & Yasin, 2001, p. 43).

English language proficiency (ELP). This has been used for many years to describe the benchmarks and levels of an English learner's competency in speaking, writing, listening, and reading (Bauman et al., 2007, p. 4).

Free or reduced price meal (FRPM). In 2013-2014 the State adopted a new funding formula (Local Control Funding Formula or LCFF) for public schools that targets funding for pupils who are eligible to receive a free or reduced price meal (FRPM) under the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs. These eligibility guidelines are set each year by the Federal Government. (Villarreal, 2013, December 2). To be correctly designated as FRPM eligible, a student must be part of a household that meets income eligibility requirements or the student must be categorically eligible based on his or her status, such as a foster, homeless, or migrant student (CDE, 2014e).

Grade point average (GPA). This is a number that represents the average value of the accumulated final grades earned in courses over time. A GPA is calculated by adding up all accumulated final grades and dividing that figure by the number of grades awarded resulting in the mean or average of all final grades ("Great Schools Partnership," 2013). In the context of this study, the GPAs of students at this sample middle school are calculated based on the performance of students over three trimesters in a school year on a grading scale of 0 to 4.0 (A = 4.0, B = 3.0, C = 2.0, D = 1.0, and F = 0).

Limited English proficient (LEP). This is a federal designation of an individual who does not speak English as the primary language and who is not proficient in speaking, listening, reading, or writing in English (CDE, 2014a). This is also referred to as English language learner (ELL) and English learner (EL) (Menken & Antunez, 2001, p. 43).

Local educational agency (LEA). An LEA is a government agency, which supervises local public primary and secondary schools in the delivery of instructional and educational services. LEAs include school districts, county offices of education, special state schools, and independent public charter schools (CDE, 2014a).

Long term English learners (LTELs). Students who have been enrolled in schools in the U.S. for more than six years (Cal. Assemb. B. 2193; CDE, 2014a; Olsen, 2010b), are enrolled in any of grades six through twelve, have remained at the same English language proficiency (ELP) level for two or more consecutive years based on the CELDT or successor test, and have scored far below basic or below basic on the English-language arts standards-based achievement or any successor tests (Cal. Assemb. B. 2193, section 1, para. 1; CDE, 2014a).

Lunch status. This is a search field in PowerSchool that allows schools to extract information about which students qualify for a FRPM (“DataDriven for schools,” 2012).

Performance levels. These are CELDT ranges of scores in which students have demonstrated sufficient knowledge and skills to be regarded as performing at a particular English-proficiency level. Student CELDT scores are identified as falling

into one of five performance levels: beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, or advanced (CDE, 2014a).

PowerSchool (PS). This is a web-based student information system that allows schools to manage information, such as grades, attendance, demographics, and courses. Since PowerSchool is web-based, parents and students can view grades (“Pearson School Systems,” n.d.).

Program improvement (PI). All Title I funded schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) that do not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are identified for Program Improvement (PI) under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (CDE, 2014f). Under NCLB, PI schools and LEAs are responsible for implementing certain federal and state requirements during each year that they are in PI. These vary, based on the PI year and whether the entity is a school or LEA (CDE, 2014f).

Reclassification. The local process used by LEAs to determine if a student has acquired sufficient English language fluency to perform successfully in academic subjects without English language development support (CDE, 2014a). This is also referred to as redesignation (2014d).

Reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP). Students with a primary language other than English who were initially classified as ELs, but who have subsequently met the LEAs criteria for EL proficiency (CDE, 2014a).

Subtractive education. This occurs when students give up aspects of their dual identity such as their native language due to the pressures imposed on them (Lambert, 1973).

Summary

The introduction of this thesis discusses an issue that is critical to a growing population of public school students, LTELs. This study investigates why LTEL students enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years are remaining LTELs throughout their educational experiences. Although there is existing research on LTELs, the research is limited (Menken et al., 2012, p. 122). Learning about the factors that cause LTEL students to remain LTELs and prevent reclassification will assist educators in meeting the instructional needs of this demographic group. The following literature review chapter synthesizes past and present research regarding ELs and LTELs.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

As of 2007-2008, approximately 10% of U.S. K-12 students were classified as ELs (USDE, 2010). Among ELs, an increasing number of students are classified in the LTEL subgroup (Menken & Kleyn, 2009, para. 1). The most current definition of an LTEL is that of a student who has been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years and is not making progress towards English proficiency (Cal. Assemb. B. 2193; CDE, 2014a; Olsen, 2010b). These students also have limited academic oral and literacy skills in English and their native languages (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012). LTELs are considered “orally bilingual for social purposes” (pp. 122-123). This growing group is fluent in conversational English, but continue to struggle academically. Therefore, more research is needed to deduce why some LTEL students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences. To understand this complicated issue, the following chapter will first review educational policies and standards that have influenced ELs and LTELs, instructors, instructional methods, and curricula across the nation. The chapter will also review the current state of education for ELs, LTELs, and their instructors.

History of Educational Policies and Standards

Over the past 20 years, educational policies and standards have emerged that have heavily influenced the U.S. public school system at a federal and state level. The core policies and standards include Proposition 227, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Common Core State Standards (CCSS), English Language Development Standards,

and Senate Bill 1174. These have been highly debated in the media, political arenas, educational systems, and among voters across the country. In many cases, these policies and standards have directly impacted EL and LTEL students.

Proposition 227. In the mid-1990s, EL students became a highly debated topic in California politics and among voters. In the 1996-1997 school year, California public schools served 5.6 million students in grades kindergarten through twelve; 1.4 million of these students were categorized as limited English proficient (Cal. Prop. 227, 1998b). At that time, billionaire Ron Unz became heavily involved in the anti-bilingual movement, sponsoring a voter initiative called “English for the Children.” (Revilla & Asato, 2002, p. 108). In 1997, Unz wrote, “...we are in the process of placing an initiative on the June 1998 ballot which would more-or-less end ‘bilingual education’ in California once and for all” (para. 1). In 1998, Unz’s vision became a reality when California voters passed Proposition 227, a law requiring students attending public schools be taught English via English instruction and eliminating most bilingual classes (Cal. Prop. 227, 1998 & 1998b). An argument in favor of Proposition 227 states, “Latino immigrant children are the principal victims of bilingual education. They have the lowest test scores and the highest dropout rates of any immigrant group” (Cal. Prop. 227, 1998c, para. 1). With Unz’s support and sponsorship, similar initiatives were passed in Arizona through Proposition 203 in 2000 and in Massachusetts through the Question 2 initiative in 2002 (Escamilla, Shannon, Carlos, & García, 2003).

In California, Proposition 227 (1998b) “significantly” changed the way ELs were taught (Proposal section, para. 1). According to the official document, all students in California public schools should be taught English by being taught using the English language (Cal. Prop. 227, 1998, Article 2 section, para. 1). Rather than participating in programs that can last for years, EL students are to be educated through “...sheltered English immersion” during a time period that is normally not to exceed one year (Article 2 section, para. 1). Once ELs obtain “a good working knowledge of English,” they are to be transferred to mainstream classrooms (Article 2 section, para. 1). If a school child is denied the right to English language instruction, the parents or legal guardians “...have legal standing to sue for enforcement of the provisions of this statute...” (Article 5 section, para. 1).

Since the implementation of Proposition 227, studies have found that it has impacted bilingual teachers and how they instruct students. Weisman and Hanson (2002) discovered that teachers became frustrated with the new restrictions imposed by the law. Teachers felt limited to English and had to try to find unique methods of teaching without using a student’s primary language to help facilitate the acquisition of a second language. In addition, since all tests were written and administered in English, educators were forced to move away from instruction in a student’s primary language (Gutiérrez et al., 2002). Weisman and Hanson (2002) also deduced that since bilingual teachers had experienced the process of learning a new language, they were able to empathize with newcomer students in the language acquisition process.

Research shows that Proposition 227 has also impacted EL parents. Based on parental waiver conditions detailed in Article 3 of Proposition 227, parents can sign a waiver:

...children may be transferred to classes where they are taught English and other subjects through bilingual education techniques or other generally recognized educational methodologies permitted by law. Individual schools in which 20 pupils or more of a given grade level receive a waiver shall be required to offer such a class; otherwise, they must allow the pupils to transfer to a public school in which such a class is offered. (Cal. Prop. 227, 1998)

Despite this waiver option, parents have often been ill informed of their rights to waive the proposition's requirements. Olivos (2008) details roadblocks in the waiver process, such as waivers being denied without explanation of parental rights to appeal, waivers being lost, or parents signing waivers when a school contains an English only program (p. 28). McField (2008) states that the waiver filing process is complex and that it is difficult to obtain information from districts (p. 20). Further, with this complex filing process and Proposition 227's "shift in power for program selection from districts to parents," (p. 18) educators and districts must be "vigilant" in informing parents about the program options for EL students (p. 20).

No Child Left Behind. Three years after Proposition 227 emerged, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed in 2001 at the federal level during the George W. Bush administration in order to "change the culture of America's schools" and to close the academic achievement gap ("Office of the Under Secretary," 2002, p.

9). The NCLB desktop reference states: "...American students still lag behind many of their fellow foreign students and the academic achievement gap in this country between rich and poor, white and minority students, remains wide" (p. 9). Through NCLB, schools and districts had to disaggregate test data for underperforming subgroups. The rationale was as follows: "Data will be disaggregated for students by poverty levels, race, ethnicities, disabilities, and limited English proficiencies to ensure that no child—regardless of his or her background—is left behind" ("Office of the Under Secretary," 2002). By disaggregating the performance of subgroups, the schools, districts, and states could determine if they were meeting the needs of all students (Hosp, Hosp, & Dole, 2011, p. 110). Since NCLB defined ELLs as a "significant subgroup," their achievement became a major focus in schools throughout California (Olsen, 2010a, p. 30). Schools also had to present the yearly progress of English language learner (ELL) students in "English proficiency, reading, and math tests" (Batt, 2008, p. 39).

Through NCLB, each state was required to develop and implement a statewide accountability system ("Office of the Under Secretary," 2002, 17). As defined in NCLB, each school, Local Educational Agency (LEA), and state needed to ensure that Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) was being made through a series of annual academic performance goals (CDE, 2013a, p. 5). In 2002, California's State Board of Education (SBE) "...demonstrated the state's commitment to the development of an accountability system to achieve the goals of NCLB by adopting five performance goals" (CDE, 2007, p. 5):

- (1) All students will reach high standards, at a minimum, attaining proficiency or better in reading and mathematics, by 2013-2014.
- (2) All limited-English-proficient students will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.
- (3) By 2005-2006, all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers.
- (4) All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug free, and conducive to learning.
- (5) All students will graduate from high school.

The AYP requirements encouraged school districts to meet their AYP goals and avoid becoming a Program Improvement (PI) school. Schools were designated as PI if they did not meet the established AYP criteria for two consecutive years (NCLB, 2002, p. 1487). Each district implemented benchmarks that were then followed by the implementation of pacing guides to ensure that students were prepared for standardized testing (Powell et al., 2009, p. 24).

A very important performance goal of NCLB compliance was that teachers had to be deemed “highly qualified” (“Office of the Under Secretary,” 2002, p. 14). Teachers had to hold credentials to teach the subject area in which they were hired (p. 14). Even as highly qualified teachers, studies after NCLB have shown a widespread deficiency in English language development knowledge among teachers (Olsen, 2010b; Batt, 2008). While NCLB was meant to close the achievement gap throughout

California, “too many schools and districts” made English learners a low priority (Olsen, 2010b, p. 3).

Studies show that NCLB had an impact on the allocation of classroom instructional time. The study by Powell et al. (2009) reveals that the use of instructional time changed with the new emphasis on reading instruction (p. 22). The increase of instructional minutes for English and math meant minimal instructional emphasis on science, arts, and social studies (Powell et al., 2009, p. 22; Olsen, 2010a, p. 32). This contributed to knowledge gaps and resulted in fewer opportunities to develop the academic language required for success in those subjects (Olsen, 2010a, p. 32).

While there was an increased instructional focus on English and math through NCLB, the time allotted for language development for language learners varied and in some cases was non-existent. For example, in studies by Olsen (2010a) as well as Menken and Kleyn (2010), it was discovered that minimal instructional time was used to teach students English language development (ELD). These studies also claim that when ELD was taught, it was instructed in isolation from academic content and literacy learning. Consequently, students were clustered into groups of language development that were not accurate. Menken and Kleyn (2010) found that students were “mismatched to the levels of oral English proficiency possessed by students who have spent sustained periods of time in U.S. schools” (p. 407). This inaccurate placement significantly impacts the progress of LTELs because their needs are not being met.

