

2015

English Language Learners and High School Transition Experiences

Kimberly Watkins
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

 Part of the [Educational Psychology Commons](#), and the [Psychology Commons](#)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Kimberly Watkins

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Krista Cournoyer, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty

Dr. Kathyrne Mueller, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty

Dr. Robin Friedman, University Reviewer, Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University

2015

Abstract

English Language Learners and High School Transition Experiences

by

Kimberly Carol Watkins

MEd, State University of West Georgia, 2004

BA, Oglethorpe University, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

General Psychology

Walden University

February 2015

Abstract

Spanish speaking English language learning (ELL) students in U.S. public schools are among those most likely to drop out of high school. However, there is a research gap concerning Spanish speaking ELL student success and their experiences in transitioning from supported English as a second language (ESL) classes into mainstream, general education classes in high school. Guided by the framework of transitional bilingual education, the purpose of this study was to present the phenomenological experiences of former ESL students as they transitioned from ESL to English-only classes. Participants included 7 adults who transitioned from Spanish speaking ESL during their high school years and were now enrolled in a local community college. Adult participants were chosen to decrease barriers to participation due to age, clarify perspectives since having completed high school, and reduce negative effects related to power differentials when they were still enrolled as high school students. Each participated in a semistructured interview about daily experiences in the high school ESL program. Using Giorgi's 7-step approach to data analysis, deductive coding was used to identify themes: (a) daily experiences with ESL and mainstream classes, (b) understanding of the ESL classes and transition to mainstream, (c) opinions concerning elements of the programs that hurt or helped their education, and (d) suggestions for ways to improve the programs for future students. More qualitative research with a broader range of students is recommended for future study. Positive social change implications include informing current practitioners and future researchers with the aim of facilitating increased perceived and actual school success, reduced dropout rates, and increased graduation rates for Spanish speaking ELL students.

English Language Learners and High School Transition Experiences

by

Kimberly Carol Watkins

MEd, State University of West Georgia, 2004

BA, Oglethorpe University, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

General Psychology

Walden University

February 2015

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to both Eugenia Palmer and Zoe Stewart. Mrs. Eugenia Palmer was a wonderful friend, teacher, role-model, and grandmother. She showed me the importance of education. Her belief in my ability to complete this journey pushed me through the process. She understood the importance of persistence and encouraged me to never let go of my dreams. My grandmother was a constant educator, helping both me and the thousands of children she taught over her 40 year career. I admire her in so many ways, but attending college at a time when a college degree was not required or expected of teachers showed her belief in the importance of education. It also showed me that women can accomplish anything they wish. I am saddened that my grandmother did not live to see this dissertation completed, but without her support this dissertation may never have become.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my daughter, Miss Zoe Watkins Stewart. My goal is to be a friend, teacher, and role-model for her as my grandmother was for me. My hope is that this dissertation will show her that anything is possible with persistence, focus, and dedication.

Acknowledgments

First, and foremost, I would like to thank my husband, Randy Stewart, for countless hours of support with this process. He has debated ideas, read and reread sections of text, and took over the business of running our family while patiently allowing me to write. I am forever in his debt.

I would also like to thank my parents, Ivan and Carol Watkins, whose belief in my abilities has never wavered. They provided me with the education and guidance that pushed me toward my dreams.

I would like to thank my colleague and friend Mrs. Sineca Muhammad who listened to countless ideas on data collection and helped guide me in the best directions. Also, I am grateful to my colleague Rodney Larrotta for always advocating for ESL research.

I would like to thank Dr. Krista Cournoyer for years of support with this process. She answered anxiety ridden texts at all hours of the day and night. She spent hours talking me through the process and providing ideas. I cannot thank her enough.

Dr. Kathyrne Mueller has been a constant source of wisdom throughout this paper. Her unending knowledge of the qualitative process was instrumental to someone with a quantitative mind.

Finally, I am grateful to all those ELL students who took the time to speak with me and allow me to understand their high school experiences. Their insights have changed my outlook in so many ways.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background	2
Problem Statement	4
Purpose of the Study	5
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Nature of the Study	6
Rationale for Phenomenology.....	7
Research Questions	8
Research Objectives	8
Definitions.....	9
Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations	11
Significance of the Study	13
Conclusion	15
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	17
Literature Search Strategy.....	18
Conceptual Framework.....	19
English Language Learner Statistics.....	20
Latino/Hispanic ELL Dropout Rates	22
Diversity Training for Teachers.....	26
ELL Students, the No Child Left Behind Act, and Public Attitudes	29

No Child Left Behind Act.....	29
Community Attitudes Toward ELL Students	32
School Climate and Acceptance of Spanish Speaking ELL Students	35
Teaching Spanish Speaking ELL Students	38
Teacher Backgrounds.....	39
Monolingual vs. Bilingual Education	41
Transitional Programs.....	44
Breakdown in Spanish Speaking ELL Transitional Plans	47
Summary and Conclusions	51
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	53
Introduction.....	53
Research Design and Approach	54
Research Questions.....	54
Paradigm	54
Data Choices	55
Rationale for Phenomenology.....	57
Role of the Researcher	60
Context of Study	61
Methodology	62
Participant Selection and Recruitment.....	62
Data Collection	64
Data Analysis Plan.....	67

Issues of Trustworthiness.....	69
Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants.....	71
Dissemination of Findings	72
Summary	73
Chapter 4: Results	74
Introduction.....	74
Research Questions.....	74
Setting	75
Demographics	75
Data Collection	75
Data Analysis	76
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	77
Credibility	78
Transferability.....	79
Dependability	80
Confirmability.....	80
Results	80
Theme A: Daily Experiences with ESL and Mainstream Classes.....	88
Theme B: Participant Understanding of the ESL Classes and Transition to Mainstream	92
Theme C: Participant Opinions Concerning Elements of the Programs that Hurt or Helped Their Education	93

Theme D: Participant Suggestions for Ways to Improve the Programs for Future Students	98
Summary	99
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	101
Introduction.....	101
Interpretation of Findings	102
Theme A: Daily experiences with ESL and Mainstream Classes.....	103
Theme B: Participant Understanding of the ESL Classes and Transition to Mainstream	105
Theme C: Participant Opinions Concerning Elements of the Programs that Hurt or Helped their Education.....	106
Theme D: Participant Suggestions for Ways to Improve the Programs for Future Students	108
Theoretical Framework.....	110
Limitations of the Study.....	111
Recommendations.....	112
Implications.....	113
Implications for Social Change.....	113
Implications for Methodology	114
Implications for Practice	114
Conclusion	116
References.....	118

Appendix A: Adult Informed Consent Form134

Appendix B: Participant Interview137

Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation from School District140

Appendix D: IRB Approval from UNG.....141

Curriculum Vitae143

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographics of Spanish speaking ELL Students by State and County 63

Table 2. Codes used for Data Analysis in Transcribed Interviews..... 81

Table 3. Themes Related to Codes 85

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This chapter will begin with an understanding of the background of the problems faced by English language learner (ELL) students, including retention rates and the increasing need for new research. The problem statement will be explained, along with the conceptual framework of the theory of transitional bilingual education that underlies the approach of this study. The purpose of this study will be presented and explained. In the nature of the study, I will review the research questions, the rationale for using the phenomenological approach to research, and the research objectives. Definitions will be provided for terminology that will be used throughout the study. This chapter will conclude with presenting the assumptions, limitations, scope, and significance of the current study design.

The aim of this study was to address the lack of qualitative information regarding the transitional experiences of ELLs as they moved from English as a second language (ESL)-supported classes into mainstream, English-only classrooms. With the recent influx of Spanish speaking workers bringing children who are not proficient in English to the United States, the number of high school students who must attend ESL classes has increased (Souto-Manning, 2007). Fry and Gonzales (2008) proposed that by the year 2050, there will be more Hispanic speaking students than students of English speaking origin in U.S. schools. With Spanish speaking students comprising 20.6% of the high school drop outs, effectively educating these native Spanish speaking students is a necessary step in ensuring that the U.S. economy moves forward with an educated workforce (Hernandez & Nesman, 2004). In this study, social implications regarding the

struggles Spanish speaking ELL students face as they transition into English-only classes were addressed, including providing school districts with information that can be used to influence the development of new techniques for working with Spanish speaking ELL students. Another goal was identifying the lived educational experiences of the primary stakeholders in the ESL program: the former students.

Background

ELL students have struggled to complete their high school education. Hernandez and Nesman (2004) found that Hispanic students drop out at a higher rate than other ethnic subgroups. However, not all Spanish speaking students are ELL or first generation immigrants. In Georgia, ELL student dropout rates for all subgroups was 5.6% in 2011, while the overall figure was 3.7% (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement [GOSA], 2010). If high school administrators hope to retain and graduate ELL, Spanish speaking high school students, educators must develop effective teaching and transitional programs for them using research-based strategies for meeting the needs of this at-risk population.

Many teachers are not adequately prepared to work with this population of students. Otway (2007) found that elementary school teachers presented a need for collaboration and team teaching strategies. Past researchers have focused on differences in teaching methods that could work best with the ESL population and accommodations in test administration that could benefit the students (Doherty & Hilberg, 2007; Zheng, Cheng, & Klinger, 2007). Qualitative studies of Spanish speaking ELL students regarding current educational practices are needed. So far, only a handful of such studies have been

conducted as the majority of studies have been quantitative in nature, which presents a gap in the current research (Kimball, 2008; McCoy-Wilson, 2011; Otway, 2007; Strickland, 2009). The No Child Left Behind act (NCLB; 2001) stipulated that all students should be able to pass testing on specific content in English by the end of each school year for promotion to the next level (Fry, 2008; Public Law 107-110, 2002). However, it has been documented that it takes 3 to 7 years for ELL students to become cognitively and academically proficient in English (Baker & Rossell, 1993; Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; Ernst-Slavit, Moore, & Maloney, 2002; Tsang, Katz, & Stack, 2008). After using a case study design to examine the learning experiences of one Spanish speaking ELL student in high school, Cohen (2007) wrote about many outside factors that affect whether students pass courses and achievement tests. Cohen documented the approach to educating one student, Mario, who had moved to the United States from Mexico when he was in eighth grade. Mario had a solid educational background in Spanish. Even with having a good education before moving to the United States, Mario struggled with U.S. education. Cohen concluded that the quick transition into English-only classes could negatively affect students such as Mario. These findings support the need for adequate preparation of ESL students before transitioning into mainstream classes.

Researchers have claimed that ESL programs focused on moving students into English-only classrooms need to provide ongoing educational assistance to ELL students after they have been mainstreamed into English-only classrooms (Field, 2008; Gomez, Strage, Knutson-Miller, & Garcia-Nevarez, 2009; Zehler et al., 2008). In this study, the

daily experiences of former Spanish speaking students were explored as they transitioned from ESL-supported classes into mainstream English-only classes.