During the NCLB instructional shift, school districts moved towards scripted methods of instruction. For example, Gutiérrez et al. (2002) and Powell et al. (2009) assert that NCLB lead to the adoption of scripted reading programs. These reading programs limited the creativity of teachers and confined them to curricula adopted by the individual school districts (Powell et al., 2009). Classroom content was aligned with state testing and thus became “scripted” (Powell et al., 2009, p. 24) and most of the elements were “skill and drill” activities (Olson, 2007, p. 126). Similarly, Powell et al. (2009) indicated that teachers referenced their instruction as “drill and kill” (p. 24). Although teachers in the study by Powell et al. (2009) did not acknowledge teaching to the test, the lesson design and delivery were aligned to the school district’s mandated curriculum. This curriculum emphasized memorization instead of making meaning of the concepts being taught. Olson (2007) and Gutiérrez et al. (2002) also notes that teachers felt the pressure to improve test scores, thus emphasizing the popular method of teaching to the test. During this time period, there was a lack of appropriate curriculum adoptions to meet the needs of ELLs (Olsen, 2010b).

NCLB not only impacted the time, content, and methods of classroom instruction, it created a foundation for subtractive education. Lambert (1973) defines subtractive education as when students give up aspects of their dual identity, such as their native language, due to the pressures imposed on them. Students are not exposed to their primary language, consequently losing a portion of their culture. Menken and Kleyn (2010) state that students are not provided the opportunities to develop their

native language skills that would in turn transfer to English with proper support from educators. LTELs need additional guidance to develop the English language inside of the classroom.

The NCLB Act was reauthorized to meet the needs of disadvantaged students. Efforts were made nationwide to foster highly qualified teachers and reach AYP goals. Despite these efforts, the achievement gap grew for English learners (ELs) since the implementation of NCLB (Olsen, 2010b).

Common Core State Standards. Eight years after the NCLB Act was passed, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were launched in 2009 (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010a). Although state education standards had existed since the early 1990s, one reason the CCSS were developed was because by the early 2000s, each state had its own learning standards and own definition of proficiency; this caused a “lack of standardization” across the states (Timeline section, para. 1). Unlike the NCLB Act, the federal government played no role in developing the CCSS; this was a state-led effort (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010b). Leaders from forty-eight states, two territories, and the District of Columbia focused on creating “real-world learning goals” to enable all students to graduate from high school and be prepared to be successful in college and in the workforce (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010a, para. 1). The implementation of the CCSS varies across districts. It will be implemented in states that sign up across the nation in the coming years. The

CCSS represents a major shift in our educational system. The instructional shifts outlined in the CCSS are (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010a):

- Regular practice with complex text and academic language.
- Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from texts, both literary and informational.
- Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction.

Districts and schools will now focus on implementing literacy standards across all content areas and preparing students to be 21st century learners (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010a).

Although the CCSS is relatively new, there have been recent studies that investigate the impact of the CCSS on students. Billings and Roberts (2013) argue that students will benefit from the CCSS because they will be taught speaking, listening, reading, and writing together within context, rather than teaching these elements in isolation. They also believe that speaking and listening promotes student engagement and results in the desire to read and write. Through the CCSS, Billings and Roberts (2013) believe all students will learn to think critically. For ELs, the impact of the CCSS is yet to be determined. Preliminary research conducted by Hakuta, Santos, and Fang (2013) found that through the CCSS, ELs will become “members of the community” (p. 453). However, they assert that in order for ELs to be successful in content-rich classrooms, they need language comprehension skills and must be exposed to language and content.

California ELD Standards. In an effort to “support the academic achievement of California’s ELs,” the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the new California English Language Development Standards (CA ELD Standards) in 2012 (CDE, 2013b, p. 4; CDE, 2014e). The newly adopted CA ELD Standards “...describe the key knowledge, skills, and abilities in core areas of English language development that students learning English as a new language need in order to access, engage with, and achieve in grade level academic content areas (CDE, 2013b, p. 6). The CA ELD Standards are not intended to supersede the CCSS for English language arts (ELA) and literacy. These standards have been “...designed to provide challenging content in English language development for ELs to gain proficiency in a range of rigorous academic English language skills.” (p. 6). They also align “...to the key knowledge, skills, and abilities for college and career readiness as described in the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, CCSSM [Common Core State Standards for Mathematics], Next Generation Science Standards, and history/social studies standards” (p. 6).

In the CDE document *Overview of the California English Language Development Standards and Proficiency Level Descriptors* (2012), the EL student population is described as a diverse group influenced by a variety of factors, such as coming “...from all over the world, and from within California, with a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, experiences with formal schooling, proficiency with native language and English literacy, migrant statuses, and socioeconomic statuses, as well as other experiences in the home, school, and community” (Torlakson, 2012, p. 2). These numerous factors are helpful in informing educators

how to “...support ELs to achieve school success through implementation of the CA ELD Standards and the academic content standards” (p. 2). Further, in the context of the CA ELD Standards, the LTEL population is highlighted in the document and is described in detail. The document states that the State of California recognizes that LTELs “...face considerable challenges succeeding in school as the amount and complexity of the academic texts they encounter rapidly increase” (p. 3). It also details how Assembly Bill 2193 (2012, section 2, para. 1) “...requires the CDE to annually ascertain and provide to school districts and schools the number of such pupils [LTELs] in each school district and school” (Torlakson, 2012, p. 3).

A successful implementation of the CA ELD Standards to serve both EL and LTEL students requires, “strong instructional leadership” in every school and “well-prepared teachers in every classroom (CDE, 2013b, p. 10). A well-prepared educator is one who possesses “...a thorough understanding of what students are expected to know and be able to do as well as an array of instructional strategies designed to support students in meeting language proficiency and core content expectations” (CDE, 2013b, p. 10). In order to prepare educators, professional development will be needed for educators of EL students.

Senate Bill 1174. Two years after the new CA ELD Standards were adopted, Senator Ricardo Lara introduced California Senate Bill 1174 (2014) in California to repeal Proposition 227. If passed, this bill will enable parents to have the choice to have their children receive bilingual education. It will also allow county offices of education and school districts to “...determine the best language instruction methods

and language acquisition programs to implement by consulting experts in the field, parents, and engaging local communities” (Cal. S. B. 1174, 2014, Legislative Counsel’s Digest section, para. 1). Supporters of the bill are deeming multilingualism as a necessary 21st century skill in college and careers and would like this Senate Bill to be on the 2016 ballot (para. 4). With its emphasis on biliteracy in the context of college and career readiness, this bill could have connections to the CCSS and have an impact on LTELs.

ELs, LTELs, and Their Instructors

EL students and the LTEL subgroup have experienced great educational shifts over the years due to changes in policies and standards. Current federal and state laws require that all students with a primary language other than English be assessed for how proficient they are in English (CDE, 2014a). The legal basis for this testing is that “...all students have the right to an equal and appropriate education, and any English language limitations (left unidentified and/or unaddressed) could preclude a student from accessing that right” (p. 1). To better understand the current state of ELs, particularly in the state of California, the following section details how students are classified as ELs, how they are tested, and how they can become reclassified. LTEL students are also described in the context of their current course placements and the perceptions and preparedness of their instructors.

EL identification process. The EL identification process begins with a home language survey. All local educational agencies (LEAs) are required to determine the primary home language of students upon first enrolling in California public schools

(CDE, 2010, p. 5). In order to determine a student's primary home language, LEAs usually administer a home language survey (CDE, 2014a, p. 9). This survey asks parents to answer four questions as stated by the CDE (2005).

- (1) Which language did your child learn when he/she first began to talk?
- (2) Which language does your child most frequently speak at home?
- (3) Which language do you (the parents or guardians) most frequently use when speaking with your child?
- (4) Which language is most often spoken by adults in the home? (parents, guardians, grandparents, or any other adults)

If the respondents answer anything other than English, they are to be tested to determine if they are ELs (CDE, 2010, p. 6). LEAs use the fourth question at their discretion; they determine whether or not to test the student (p. 6).

EL testing process. The California English language development test (CELDT) is the assessment that is currently used in the state of California as an initial assessment for students who are newly enrolled and who have a primary language other than English (CDE, 2014a, p. 1). The CELDT is also used annually to measure the progress of English language proficiency (ELP) for students who have already been identified as ELs (pp.1, 7). California education code 313 (2013) states that EL designated students shall take this test annually until they are “redesignated” as proficient in English (para. 1). The CEDLT is organized by four domains including listening, speaking, reading, and writing (CDE, 2014a, p. 8). Students are scored for each domain using five performance levels that show that “students have

demonstrated sufficient knowledge and skills to be regarded as performing at a particular English-proficient level” (p. 43). Students are identified at beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, or advanced English performance levels (CDE, 2014a, p. 43). Students in grades 2-12 also receive an overall CELDT score that is the average of the four domain scores (CDE, n.d., p. 2).

Although the CELDT is the current statewide EL assessment in California, the state’s ELD testing system is undergoing major changes. Based on California education code section 60810 (2013, para. 1) and section 60811.3 from Assembly Bill 124 (2011, section 2, para. 1), the CDE is required to “...incorporate the new ELD Standards into the public education system, including the state ELP test” (CDE, 2014a, p. 3). Therefore, the CDE is working on replacing the CELDT and creating the new English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) system (p. 3). The ELPAC is being designed to “...assess California’s diverse population of English learners in accordance with the new ELD Standards and state and federal requirements for assessment accountability” (p. 3).

During the period of transition to the ELPAC system, the CELDT will continue to be administered in the 2014-2015 school year within the usual assessment window from July 1 to October 31 (CDE, 2014a, p. 3). However, when the new system is in place, there will be great changes to the testing process. In October of 2013, the governor approved two bills that address the development of the ELPAC (p. 4). California Senate Bill 201 (2013) authorizes the creation of two separate English language proficiency (ELP) assessments, one for the initial identification of an EL

and the other for the annual EL test (CDE, 2014a, p. 4). It also identifies a new testing window that begins after January 1 and lasts four months (p. 4). The other bill that was passed, California Assembly Bill 899 (2013), “ensures that the ELPAC will meet state law and federal accountability requirements when the test is aligned to the California ELD Standards” (CDE, 2014a, p. 5).

EL reclassification process. EL students currently continue to take the CELDT annually until they become reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) (CDE, 2014a, p. 6). In the state of California, the following criteria is required for a student to be reclassified as RFEP (Cal. Educ. Code 313, 2013. para. 1):

- (1) Assessment of English language proficiency using an objective assessment instrument, including, but not limited to, the ELD test that is developed or acquired pursuant to Section 60810.
- (2) Teacher evaluation including, but not limited to, a review of the student's curriculum mastery.
- (3) Parental opinion and consultation.
- (4) Comparison of the performance of the student in basic skills against an empirically established range of performance in basic skills based upon the performance of English proficient students of the same age, that demonstrates whether the student is sufficiently proficient in English to participate effectively in a curriculum designed for students of the same age whose native language is English.

When assessing the English proficiency of kindergarten or first grade students, they must receive an overall CELDT performance level of early advanced or higher and receive intermediate domain scores for listening and speaking (CDE, 2014a, p. 18). Students in grades two through twelve must receive an overall CELDT performance level of early advanced or higher and each domain's score in speaking, listening, reading, and writing should be intermediate or higher (p. 18).

According to the CDE, school districts have the flexibility to determine “...whether or not an English learner student has sufficient English proficiency to be reclassified as a fluent English speaker” (CDE, 2013c, para. 1). For example, in the sample school district featured in this study, the district determined the following reclassification criteria for grades 4-7 during the 2013-2014 school year. In order to be reclassified, the following criteria had to be met:

- Students had to receive an overall CELDT score of early advanced or advanced with a minimum of early advanced on all four domain scores.
- Students had to receive a score of basic on both the English Language Arts (ELA) and the Mathematics sections of the California Standards Test (CST).

However, this school district will accept a sub-score of intermediate if the CST ELA performance level is either proficient or advanced.

- Unedited writing products were analyzed by district literacy coaches to determine if the students were able to write at a proficient level and use native-like sentence structures of writing.

Students in the 8th grade had similar reclassification criteria but with slightly different requirements for certain scores. For the CELDT, eighth grade students had to score early advanced overall and with sub-scores of intermediate or higher. They also had to receive a performance level score of basic on the CST ELA exam. In addition, the CST mathematics test was not taken into consideration for 8th grade students.

The state of California and its districts and schools have been criticized for certain aspects of their EL programs and reclassification processes. Bailey and Kelly (2010) critique the initial step of the EL process, the home language survey. They assert that a drawback to the California public school home language survey is that “...if parents report that the grandparents or ‘any other adult’ in the home speak a language other than English this response will trigger evaluation with the CELDT, irrespective of whether the child speaks that language...” (p. 7). At a broader level, California State Auditor published a lengthy audit report in 2005 stating that the CDE and its districts need to improve how they “manage and monitor supplemental English learner programs” (p. 17). More specifically, it highlights flaws in the reclassification process:

...funding is skewed and performance results are not comparable across the State because some school districts use more stringent criteria to redesignate English learners as fluent. The failure of the department and school districts to monitor the student redesignation process also has led to some students remaining in the English learner population after they meet the criteria for

fluency, as some schools fail to initiate, complete, or adhere to their district's redesignation process (p. 17).

LTELs and their instructors. For LTEL students, the goal is that current legislative efforts for public school improvements will positively impact the learning environment for these students. Currently, the LTEL learning environment is not conducive to academic and linguistic growth. The research has shown that LTELs are placed in classrooms with teachers who are not prepared to teach content to students who struggle academically (Olsen, 2010a). Since LTEL students often need extra support classes, they are provided partial curricula and have fewer course options (Olsen, 2010a; Wassell, Hawrylak, & LaVan, 2010). In some cases, students in secondary schools end up being excluded from elective courses (Olsen, 2010a). Wassell et al. (2010) claim that teachers are not challenging ELL students inside of the classroom. Batt (2008) notes that teachers are overwhelmed with the amount of additional time needed to design lessons that meet the needs of LTELs. Another scenario can occur with LTEL students where teachers misperceive their English skills. Freeman, Freeman, and Mercuri (2002) say that since LTEL students often have conversational English skills, they are often placed in mainstream classroom settings (p. 38). If they do not do well in school, they could be recommended for special education classes since the “assumption is that difficulty with English is not the problem” (p. 38).

Researchers assert that the use of a student's primary language is not always encouraged inside of the classroom. For example, in studies conducted by Karabenick

and Noda (2004), and Nava and García (2012), it was found that participants believed that the use of a student's primary language interferes with the acquisition of the English language. Weisman and Hanson (2002) explain that conflicts happen between colleagues who hold "...negative attitudes about bilingual education and even attempt to intimidate them into avoiding any use of the students' native language" (p. 60). Nava and García (2012) deduce that not allowing students to fully develop their primary language will have a negative cognitive effect on students because they are not allowed to "develop a cognitive and linguistic foundation" (p. 75). This results "in low levels of proficiency and low academic achievement in both languages" (p. 75).

In addition, there is a limited amount of LTEL professional development offered to educators. Studies by Karabenick and Noda (2004), and Luttrell (2011) argue that educator participants are not well versed in cultural and linguistic diversity methodologies. Batt (2008) states that, "...not all educators who work with ELLs in their schools were qualified to work with linguistic minority students" (p. 40). Further, Luttrell's (2011) study concludes that there is a "...lack of training for teachers in cultural and linguistic diversity training both in preservice and district training" (p. 111).

With the various academic struggles of the LTEL population and the lack of professional development for educators, research suggests that schools and districts should provide teachers professional development in the areas of curriculum, language acquisition, and the benefits of biliteracy. Olsen (2010b) believes that school districts need to hire teachers who can change the curriculum used to meet the

needs of the diverse learners within the school. Moreover, school districts should implement on-going research based professional development that focuses on the linguistic needs of students (Luttrell, 2011; Olson, 2007; Pettit, 2011). In order to meet those needs, teachers should better understand the language acquisition process. Olsen (2010b) states that it takes “five years to achieve English proficiency” (p. 12). Consequently, teachers should develop a better understanding of the benefits of encouraging students to develop their primary language, which will then help transfer skills into English (Pettit, 2011).

Although there is a need for additional LTEL professional development for educators, not all teachers desire such support. A study conducted by Reeves (2009) shows that 45% of the participants did not express interest in receiving professional development, although the majority of the participants indicated that they had not received adequate professional development to meet the needs of ESL students (p. 136). However, Youngs and Youngs, Jr. study concluded that teachers with previous professional development resulted in a more positive attitude towards teaching ESL students in comparison to teachers who had not received ESL training (p. 113).

Based on the current research of EL and LTEL students, it is imperative that instructional leaders and policy makers begin to divert attention to this growing subgroup of students (Olsen, 2010b). Ascenzi-Moreno, Kleyn, and Menken, (2013) assert that administrative support of the LTEL population is imperative:

It is critical that school administrators build meaningful programs that support the success of students labeled LTEL...These re-organization efforts should

span the school year (and beyond). Chronologically, these structures may include: summer program planning, curriculum mapping, regular LTEL team meetings, ongoing PD, peer and administrator observations, CDI (Collaborative Descriptive Inquiry) groups focused on LTELs, planning time for ELA/ESL/HLA teachers, and end of summer workshops/reflections. Administrators are key in developing and sustaining these structures for teachers to best reach and teach their students who fall under the LTEL label (p. 3).

Despite the various issues that LTEL students face, there are a variety of solutions for teachers, schools, and districts that can assist LTELs in being academically successful. As referenced in chapter one, LTEL students will improve academically by building academic language (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002) and developing native language skills that can transfer to English language skills (Menken and Kleyn, 2010). LTEL students will also benefit from having more realistic perceptions of their academic performance and expectations (Menken et al., 2012) and by being knowledgeable about the reclassification process (Olsen, 2010a).

Olsen (2010b) has created a district checklist with over twenty suggestions for how a district and school leaders can best support LTEL students. Some of the key items related to LTEL students include the following (pp. 55-56):

- We have a formal definition for long term English learners (LTELs).
- We have conducted our own inquiry (including analysis of data, student interviews, focus groups, review of cumulative file histories, and classroom

observations) to develop a deeper understanding of our own LTEL population.

- At the secondary school level, we have specially designed English language development (ELD) to focus on the unique needs of LTELs, including academic language and writing.
- Our LTELs are knowledgeable about the purposes of the CELDT and implications of their CELDT scores or of subsequent tests. They know what they need to do in order to meet the reclassification criteria.
- Professional development and collaborative planning time for teachers of classes with LTELs is a high priority for the use of professional development funds.
- We provide supplementary materials and relevant literature for academic classes with LTELs in order to enhance access, engagement, and academic success.

At the county level, the Riverside Office of Education provides an example of efforts to support LTEL students in the California public school system. This county formed an LTEL task force that conducts meetings, training sessions, and research on the LTEL population. Their goal is to “...provide support for districts and schools as they seek to move their LTELs to proficiency in English and to high levels of academic achievement toward redesignation...” so that they can be well prepared to graduate from high school and be successful in college and the workforce (Frank, 2014, Long-Term English section, para. 1). In January of 2012, the task force hosted

an LTEL institute featuring LTEL experts like Dr. Laurie Olsen (Frank, 2013). The LTEL task force has also created a list of 28 LTEL-related research projects that they are investigating (“Long-term English,” n.d.). They are studying a variety of questions related to LTELs. For example, question 10 asks, “Which schools have a track record of moving students to English proficiency in the earliest expected amount of time since entering kindergarten? What about their practices accelerate this progress?” (“Long-term English,” n.d., p. 1). Question 21 asks, “Is there a link to high rates of reclassification and high rates of academic scores?” (p. 2). Recent efforts like this county task force as well as research by experts like Olsen (2010a; 2010b) demonstrate how LTEL students have become a concern in the California public school system.

Summary

California’s growing EL population has been a topic of discussion and debate for many years. The EL-related programs, laws, and curricula have metamorphosed over the past twenty years due to a variety of changes to policies and standards, such as Proposition 227, the NCLB Act, and the CCSS. In recent years, the academic struggles of the LTEL subgroup have been featured and defined in educational research, in the new CA ELD standards, and in Senate Bill 1174. The research shows that the current learning environment for public school LTEL students does not support their language needs and does not prepare them to be college and career ready. Current studies also provide suggestions for how teachers, schools, districts, and the CDE can improve the academic skills of LTEL students. However, the

research is limited and therefore requires more study about why students become LTELs and how best LTELs can be successful academically and professionally.

This study will thus investigate the reasons why some LTEL students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences. The subsequent methodology chapter will discuss the mixed method design that will be conducted using a sample middle school population. The school that was chosen for this study is located in a low socioeconomic area in Southern California with a majority of second language learners. It therefore provides a rich environment for academic investigation of LTELs. The chapter will detail the two forms of data collection that will be used in the study, including a confidential survey and an analysis of student academic and demographic data.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This study was conducted at a middle school in Southern California. Using mixed research methods, the study surveyed a sample of teachers and assessed student academic and demographic data points. The survey was administered to teachers at this middle school with the purpose of identifying teacher opinions and knowledge about LTELs, and their experience with LTELs. To assess academic and demographic data points, I analyzed student PowerSchool information to determine the factors that contribute to LTEL students remaining as LTELs. Chapter 3 provides information regarding the mixed method research design, participants, school setting, and procedures for data collection and analysis.

Methodological Design

This study implements a mixed methods research design, including qualitative and quantitative research. According to Mertler and Charles (2011) “quantitative data yields information that can be analyzed statistically to provide useful information for describing a large number of people” (p. 319). This study includes a sample of the LTEL population, which will yield information to best meet the needs of LTEL students. Mertler and Charles (2011) also state that qualitative data collection including open-ended responses afford the researcher the opportunity to develop a “much more complex picture of the phenomenon under study” (p. 319). Creswell, (2005) states that qualitative data collections allow the researcher to collect more detailed information supporting or extending explanations that could be drawn from the results of statistical analyses. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods,

teachers completed a 14-question, confidential online survey that sought to identify teacher opinions and knowledge about LTELs, and experience with LTELs. In addition, LTEL student academic and demographic data points were analyzed statistically using the quantitative method to determine contributing factors that cause students to remain LTELs.

Quantitative instruments. In the survey, teachers were presented eight multiple choice questions among which one was a Likert-Type question using a scale of very ineffective, ineffective, neutral, effective, and very effective. One of the multiple-choice questions asked the participants about the number of years they have been teaching. The Likert-Type question asked for a rating of the effectiveness of the professional development they had received. The results of the multiple-choice questions are featured in the following findings chapter, describing the participants who took the survey and their opinions and knowledge about LTELs, and their experiences with LTELs.

In the analysis of demographic data, a report was run from the PowerSchool software on all students who are not reclassified. Some of the data collected included the country of birth, English language proficiency level, lunch status, and speech status. This data was sorted by category in order to make generalizations about the LTEL population at this school.

Qualitative instruments. The survey contained six open-ended questions that were qualitative in nature. They asked for teachers to share their opinions and knowledge about LTELs, and their experiences with LTELs. For teachers who had

received professional development on LTELs, the survey asked them to reflect on instructional strategies that cater to LTEL students. Teachers were also asked to share characteristics that they believe are unique to LTELs. Finally, the teachers shared potential barriers at school and home that prevented students from becoming reclassified. Of these barriers, they were asked to choose the most significant barrier in the school and home environments. These results were analyzed to uncover common themes among teacher opinions.

Research setting and participants. This sample study was conducted at a large middle school with an average of 1000 students, located in Southern California. Based on PowerSchool data, the demographics of the student body consist of 94% Hispanic or Latino and 6% Other (Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Hawaiian, Filipino, African American, White-Non Hispanic, and declined to state). Of the total student population, 87% of the students are eligible to receive a free or reduced price meal (FRPM) and are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Thirty-seven percent of students have not reclassified. The participants of this study included teachers from the sample middle school who voluntarily completed the survey.

Data Collected

The survey portion of the study collected information on teacher opinions and knowledge about LTELs, and their experiences with LTELs. The academic and demographic assessment portion of the study focused on the educational history of all students who did not reclassify this school year and who remain LTELs.

Instruments and Procedures of Data Collection

The first data collection instrument used in this study included a 14-question mixed methods survey. Given the tight time constraints of the study, the online survey was a practical tool for data collection. The survey included both multiple choice and open-ended questions and took no longer than thirty minutes to complete. The multiple choice quantitative questions provided a quick snapshot of the participants, including their years of teaching experience, their professional development related to LTELs, and the reclassification status of their students. To obtain a “more complex picture” through qualitative research (Mertler & Charles, 2011, p. 319), participants also answered six open-ended questions that enabled them to include their opinions and knowledge about LTELs, and their experiences with LTELs. For example, teachers were asked to write about the barriers at school that contribute to students not being reclassified and becoming LTELs. These answers provided richer responses beyond the constraints of multiple-choice questions.

The second data collection instrument used in this study was a quantitative statistical analysis of a data report of students who were not reclassified. On the day the data was pulled, the student body totaled 1015. At this time, non-reclassified students represented approximately one-third of all students. The report included student academic and demographic data points and was created through a web-based student information system called PowerSchool. The survey results spreadsheet contained a variety of data points, such as country of birth, district entry grade level, English proficiency level via the CELDT, and GPA. PowerSchool was a useful

instrument for the study because it provided a quick way to collect a lot of information about a large group of people in a short amount of time. Using the quantitative method of analyzing data statistically in order to “provide useful information for describing a large number of people” (Mertler & Charles, 2011), the data points were sorted, coded, and assessed for statistical concepts, such as averages and Chi-Square. Then, conclusions were made about the characteristics of LTEL students.

Methods for Data Analysis

The data in this study was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative portion of the study, PowerSchool data points were analyzed using SPSS software. A one-way between subjects ANOVA test was used to analyze single data point variables, such as student GPA by gender, grade level, and LTEL status. In addition, a Chi-Square Analysis was administered to identify whether statistically significant relationships existed between LTELs and the country of birth, speech support, and English proficiency level. Further, the mean of GPA by gender was calculated. For the survey’s quantitative questions, frequencies and averages were calculated. The remainder of the survey was assessed qualitatively, by analyzing the open-ended survey responses. The survey results were coded for common themes.