Problem Statement

The collection and analysis of qualitative data in this study was intended to provide the ELL student perspective to those developing educational policy and practice for ESL students. Scholars have yet to address the unique experiences that Spanish speaking ELL students face as they transition from ESL classes into mainstream, general education classrooms (Field, 2008; Gomez et al., 2009; Zehler et al., 2008). Laguardia and Goldman (2007) reported that current ESL practice pushes ELL students to quickly learn content designated for state tests without regard to their level of English language mastery. While quantitative data presents information on the typical number of years students need to master academic English, through phenomenological research, additional ideas on how to approach education and transition were gleaned. This qualitative information is a helpful avenue to explore when addressing the needs of ESL programs.

One concept of second language development that is not often addressed when considering second language dominance is the cognitive and academic language proficiency (CALP) of ELL students. CALP is a concept developed by Cummins (1984) and refined by Laija-Rodriguez, Ochoa, and Parker (2006). According to CALP, it is important to understand that academic language development is often different than language used for social situations. Laija-Rodriguez et al. found that first language development is a factor in second language development. When learners of a new

language have not received a solid foundation in their second language, they may be more likely to withdraw from a formal education when they no longer have the support of the ESL teacher (Reyna, 2000). It is important to consider an ELL student's CALP in learning success with a final aim of language mastery and high school graduation. Presenting mastery of academic language from the perspectives of the students may help to provide evidence for or against quick transitioning of ELL students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to present the lived experiences of former ESL students as they made the transition from ESL to English-only classes. The goal was to serve as a first step toward giving voice to students directly involved in these programs. Many ELL students struggle with reading and academic English language use when they exit the ESL program and enter the regular education setting (What Works Clearing House, 2007). More research is needed to document the nature of this struggle as reported by students enrolled in such programs in order to help gain information on the experiences of ELL students as they transition from the ESL to English-only classrooms (O'Day, 2009; Rance-Roney, 2008). My goal was to understand the experiences of former ELL students who were recent graduates of an existing transitional program.

Conceptual Framework

Bilingual education theories and models address how to best transition Spanish speaking ELL students from the ESL to mainstream, English-only classrooms (Olivo, 2003). However, Cummins presented a theory on bilingual education in 1999, which is called the theory of transitional bilingual education (Camarena, 2009; Fry, 2008; Kritzer,

2007). The theory of transitional bilingual education supports use of the ELL students' primary language in the classroom to facilitate more successful English-only classroom transitions. Cummins (1984) claimed that academic literacy in a student's primary language could support literacy and academic achievement in the second language. Therefore, when there is a teacher present who speaks their native language during ELL students' transition process, students are able to comprehend English and match the academic achievement of monolingual English speaking peers (Chen, Kyle, & McIntyre, 2008). As a result, during the ESL to mainstream transition, students experience more success. This may be one way to increase the likelihood that Spanish speaking ELL students will remain engaged in and confident about academic skills and, therefore, more likely to remain in and graduate from high school. This framework was used to support the qualitative perceptions of former ELL students in the current study.

Nature of the Study

A phenomenological design was used to explore data on the lived experiences of transitioning from ESL to English-only classrooms from the perspective of recently transitioned Spanish speaking ESL adult students. The research questions are presented to understand the daily experiences of former ESL students and how these experiences have facilitated academic growth. Creswell (2003) explained that the phenomenological approach to research allows for an understanding of the lived experiences of participants in a particular program in order to understand more about that program. Because of the foundational nature of this research, the phenomenological approach was chosen to capture the experiences of those most directly involved with ESL education, the former

students. Participants were randomly selected from an ESL program at a medium-sized county in a southern state. Participants were selected from recently transitioned (within 5 years) Spanish speaking adult students. Participants were interviewed individually. Giorgi's (1985) 7-step approach to data analysis was used in transcription and analysis of the information obtained.

Rationale for Phenomenology

The phenomenological approach to data collection was used in this study. Johnson and Christianson (2004) related that, while there are many ways to approach research, the phenomenological perspective allows the experiences of the participants to guide the research toward common themes in experience. These themes may introduce new ideas for focus and change. To understand the experiences and daily practices in the classroom, experiential information from the former students was gathered to further explore ESL to English-only transitioning programs. The rationale for the phenomenological approach comes from looking at the approaches of several other studies on emerging cultural and educational change; these studies are presented in Chapter 3 (Kimball, 2008; McCoy-Wilson, 2011; Otway, 2007; Strickland, 2009).

The population change in the chosen state has produced a cultural change that needs to be addressed. Researchers have used the phenomenological approach when there was a lack of understanding of a new phenomenon (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). While information on ELL students has been presented from a quantitative standpoint, researchers have not addressed the experiences of the Spanish speaking ELL students during their transition into the mainstream classroom. Quantitative analysis has been used

to collect numerical data regarding ELL students' dropout rates, test scores, and rates of success in mainstream classes (Cohen, 2007; Department of Education, 2008; Fry, 2008; Haneda, 2008). However, despite the abundance of these statistical data, there is not enough to gain a comprehensive picture of the educational experiences of Spanish speaking ELL students because scholars have not approached the lived experience of this group in the classroom. The phenomenological approach was chosen to introduce an understanding of the ESL program by relying on the perspectives of those directly affected by it and involved with it.

Research Questions

Answers to the following questions were the aim of this study:

- What are the daily experiences of ESL students during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?
- How do students understand the educational change from ESL to mainstream classes?
- What experiences do former ESL students perceive have helped or hurt them during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?

Research Objectives

The objective of this study was to use phenomenological interviews to obtain an overall picture of the student perceptions from those who have participated in transitional ESL programs for Spanish speaking high school students and to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program related to future student success. Interview responses were content analyzed based on response similarities. Participants were recruited through a

local university ESL program to gain information on former high school students; however, it was not a requirement that participants be currently enrolled in the university. Participant responses were deductively coded. Interviews addressed such questions as participation in the ESL program and the experiences with U.S. public schools.

While there is an abundance of quantitative research on working with ESL students, one benefit of carrying out this qualitative study was to provide school districts with information that can be used to influence the development of new techniques for working with Spanish speaking ELL students. Another benefit is that qualitative researchers can present educational experiences from the standpoint of those directly involved with the ESL program, the former students, based on their lived experiences told in their own words. While quantitative research approaches provide numerical data to describe ESL program success, such data may be limited in the scope of information it can represent. For instance, talking with former ESL students presented areas of interest that cannot be gained by analyzing the numbers of students who are considered successful in their transition to general education classes. Additional qualitative data on this topic can help to show positive elements of current programs as well as directions for future growth and development of high school ESL programs.

A more detailed discussion of the format of the study, methodology, and populations addressed will be provided in Chapter 3.

Definitions

The following terms will be used throughout the current paper and should be understood by using the definitions below:

Adequate yearly progress (AYP): A concept generated from NCLB that provides a measure of accountability regarding whether schools have provided sufficient instruction annually to move ahead of their success rate from the previous year. AYP is typically measured through test scores and promotion/graduation rates (Zehler et al., 2008).

English language learner (ELL): Someone who is being newly educated in an English-dominant culture, whose first language is not English, and who is learning English as a second language (Haneda, 2008).

English as a second language (ESL) class: A specially constructed learning model that U.S. ELL students are often placed into in order to focus on their English development. Teachers who have received specific training in language learning techniques usually teach these classes (Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002).

English as a second language (ESL) teacher: Someone who has completed continuing education to become ESL certified and work specifically with the ESL population of students (Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002).

Mainstream classrooms: General education classrooms that consist primarily of English speaking students who are not receiving special accommodations for testing or instruction related to language dominance (Haneda, 2008).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): A federal act instituted in 2001 that requires schools to provide programming and testing for students to show progress toward educational goals (Public Law 107-110, 2002).

Qualitative data: Information that verbally describes data instead of representing it numerically. Qualitative information is often presented in the words of the subject and is open to researcher interpretation (Creswell, 2003).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

In this study, certain assumptions were made and will be clarified here. First, it was assumed that teachers were teaching the content required by the State Performance Standards. A second assumption was that all teachers and schools were highly motivated and using best practices in helping their students learn most effectively. A third assumption was that the former high school level Spanish speaking ESL students participating in this study did not have any learning disability or other special needs that would interfere with the learning of a second language. As the participants had been in U.S. schools for enough time to transition into English-only classes and the majority of them were attending university, it was assumed that special needs would have been identified by the schools by the point of participation. Finally, it was also assumed that the participants were openly and honestly sharing their memories of their high school ESL experiences as accurately as they remember them.

As with all studies, this research had limitations that must be addressed. First, the population for the current study was taken from one county in a southern state. This area was chosen for the recent influx of many Spanish speaking ELL students. However, the data may not generalize to Spanish speaking ELL student populations outside of this area. With 41,000 Spanish speaking students in this state's high schools consisting of the majority of ELL students (Bryant, 2010), only students of Spanish speaking origin were

chosen to participate. ELL students from other language backgrounds may have different experiences with second language learning in U.S. public schools or in programs other than ESL. Additionally, only high school students were the focus of this study, while educational approaches or outcomes for elementary and middle school students may vary. Students who enter U.S. schools in middle and high school are more likely to face difficulties in transitioning and may never grasp academic English (Burroughs, 2008; Minaya-Rowe, 2008; Mora, 2000). For this reason, the focus of the study was exclusively on high school ELL student programs. Another limitation had to do with potential researcher bias. However, I approached the research using the bracketing technique of suspending judgment about the experiences of the participants and gaining an understanding of the lived experiences as meaningful units of study (Giorgi, 1985).

Given the limitations and assumptions reviewed, the delimitations of the study involved the population from which participants were being sampled: recently transitioned ESL students who exited the ESL program in the past 5 years. Participants were adults of 18 or older whose first language was Spanish and varied in gender. Participants were recruited from a local university where many previous high school ESL students attended, but they were not required to be currently enrolled in the university. Recently transitioned students were asked to participate based on self-reported data that showed them as having completed the ESL program within the past 5 years and as having been enrolled in mainstream-only courses. These delimitations were made to incorporate the lived experiences of those most recently involved in the transitional process from ESL supported classes into mainstream, English-only classes. This specific aspect of the

research problem was chosen because of the lack of research from the viewpoint of students involved in this area. The scope of the study was to gain an understanding of how Spanish speaking ELL students experienced the transition from ESL classes to English-only classes. These data may be generalizable to public schools, community support organizations, and students as support for increasing focus on ESL programs and transitional services for ELL, Spanish speaking students.