Summary

By collecting information about teacher opinions and knowledge about LTELs, and their experiences with LTELs and assessing student data at this middle school,

this study could positively impact the sample school in the future. This school site is currently facing an increase of students who are classified as LTELs. This sample study could also provide educators, administrators, and district leaders important insights into LTEL students. Chapter four will outline the findings of the study resulting from the survey as well as the academic and demographic analysis.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

Within recent years, a growing number of students have been identified as long term English learners (LTELs) at the secondary level and are unable to become reclassified. Therefore, the quantitative and qualitative data outlined in this chapter was selected to identify factors that contribute to this growing educational issue. In order to identify those factors, the following question was used to guide the data analysis in this chapter: Why do some students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences? This question was investigated through collecting student data points from the web-based student information system PowerSchool as well as through giving an online survey to teachers.

Quantitative Data

To research the question about why LTEL students remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences, this study applied quantitative methodology to the results. The PowerSchool student data points were sorted by descriptive statistics and were assessed for statistical significance through the one-way between subjects Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test and the Chi-Square test. Certain questions of the teacher survey were organized by descriptive statistics and one question utilized the Likert-Type method of questioning.

Descriptive statistics: students. Data from 379 English learner (EL) students who were not reclassified was collected via PowerSchool from the sample school in which this study was conducted. Ninety-six percent (364) of these students were

identified as Hispanic or Latino and were used in this study. Four percent (14) were identified as other ethnicities and were not used in this study. Of this sample population, the student enrollment was as follows: 41% (148) in 6th grade, 32% (115) in 7th grade, and 28% (101) in the 8th grade. In addition, 43% (157) of the students were female and 57% (207) were male. Further, 84% (307) of all EL students would be defined as LTELs because they have been enrolled in U.S. schools for over six years. Only 16% (57) of all EL students were not classified as LTEL students because they had been in U.S. schools for six or fewer years. These descriptive statistics about students are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages for Categorical Demographic Information, n = 364

Demographic	n=364	%
LTEL		
No	57	16
Yes	307	84
Grade Level		
6	148	41
7	115	32
8	101	28
Gender		
F	157	43
M	207	57

To begin analyzing the LTEL population, LTEL grade point averages (GPAs) were assessed to discover if GPAs are influenced by the LTEL status, gender, or grade levels. A one-way between subjects Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was conducted to compare LTEL GPAs, grade levels, and gender conditions as seen in Table 2. There were significant effects for grade levels [$F(2, 352) = 14.868, p < .000$]; there was a correlation between grade levels and GPAs. Significant effects also resulted for gender [$F(1, 352) = 14.217, p < .000$]; there was a correlation between gender and GPAs. However, no significant effects were found on LTELs at the $p < .05$ level for the three conditions [$F(1, 352) = 2.876, p < .091$]. In addition, no significant interaction resulted in the following correlations: LTELs and grade levels [$F(2, 352), 2.678, p < .070$]; LTELs and gender [$F(1, 352), .071, p < .791$]; grade levels and gender [$F(2, 352), 1.904, p < .150$]; and LTELs, grade level, and gender [$F(2, 352), .440, p < .645$]. Through the one-way between subjects ANOVA test, a correlation was found between grade levels and GPA and between gender and GPA.

Table 2: One-Way Analysis of Variance of Average GPA by LTEL, Grade Level, and Gender

<i>Source</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Corrected Model	86.076 ^a	11	7.825	11.567	.000
Intercept	665.191	1	665.191	983.274	.000
LTEL	1.946	1	1.946	2.876	.091
Grade Level	20.117	2	10.058	14.868	.000
Gender	9.618	1	9.618	14.217	.000

<i>Source</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
LTEL * Grade Level	3.623	2	1.812	2.678	.070
LTEL * Gender	.048	1	.048	.071	.791
Grade Level * Gender	2.576	2	1.288	1.904	.150
LTEL * Grade Level * Gender	.595	2	.297	.440	.645
Error	238.130	352	.677		
Total	1849.00	364			
Corrected Total	324.206	363			

a. R Squared = .265 (Adjusted R Squared = .243)

LTELs were also statistically assessed using a Chi-Square test for independence to find the relationship between the following categories: LTELs and their birthplace countries; LTELs and whether or not they received speech services; and LTELs and their English proficiency levels. When assessing LTELs and their birthplace countries, the results show a statistically significant relationship between the variables, [$\chi^2(4, N = 364) = 68.960, p < .00$]. As seen in Table 3, this relationship is significant because students born in the U.S. compared to students enrolling in U.S. schools after a certain grade significantly influences students being becoming LTELs; P value is less than .05. Likewise, when analyzing LTELs and speech, the data shows

a statistically significant relationship between the variables, [$\chi^2(2, N = 364) = 30.278^a, p < .00$]. This is depicted in Table 3, suggesting that there is a relationship between students who receive speech services and who are LTELs. Finally, when evaluating LTELs and English proficiency levels, there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables, [$\chi^2(4, N = 364) = 24.498^a, p < .00$]. Table 3 shows that there is a relationship between students' English proficiency levels and LTELs. Using the Chi-Square test for independence, significant relationships were found between LTELs and their birthplace countries, between LTELs and whether or not they received speech services, and between LTELs and their English proficiency levels.

Table 3: Chi-Square Test of Independence Between Country Birth Place, Speech, and English Proficiency Level by LTEL Status

	LTEL (n = 307)		Non-LTEL (n = 57)		χ^2	df	P
	Obs.	Exp.	Obs.	Exp.			
Country Birth Place					68.960	4	.000
Guatemala	2	2.5	1	.5			
Mexico	53	54.8	12	10.2			
United States	251	237.8	31	44.2			
Venezuela	0	.8	1	.2			
Not Identified	1	11.0	12	2.0			
Speech					30.278	2	.000

	LTEL (n = 307)		Non-LTEL (n = 57)		X^2	df	P
	Obs.	Exp.	Obs.	Exp.			
No	277	272.4	46	50.6			
Yes	26	23.6	2	4.4			
Not Identified	4	11.0	9	2.0			
English Proficiency					24.498	4	.000
Level							
1	11	17.7	10	3.3			
2	19	22.8	8	4.2			
3	125	122.3	20	22.7			
4	140	134.1	19	24.9			
5	12	10.1	0	1.9			

Another one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of English proficiency levels on LTELs, grade levels, and gender. There were significant effects of English proficiency levels on LTELs at the $p < .05$ level for the three conditions [$F(1, 352) = 9.712, p < .002$]. Similarly, there were significant effects of English proficiency levels on grade levels [$F(2, 352) = 4.392, p < .013$]. However, there was no significant effect of English proficiency levels on gender [$F(1, 352) = 1.201, p < .274$]. Also, no significant interaction resulted between the following categories: LTELs and grade levels [$F(2, 352) = 1.747, p < .176$]; LTELs and gender [$F(1, 352) = .656, p < .418$]; grade levels and gender [$F(2, 352) = .473, p < .623$]; and

LTELs, grade levels, and gender [$F(2, 352) = .126, p < .882$] as seen in Table 4. This one-way between subjects ANOVA test shows significant effects of English proficiency levels on LTELs and significant effects of English proficiency levels on grade levels. The quantitative data suggests that the important factors that influence LTELs include the country of birth, their English proficiency level, and gender.

Table 4: One-Way Analysis of Variance of English Proficiency Level by LTEL, Grade Level, and Gender

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Corrected Model	23.584 ^a	11	2.144	2.917	.001
Intercept	1540.970	1	1540.970	2096.615	.000
LTEL	7.138	1	7.138	9.712	.002
Grade Level	6.456	2	3.228	4.392	.013
Gender	.883	1	.883	1.201	.274
LTEL * Grade Level	2.568	2	1.284	1.747	.176
LTEL * Gender	.482	1	.482	.656	.418
Grade Level * Gender	.695	2	.348	.473	.623
LTEL * Grade Level	.185	2	.092	.126	.882
* Gender					
Error	258.713	352	.735		
Total	4278.000	364			
Corrected Total	282.297	363			

a. R Squared = .084 (Adjusted R Squared = .055)

Descriptive statistics: teachers. An online survey was administered to forty-seven teachers at a large middle school in Southern California. Twenty-seven surveys were obtained within a short time frame. Participants had the last two contracted school days to complete this survey, while others completed this survey during their summer break as the survey was accessible to participants for two weeks. The following analysis focuses on educator responses as a group. Participants were asked to respond to questions specific to LTEL students.

The first question of the survey asked about their years of teaching experience. Participants of this study ranged in educational teaching experiences. The group is broken down as follows: 11.1% (3) had taught 1-2 years, 3.7% (1) had taught between 3-5 years, 18.5% (5) had taught between 5-10 years, 40.7% (11) had taught between 11-20 years, and 25.9% (7) had taught between 21-30 years. The majority of participants had taught between 11-20 years.

The second survey question asked educators to approximate the amount of professional development (PD) they had received as a contracted teacher, which prepared them to teach ELs. The PD may have included coursework, seminars, or group or one-on-one training sessions. Educators responded as follows: 7.4% (2) participants responded that they had received between 1-5 hours of PD, 7.4% (2) received between 6-10 hours of PD, 18.5% (5) received between 11-20 hours of PD, 7.4% (2) received between 21-30 hours of PD, and 55.6% educators (15) received more than 31 hours of PD. Further, 3.7% (1) did not respond to this question. The majority of respondents indicated that they had received over 31 hours of PD.

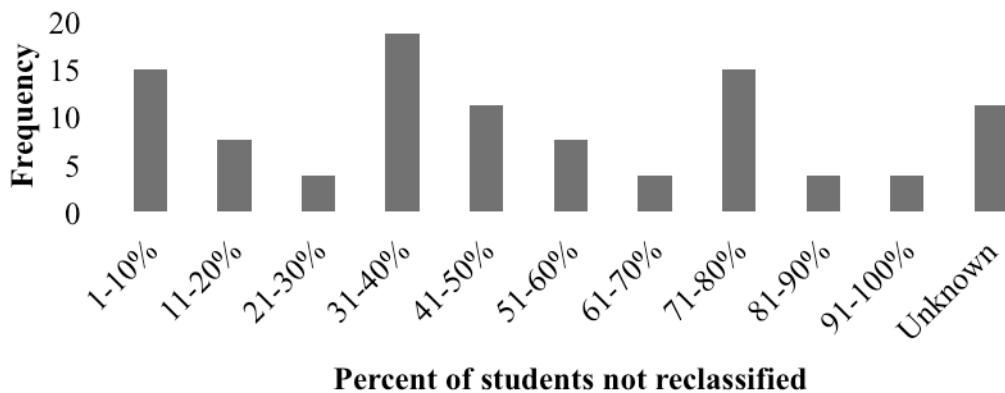
As a follow-up to question two, the third question asks if the PD about ELs that participants received instructed them on how to meet the needs of LTELs. Of the respondents, 3.7% (1) responded as unsure, 40.7% (11) stated that they had been instructed on how to meet the needs of LTEL students, while 55.6% (15) stated that they had not received PD aligned with LTEL students. Most respondents, 55.6%, indicated that they had not received PD aligned with LTELs.

If participants said that they had received PD on LTELs, they were asked in question four to answer a Likert-Type question rating the effectiveness of their PD. They rated the PD as very ineffective, ineffective, neutral, effective, or very effective. The other 55.6% (15) of participants who answered no to the previous question did not answer question four. Therefore, the responses are as follows: 25.9% (7) responded neutral to this question, 3.7% (1) stated that the PD was ineffective, 7.4% (2) stated that it was effective, 7.4% (2) stated that the PD was very effective. For question five, participants who had received PD on LTELs were also asked about what instructional strategies they learned that are specific and unique to LTELs. The answers will be reviewed in the qualitative data section of this chapter.

In question six, teachers were asked if they had ever received PD regarding the CELDT scoring levels and the test content. The results were that 29.6% (8) of participants had received PD aligned with CELDT scoring levels and the test's content. However, 70.4% (19) responded that they had not received PD aligned with the CELDT scoring levels or the test content. The overwhelming majority of educators had not received PD aligned with the CELDT exam.

This was followed with question seven that asked educators if they had ever received PD related to the district requirements for EL students' reclassification. Of the respondents, 29.6% (8) responded that they had received PD aligned with the district's reclassification criteria, while 70.4% (19) responded that they had not received this PD. The majority of responses indicate that educators are unaware of the reclassification criteria.

For question eight, teachers were asked to determine the percentage of their EL students who had not reclassified. The participants had the following responses: 11.1% (3) of respondents selected unknown; 14.8% (4) stated that 1-10% of their students had not reclassified; 7.4% (2) stated that 11-20% of their students had not reclassified; 3.7% (1) stated that 21-30% of their students had not reclassified; 18.5% (5) stated that 31-40% had not reclassified; 11.1% (3) stated that 41-50% had not reclassified; 7.4% (2) stated that 51-60% had not reclassified; 3.7% (1) stated that 61-70% had not reclassified; 14.8% (4) stated that 71-80% had not reclassified; 3.7% (1) stated that 81-90% had not reclassified; and 3.7% (1) stated that 91-100% of students they taught had not reclassified. There was a range of responses among teachers as seen in Table 5. The mean of EL students who had not been reclassified was 38.96% ($SD = 28.84$). The frequencies and percentages are presented in Figure 1 and the mean and standard deviation are presented in Table 5.