Significance of the Study

Presenting the lived experiences of former ESL students as they made the transition from ESL to English-only classes was the purpose of this study. Most research has been quantitative in nature, addressing the effects of dropping out of school and the increasing number of Spanish speaking ELL students to U.S. schools (del Carmen Salazar, 2008; Fry & Gonzalez, 2008; Hernandez & Nesman, 2004). Related researchers addressed specific teaching techniques that work best for Spanish speaking ELL students, as well as the problems with teaching strategies currently in effect (Baker & Rossell, 1993; Batt, 2008; Necochea & Cline, 2000). However, few scholars have documented the concerns directly from former high school, Spanish speaking ELL students concerning their experiences. Otway (2007) addressed this from the elementary teacher perspective, and Cohen (2007) focused on one case of a high school student, but only a handful of such studies were found. Research of a quantitative nature does not allow for the consideration of the perceptions and interpretations of participants. ESL students are directly affected by such quantitative analysis on a daily basis. Recording and analyzing the daily experiences of transitional, high school ESL service from student perspectives

may broaden the current understanding of education practices. As most researchers have looked toward quantitative data to address this issue, the qualitative approach of the current study allowed for the former ESL student's perspectives on improving education.

Results of this study may be applied to the public school bilingual education strategies of ELL, Spanish speaking students in several ways. Teachers can use the obtained information to start to understand the needs of their students from the perspectives of the students. School counselors can use these findings when working with ELL students to understand the struggles they encounter and to use this information to help provide a smoother transition into mainstream classes. School administrators can use these data to help build a new climate of inclusion, support, and understanding of what Spanish speaking ELL students need in the schools. School districts can use this information to provide continuing education to teachers on how to best work with the Spanish speaking ELL student population. Finally, Spanish speaking ELL students can have a voice through peer participants' expression of their experiences.

The results of this study are intended to be used to bring about positive social change for Spanish speaking ELL students. By exploring the experiences of those directly involved, work toward increasing high school graduation rates for Spanish speaking ELL students can continue to be refined. School district personnel may use this research to influence the development of new techniques for working with Spanish speaking ELL students. Another benefit is that qualitative research can present educational experiences from the standpoint of those directly involved with the ESL program, the former students. Reviewing transitional programs can help teachers focus

on how Spanish speaking ELL students in particular adapt to the U.S. classroom. ELL students often fail to succeed in the U.S. educational system, partially due to a lack of support when they exit from the ESL program (Otway, 2007). Even if teachers do not find a new way to work with these students, the process of being heard and having a voice in the education process may empower Spanish speaking ELL students and help them feel more successful in the classroom.

Conclusion

The introduction to the study was presented in Chapter 1 by exploring the background of the problem of high dropout rates of ELL students (GOSA, 2010). This exploration resulted in a problem statement that underlies the purpose of the study, which was to explore the perceptions and experiences of former high school, Spanish speaking ELL students as they transitioned from ESL to mainstream classrooms. The conceptual framework of transitional bilingual education (Cummins, 1984) was explained to understand the approach to studying the construct. The nature of the study section was used to explain the rationale for the phenomenological approach, the research questions, and the research objectives. With this, the definitions of key terminology used in this study were explained. In this chapter, the assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations have been explored to support the significance of the study. In the literature review, information about current practices with ELL students will be presented. Political implications toward NCLB and ESL education will be reviewed from the point of view of the general public and education administrators. In qualitative research tradition, narrative data from ELL students was collected, summarized, and interpreted to

document themes unique to this large subgroup of U.S. students. Chapter 2 presents a detailed review of ELL literature regarding current practices as well as the theory and approach this study follows. In Chapter 3, I explain the details of the research model. In Chapter 4, I outline the results of the study by presenting the voice of the participants. Finally, Chapter 5 presents conclusions on the results and areas for positive social change from the data.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of the study was to present the lived experiences of former ESL students as they made the transition from ESL to English-only classes. While quantitative data have been presented, a problem exists around the lack of qualitative information concerning this topic (Kimball, 2008; McCoy-Wilson, 2011; Otway, 2007; Strickland, 2009). ELL students in U.S. schools have received increased attention in research journals, experimental studies, and classroom observations (Center on Education Policy, 2007; Chen et al., 2008; Cline, Reyes, & Necochea, 2005; Gasbarra, & Johnson, 2008; Gibbons, 2008; Kimball, 2008; Minaya-Rowe, 2008; Otway, 2007; Zehler et al., 2008). In 2001, NCLB required school systems to examine their ELL dropout rates (Public Law 107-110, 2002). This also brought to attention some past political issues about prejudicial beliefs and actions in communities and schools that may affect the education ELL students receive (Reyes, 2008). Services to help students transition from ESL supported to mainstream classes have been explored through articles in order to understand how to best serve these students in the mainstream classroom (Fairburn, 2009; Hansen-Thomas, 2008). Research on ELL students in ESL education and transitioning to English-only classrooms is explored in detail in this chapter and is used to move toward an understanding of the educational experiences of former Spanish speaking, high school, ELL students as well as how and when to transition them to mainstream classes.

The following chapter will present the strategy that was used to approach the literature review and the conceptual framework. Once this is presented, the literature will include four main themes. In the first section, I will present research on statistics for

ELLS in relation to drop out rates and ESL teacher training. In the second section, I will focus on the NCLB act and the community attitudes and school climate that may affect the policies and approaches toward educating Spanish speaking ELL students. In the third section, I present literature on teaching Spanish speaking ELL students by looking at different approaches to education and transition from ESL to mainstream courses. In the final section, I will focus exclusively on the current problems with the transitional programs for ESL students.

Literature Search Strategy

An extensive review of the literature on ELL students was conducted by using search engines such as EBSCOhost, ERIC, Academic Search Premier, and Walden Dissertations. In these searches, the following key words were targeted: *ELL, English language learner, ESL, English as a second language, Hispanic students, No Child Left Behind, bilingual education, English-only, and graduation rates*. The search was limited to peer-reviewed, scholarly research articles and dissertations. These searches returned articles that were helpful, and following the references of those articles led to additional related information. Through this search, I found that several major themes regarding ELL students included statistics concerning the struggles and dropout rates for ELL students, teacher training issues, the NCLB Act and related community feelings around its implementation, the efficacy of different teaching methods, and variability amongst theories of bilingual education.

Conceptual Framework

The concept under investigation in this study was retrospective lived experiences of former Spanish speaking ELL students as they transitioned from ESL-supported classes into mainstream, English-only education. Bilingual education theories and models address how to best transition Spanish speaking ELL students from the ESL to mainstream, English-only classrooms (Olivo, 2003). However, Cummins focused specifically on transitioning students and created the theory of transitional bilingual education (Camarena, 2009; Fry, 2008; Kritzer, 2007). Cummins (1984) coined this theory based on the idea that bilingual education was successful for students in other countries, that cognitive advantages of two languages should help academic development, and that conversational language and academic language are learned in different ways. The theory of transitional bilingual education supports use of the ELL students' primary language in the classroom to facilitate more successful English-only classroom transitions. Cummins claimed that academic literacy in a student's primary language could support literacy and academic achievement in the second language. Therefore, when there is a teacher present who speaks their native language during ELL students' transition process, students are able to comprehend English and match the academic achievement of monolingual English speaking peers (Chen et al., 2008). As a result, during the ESL to mainstream transition, students experience more success (Cummins, 1984). This may be one way to increase the likelihood that Spanish speaking ELL students will remain engaged in and confident about academic skills and, therefore, more likely to remain in and graduate from high school (Chen et al., 2008).

Although teachers have begun to face the challenge of working with Spanish speaking ELL students, the lack of research with these students has created difficulties such as ideal instructional settings and pacing in addressing the needs of ELL students (Brice et al., 2008). In order to help Spanish speaking ELL students, teachers need to understand and appreciate the unique backgrounds and cultures of their students (Jimenez, Gersten, & Rivera, 1996). Attitudes of educators may make working with and advancing Spanish speaking ELL students difficult (Laguardia & Goldman, 2007). This relates to Cummins's theory of transitional bilingual education as the attitudes that teachers bring with them may affect their support or application of the theory in the classroom.

However, researchers have shown that some teachers have fought to empower students and use their experiences, education, and bilingualism to add to the overall education of the class (del Carmen Salazar, 2008). The current study benefitted from the transitional bilingual education framework because the focus was on empowering students to explore their own experiences and present ideas for future growth on the ESL to mainstream transitional program.

English Language Learner Statistics

Spanish speaking ELL student numbers have grown in U.S. schools as demographics have changed with increased immigration. ELL students have been characterized as those who have struggled with the U.S. school system for many reasons, including well below grade level reading and writing skills in English (Haneda, 2008). Between 1991 and 2001, Spanish speaking ELL enrollment increased by 95% (Cohen,

2007; Fry, 2008). This rate doubled by 2006 (Fry & Gonzales, 2008; Otway, 2007). In 2008, ELL students comprised 8.5% of U.S. students (Department of Education, 2008; O'Day, 2009). Fry and Gonzales (2008) documented that 69% of ELL students are Spanish speaking and, if the rates of growth continue, by 2050 there will be more Spanish speaking children than White, non-Hispanic children in U.S. schools. ELL students are the largest growing subgroup in elementary schools, becoming a focal point for research and understanding (Cohen & Clewell, 2007).

The “new Hispanic states,” those with large Spanish speaking populations, have been identified as Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, Virginia, and Washington (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). As Spanish speaking immigrants have moved beyond the border states, demographics in these new Hispanic states have begun to change (Zehler et al., 2008). According to statistics, 70% of ELL students are in 10% of the schools, and focus on those changing schools has increased (Cohen & Clewell, 2007; Fry, 2008). Public schools that have large ELL populations have also been shown to have more students from underprivileged homes (Fry, 2008). These factors have been related to Spanish speaking ELL student achievement in many ways that will be explored next.

Schools increasing in diversity, including the increase in ELL students, have faced unique challenges (Olivos & Ochoa, 2008; Starkman, 2008; Zehler et al., 2008). For instance, Starkman (2008) wrote that the need for information about how to teach ELL students has outpaced the research and publication of materials. Therefore, teachers have relied on other colleagues for ideas and support. This lack of formal teacher training

may have contributed to ELL students not achieving at the levels that schools expect (Hernandez & Nesman, 2004). Minaya-Rowe (2008) found that between 69 to 90% of ELL students were not able to transition into mainstream classrooms, even after attending supported classrooms for many years. ESL-supported classes offer additional guidance in English skills to students while they work on academic content; however, mainstream classrooms do not offer English language assistance while teaching academic content. To help ameliorate this problem, many options have been explored, including differentiated instruction and teacher training.

Traditionally, educational research was centered on White, native born students. With differentiated instruction, educators have become focused on the needs of each student individually (Burroughs, 2008). Although teachers have begun to face the challenge of working with Spanish speaking ELL students, the lack of research with these students has created difficulties such as ideal instructional settings and pacing the speed in which content is presented in addressing the needs of ELL students (Brice et al., 2008). Work toward providing an expanding reservoir of information for teachers to access has become important (Lee et al., 2008). Without a full, research-based understanding of the problems that Spanish speaking ELL students face on a daily basis in the classroom, teachers struggle with how to help these students succeed.

Latino/Hispanic ELL Dropout Rates

ELL students have much higher dropout rates than native-English students. Del Carmen Salazar (2008) wrote that society has been excluding Latina/o students from optimal educational attainment through unjust social conditions and limited focus on

education strategies. Emphatic statements such as this have spurred the debate on Spanish speaking ELL student success in U.S. schools. In the U.S., however, most minority groups have higher dropout rates than White, nonHispanic students (Burroughs, 2008; Carpenter & Ramirez, 2007; Gibbons, 2008; Hernandez & Nesman, 2004). Spanish speaker rates may appear higher because families are often transient and move with their jobs (Gasbarra & Johnson, 2008). ELL students born in the U.S. drop out of school more often than immigrants born in other countries (Carpenter & Ramirez, 2007). An additional problem presents itself for high school level Spanish speaking ELL students, as moving into the U.S. at an older age may not allow ELL students enough time to learn the language before they are moved out of the school system because of age constraints (Gibbons, 2008). Mora (2000) found that ELL students who entered U.S. programs later in life were less likely to graduate and, when they did, typically made less money.

Researchers have examined factors such as absenteeism and poverty to explain the increased dropout rates among various groups of ELL students (Field, 2008; Fry, 2008; Garcia, 1991; Hernandez & Nesman, 2004; Keifer, 2008). In general, Spanish speaking ELL students have shown higher poverty rates than other students (Field, 2008; Garcia, 1991; Kiefer, 2008). These students also attended schools with lower test scores, higher enrollments, and higher numbers of students on free or reduced lunch (Fry, 2008; Hernandez & Nesman, 2004). With increased financial strain, many students have had to leave school in order to find jobs to provide for their families, or face increased absenteeism (Gasbarra & Johnson 2008; Hernandez & Nesman, 2004). These pressures

have been combined with paying for educational supplies, tutoring, and clubs (Garcia, 1991; Gasbarra & Johnson, 2008).

Overall, ELL students scored substantially lower than all other subgroups on standardized achievement tests, such as the SAT and Florida's Comprehensive Assessment Test (Otway, 2007; Reyna, 2000; Tsang et al., 2008). Students who were placed into high school ESL classrooms showed even more limitations in their functioning (Laguardia & Goldman, 2007; Mora, 2000). Since different educational programs cover content at different levels and instructional paces, Spanish speaking ELL students are often tested on content (such as American History) that they have not been exposed to before moving into the U.S. school system. Also, ESL programs often have to cover content quickly, missing much depth in information. Inadequately covered content has increased ELL students' chances of failure on standardized achievement tests (Mora, 2000). Low test scores for ELL students have been found most often in schools with many poor Spanish speaking students, inadequate teacher preparation, and high dropout rates (Gasbarra & Johnson, 2008).

Educators need to understand the backgrounds and special needs of Spanish speaking ELL students in order to understand their struggles in the classroom. For example, Fry and Gonzales (2008) found 34% of Spanish speaking parents did not complete high school compared to a 7% noncompletion rate for nonHispanic White parents. Coming from environments where parents have not experienced high school graduation and all of the tasks it entails may negatively affect more Spanish speaking students in terms of parental understanding and involvement with grading structures and

graduation requirements (Gasbarra & Johnson, 2008; Juarez, 2008). Parents encouraging homework and helping with studying have been shown to be important factors in predicting student dropout rates for all of students (Hernandez & Nesman, 2004). Educators have often overlooked some of these elements that have a daily effect on Spanish speaking ELL students. Not only are Spanish speaking ELL students learning a new language and new subject matter, they also have had to learn the U.S. system of education and culture, while trying to remain true to their own cultural identities (Edl, Jones, & Estell, 2008; Paz, 2008). This has been even more difficult for older students who enter ESL programs with limited school experiences (Zehler et al., 2008). Proactive communities and schools have recommended mentoring and cultural diversity awareness programs to help ELL students cope with such difficulties (Hernandez & Nesman, 2004). Communities are trying to address the needs these students bring and help them throughout their education (Zehler et al., 2008). However, since students are not allowed to return to high school after their 20th birthday, high school level Spanish speaking ELL students may simply run out of time and then enter the workforce as high school dropouts (Laguardia & Goldman, 2007).

As dropout rates have increased, the focus on the quality of the education of Spanish speaking ELL students has also increased. Some research has shown that students who enter U.S. schools already having experienced consistent and quality education do better (Gibbons, 2008). However, it is not merely prior educational experiences that affect Spanish speaking ELL students. Economic problems, underprepared teachers, less time in schools, as well as community and school problems

have confounded the issue (Xu, Gelfer, Sileo, Filler, & Perkins, 2008). Vacca-Rizopoulos and Nicoletti (2009) stated, “for teachers and other educators, acquiring the understanding and skills to help English language learners (ELLs) succeed academically is more urgent than ever” (p. 68). Educating teachers is one place to start.

Diversity Training for Teachers

While student diversity has increased, teacher demographics have remained stable and homogenous. White, English speaking females are the norm for teachers, with 75.8% of teachers being women and 83.1% of teachers being White (Gomez et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Vacca-Rizopoulos and Nicoletti (2009) worried that teacher demographics affect student learning because many teachers may not understand the diversity or the backgrounds of their students. Primarily, this issue has been addressed through multicultural education courses. However, exposure to multiculturalism through such coursework does not predict a teacher’s ability or willingness to work with these populations (Gomez et al., 2009).

Teachers who work the best with Spanish speaking ELL students are ones who understand the culture of the students. When looking at willingness to work with ESL populations, it is important that programs to educate teachers do more than just require coursework around diversity, but have teachers engage with such students and families to develop more positive attitudes and proactive behavior toward Spanish speaking ELL students (Gomez et al., 2009). However, many teachers have not considered diversity their responsibility and have resisted multicultural inclusion in the classroom (Lee et al., 2008). It is important to remember that teachers are human and, therefore, may hold

certain biases. Teachers who wish to approach students without bias must explore their biases, assumptions, and cultural backgrounds (Lane, 2006).

Researchers have suggested that educational change in the hiring and training of teachers is needed to work effectively with Spanish speaking ELL students. In fact, administrators of schools with large ELL populations often hire less qualified teachers and rely on substitute teachers more often than other schools (Cohen & Clewell, 2007). The short supply of bilingual teachers has also been a problem. The need has become increasingly greater for teacher training on better approaches to teaching ELL students (Gibbons, 2008). Often mainstream teachers have been assigned to work with students who remain in ESL-only instruction for the entire day with limited training in appropriate methodologies (O'Day, 2009). This has resulted in schools with large ELL populations having difficulty hiring teachers and receiving funding (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008).

Working with Spanish speaking ELL students has also presented unique challenges. Laguardia and Goldman (2007) addressed the fear untrained teachers felt when they did not understand these challenges. Untrained teachers were those who had not received instruction regarding how to work with Spanish speaking ELL students (Batt, 2008; Laguardia & Goldman, 2007). For this reason, Batt (2008) recommends that all teachers must be required to attend ELL education workshops. However, smaller school systems that have low ELL enrollment have had problems receiving funding to train teachers to work with this population (Field, 2008). This problem has led to many schools providing minimal services for ELL students and minimal support for teachers

(Otway, 2007). These challenges have caused some teachers to leave their schools or the teaching field altogether (Center on Educational Policy, 2007).

The common theme regarding success of ELL students in much of the literature seems to center around teacher training. Most teacher training programs have been encouraged to send interns to work at schools with a range of diverse students (Gomez et al., 2009). However, there has been a lack of research regarding how to best prepare teachers to teach Spanish speaking ELL students without removing important content (Lewis-Moreno, 2007; Minaya-Rowe, 2008). Teachers who have received training have primarily done so through professional development instead of specifically designed courses during their degree programs (Batt, 2008). As local colleges have tried to respond to the call for specialized approaches to education, the need for funding and research has increased (Sanchez & Sanchez, 2008).

Limited funding for training and hiring highly qualified teachers may be a part of the problem. Therefore, some high schools with large Spanish speaking ELL populations may be providing less than optimal services to these students (Cohen & Clewell, 2007). Thus, mainstream teachers have been asked to teach a population that they have not been trained to teach, with methodologies that they do not understand (Vacca-Rizopoulos & Nicoletti, 2009). Policymakers have not been able to respond quickly enough to the increased need for research and funding (Center on Educational Policy, 2007). This lack of research has left many educators and community members questioning how to best address this population of students.

ELL Students, the No Child Left Behind Act, and Public Attitudes

Educators have spent much time determining how to best differentiate instruction for the variety of students in their classes. It seems as if two of the dominant forces affecting differentiation of instruction for ELL students and allowing them to reach the final destination of earning their high school diploma have been NCLB and societal attitudes toward ELL students and their families (Coltrane, 2002; Mora, Mora, & Davila, 2007).

No Child Left Behind Act

NCLB requires that schools maintain proof of academic growth (Adequate yearly progress, AYP) for all students, typically using standardized testing measures (Coltrane, 2002; Public Law 107-110, 2002; Zehler et al., 2008). Title III of NCLB requires schools to bring all ELL students up to the academic achievement standards that mainstream students are expected to meet. The goal is to “provide high quality instructional programs designed to prepare limited English proficient children... to enter all-English instruction settings” (Public Law 107-110, 2002, para. 4). Evaluations are used to ensure that all students are making progress learning English and to show the progress that has been made. Although NCLB requires proficiency in reading and math, ELL students typically perform the lowest in these areas (Fry, 2008). Reliance on high stakes tests has been used as an accountability measure with the aim of schools providing evidence that they are “not leaving behind” any students. This has resulted in schools having to explicitly provide evidence of growth for all student subgroups, including those who are ELLs, and that has primarily showed the lower academic achievement scores of this population

(Sanchez & Sanchez, 2008). The requirement that ELL students obtain a high stakes test score comparable to English-only peers to pass to the next grade level or graduate may have a negative effect on ELL students (Olivos & Ochoa, 2008), but it may also provide incentive for schools to focus instruction on this population. When schools do not reach AYP goals for AYP subgroups, the result is that schools may lose accreditation and funding which provides further incentive. NCLB has been revised to allow for new immigrants to be exempt from taking certain tests in reading, but math has remained a requirement and a problem for many educators, students, and schools (Wright & Li, 2008).

The implementation of NCLB has presented some other concerns that have been addressed. First, the majority of Spanish speaking ELL students have been tested in English (Wright & Li, 2008). Since this is not their primary language, test administrators have allowed for extended time and the use of a word to word dictionary, which Wright and Li reported has not been sufficient. An additional concern is that the content that Spanish speaking ELL students encountered in their past educational experiences may not match test content (Laguardia & Goldman, 2007). After students have been in the US for at least 1 year they are expected to pass these tests. This may explain why many states that originally embraced bilingual education have moved toward English-only classrooms (Otway, 2007). However, researchers have suggested that going back to “linguistically appropriate” education would truly benefit the students (Zehr, 2007). Zehr presents the term “linguistically appropriate” to include bilingual education or modified monolingual education.