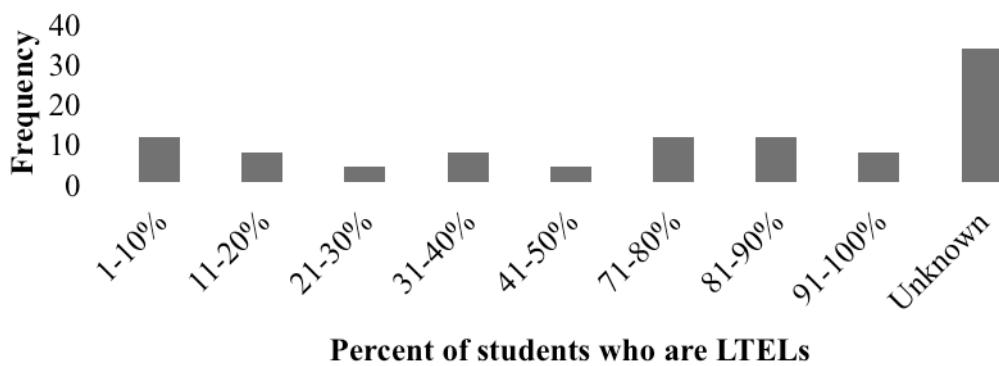
Figure 1: Frequency of Students who Have not Reclassified*Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation for Grouped Frequency Distribution*

Measure	M	SD
Amount of EL students	38.97	28.85
Amount of LTEL students	31.98	36.24

As a follow-up to question eight, question nine asked survey participants to identify what percentage of their students who have not reclassified are LTELs. Surprisingly, 33.3% (9) responded as unknown and 3.7% (1) did not respond to this question. Among the teachers who did know how many LTELs they taught, they had the following percentages of LTELs in their classrooms: 11.1% (3) reported that 1-10% of their students were LTELs; 7.4% (2) reported that 11-20% of their students were LTELs; 3.7% (1) reported that 21-30% of their students were LTELs; 7.4% (2) reported that 31-40% of their students were LTELs; 3.7% (1) reported that 41-50% of their students were LTELs; zero (0%) participants selected 51-60% as well as 61-70%; 11.1% (3) reported that 71-80% of their students were LTELs; 11.1% (3)

reported that 81-90% of their students were LTELs; and 7.4% (2) reported that 91-100% of their students were LTELs. Similar to the previous question, most participant responses were not unanimous. The average teacher identification of LTEL students ranged from 4.26% to 68.23%, with a mean of 31.98 ($SD = 36.24$) as seen in Table 5. The frequencies and percentages are presented in Figure 2 and the mean and standard deviation are presented in Table 5.

Figure 2: Frequency of Students who are LTELs



Qualitative Data: Teacher Survey

To further investigate why LTEL students remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences, this study also applied qualitative methodology to the results. Participants were able to answer several open-ended questions, which provided rich feedback about their opinions and knowledge about LTELs, and their experiences with LTELs. They described instructional strategies that work well with LTEL students. They also detailed characteristics unique to LTELs in the home and school environments, as well characteristics displayed when with their peers.

Teachers were also asked their opinions about the barriers at home and at school that cause students to remain LTELs.

Instructional strategies. The eleven participants who said they had received PD on LTELs in question three were asked about what instructional strategies they learned that are specific and unique to LTELs in question five. Participants described many instructional strategies that are specific to LTEL students. However, some strategies were mentioned that are not specific to this population and certain descriptions were too general to be deemed instructional strategies.

Teachers identified numerous essential instructional strategies specific to LTELs. Strategies were mentioned, such as tapping into prior knowledge, pre-teaching of vocabulary, and the use of visual aids and realia. In addition, writing strategies were mentioned, such as graphic organizers, sentence frames, and short responses. Other instructional strategies included cognate use, cloze reading, and labeling text features, like titles and subtitles. Participants also mentioned teaching grammar and academic language through vocabulary within context. The concept of grouping was also identified as a strategy for assisting LTELs; teachers mentioned pair-share activities, partner work, and not tracking students by level. Student and teacher collaboration was also identified as a core instructional strategy for assisting LTEL students. In addition, one participant responded that teachers should collaborate with colleagues about LTELs in order to help these students.

Some of the participant responses to this question about instructional strategies were either too general or not specific to LTEL students. A response that was too

general consisted of an answer that was an overarching concept with no specific activity or teaching method described or elaborated upon. Further, if an instructional strategy was listed that is not a research-based EL or LTEL strategy, this strategy was excluded from the qualitative analysis. For example, two participants responded using general EL terminology, which was not specific enough to categorize as an LTEL-specific instructional strategy; they described the instructional strategies as “scaffolding” and “differentiation.” In addition, general teaching strategies were described that are not necessarily EL specific. Respondents cited spelling strategies, such as providing opportunities for spelling improvement through writing and grammar as well as the use of journals to organize words that are difficult to understand or spell. They also mentioned using literature circles and note-taking. Although these can be useful instructional strategies, they are not LTEL-specific.

Characteristics. In question ten, participants were asked in an open-ended format to identify characteristics that they have observed that are unique to their LTEL students. Twenty-four participants responded to this question with a variety of LTEL characteristics. Three sub-themes of characteristics emerged: participants listed characteristics specific to home, school, and peers.

Home. LTEL students and their parents possess unique home characteristics as reported by participants. Students were described as having “limited exposure to reading and writing outside of the classroom,” as lacking study skills, and speaking Spanish at home. In addition, participants explained that students lack parental support to acquire English. Parents were described as not being involved at school,

not speaking English, and having limited educations. Respondents also identified that the primary language at home for both students and parents is Spanish. One participant reported that since students prefer to speak English, this limits their communication with parents at home. Another response stated that students have “limited communication with parents because they don’t speak Spanish.”

School. According to participants, LTELs have characteristics specific to the school setting related to their social and emotional state and their academics. Teachers wrote repeatedly about negative characteristics of LTEL students related to social and emotional health. LTEL students were depicted as possessing social or emotional issues, such as lacking motivation or the drive to succeed, having an apathetic attitude, expressing discouragement and low self-esteem, and demonstrating disruptive behavior. Only one respondent stated in a positive manner that LTEL students are “hard workers.”

Participants also described academic characteristics specific to the LTEL population. It was reported that LTEL students have limited language proficiency skills and academic vocabulary in both Spanish and English. Another characteristic listed was that some students resort to code and register switching where they use English and Spanish to communicate. They were also characterized as struggling with reading because they have low reading levels. Respondents stated that LTELs read slowly, they have difficulties with the meaning of vocabulary and with identifying main ideas, and they lack the stamina to read. Participants wrote that LTELs also struggle with writing, stating that LTEL students do not express complete thoughts

when writing, they struggle with sentence structure, English grammar and vowels, and they use Spanish syntax. They also have difficulties with linguistics such as “grapheme-phoneme relationships.” In addition to skills LTEL students’ lack, they also were characterized as having struggles in achievement because they are not making academic improvements. Respondents indicated that LTEL students are “stuck” in reading and writing and have “plateaued academically.” In reference to reclassification, respondents indicated that although LTEL students are close to reclassifying, LTELs do not find this process to be “important” and they struggle with the writing portion of the reclassification requirements. LTEL students were also depicted as having low performance levels of academic achievement, having low grades, and either not completing or not attempting to do their homework.

Peers. Respondents also defined LTEL students as having characteristics that relate to their peers. LTELs were described as making specific choices at school about what language to use with their peers and who to choose as their peers. According to participants, LTELs tend to befriend students who are ELs. In addition, LTELs students tend to speak Spanish with their peers.

Home barriers. Question numbers eleven and twelve of the survey asked participants to identify barriers at home that contribute to students not being reclassified and remaining LTELs. Based on the responses, the home barriers can be organized in four themes: students, parents, language, and home environment. Student barriers at home included students having to babysit often, students lacking support from their peers to do well academically, students lacking motivation, and

students wasting time with television. For example, the lack of motivation as stated by one participant stems from students feeling that they do not “need to succeed as no one leaves the neighborhood.” Another participant stated that the biggest barrier is that “...the students spend too much time watching tv!”

A large barrier at home related to parents was a lack of parental support. Since parents are often not home due to their work schedules, one participant wrote, “In the case of teenagers, they often have a lot of freedom to do what they want because they don't have adult supervision.” Respondents also explained that parents lack formal educations. Therefore, they are “hesitant to seek help for themselves or their children” by helping their children practice the skills they need. Further, respondents stated that parents do not push their children to learn. They also said that parents are not informed about school and do not communicate with the school. For example, parents often do not know the reclassification criteria for their LTEL children.

Another home barrier is related to language. With the primary home language as Spanish a participant stated that, “Parents do not speak English and therefore don't read with or help the students practice their English.” In addition, student conversational language is limited because students do “...not have enough personal practice of reading, speaking and writing English” and limited access to English materials at home such as reading books. Five participants cited that the biggest barrier to LTELs is that English is not the primary language used at home.

Finally, the general home environment is described as a home barrier. A participant stated that “...lacking a quiet place to study with home encouragement”

hinders students from becoming reclassified. Also, a respondent said that students lack support from their neighborhood and community and received “...little encouragement and value placed on education.” Also, it was described that some LTELs do not even have a home.

Biggest home barriers. Question number twelve asked participants to identify the biggest home barrier that contributes to students not being reclassified and remaining LTELs. Twenty-five participants responded to this question, one did not answer, and one participant was “not sure.” As reported by participants, the three biggest barriers causing LTEL students to remain LTELs included that English is not spoken at home, that parents do not support students academically, and parents are not informed about school.

School barriers. Question numbers thirteen and fourteen of the survey asked participants to identify school barriers that contribute to LTEL students not being reclassified. Four school barrier themes surfaced, which included school structures, educators, students, and academics.

School structures. Some participants felt that one school barrier was that school structures were missing. A teacher stated that schools are missing interventions that support the needs of LTEL students via “specialized classes” in which schools “...go back to the basics and focus on grammar and sentence structure.” In addition, one participant stated that students have “...no firm consequences for not passing - students are not retained and are moved to the next grade level regardless of failing grades.” Another participant indicated that,

... ELs and LTELs do not benefit from the current traditional school calendar of our district. Although the traditional calendar is more conducive to sports activities (especially in high school), the two months of summer sets English learners back in their academic process because they do not have opportunities to practice academic English. Even though LTELs can speak well in social settings (unlike newcomers), LTELs need the intensive academic practice throughout the year in order to progress and reclassify. If our students had their school calendar broken into a year-round schedule, the year would be broken up in a more balanced way and they would not have a large chunk of time when they were not in school.

Further, some participants believe that the biggest problem is not having the proper instructional support. One respondent described the importance of having an instructional aide to support the needs of LTEL students. Another teacher stated, "...many times ELLs and SPED are combined in classes which creates a slower pace with differentiation." One participant expressed concern about LTEL students being grouped together "year after year."

Educators. Participants also felt that educators presented a school barrier by contributing to students not being reclassified and remaining as LTELs. One respondent noted deficiencies in teachers' abilities to "...differentiate instruction to include the LTELs." Another participant said that teachers need to "focus on specific student needs." One teacher stated that the "...lack of deliberate differentiation and scaffolding by classroom teachers" adds to this issue. Another respondent stated,

One barrier is that classes are heterogeneous, and not enough support is provided for the LTELs in terms of support staff. In my classes, my students range from reading at a 1st grade level to high school level. It is difficult for one teacher to differentiate for all of these levels.

In addition, another participant cited “staff not understanding the student ethnic culture.” Additionally, professional development was identified as a need for LTEL teachers. As stated by the following participant,

...teachers need more professional development on the LTEL population and how to best meet their needs. This training should be given to all subject areas, not just language arts. Teachers may not know the difference between teaching a newcomer and teaching an LTEL student.

Moreover, another educator mentioned that, “teachers are so busy teaching their content that we forget to help the students work on reclassification.” Another respondent stated that educators also need to work on practicing great communication with parents throughout the school year and encouraging students to speak English during school hours.

Students. In the school setting, the social and emotional wellness of students was identified as a contributing school factor that prevents students from becoming reclassified. Participants felt strongly that students lack motivation as stated by a respondent,

LTEL students seem to be less interested in academics than newcomer students. My newcomer students are often excited to learn English and learn

about the U.S. My LTEL students seem to be more frustrated with school and they don't try as hard to do well.

Another educator noted that LTELs are apathetic about school. In order to motivate LTEL students, they need "...more role models to encourage them to push through and reclassify." Further another teacher said that LTEL students are "...lacking the confidence to take their ELA to the next level. Because they are above the 'lowest of the low,' and lower than the 'highest of the high,' they find themselves 'stuck.'"

Adding to this, another participant noted that students attend school without being ready to learn, which leads to behavior issues. One respondent said that as students interact they "do not support each other" because "it's not cool to be smart;" this limits their potential because school is seen as a "social environment."