Spanish speaking ELL students' school success hinges on their ability to use the English language in educational contexts. According to CALP, it takes 7 to 9 years to learn to socially speak a new language; however this does not include using this language for academics (Laija-Rodriguez et al., 2006; Starkman, 2008). NCLB supports an English-only approach to education, which has taken bilingual education out of the forefront. For this reason del Carmen Salazar (2008) has taken an aggressive stance by coining NCLB the "No Child Left Bilingual Act" and suggests that the provisions of the act have not supported Spanish speaking ELL students. Since standardized tests have been used to measure learning, it is imperative to provide education that addresses what students will see on those tests (Fairbairn, 2009; Tsang et al., 2008). Due to NCLB requirements, schools have struggled with teaching English sufficiently before Spanish speaking ELL students are required to take high stakes tests (Batt, 2008). Still, most states have required Spanish speaking ELL students to take graduation tests in English in order to receive a high school diploma (Coltrane, 2002; Laguardia & Goldman, 2007; Wright & Li, 2008). Although some test accommodations may be allowed, such as small group administration or extended time, this will not help if the student does not understand English (Coltrane, 2002). This may help to explain the lack of AYP in many schools with high ESL populations.

NCLB requires schools to show AYP for all students, even ELL students (Harper, de Jong, & Platt, 2008; Public Law 107-110, 2002). Standardized tests may be a valid measure for AYP (Tsang et al., 2008). While standardization of education and accountability measures is an idea to make sure that all students are receiving an

equitable education, when schools have not made AYP, it is often teachers that have been scrutinized (Fairbairn, 2009). Because of this, Laguardia and Goldman (2007) explained that schools are not afforded enough time for ELL students to learn English before working on content knowledge that will be presented on the tests. Teachers, students, and school funding may suffer because content in a second language must be mastered before adequate English acquisition that would lead to school success (Coltrane, 2002; Smyth, 2008). Coltrane (2002) wrote that decisions that have such effects on schools should not be based on high stakes tests alone, especially in schools with high ELL populations.

Community Attitudes Toward ELL Students

When determining programs that work best for Spanish speaking ELL students, it has become important to bear in mind public perceptions of ELL immigrants in the United States. When students have felt negative stereotypes about their abilities and their prospects for the future coming from community members, they have often performed at the level expected of them (Chang & Demyan, 2007). With the influx of Spanish speaking immigrants into U.S. schools, intolerance has been on the rise (Mora et al., 2007). Ethnic stereotypes are not new and prejudice exists in all cultures, but the lack of cultural awareness has presented a problem for some ELL students (Laguardia & Goldman, 2007). Some argue that this lack of tolerance for other cultures has been seen in the push to make English the official U.S. language. The perception has moved toward viewing all Spanish speaking immigrants as illegal, uneducated, and a drain on U.S. resources (Reyes, 2008). However, many of these perceptions are not based in fact and perpetuate myths that feed resentment toward ELL students. While the current political

focus has begun embracing cultural diversity, the school system has traditionally viewed cultural differences as something to be integrated (Juarez, 2008). While the media has spent a great deal of time and money talking about illegal immigrants and the problems that they pose for the U.S., very few people have focused on what will become of their children (Sanchez & Sanchez, 2008). Spanish speaking ELL students have also seen discriminatory practices aimed at their parents (McHatton, Shaunessy, Hughes, Brice, & Ratliff, 2007). Many have categorized Latino children as violent, poor, lazy, unintelligent, and dependent on public assistance (Charles & Massey, 2003). Having grown up in an environment of discrimination might hinder children who are trying to form unique identities. Trying to build a future upon such negative stereotypes is a daunting task.

Community beliefs related to an English-only approach to effectively educating Spanish speaking ELL students might be adding to the problems of discrimination. Being able to speak English has been become equated with being American to many in this country (Mora et al., 2007). Those who do not speak English have been viewed as foreigners who are unwilling to try to assimilate into the U.S. community. However, many of these children are not afforded the option of assimilation. Without the ability to communicate, parents are limited in their ability to become involved in the educational lives of their children and to help their children assimilate (Laguardia & Goldman, 2007). Images of teachers and politicians telling immigrants to leave if they do not want to assimilate have been prevalent (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008). A debate about whether to endorse English as the official language of the U.S. has resulted in half of the

50 U.S. states adopting an English-only policy by the year 2000 (Mora & Davila, 2002). Even as early as the 1980s, 14 states (Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia) had passed English-only legislation (Mora & Davila, 2002). Today, 34 states have an English-only policy.

There may be more at stake for ESL students than just an education. In 2007, the *Center on Educational Policy* stated, “The consequences of not passing high school exit exams are dire; without a high school diploma, students may be unable to go on to postsecondary education or even obtain a job” (2007, p. 17). English-only mandates may be adding to society’s problems of unemployment. Other consequences include (a) the added financial and emotional support needed for these families, (b) feelings of failure from students trying to succeed in a new culture, and (c) the inability for these families to financially or educationally progress in the U.S. way of life.

Many of the problematic practices seen in schools and communities may be explained in a misunderstanding of cultural differences between groups. As language barriers have continued to cause Spanish speaking students to stick together, integration in schools and society has remained difficult (Burroughs, 2008). Not only have second language skills kept students from achieving educational success, but they have also kept their parents from being involved in the educational process (Gasbarra & Johnson, 2008). In Central and South American countries, parents have afforded teachers more responsibility and trust with raising and training their children. So, while language barriers did keep them from becoming more involved, cultural differences have often

made it appear that the parents do not care about their child's education (Gasbarra & Johnson, 2008). This is an example of a cultural difference that has been misunderstood.

It appears that societal perceptions need to be addressed in order for education law and practice to result in more positive outcomes for ELL students (Paz, 2008). Therefore, school communities that embrace diversity have gained popularity. Laguardia and Goldman (2007) paraphrased this new schooling idea from the *1992 Bill of Rights for Children* (National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1992) as

(1) to learn alongside classmates of different abilities and needs; (2) to have developmentally appropriate instruction; (3) to learn in a language that they understand and to have their home language and culture respected; (4) to attend schools that are adequately funded; and (5) to receive instruction from teachers who believe they can learn. (p. 113)

School counselors may be able to provide for these rights as they have been reported to be effective mediators to reach out to local cultural leaders and parents (Goh, Wahl, McDonald, Brissett, & Yoon, 2007). However, in order to build a new multicultural community, all must be involved. Addressing the underlying problems in the community is an important part of the overall goal; however, to address the needs of Spanish speaking ELL students, the attitudes of the school in particular have been important (Lewis-Moreno, 2007).

School Climate and Acceptance of Spanish Speaking ELL Students

Negative racial stereotypes are present in all cultural groups and at all social levels, but they may be most detrimental when experienced by children in school. As

immigration of Spanish speaking people has continued to increase, social stereotypes being played out in schools have received increased attention (Chang & Demyan, 2007). Studies have begun to address teachers' beliefs and behaviors toward students. For instance, Orfield, Frankenberg, and Lee (2003) found that nonHispanic White students attend schools that are mostly (80%) nonHispanic White, while Latino students attend schools where the majority of students are Latino (over 50%). The majority, 75 to 84%, of Spanish speaking children have said that discrimination is still a real problem in their schools (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). Downplaying the assets that bilingual children bring to the classroom may create a sense of needing to assimilate Spanish speaking children as soon as possible (Commins, 2008). In one study, high school ELL students shared that they experienced a lack of faculty diversity, differences in educational access, and bias in ways they were disciplined (McHatton et al., 2007). Society would benefit from schools setting the standard for reducing discrimination (Cline et al., 2005). Garcia and Ortiz (2006) stated that schools are the first basis of social practice that children encounter. Therefore, the practices formed in schools can contribute to both decreasing or increasing cultural awareness and acceptance of diversity.

Children face detrimental consequences when they are perceived as outcasts or viewed as inferior. Self-segregation, which is choosing to remain separate, has resulted. Self-segregation has been correlated with high poverty rates in certain areas, primarily in schools with a high percentage of minority students (Orfield et al., 2003). Experienced teachers have tended to leave such schools, because of low test scores, low graduation rates, and scarce resources. Their departure has been correlated with decreased test

scores, possibly because these students are being taught by underprepared educators. It is difficult to learn to speak English, but when Spanish speaking ELL students in such schools have not been exposed to English speakers, the problem has intensified. Additionally, Reyna (2000) found that Spanish speaking children have been stereotyped by educators as having low intellectual ability that, in turn, has caused them to give up on learning English or participating in school. When teachers have tried to integrate new methods to help Spanish speaking ELL students in the classroom, some have been met with resistance from existing school policies and practices that caused them to focus on the English speakers in the classroom instead (Lee, Ajayi, & Richards, 2007).

The treatment of Spanish speaking ELL students has been scrutinized over the past years. Since schools are the first glimpse of cultural awareness that students encounter, understanding the equality between cultural groups has been shown to be important (Haneda, 2008). Haneda proposed that equitability can be approached by using a standardized approach (such as that proposed by NCLB) and agreed upon standards for good pedagogy. Teacher and school expectations have influenced the opportunities that Spanish speaking ELL students have received. Even subtle expectations have affected students in varied ways (Reyna, 2000). Therefore, teachers have been asked to examine their own conscious and unconscious biases. When classrooms have used the experiences and educational backgrounds of bilingual and bicultural students to enhance the classroom content, Spanish speaking students have performed much better than their peers (Lewis-Moreno, 2007).

Work toward helping increase the success of Spanish speaking ELL students in the high schools has increased in momentum as more people have become involved. School principals often create the atmosphere of the school culture (Necochea & Cline, 2000). When principals were involved in focusing the school climate toward helping empower ELL students to learn, the atmosphere improved. Teachers and principals can work together to change the culture of the school, but this has needed to be a long-term goal (Haneda, 2008). Therefore, schools have to be willing to analyze and improve their weaknesses and recognize and support their strengths in this area (Paz, 2008). With NCLB providing for ways to measure ELL success rates, schools and teachers have become more accountable to ELL students. This accountability has increased test scores (Tsang et al., 2008). However, this worked best when the entire school was invested in the success of their Spanish speaking ELL students, not only ESL teachers (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). Programs that explore cultural differences and communication have been the focus of much research (Burroughs, 2008). In order for this to work, all teachers need to have received training in the cultural backgrounds of the students that they teach (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008). Including the whole school community has been an effective way to approach the positive transition of ELL students (Goh et al., 2007).

Teaching Spanish Speaking ELL Students

Changes in students do not always balance with educational change. Throughout the change in U.S. demographics, schools have traditionally utilized teaching models that are designed for native English speaking students (Gibbons, 2008). When schools have designed ESL programs, Spanish speaking ELL students have been taught as if they are

coming from the same educational backgrounds and cultural experiences (Center on Educational Policy, 2007). Spanish speaking immigrant students have begun U.S. schooling with a wide range of education backgrounds from high quality, comprehensive education to no formal educational experiences. These students have had to learn a new language, a new culture, and new academic content (Gibbons, 2008). With the increase in accountability for these students, the pressure for students to learn quickly has become immense.

Teacher Backgrounds

One of NCLB's provisions to help students was to have only highly qualified teachers working with at-risk students. However, ESL teachers were left out of this requirement (Harper et al., 2008). When ELL students attended their core subjects, such as math or literature, the teacher has been required to be highly qualified in that subject matter. However, this does not mean that the teacher has received training on how to best work with Spanish speaking ELL students (Cadiero-Kaplan, & Rodriguez, 2008). One reasonable explanation for this discrepancy is that there are so few bilingual teachers available to meet this need (Bauer, 2009). However, it has been shown that teachers who can relate to their students (i.e., culturally, linguistically, or emotionally) are better able to provide educational support (Chen et al., 2008). Teachers who are bilingual have been able to relate on a more personal level with Spanish speaking ELL students, as they may have gone through some of the same challenges of learning a second language (Gomez et al., 2009). These teachers have also been a link between schools and families (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008). Baker and Rossell (1993) found that teachers who were

proficient in the native language of the students, but only used it for clarification purposes, worked best with the students. If bilingual or bicultural teachers work best with Spanish speaking ELL students, recruiting efforts seem crucial.

It is also important to address teachers' views of Spanish speaking ELL students in the classroom. Teachers' views of ELL students may lead to self-fulfilling prophecies of student ability (Edl et al., 2008). Most ESL programs have not addressed the expectations of teachers (Lee et al., 2007). Babad, Inbar, and Rosenthal (1982) focused on what happened when teachers had either a positive or negative expectation of a student. Teachers in this study were given a measure to determine their level of bias toward different groups. Students were randomly placed into low or high potential groups. Those teachers who were deemed as having high bias treated the "low potential" students negatively. The results of this study have made researchers question who should be teaching ELL students (Yoon, 2007). In order to teach Spanish speaking ELL students, teachers need to understand and appreciate the unique backgrounds and cultures of their students (Jimenez et al., 1996). Attitudes of educators may make working with and advancing Spanish speaking ELL students difficult (Laguardia & Goldman, 2007).

Many teachers have been working to help Spanish speaking ELL students in the high school classroom. Researchers have shown that some teachers have fought to empower students and use their experiences, education, and bilingualism to add to the overall education of the class (del Carmen Salazar, 2008). As this trend has continued, teachers have systematically had to change the ways that they teach (Commins, 2008). For example, when clarifying content, incorporation of the students' first language has

also been helpful. Despite these efforts, teachers have also had to work with trying to motivate students who are already overwhelmed with adding new academic content onto learning a second language (Gibbons, 2008).

The lack of ESL and bilingual educators has remained a problem due to many of the challenges that ESL teachers face. Teachers who work with Spanish speaking ELL students have had to motivate, teach a language, and still meet accountability standards for content knowledge (Starkman, 2008). As teachers have many responsibilities to balance, most ESL teachers have done this alone, without having the time to communicate with fellow teachers (Field, 2008). These responsibilities have driven many teachers into other less challenging teaching areas (Batt, 2008). As there is always a need for teachers, this has been a problem. Administrators must understand and try to avoid burdening such teachers with extra duties such as bus duty, lunch duty, and/or hall duty. However, this has not often been the reality. The nature of U.S. public schools has allowed the most educated teachers to move to higher-performing schools, which has hurt students with greater needs (Smyth, 2008). However, even with well-trained and prepared teachers, the question has remained about how to best educate ESL students.

Monolingual vs. Bilingual Education

The monolingual/bilingual education debate is ongoing. NCLB focused on the importance of English-only, monolingual education (Harper et al., 2008). Some have viewed teaching in any language other than English as unAmerican (Necochea & Cline, 2000; Olivos & Ochoa, 2008), so patriotism has been taken into account in this debate. Political campaigns have been used to support an official U.S. language. Many who have

supported monolingual English-only programs have promoted patriotism as the primary objective (Sanchez & Sanchez, 2008). Even so, findings regarding monolingual and bilingual education have been mixed. Edl et al. (2008) found that Latino students in bilingual classes had a poorer understanding of how to relate to English speaking students. Socialization with English speaking peers came easier to those students who were taught in English-only classrooms. Therefore, as some research supports monolingual education, this furthers complicates the debate over bilingual education. There is a possibility that bilingual education sets students back if they are paired with teachers who find their responsibilities overwhelming (Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002).

Transitional bilingual education has received a great deal of support from educators and researchers over the years. Providing linguistic scaffolding has been shown to help students transition from their first into their second language while still learning required content (Haneda, 2008; Minaya-Rowe, 2008). In classrooms that support a transitional bilingual approach, students have successfully added to their current knowledge base without losing their first language or culture of origin (Bauer, 2009; Necochea & Cline, 2000). As students in transitional bilingual classes have progressed, the differences in social functioning have tended to decrease (Edl et al., 2008). When utilizing bilingual instruction, teachers have typically used the native language of the student when presenting new content, but required that the students use English when presenting to the class (Pray & Mondardt, 2009). However, students who have built proficiency in their first language tend to learn a second language with greater ease (Brice et al., 2008). Providing instruction in the first language has helped in this regard as well.

It has also helped students who are concerned about losing their heritage and being ostracized by their cultural group if they move to English-only (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008). Researchers have shown that when a second language was balanced with a first language, students achieved at higher rates (Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002; Vacca-Rizopoulos & Nicoletti, 2009). Allowing students to incorporate their first language in the classroom has also been shown to help students learn from each other (Vacca-Rizopoulos & Nicoletti, 2009). The important component to remember about transitional bilingual education has been to maintain a balance between primary and secondary language instruction. Students have been able to keep up with new content when allowed to use their primary language, but they also have needed to use the second language for a significant portion of the time (Slavin & Cheung, 2004; Young & Tran, 2001).

A middle ground has been presented in the form of culturally familiar teaching.

Lane stated that:

It is important for teachers to bridge the gap between the student's personal cultural knowledge and concepts that have to be mastered. By using culturally familiar ways of teaching, teachers have the opportunity to reinforce the cultural knowledge of their students. (2006, p. 10)

Students have been required to academically achieve while maintaining their cultural identities. Therefore, teachers could encourage the use of the first language of students to help with English language development (del Carmen Salazar, 2008).

Additive literacy has allowed for students to use their previous language development to help promote their current development by adding to what they already know (Bauer,

2009). In this context, teachers have needed a good understanding of the educational background of their students' literacy proficiency and how this related to their cultural experiences (Hansen-Thomas, 2008). Pray and Mondardt (2009) have suggested that "the first [step] is tying the learning task to students' past knowledge, the second is tying the learning task to students' past experiences; and third is tying the task to vocabulary with which students are already familiar" (2009, p. 35). However, bilingualism must always be seen as an asset that the student brings to the educational table, not something to be overcome (Commins, 2008; Juarez, 2008). Engaging students socially and academically in school has shown great benefits (McHatton et al., 2007). Allowing for diversity in the classroom has opened students up to interacting in new ways and learning from each other (Xu et al., 2008). The value of diversity and the use of transitional bilingual educational theory can be an asset to the classroom environment and educational arena.

Transitional Programs

Many benefits and problems surround programs that help Spanish speaking ELL students' transition from ESL into mainstream classrooms. For instance, sheltered instruction (SI), where ELL students are kept in ESL classes all day, afford very few opportunities for Spanish speaking ELL students to engage in using English with English speaking peers (Haneda, 2008). The creation of educational programs based on the experiences of monolingual students as the majority group may have held Spanish speaking ELL students behind as well (Harper et al., 2008). In some cases, ELL students have been labeled as "struggling readers" and sent to remediation classes instead of developing curriculum that is designed to help this unique group. However, many

Spanish speaking ELL students have moved into U.S. schools with strong academic skills, but simply need to understand English (Lewis-Moreno, 2007). Placement in remedial courses may not be the best option to help these students. Lewis-Moreno pointed out that ELL students must be able to apply an understanding of academic English in all content areas, which has often been overlooked. Olivos and Ochoa (2008) stated that academic development has taken a backseat to assimilation into an English-only education. As attention to this problem has increased, the ability to speak multiple languages has not traditionally been considered an asset to the education of children (Juarez, 2008). Unfortunately, there has been little research conducted on the effectiveness of current ESL programs (Llosa & Slayton, 2009).

Sheltered Instruction (SI) is one program that has been examined by several researchers. Hansen-Thomas (2008) wrote that the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is one way to begin to measure the effectiveness of sheltered programs for ELL students. SIOP has designated that sheltered instruction should encompass cooperation of different levels of students, using English as an academic language instead of a social language, incorporating the first language of the student, using more hands-on learning models, and teaching learning strategies to students. Hansen-Thomas found that when these features were included, SI did benefit students. Valuing cooperation and discovery in classes had a positive impact on the ability of ELL students to grasp the material. Laguardia and Goldman (2007) stated that such strategies have raised a sense of awareness and hope that better methods are in our future.

However, Spanish speaking ELL students have rarely been afforded enough time in school to learn English in an academic context. In most schools, ELL students have been given between 1 and 3 years before they were placed into mainstream classes (Kiefer, 2008). This has been based on the students' ability to speak English, not their ability to read or understand academic content. However, CALP takes many years to learn to use another language for academic content (Field, 2008; Laija-Rodriguez et al., 2006). It seems possible that this discrepancy may help to explain why students may give up on school altogether.

The push to mainstream students as soon as possible might be explained by examining funding issues, inaccurate information, and government regulations. However, if Spanish speaking ELL students are exited from ESL classrooms too early, mainstream teachers need to receive training on how to best educate the students who are still learning to use academic English (Yoon, 2007). Traditionally, ELL students who have been mainstreamed received no further language support if it was not offered by their mainstream teacher (Fairbairn, 2009). Many mainstream teachers have been shocked to find themselves with students who have not understood what they were reading and have not been able to write at the level that they expect (Minaya-Rowe, 2008). The transition of students, as quickly as possible, has led to an increasing problem for schools when trying to meet AYP goals (Cline & Necochea, 1995) and for students who are not yet ready to learn exclusively in English.

Therefore, focus on what Spanish speaking ELL students need to be successful has become important. Yoon stated that "Excessive focus only on ELLs' linguistic needs

might overlook the fact that ELLs are ‘learners’ who need access to opportunities for meaningful activities as do all other students” (2007, p. 223). Instead of separated instruction (ESL) versus a one-size-fits-all approach (mainstream, English-only), the mainstream teachers and ESL teachers could work together to present the most effective strategies for each student as the student is transitioning (Field, 2008). By working as a team, teachers have been able to help Spanish speaking ELL students transition much more successfully. The “Castañeda test” supported the fact that ELL students need researched instructional strategies (Olivos & Ochoa, 2008). It seems important that schools understand these strategies and allocate resources toward implementation. Finally, schools need to be willing to change strategies if one is not being completely effective. One such strategy that has been introduced is the Specifically Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), which has helped mainstream teachers when planning for newly transitioned ELL students (Cline & Necochea, 2003). This has been a good start, but more methods and research are needed.