Academics. Academically, LTEL students are underperforming, which leads to students not being reclassified. Participants reported that the curricula used with LTELs contains "increasingly challenging academic vocabulary." Further a teacher described that, "A lot of these students are reading at a second/third grade level, so they are starting out behind. Some of these students need basic phonics and decoding skills, which is not taught at middle school." In addition, a respondent said that LTELs "lack a command of the English language" and also have poor writing and critical thinking skills. One participant explained that the "expectation of ability" and accountability standards are not set high by teachers because these students are ELs. Furthermore,

Most EL students (from newcomers to LTELs) often do not understand the reclassification process and they do not know the requirements for being successful in high school and being prepared enough to be able to attend a university. They need more training on both subjects.

All factors play a partial role in students not being able to reclassify.

Biggest school barrier. Question number fourteen asked participants to name the biggest school barrier that contributes to students remaining LTELs. There were three barriers that were identified the most among teachers. The first barrier was the low reading level of LTELs. The second barrier as perceived by participants was the lack of motivation among LTELs. Finally, respondents felt that a large barrier was that teachers did not have professional development on LTELs and they need to know how to meet the needs of LTEL students.

Interpretations

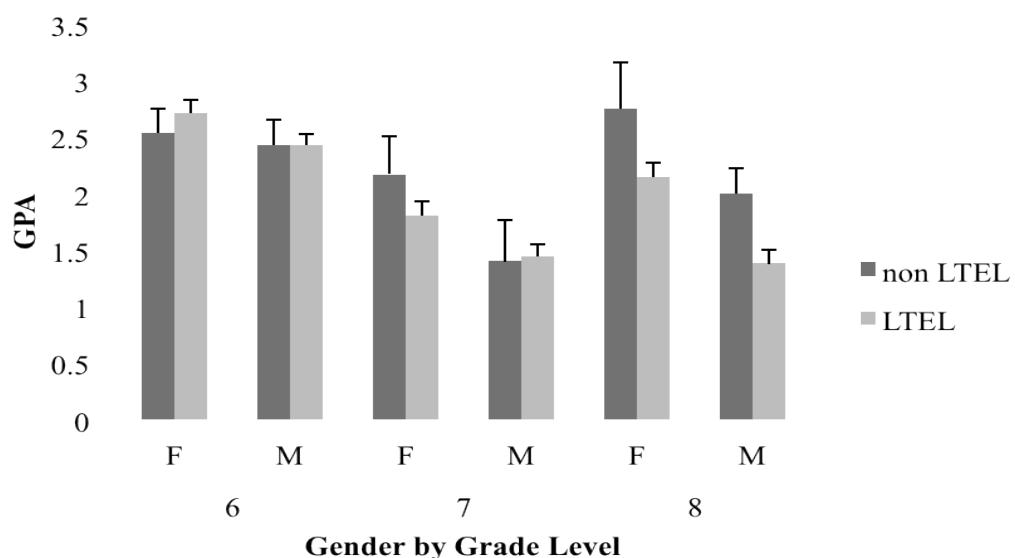
The following section will provide an analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data of this study. Both the student PowerSchool data points and certain questions in the teacher survey were assessed quantitatively using statistical methods. The quantitative data was organized in two groups: students and teachers. The qualitative data from the teacher survey was also critiqued for instructional strategies, characteristics of LTELs, and the biggest home and school barriers.

Quantitative data. The student quantitative data gathered was analyzed using a one-way ANOVA test and Chi-Square Test of Independence. Both tests contained statistically significant results. In addition, the teacher survey questions were

tabulated for frequencies. Collectively, the results yielded reasons why students remain LTELs.

Students. This study was conducted to search for factors that contribute to the growing number of students being identified as LTELs. Some barriers resulted after the statistical analysis of student demographic data by comparing the groups in this study: LTELs, non-LTELs, females and males, grade levels, and English proficiency levels. After analyzing and interpreting the data from the school site in which this study was conducted, it was found that out of the 364 Latino EL students who had not reclassified: 41% were in 6th grade, 32% were in 7th grade, and 28% were in 8th grade. In addition, 57% of the EL population were male and 43% were female in grades 6-8. Within the LTEL population, females had higher average GPAs than males. A significant barrier at this school was being a male who is labeled as an LTEL student. These results are detailed below in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Mean GPA by Gender and Grade Level



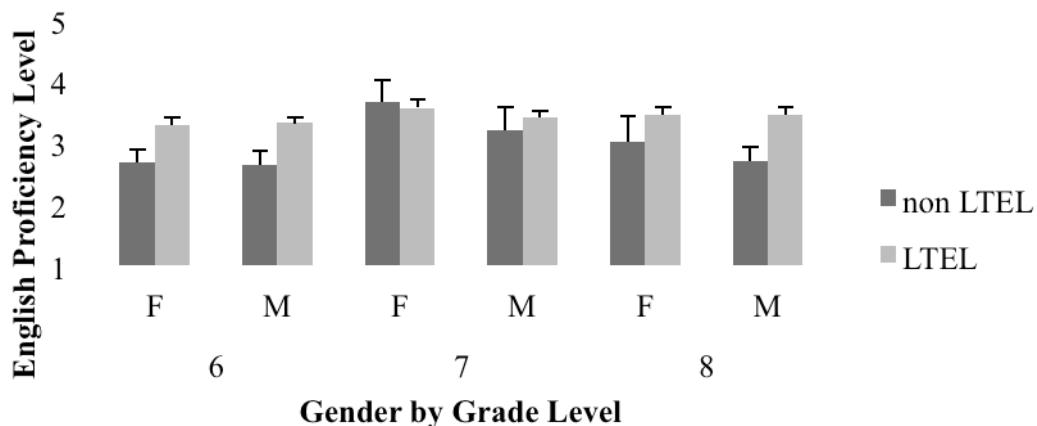
The statistics also show that there is a significant relationship between the LTEL status and the countries in which LTEL students were born. Fewer LTEL students than expected were born in Mexico (MX) and more LTELs than expected were born in the United State (U.S.) or Venezuela (VE). The *p* value of .000 for the Chi Square test indicates that a student's country of birth has an influence on students becoming LTELs.

Further statistical analyses indicate that there is a significant relationship between LTELs who received speech services during the 2013-2014 school year. The amount of LTEL students who received speech services was more than expected and the amount of students who did not receive speech services was fewer than expected when compared to non-LTEL students. The *p* value of .000 for the Chi Square test signifies that a student receiving speech services is a contributing factor to students being classified as LTELs.

Additionally, the statistical analysis conducted in this study shows the discrepancies between LTELs and their English proficiency levels. The proficiency levels are based on the yearly CELDT exam that measures the achievement of limited English proficient students in California (CDE, 2014a). The student CELDT scores are identified as falling into one of five proficiency levels: beginning (1), early intermediate (2), intermediate (3), early advanced (4), or advanced (5) (CDE, 2014a). In the current study, Figure 4 shows that on average, LTEL students had higher English proficiency levels on the CELDT exam than non-LTEL students. In addition, there were fewer LTEL students at English proficiency levels 1 and 2 than expected.

Further, the results showed more LTEL students scoring at levels 3, 4, and 5 than anticipated. These Chi Square test results with a *p* value of .000 indicate that the discrepancies found are factors that contribute to students becoming LTELs.

Figure 4: LTEL and Non-LTEL English Proficiency Levels by Grade Level and Gender



Teachers. The twenty-seven participants of this study possessed a range of experiences and opinions. The participants had been in the teaching profession anywhere between two and thirty years. The majority of the teachers had taught between eleven and twenty years. Further, fifty-one percent of respondents had received over thirty-one hours of PD on how to meet the needs of EL students. However, 55.6% of these educators stated that they had not received PD aligned to meet the needs of LTEL students. Furthermore, 40.7% stated that they had received PD aligned to meet the needs of LTEL students and felt neutral to the effectiveness of it inside of the classroom. Some respondents suggested that their school district needed to provide educators additional PD aligned with meeting the needs of LTELs.

Although schools are required to administer the CELDT yearly, not all teachers on site were familiar with the exam. According to the information gathered from respondents, 70.4% had not received PD aligned with the CELDT scoring levels and the test content. In addition, 70.4% stated that they had not received PD aligned with the school district's requirements for EL reclassification. When asked what percentage of their EL students had not reclassified, educator responses differed. However, 18.5% of participants stated that 31-40% of students they taught had not reclassified, which is within range of the actual school's demographic data. Subsequently, participants were asked to identify the percentage of ELs who are LTEL students. The answers varied greatly. The largest consensus among respondents was with the nine teachers (33.3%) who said they did not know the quantity of LTEL in their classes. The remaining participants chose percentages of LTELs that ranged from as low as 1-10% to as high as 91-100%. This information demonstrates that educators are unaware of how many students they have enrolled who are LTELs.

Qualitative data. After coding the qualitative data gathered from the survey, themes emerged from the responses. The school, educators, students, parents, and peers were all identified as having a significant influence on students becoming LTELs.

Instructional strategies. The respondents of this survey were able to identify a range of instructional strategies that support LTEL students. However, there was no consensus among responses. The strategies shared by teachers ranged widely and no

strategy was listed consistently among teachers. Also, some teachers seemed to have vastly differing opinions on how to best approach teaching LTEL students. For instance, some teachers emphasized the importance of pre-teaching strategies such as the pre-teaching of vocabulary prior to a lesson or unit while other teachers articulated the importance of having students working with partners and learning concepts and vocabulary within context rather than in isolation. These are two differing instructional approaches to teaching LTEL students. These inconsistencies among the reported instructional strategies indicate that there should be more consensus among teachers about how to best instruct LTEL students.

Characteristics. After coding the data, there was a limited consensus of characteristics that LTEL students possess. Three themes emerged after the coding: home, school, and peers. However, most responses were categorized within home and school. The top three home characteristics unique to LTEL students was a lack of parental support of students learning English, a lack of parent involvement at school, and parents not speaking the English language. In the school setting, the participants felt that the top school characteristic unique to LTEL students was that LTELs lacked motivation. In addition, students who were identified as LTELs were also characterized as being disruptive inside of the classroom and neither proficient in either English or Spanish.

Biggest home barriers. The answers to the question about the biggest barriers that contribute to students becoming LTELs equally had little consensus. Seven respondents stated that the biggest home barrier was that students do not have the

support at home to be successful in school. Two other home barriers included English not being the primary home language and parents failing to participate in the educational growth of their children.

Biggest school barriers. In addition, the answers for the biggest school barriers had no unanimity. The top school barriers identified by teachers were that students lack motivation and have low reading levels. Further, respondents also mentioned that teachers need further instruction as to how to design lessons that meet the needs of LTEL students.

Responses from the qualitative data suggest that several factors contribute to students becoming LTELs. Most of the barriers at home and school as perceived by participants are language related. Respondents also said that another barrier in the school setting is that teachers must learn how to design lessons that meet the needs of LTEL students. Teachers also felt that LTEL parents lack school involvement. All of these elements combined contribute to students becoming LTELs.

Educational Benefits

The educational field can benefit from the information found in this study. The topic of the growing LTEL population is a current issue that is of great concern of all stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Many students are unable to reclassify, especially students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for over six years. Although NCLB was implemented in an attempt to meet the needs of all learners, the rate of students who are not English proficient continues to grow. Now that we are in the implementation phase of the CCSS, stakeholders need to

become aware of students whose needs are not being met so that they may implement research-based practices in order for LTELs to be successful in the 21st century.

Insights

One insight that can be gained from this research is the result about male students. This study found that by the 8th grade, male Latino students are at risk. They are the largest group of students who are not reclassifying and their GPAs drop over time. If this pattern continues into high school, male LTEL students will be more likely to drop out of school. More efforts need to be made at the elementary and middle school levels to motivate these students to be successful in school.

Summary

This chapter sought the answer to the question of why some students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences. Both the qualitative and quantitative measures indicated that students, educators, administrators, and parents all have contributed to the struggles of LTELs.

The results of the teacher survey and the student data analysis show several common traits among LTEL students. Based on the survey responses, LTELs are characterized as being fluent in conversational English, but lacking reading and writing skills in both their primary and secondary languages. The student data analysis show that although LTELs have higher English proficiency skills than their peers, they tend to have lower GPAs than other EL students, such as in comparison to EL students who are at risk of becoming LTELs or to EL newcomers. This lack of

academic success among LTELs is largely attributed to a lack of motivation, as perceived by teacher respondents. With low motivation levels and low grades, LTEL students are at risk of not completing the necessary requirements to graduate from high school. Within the LTEL population, the students with the greatest risk of dropping out of school are male Latinos.

Further, this study details the various barriers that exist in the school and home settings that contribute to the struggles of LTELs. Respondents reported that two of the big barriers involve teachers and parents. In the school setting participants stated that teachers lack adequate training about LTEL students and have difficulties meeting the needs of LTELs. Thus, educators need professional development aligned with research-based strategies required to meet the needs of LTELs. In the home setting, teachers felt that parents also contribute to students becoming LTELs. Participants explained that parents are often not involved in their children's educations and that they lack the skills needed to support developmental needs of their children. Therefore, schools should host parent nights covering topics to aid and encourage parents to become active participants in their children's educations. Further, teachers should receive professional development related to how working parents can support their children academically.