Breakdown in Spanish Speaking ELL Transitional Plans

Schools and students have approached transitioning from different perspectives and have struggled on many fronts. For instance, teachers do not want to hold Spanish speaking ELL students back from gaining acceptance in the mainstream classes or with their peers. But, mainstreaming students too quickly has had detrimental effects as well. This subject has continued to cause debate among teachers, policy-makers, and students.

Schools have faced many problems when deciding on the best time to mainstream Spanish speaking ELL students. Teachers have struggled even more when the teacher

cannot speak to the student or understand what the student needs to succeed (Center on Educational Policy, 2007). Educators in rural districts with low Spanish speaking ELL populations have struggled with limited resources and little expertise (Zehler et al., 2008). Necochea and Cline (2000) worry that many teachers who have been in the educational system have decided that the focus on ELL students is another fad of education and that it will pass in time. Therefore, it has been difficult to institute long term changes. Mainstream teachers may have struggled to help students because of failure to understand if the struggle is with content or English ability (Gersten, 1996). In addition, Spanish speaking ELL populations in the high schools are constantly changing as these students continue to move in and out of the schools throughout the year. These migrant students come from varied educational backgrounds (Commins, 2008). Such variation in education has required schools to be prepared to work with students from all backgrounds at any time throughout the year, while high stakes testing assumes that these students are part of that school for the entire year. Planning for such students has become difficult for schools when they have tried to allocate funding, hire appropriate teachers, and maintain class sizes (Laguardia & Goldman, 2007).

Outside of educational system problems, Spanish speaking ELL students have also brought their own difficulties to the educational arena. Cohen stated it best when he said that

Life is difficult enough for any teenager, but to add a new culture, a different language, a different school system, different teaching styles and expectations, new friends, and an altogether different environment compounds the difficulties

that adolescent immigrant students must deal with in order to be academically successful. (2007, p. 165)

Spanish speaking ELL students have also faced anxiety when being introduced to mainstream classrooms (Yoon, 2007). In addition to these limiting factors, ELL students have remained absent from gifted programs and their education has not equaled that of native English classmates (Lewis-Moreno, 2007).

Transitioning into mainstream classes has been problematic for students and teachers. Accelerated transitional programs may not help the situation (Watt & Roessingh, 2001). Teachers have faced limitations of funding, resources, and time to work toward preparing ELL students to be successful on state exams (Center on Educational Policy, 2007). When schools have not been prepared to deal with ELL increases, they have had to define new methods as they have gone along, with limited resources (Zehler et al., 2008). Therefore, transitions for middle and high school students have tended to be abrupt (Gersten, 1996). Many quickly transitioned Spanish speaking ELL students still needed support as they encountered new information in different classes (Cohen, 2007). When students have shown ability at conversing in English, many teachers have assumed that they understood academic English (Gasbarra & Johnson, 2008; Lewis-Moreno, 2007). Sanchez and Sanchez (2008) wrote that

After their exemptions expired, LEP [Limited English Proficiency] students were thrust into the general education classroom with little support and only a limited, low-level exposure to the state curriculum. This practice almost certainly ensures

the failure of LEP students in all-English general education classrooms, high stakes tests, and required exit-level graduation exams. (pp. 332-333)

This inadequate preparation and premature transitioning has hurt Spanish speaking ELL students' ability to learn content and the schools' ability to meet state standards (Gersten & Baker, 2003). Transition pacing is an area that needs more research.

There appears to be a need for change in the way schools approach working with high school Spanish speaking ELL students. Field (2008) stated that standards-driven content, instruction, and support have been a necessary first step. However, ELL students need support for many years after they have been transitioned into mainstream classrooms (Zehler et al., 2008). The Center on Educational Policy (2007) has emphasized the importance of schools needing to address ELL students scholastically, emotionally, and socially if they are to succeed in U.S. schools. There has been a need for teachers to understand the challenges that Spanish speaking ELL students have faced while adding the difficulty of new academic content (Zehler et al., 2008). A cultural understanding that many Spanish speaking ELL students have limited resources has been addressed as well (Center on Educational Policy, 2007). Traditionally, schools have not been able to look at all of these angles in understanding when students have the ability to transition into English-only classrooms (Tsang et al., 2008). This lack of information has hurt schools that already struggle with resources to help their students.

This missing element has brought the focus to different ideas that have been presented to help with transitioning Spanish speaking ELL students. How to help with transitioning has been a central debate in education for quite some time. Districts without

large populations of Spanish speaking ELL students have often faced the overwhelming task of how to build a program to serve student needs (Zehler et al., 2008). However, “where ELLs were successful, [researchers] found that common features included respect for students, high expectations, promotion of both language development and content knowledge, and encouraging active student involvement” (Laguardia & Goldman, 2007, p. 125). Attention has also been paid to the importance to bridging the gap between ESL teachers and mainstream teachers in order to build a cohesive program of interventions for the students. Almost everyone in the school system has agreed that students need to understand English on an academic level before transitioning, if this is financially possible (Gersten & Baker, 2003). However, when this is not possible, many have stated that transition can happen sooner if they can be taught English in their content area classes. Whether transition happens earlier or later, the decision needs to be based on what is best for the child’s development.

Summary and Conclusions

The statistics on ELL students have been presented. Areas concerning their struggles and dropout statistics have explained that ELL students do drop out at higher rates than other subgroups and have a difficult time adjusting to cultural and educational changes (Burroughs, 2008; Carpenter & Ramirez, 2007; Gibbons, 2008; GOSA, 2010; Hernandez & Nesman, 2004). Teachers may not have sufficient training to work with the concerns that ELL students bring to the classroom (Batt, 2008; Lewis-Moreno, 2007; Minaya-Rowe, 2008; Sanchez & Sanchez, 2008). The NCLB act and related community feelings around its implementation have shown ELL students have traditionally been

viewed and educated differently than mainstream students (Coltrane, 2002; Chang & Demyan, 2007; Mora et al., 2007). Some teaching methods worked better for ELL students than others (Bauer, 2009; Edl et al., 2008; Lane, 2006; Necochea & Cline, 2000). Finally, this chapter has shown the variability amongst the different theories of bilingual education (Cline & Necochea, 2003; Field, 2008; Haneda, 2008; Hansen-Thomas, 2008). The existing research on ESL students, teacher demographics and attitudes, community attitudes and public policy, as well as current educational plans have presented a need for a new data on approaching positive social change for transitioning ESL students.

All of this research provides support for the fact that ELL students are not succeeding at the level of English-only students when they transition into English-only classes (Center on Educational Policy, 2007). With this research in mind, in Chapter 3 I will present a phenomenological approach to better understand the lived experiences and perceptions of former ESL students on the transition from ESL programs into mainstream classes. This approach may fill the gap in the literature by providing phenomenological data from the perspectives of the students, instead of educators, on these experiences as well as extend understanding of transitional experiences. This new understanding could lead to increased awareness and focus for future research.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to present the lived experiences of former ESL students as they made the transition from ESL to English-only classes. While quantitative data have been presented, a problem exists around the lack of qualitative information on this topic. While researchers have presented ideas for effectively educating ELL students, the application of such solutions has not manifested in success for the Spanish speaking ELL student (Field, 2008; Gomez et al., 2009; Zehler et al., 2008). Under the assumption that the purpose of education is to prepare students to function productively in society, the ability to pass a test may not accurately represent future potential. However, the unique difficulties and supports experienced by ELL students have not been fully captured in the current research, which has been based on statistical trends in test scores (Field, 2008; Zehler et al., 2008). Through the use of qualitative interviews, perceptions about ELL student experiences in the ESL classroom and mainstream, English-only classes were explored. The aim of this qualitative analysis was to allow those who experienced the transition most directly to contribute to understanding the strengths and weaknesses of current practices.

This chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of the study and its implementation. Specifically, in the research design and approach section, I discuss the rationale for choosing the phenomenological approach, the role of the researcher, and the research questions. In the methodology section, the location of the study as well as how the participants were sampled and invited to take part in the study, is discussed. This

chapter also includes a section on data collection, and in the data analysis section, I will review information about the measure used and how raw data were transformed and analyzed into a coherent whole. Finally, I will present a discussion about ethical implications and how the rights of the participants were protected.

Research Design and Approach

Research Questions

The research questions guided the format of the interview and the survey design.

This study was guided by the following questions:

- What are the daily experiences of ESL students during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?
- How do students understand the educational change from ESL to mainstream classes?
- What experiences do former ESL students perceive helped or hurt them during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?

Paradigm

The paradigm that guided the study was based upon the theory of transitional bilingual education by Cummins (1984). According to the theory of transitional bilingual education, the students' first language is used in the classroom as a means to facilitate the learning of academic English at a faster pace (Camarena, 2009; Fry, 2008; Kritzer, 2007). Chen et al. (2008) agreed that the use of the students' first language by instructors helps students grasp new material quickly. Using this theory, students can continue to learn academic content even though they have not yet mastered the English language. This

theory also lends itself to the use of qualitative information because the particular experiences of students are important with exploring when to best transition them from bilingual education into English-only mainstream education.

Data Choices

The data collected for this study were qualitative in nature and consisted of the lived experiences of former ESL students. Creswell (2003) presented five methods for approaching qualitative research: ethnographies, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological research, and narrative research. The current data fit the phenomenological research model of presenting the perspectives of those involved in one program as a way of gaining an in-depth understanding of the situation from the perspectives of those directly involved. Qualitative data were chosen for the details that can be conveyed through this information.

Quantitative studies about the statistics of Spanish speaking ELL students' classroom success can only provide a quantifiable difference in test scores or drop out statistics that can alert educators to problems with the ESL program. The use of phenomenological data can provide an understanding of the experiences of former Spanish speaking ELL students to help present the need for future researchers to clarify reasons for these trends. Morrissey and Higgs (2006) explained that "Phenomenologists take an experiential view toward understanding such phenomena, highlighting human experience as not only valid, but of great importance to understanding human existence" (p. 162). By understanding how the experiences have affected the participants and what these experiences have meant to their lives, phenomenologists can explore the

perceptions of the individual in greater depth. Presentation of personalized experiences can alert educators to both positive and negative aspects of the existing program in order to enhance the educational experiences of ESL students.

Other types of quantitative and qualitative research follow the approach to maintaining objectivity in order to compare information across groups (Morrissey & Higgs, 2006). While objectivity is an important element of many types of quantitative research, these approaches may lose some of the personalization that the phenomenological approach espouses. Other qualitative approaches are helpful for addressing different elements of data that are not the primary focus of this research. For instance, the ethnographic approach excludes personalization by focusing on particular cultural groups (Murtagh, 2007; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). The grounded theory approach uses participant data to create new theory (Toloie-Eshlaghy, Chitsaz, Karimian, & Charkhchi, 2011). The case study design looks in depth at a particular program, but focuses more on the program in general, not on the individuals involved (Toloie-Eshlaghy et al., 2011). Finally, while narrative research does gain the individual story of participants, this story is presented as a narrative through the understanding of the researcher (Gilbert, 2002; Schiff, 2006). Therefore, the phenomenological approach was chosen for this study to highlight elements of the daily experiences of former students in hopes of presenting new ideas and seeing what has worked well in the transitional classroom. Johnson and Christianson (2004) explained that the phenomenological approach requires that the researcher suspend his or her own beliefs and spend time understanding the daily experiences of participants. The depth and focus of the

phenomenological approach presented new areas of focus for ESL researchers and educators.