Conclusion

Chapter four on data analysis provided a snapshot of one sample school. LTELs were depicted through the eyes of the teachers on campus. LTELs were also described through the analysis of student data points. The LTEL population was

assessed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Based on the findings of the data analysis chapter, the following chapter will provide educational recommendations for future studies.

Chapter Five: Thesis Recommendations

As I investigated potential research topics for my thesis, I wanted to study a topic that would be directly applicable to the students I teach. For most of my career, I have worked with K-12 students from low socio-economic and immigrant households, with most designated as English learners (ELs). According to the California Department of Education [CDE], ELs are students who have not developed their speaking, listening, reading, and writing proficiencies in English sufficient for participating in regular school programs (2014a, p. 42). During my years of teaching, I have often heard educators ask questions, such as “Why is this 6th grade EL student not reclassified when she was born and raised in the U.S.?” or “Why is this high school junior still not reclassified when he has been in EL programs since he moved to the U.S. in second grade?” These questions led me to investigate a unique group of students: a subgroup of EL students who are classified as long term English learners (LTELs).

According to California Assembly Bill 2193, LTELs are defined as students from grades six to twelve who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years. LTEL students remain in this category if they have the same English language proficiency (ELP) level for two or more consecutive years based on the California English language development test (CELDT), or any successor test. They also remain as LTELs if they score far below basic or below basic on the English language arts standards-based achievement test, or any successor test.

Using this definition of LTELs as a foundation, this study investigated the following question: “Why do some LTEL students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences?” To answer this question, I felt it was important to research LTEL students based on student data as well as from the perspective of teachers who instruct them. To study student academic and demographic data, I used the qualitative research method to complete a statistical data analysis of student data. The data was retrieved from the web-based student information system PowerSchool. To identify which students had attended U.S. schools for more than six years, I compared their first year of U.S. schooling with their district entry grade level; I investigated further any students who had date discrepancies in their data. I also studied student data points, such as country of birth, English proficiency level via the California English language development test (CELDT), and grade point average (GPA). To better understand potential unique features of an LTEL student, I compared LTEL students to EL students who were not classified as LTELs.

To learn about teacher opinions and knowledge about LTELs, and their experience with LTELs, I used mixed quantitative and qualitative methods to conduct an online teacher survey. I asked teachers how many years they had taught, if they had LTEL professional development, and if they knew the LTEL and reclassification status of their students. I also asked their opinions about the barriers at home and at school that prevent LTELs from being successful. I used these results to determine overarching themes that could provide insight into why LTEL students remain

LTELs. The following thesis recommendation chapter details my analysis of the student data and the teacher survey through these sections: interpretations, lessons learned and educational implications, recommendations to educators, recommendation for best practices and educational research, the limitations of the research, the ideal study of LTELs, future research directions, a research extension, potential research, curriculum, and instruction, and the summary and conclusion.

Findings and Interpretations

This study was conducted at a large middle school in Southern California with an average of 1000 students. The demographics of the student body consisted of 94% Hispanic or Latino and 6% Other (Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Hawaiian, Filipino, African American, White-Non Hispanic, and declined to state). Of this sample student population, 87% of the students were eligible to receive a free or reduced price meal (FRPM) and were socioeconomically disadvantaged. In addition, 37% of students had not reclassified. The participants of this study included teachers from this middle school who voluntarily completed the survey.

My research of student academic and demographic data and teacher survey responses revealed three major reasons that answer the following thesis research question: “Why do some LTEL students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences?” The three major reasons as stated by participants included a lack of professional development about LTELs among the teachers, a lack of motivation among LTEL students, and the lack of parental support at home.

Based on the qualitative results of the teacher survey, one reason why students remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences is because teachers have not received enough or any professional development on the best practices for instructing the LTEL population. Of the respondents, 55.6% reported that they had never received training on LTEL students. However, 40.7% of the teachers reported that they had received training and they listed a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of LTEL students. Further, some answers were vague, using words like “differentiate” and “scaffold.” Among the detailed answers, there was a lack of continuity in what constituted an LTEL-appropriate instructional strategy. In addition, there were important LTEL-specific strategies that were either never mentioned or mentioned by only one participant. As research has shown, LTEL students have unique academic needs that are different from other EL subgroups. Recent research by Ascenzi-Moreno, Kleyn, and Menken (2013) urges school administrators to “build meaningful programs that support the success of students labeled LTEL” (p. 3). In their research, they provide a variety of suggestions for teachers, such as ongoing professional development, curriculum mapping, and regular LTEL team meetings (p. 3).

Another result of the survey responses showed that LTEL students tend to lack motivation. Current educational research exists about how LTELs “have learned to be passive, non-engaged, and invisible students (Olsen, 2010b, p. 24) and how LTELs are a “high risk population for grade retention and dropout” (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012, p. 136). Likewise, one of the major themes that resulted from the

open-ended survey questions was that teachers believe that many LTEL students lack the motivation to succeed. In addition, the analysis of the academic and demographic data points showed that LTEL students tend to receive lower grades than other EL students. However, LTEL students tend to have higher proficiency levels than other ELs. In addition, females tend to receive better grades than LTEL males. These results revealed a need to develop methods to motivate LTELs on academic and social-emotional levels.

A third result of the survey answers was that teachers feel that LTEL students do not receive the necessary academic support at home. In the survey, numerous teachers said that the fact that English was not spoken in the homes of LTEL students was a major hindrance to the English linguistic growth of LTELs. Some teachers also reported that academics were not emphasized in LTEL homes and students usually did not have suitable home environments in which to work. These results indicate that there is a need for parent training sessions that provide parents a better understanding of how to assist their children in being academically successful, what school resources are available to parents, and how parents can better support their LTEL children, despite the language barrier.

Lessons Learned and Educational Implications

Although I have teaching experience with long term English learners and I've received training on this population, I learned a great deal about the LTEL population through this study. Writing the literature review gave me insight about how the LTEL population is an emerging topic among educational research and

current government policies. By studying LTEL students via student data and teacher perspectives within this study, I have learned that the reasons for why LTELs remain LTELs are vast and multi-layered. As I conclude this study, I have learned how important it will be for educators to better support LTEL students in order to make them successful in high school, college, and the workplace.

Recommendation to Educators

After analyzing the open-ended survey questions, I would stress to educators the importance of knowing their LTEL students in order to meet their needs instructionally. Although many students may be ELs, it appears that not many educators know how many students are LTELs. The identification of LTEL students will help educators meet the needs of these students who are falling through the cracks of our educational system.

Recommendation for Best Practices and Educational Research

The implementation of best practices and further educational research will aid LTEL students who are falling behind academically. Currently, it is an arduous process to determine if a student is an LTEL, particularly when a student has migrated back and forth between the U.S. and a foreign country. Therefore, I recommend that all school districts use computer based software that is designed to accurately track students who are ELs and LTELs. Although the CDE is now required to provide LTEL data to districts on a yearly basis (Cal. Assemb. B. 2193, section 2), providing teachers easy access to this information about their LTEL students will increase the chance that teachers will use the data to better understand their students.

Teachers are already overwhelmed with the amount of work they have to do on a regular basis. If they are required to complete the detailed process of identifying their LTEL students, then it is unlikely that they will make additional time to find this needed information.

In addition, teachers should emphasize best practices to meet the linguistic and educational needs of LTEL students. Olsen (2010b) states in her district checklist that, “Professional development and collaborative planning time for teachers of classes with LTELs is a high priority for the use of professional development funds” (p. 33). This is now possible with the funding being provided to school districts in order to implement the CCSS (Cal. Assemb. B. 86, 2013, section 85). The emphasis of those funds should focus on meeting the needs of LTELs.

Further, schools with high numbers of language learners should work on improving parent involvement. In order for parents to become aware of the implications of their children not reclassifying, they should be informed of the risks and challenges their children will face at the secondary level. Parents must also be familiar with the academic progress of their children and they should be active participants in shaping their educations and futures (Olsen, 2010a, p. 33).

In order to address these needs, all stakeholders must be proactive in bridging the gaps of knowledge LTELs often have by establishing goals. Administrators, teachers, and parents can all do their part to improve the progress of LTEL students. Administrators can help foster the academic growth of LTELs by providing monthly professional development for their teaching staffs addressing one LTEL-related topic

at a time. These training sessions for educators about LTELs should include the following topics:

- CEDLT testing and its scoring (or any subsequent assessment).
- Reclassification requirements for ELs.
- Scaffolding or differentiating assignments effectively.
- Identifying LTEL students in each class.
- Meeting the language needs of students.

School sites can also provide monthly parent training sessions in which parents are educated on LTEL-related subjects:

- Understanding the reclassification process.
- Interpreting CELDT scoring (or the scoring of subsequent assessments).
- Supporting students at home.
- Supporting students at school.
- Preparing their children to be college-ready.

Educators will better meet the needs of their LTEL students by following these best practices:

- Identifying LTEL students in each class.
- Identifying three LTEL students who are close to reclassifying and setting goals with them; monitoring and discussing their progress with the Literacy Coach or Administrators on a monthly basis.
- Providing students time to discuss their thinking prior to finalizing their task using language frames.

- Using cooperative grouping with students to promote academic achievement and motivation; fostering interpersonal communication skills through having students working in small heterogeneous groups.
- Providing students timely feedback on assignments.

Following these suggested best practices will assist administrators, educators, and parents in meeting the needs of LTEL students.

Limitations of Research

One major limitation to this study involved time constraints. While the thesis writing process began in February through a university course, the thesis approval procedures through the university were not completed until June. Therefore, the teacher survey was distributed the day prior to the last day of school. During that time, teachers were consumed with end-of-the-year textbook returns, grade level ceremonies, and required classroom checkout procedures. Therefore, only a little over 50% of teachers responded to the survey. If I had been able to send the survey sooner, I would have had a better chance of collecting results that reflected the opinions of all teachers at this sample school. In addition, my original research plan was to conduct informational interviews of small focus groups of teachers. Although focus groups interviews could have provided richer and more detailed results, it would have been very difficult to find teachers during this late time in the school year who would have been willing to commit time to focus groups. I therefore chose to collect information from teachers using online survey questions about LTELs.

In addition, the web-based student information system PowerSchool has limitations to the type of data it can generate in a report about LTELs. PowerSchool contains a great deal of information about a student's educational history, such as the grade level of a student's first U.S. schooling, the grade level of a student's first entry into a district, and any other entry and exit dates to and from the district. However, not all of these data points can be generated in a PowerSchool reports. Therefore, when analyzing a report, I found a discrepancy between a student's first U.S. public school entry date and the student's first entry into a district. For any student with a discrepancy, I investigated the student's individual PowerSchool file. I viewed all entry and exit dates to determine if the student qualified as an LTEL student by attending U.S. schools for more than six consecutive years or if the student migrated between the U.S. and schools in other countries. This is an arduous task when viewing the data of hundreds of students.

Two other limitations to this study involved the scope of the study and my position at this sample school. This study included teacher responses and student data points from one middle school. Conducting this study with multiple middle schools would have provided richer and more statistically significant results. In addition, although I conducted a confidential survey, my position as an EL coordinator at this school may have influenced teacher responses.

The Ideal Study of LTELs

If I had conducted this study with endless financial and educational resources and support, I would have conducted my study within the structure of a grant. First,

before I began the study I would have consulted directly with LTEL research experts, such as Olsen (2010a; 2010b), educational entities, like the LTEL task force with the Riverside Office of Education, and even political figures who are advocates for LTELs, such as Ricardo Lara. This would have provided me guidance on how to best proceed with my study of LTELs. Second, following in the footsteps of Olsen (2010b), I would have studied the LTEL population at a much larger scale, investigating LTELs within the district and county in which I work and perhaps even beyond my county. With access to student data points across schools and districts, I would have been able to make more accurate conclusions about LTELs. Third, I would have conducted my research with other experts in the educational field, either forming a research committee or a research task force. This would have provided more comprehensive results about LTELs.

Future Research Directions

The findings about the lack of professional development among teachers in this school could lead to future professional development about LTELs. The sample site's instructional leaders, content-area coaches, and other LTEL specialists can educate teachers on why their students become LTELs and how teachers can better meet the academic and social-emotional needs of their LTEL students. This knowledge will then drive LTEL-specific curriculum development and instruction among teachers, which will then assist LTELs in moving towards reclassification and academic success.

Research Extension

This research could be extended by applying the study to a larger sample population. If the school population included multiple middle schools with similar demographics, it could be determined if the results of this study are accurate. It would also be helpful to conduct this study in the elementary, middle school, and high school setting in order to compare results and search for commonalities among LTELs across grade levels.

Potential Research, Curriculum, and Instruction

The results of this study provide opportunities for future research topics, such as proper data collection about LTEL students and what solutions will help LTELs be successful. For example, given the limitation I encountered with obtaining student data points with PowerSchool data, I would suggest that future research should be conducted on how schools, districts, county offices, and the CDE can more accurately collect information about LTEL students. Since the CDE is now required to provide the number of LTEL students to schools and districts (Torlakson, 2012, p. 3), it would be helpful to also study the robustness of the CDE's data collection system. It is possible that students who have migrated back and forth between the U.S. and another country will be inaccurately identified as LTELs. Based on the research, suggestions could be made for how to improve the data collection system.

Another area of potential area of future educational research is to study solutions for supporting LTEL students. Much of the current research identifies how LTELs are not served, but focuses less on ways in which schools, districts, county

offices of education, and the CDE can better support LTELs and move them towards reclassification. A potential focus could be to expand on the efforts of Olsen's district checklist (2010b) and design a research-based LTEL program for training all stakeholders on how to best serve LTELs. The overarching questions would be: What can all stakeholders do in moving LTEL students towards academic achievement, reclassification, and success in high school, college, and the workplace? The answers would vary depending on whether the stakeholder is a student, parent, teacher, administrator, or a district, county, or state educational leader. Further, on the topic of motivation, this study could be extended through future research by investigating the difference between the motivation levels of LTEL female and male students. Another topic of potential research could involve further study of how LTEL students can be best motivated and thus become active, engaged, and visible members of their school campuses and achieve academic excellence. At a larger scale, there should be future research on the existence of LTELs across the nation.

Summary and Conclusion

Chapter 1 summary. EL students have historically struggled to be successful in the U.S. public school system. As Olsen (2010b) states, "...throughout the nation, English Learners continue to disproportionately end up in the lowest quartiles of achievement" (p. 6). In the state of California, there are over a million EL students in the public school system and 84.2% speak Spanish (CDE Educational Demographics Unit, 2014b). Within the EL population, one subgroup has become a focus of concern for educators, researchers, and policy makers: long term English learners (LTELs).

An LTEL is an EL student who has been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years (Cal. Assemb. B. 2193, section 1, para. 1). In a study of forty California school districts, Olsen (2010b) found that in secondary schools, the majority (59%) of ELs are LTELs and that in one of every three districts more than 75% of ELs are LTELs (p. 1). Based on a study of five California school districts, Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix, and Clewell (2000) found that ELs are underserved over time and that the LTEL population is provided inadequate instructional materials in the secondary school setting.

LTEL students have unique academic and social-emotional characteristics. They tend to be “orally bilingual” in social settings with both English and their home languages, unlike some of their EL counterparts (Olsen, 2010b; Menken et al., 2012, pp. 122-123; Menken & Kleyn, 2010, p. 400). However, although they have conversational English skills, they struggle with “academic language” and they often don’t know how to read, write, or speak in either their native language or in English about their school subjects (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002) p. 38). LTEL students tend to lack engagement in their scholastics (Olsen, 2010b) and have “lowered personal expectations” of themselves (Menken et al., 2012, p. 134). Due to the struggles they face academically and emotionally, LTELs are considered a “high risk population for grade retention and dropout” (Menken et al., 2012, p. 136). Although the majority of LTELs want to attend college, they are often unaware of the high school academic requirements for attending a university and they don’t realize

that they are in “academic jeopardy” (Olsen, 2010b, p. 25). They also have unrealistic perceptions of what “doing well” in school means (Menken et al., 2012, p. 134).

Although LTELs have unique traits and needs, they lack support in the school setting. LTELs are often improperly placed, such as in classes with EL students who are new immigrants or in mainstream classes that provide no language development instruction (Olsen, 2010b). Menken et al. (2012) state that there is a lack of research on LTELs and a lack of “specialized educational programs” designed to meet their needs (p. 122). Further, the educational inconsistencies among U.S. schools and programs contribute to students being classified as LTELs over time (Menken et al., 2012). Since LTELs are a “significant and growing secondary population,” it is critical that “schools take notice of them and meet their needs” (Menken & Kleyn, 2009, What Can We Do? section, para. 28).

Based on these alarming descriptions of the struggles of LTELs, this thesis study investigates the following research question: “Why do some LTEL students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences?” This is a current and relevant issue that schools, districts, and state governments must solve in order to move all students towards success in high school, college, and the workplace.

Chapter 2 summary. The number of EL students in the state of California is growing. However, programs, laws, and curricula adopted over the years have changed due to shifts in policies and standards. For example, in 1998, voters passed Proposition 227, a law requiring students attending public schools to be taught

English via English instruction and eliminating most bilingual classes (Cal. Prop. 227, 1998 & 1998b). Further, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed in 2001 at the federal level in order to “change the culture of America’s schools” and to close the academic achievement gap (“Office of the Under Secretary,” 2002, p. 9). Most recently, the CCSS were adopted by forty-eight state leaders, two territories, and the District of Columbia in order to create “real-world learning goals” that enable all students to graduate from high school and be prepared to be successful in college and in the workforce (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010a, para. 1).

The LTEL subgroup has been a focus in the state of California. Their academic struggles have lead to new educational research. LTELs now are officially defined in studies and in government policy. The CDE is now required to report statistics on the LTEL population to its districts. LTELs are also mentioned along with the adoption of the new CA ELD standards. Most recently, the topic of multilingualism has been promoted in proposed California Senate Bill 1174 (2014) as a necessary 21st century skill in college and careers; if passed, the results could influence the LTEL population. Although limited research exists about LTELs, recent studies show that LTEL language needs are not being met in part because some educators believe that a student’s primary language impedes with the acquisition of the English language (Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Nava & García, 2012). Further, LTELs are often placed in classrooms with educators who are not adequately prepared to meet their instructional needs (Olsen, 2010a). This lack of knowledge leads LTEL students to receive limited access to curricula, have fewer course options,

and have a need for additional support classes (Olsen, 2010a; Wassell, Hawrylak, & LaVan, 2010). Therefore, more studies about LTELs need to be conducted in order to provide educators, schools, districts, and the CDE suggestions on how to best meet the academic skills of LTEL students.

Chapter 3 summary. This study investigated the reasons why some LTEL students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences. To study this question, a mixed method research design was conducted using a sample middle school population located in Southern California. The school was selected because it is located in a low socioeconomic area and has a majority of second language learners. In addition, 84% of their non-reclassified students were identified as LTELs. Two forms of data collection were used in this study, which included a confidential survey and an analysis of student academic and demographic data via the web-based student information system PowerSchool.

Chapter 4 summary. Three themes emerged from the qualitative and quantitative research, which were driven by the research question: Why do some students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences? The three themes that emerged involve students, educators, and parents.

This study found that multiple factors contribute to students becoming LTELs. First, teachers believe that students are lacking motivation in school. However, based on the analysis of student data points LTELs possess higher English proficiency skills

and lower GPAs than other EL students. Educators characterized LTEL students as fluent in conversational English, however, they struggle with reading and writing in both English and Spanish. Further, and most significant, the student data analysis shows that male Latino LTELs are not as academically successful as female Latina LTELs. Therefore, male Latinos are at significant risk of not being successful at the secondary level.

Educators and parents also impact students and contribute to students becoming LTELs. Participants stated that educators would benefit from professional development aligned with research-based strategies in order to meet the needs of LTELs. Respondents also believed that parents are not involved in the educations of their children and they lack the skills needed to support the developmental needs. According to participants, these factors contribute to students becoming LTELs.

Conclusion

The goal for this study was to better understand why some LTEL students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years remain LTELs throughout their educational experiences. The current research on LTELs provided a good foundation for conducting this study. The results of this study highlighted multiple factors that contribute to LTEL students remaining LTELs. However, there is a great deal of research needed to better understand how to best serve the LTEL population. In addition, since there is a lack of LTEL statistics at the national level, further research should be conducted on the existence of the LTEL population across the nation. By gaining guidance from researchers and educational stakeholders who

are making efforts to move students out of the LTEL status, we can improve the academic performance of LTEL students and move them towards becoming 21st century learners who are successful in high school, college, and the workforce.

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Appendices

Appendix A



California State University
SAN MARCOS

Information Sheet

Invitation to Participate. My name is Maria L. Velasquez and I am a graduate student in the School of Education at California State University San Marcos. I would like to invite you to participate in my survey, in which I am seeking your knowledge, experiences, and opinions about long term English learners (LTELs). An LTEL student is defined by Olsen (2010) as a student who has been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years and has not been reclassified.

Research Description. You will be asked to complete a mixed-methods survey of fourteen questions, which will take you less than thirty minutes to complete. The intention of this study is to determine why many LTEL students are not reclassified.

Risks. There are minimal risks to participating in this study. The risks include the following:

- 1) You might feel uncomfortable stating your opinions.
- 2) You might feel inconvenienced due to the loss of time to take the survey.
- 3) You might be concerned that your confidentiality could be breached if technology is compromised and e-mail accounts or computers are hacked.

Safeguards.

- 1) The survey is neutral in nature with no embedded opinions. Therefore, you should not feel pressured from the survey to answer questions in any particular way. In addition, by providing a confidential survey with no identification questions (name, contact information, etc.), the goal is that you will feel more comfortable knowing that your identity will not be included.
- 2) Since this survey is optional and will take no more than thirty minutes, the risk for time loss is minimal.
- 3) The technology risks are minimal since this survey is confidential. This survey link will be given only to teachers at this site and the survey answers you submit will not include your names, e-mails, or other personal information. I will have no way to determine the identity of participants.

Benefits. Your participation in this study will benefit the educational field by attempting to further meet the needs of LTELs. It may also directly benefit our site since we are continuing to search for ways to best serve the needs of our LTEL population.

A digital copy of this thesis study will be submitted to a digital repository called Scholarworks. At that time, you may access the study or you can schedule an appointment with me to discuss the thesis results.

Voluntary Participation. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time. There are no consequences if you decide not to participate. If you choose to take the survey, your anonymous submission will represent your consent to be part of the study. In the event that you have a strong reaction to the study, you can receive confidential support from our Care Youth Social Worker, the local counseling agency Palomar Family Counseling Service, Inc., or your own insurance.

Confidentiality. As mentioned in the safeguards section, this survey will be completely confidential. I will have no way of knowing who completes the survey. Your opinions will be used to help better understand the needs of the LTEL population.

Questions. This study has been approved by the California State University San Marcos Institutional Review Board. If you have questions about the study, you may direct those to the researcher, Maria L. Velasquez, 760-224-8857 (cell), velas028@cougars.csusm.edu, or to the researcher's advisor, Dr. Carol Van Vooren, cvanvoor@csusm.edu. Questions about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the Institutional Review Board at irb@csusm.edu or (760) 750-4029. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

This document has been approved by

the Institutional Review Board at

California State University San Marcos

Appendix B**LTEL Survey
(to be transferred to a Google Form)**

Introduction: This study will focus on a subgroup of English language learners (ELLs), the long term English learner population. Olsen (2010) describes long term English learners (LTELs) as students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years and they have not been reclassified. In the following survey, please share your knowledge, experiences, and opinions about the LTEL population at the site where you are a teacher. If you choose to take the survey, your anonymous submission will represent your consent to be part of the study.

1. How many years have you been a teacher (by June 11, 2014)?

- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21-30 years
- More than 30 years

2. Approximately how many hours of professional development have you received as a contracted teacher that has prepared you to teach English language learners? (This may include coursework, seminars, or group/one-on-one training sessions. Some sample professional development titles could include the terms CLAD, BCLAD, ESL, ELL, ELD, GLAD, LTEL, SDAIE strategies, etc.)

- 1-5 hours
- 6-10 hours
- 11-20 hours
- 21-30 hours
- 31+ hours

3. In this professional development about English language learners (described in #2) were you instructed on how to meet the needs of LTELs? (This may include coursework, conference seminars, or group/one-on-one training sessions.)

- yes or no question

4. If you answered yes to #3, how effective has this professional development been in helping you instruct LTELs?

- Very ineffective
- Ineffective
- Neutral
- Effective
- Very Effective

5. If you answered yes to #3, what instructional strategies did you learn that are specific and unique to LTELs?

- open-ended answer

6. Have you ever received professional development about the CELDT scoring levels and the test content?

- Yes/No

7. Have you ever received professional development about the district requirements for ELL students' reclassification?

- Yes/No

8. Approximately what percentage of English language learner students do you teach who are not reclassified? (pull-down)

- 1-10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- 51-60%
- 61-70%
- 71-80%
- 81-90%
- 91-100%
- Unknown

9. Of your English language learner students who are not reclassified, approximately what percentage of students are LTELs? (pull-down)

- 1-10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- 51-60%

- 61-70%
- 71-80%
- 81-90%
- 91-100%
- Unknown

10. What are some of the characteristics that you have observed that are unique to your LTEL students?

- open-ended answer

11. What are the barriers at home that contribute to students not being reclassified and becoming LTELs?

- Open-ended answer

12. Of these barriers at home (described in #11), what is the biggest barrier that contributes to students not being reclassified and becoming LTELs?

- Open-ended answer

13. What are the barriers at school that contribute to students not being reclassified and becoming LTELs?

- Open-ended answer

14. Of these barriers at school (described in #14), what is the biggest barrier that contributes to students not being reclassified and becoming LTELs?

- Open-ended answer