Rationale for Phenomenology

Beginning research with an open ear to the personal experiences of participants in a program presents information from a perspective not yet fully explored and introduces new ideas for focus and change. The phenomenological approach assumes that there are common themes in experiences that may help researchers understand the phenomenon at hand (Johnson & Christianson, 2004). For example, a participant could tell me that they hated going to English class each day because they felt like they could not keep up. This personal experience could lead to identifying pacing of the classroom, the mixture of ability levels in the classroom, or the individuation of instruction. To understand the experiences and daily practice in the classroom, phenomenological data from the past ESL students were gathered to further explore ESL to English-only transitioning programs.

The rationale for the phenomenological approach comes from looking at the approaches of several other studies on an emerging cultural and educational change (Kimball, 2008; McCoy-Wilson, 2011; Otway, 2007; Strickland, 2009). Kimball (2008) addressed the influence of the cultural attitudes and beliefs of ELL teachers and their experience in the classroom using the phenomenological approach, which allowed for a better understanding of the importance of teacher beliefs on education. McCoy-Wilson (2011) used the phenomenological approach to present information on why dissatisfied ELL teachers stay with their jobs. Otway (2007) described the experiences of

professional development for ELL teachers using the phenomenological approach. Strickland (2009) used the phenomenological approach with ESL students to address their experiences with four different instructional approaches. Each of these scholars chose the phenomenological approach to address the cultural change in the classroom because of the lack of understanding on this topic. The depth of information gained from these studies has helped alert educators to the needs of ELL students and ESL teachers so that new practices can be developed. The use of semistructured interviews has helped to produce a broad picture of the current program and the strengths and weaknesses that may still need to be addressed. Schools can use this information when determining new programs to implement. From these studies, information was gathered on the day-to-day experiences of former students that may present new avenues of information on best practices for transitioning ESL students.

The population change in the chosen state produced a cultural change that needed to be addressed from a new perspective. Researchers have used the phenomenological approach when there was either a lack of understanding of a new phenomenon or a cultural change that has called into question our past way of approaching things (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). Strickland (2009) said that when a problem lacks research, exploration needs to focus on understanding the lived experiences of a phenomenon of focus in order to help build new ideas and theories. While information on ELL students has been presented from a quantitative approach, the phenomenological approaches have not addressed the experiences of the Spanish speaking ELL students during their transition into the mainstream classroom. The words of the former Spanish speaking ELL students

are vital to the approach of this study. Their reflections of experiences underly the phenomenological perspective and may present information that numerical data cannot address.

The phenomenological perspective can help to present elements of the transitional experience that ELL students encountered that may not be evident in other types of quantitative or qualitative research as other types of research do not represent data in terms of the lived experiences of the individual participants. Groenewald (2004) explained that “the aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon” while remaining true to the facts (p. 5). For instance, if information on classroom attitudes of students specific to transitioning from ESL to mainstream classes presented themselves, the effects of these attitudes could help or hinder student success. The realities of the difficulties that students encounter with learning English and assimilating into a new culture at the current pace can also be used to explain the discrepancies in student success rates. Speaking with former ELL students could present issues such as these that do not show up in quantitative data.

Despite the abundance of statistical data, quantitative analysis is not enough to gain a comprehensive picture of the educational experiences of Spanish speaking ELL students because it has not approached the lived experience of each group in the classroom. Quantitative analysis has been used substantially to collect numerical data regarding ELL students’ dropout rates, test scores, and rates of success in mainstream classes (Cohen, 2007; Department of Education, 2008; Fry, 2008; Haneda, 2008). By understanding the lived experiences of participants, an understanding of the ESL program

from the viewpoint of those who are directly involved with it on a daily basis can be gained. The phenomenological approach was chosen to introduce a deep and personal understanding of the ESL program by relying on the perspectives of those directly affected by it and involved with it. The hope was to gain an overall picture of the experiences of ELL students. These choices were deliberately selected in order to gain a richer overview of where ESL education stands currently and how it can propose to grow in the future.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I was responsible for the data collection and analysis. In addition to designing the study, I met with all participants individually, handled all data collection, and condensed the collected information into a workable format.

An interview script was used to guide the face-to-face qualitative interviews (see Appendix B). At the completion of the interview session, participants were thanked for their participation and informed that they would receive a transcript of the session that they could amend or supplement to allow for member-checking of the responses and they would receive a written synopsis of my results if they provided a mailing address. There was one interview session with each participant lasting approximately 30-55 minutes each. Maintaining personal objectivity was an important goal in this process. Bracketing (or *epoché*) was used in the data collection to help maintain objectivity. Fischer (2009) explained that “bracketing typically refers to an investigator’s identification of vested interests, personal experience, cultural factors, assumptions, and hunches that could influence how he or she views the study’s data. For the sake of viewing data freshly,

these involvements are placed in “brackets” and “shelved” for the time being as much as is possible” (p. 583). As I do have personal biases there was a need to maintain an approach to the data collection that did not incorporate these beliefs. Finley (2009) explained that this requires the researcher to connect with the world in the moment, instead of analyzing the experience in the moment. I approached the participants with “an attitude of trust that there [was] an intrinsic logic of inquiry to descriptive phenomenology, and then [sought] to validate or invalidate that logic” after I had a chance to understand the experiences (Applebaum, 2011, p. 522). The use of an interview script helped to maintain consistency while still allowing for expansion on the topics to gain deeper information.

I have no current affiliation with the selected school system. However, I worked as a professor at the university where the data was collected. No one known to me as a student was included in the study.

Context of Study

Research was conducted at a location agreed upon by me and the participant. Participants were given options such as a local library, meeting room, or via telephone. All of the participants chose to meet a local office on the University of North Georgia (UNG) campus. All of the qualified former or current students from each high school in the selected county who were currently enrolled at the UNG were asked to participate. This school system was chosen because of the recent influx of a large population of Spanish speaking students (US Census Bureau, 2010). The former ESL population was large enough to yield workable results while still new enough to get an understanding of

how the ESL program was establishing a transitional program for this new population. A letter of cooperation from the ESL director at UNG and the UNG IRB review board (Appendix C) was obtained before beginning research.

Establishing a working relationship with each participant was important for this phenomenological research. I have a relationship with the university where the data was collected, as a current employee. My relationship with the university was a benefit in this regard as the ESL director and instructors knew that I worked in the best interests of the students. I was able to establish a relationship with the former Spanish speaking ESL students who participated in the study. This was achieved through personally inviting each to participate, contacting them to discuss scheduling, and during the individual interview sessions.

Methodology

Participant Selection and Recruitment

Participants were criterion sampled from the high school ESL program in a medium sized school district in the south (see Table 1). Criterion sampling is defined as using specifically outlined criterion in the sample of participants selected (Coyne, 1997). There was one group of participants for the current study: recently transitioned Spanish speaking adult ESL students. As I did not see eligibility information, the ESL director at UNG used her privileged access to determine those who fit the eligibility guidelines to participate. As there was a limited a number of participants who met the specific criteria outlined below in the selected county, all of the students from the UNG ESL director's

list who fit the criteria were contacted and asked to participate (Appendix D). Volunteers who did not fit the criteria were not allowed to participate in the current study.

Criteria for participation in the study consisted of adults who were recently transitioned Spanish speaking ESL students. They were selectively chosen from the overall population of current and past students from the school district. To be eligible to be recruited for the study, these participants must have been: (a) first language Spanish speakers, (b) 18 or older at the time of the study, and (c) recently transitioned from ESL into mainstream English-only classrooms, considered within the past five years. From this part of the sample of recently transitioned participants, volunteers were asked to participate in the study. This resulted in seven participants.

Table 1

Demographics of Spanish speaking ELL students by state and county

Category	State	County
Total Students Enrolled	901,693	19,112
Total Graduation Rate	80.8%	82.4%
ELL Students Enrolled	50,937	717
ELL Graduation Rate	63%	50%
Spanish speaking Students Enrolled	102,602	2,452
Spanish speaking Graduation Rate	77.6%	79%
All students not meeting the GHSGT English passing score	17.6%	3.5%

ELL students not meeting the GHSGT English passing score	25%	35.9%
---	-----	-------

Note. All information can be found on the Georgia Department of Education website (GADOE, 2010).

Information obtained from a small sample group allowed for in depth phenomenological analysis. Creswell (2003) explained that a small number of participants, less than 10 people, provides for a more detailed analysis. Patton (2002) explained that while a sample size is not set for phenomenological research, the sample size should fit the purpose and feasibility of the study. The sample size provided enough information to be useful, but not so much that in depth analysis was problematic. Only participants of Spanish speaking origin were asked to participate because this study focuses on Spanish speaking participants because this is the fastest growing population of ELL students in the selected school systems.

Data Collection

I first met with the ESL director for the University of North Georgia and explained the eligibility criteria for participation. I then obtained permission from the UNG IRB to recruit UNG students as UNG has access to many students from the selected county and were eager to help with this research. The ESL director used her privileged access to identify potential participants who fit the eligibility guidelines to participate. The ESL director was the only person aware of the identity of these potential participants before they provided consent to participate. The ESL director allowed me access to recruit students during every ESL class that consisted of qualified students and provide

them with the “Invitation to Participate” (Appendix D). In the “Invitation to Participate”, I introduced the purpose of the study instructed potential participants to contact me in person or through e-mail or phone if they were interested. They were also given time to ask further questions before agreeing to participate.

Individual meetings with participants took place in a location conducive for the participant and researcher, including options of a local library, a local meeting room, or via telephone. All of the participants chose a local office on the UNG campus. The interviews took place during a time that was mutually convenient for the participant and researcher. All participants contacted me individually via e-mail to set up a time to meet. A meeting time was scheduled based on their schedule requests and the participants were contacted via their designated contact method detailing their scheduled session. Schedules were amended as necessary.

I began the interviews with introductions and conversations to put the participants at ease. I verbally reiterated the information about the study provided on the informed consent form. Explanation that the session was being taped and that I was the only person to review the tapes was provided. Using the interview script as a guide, I tried to make the participants feel comfortable during the interview. As presented by Morrissey and Higgs (2006), the interview began with the opening prompt: “Please tell me about your daily experiences in your English class.” Both Alcock (2009) and Morrissey and Higgs (2006) explained that asking such a broad question is a good way to start the conversation and bring out personal memories for which more direct questioning may not allow. According to Creswell (2003), the topics in interviews and surveys are particularly

important to help build a trusting relationship and elicit non-biased feedback. The interview script (see Appendix B) was intended to ease into the more challenging topics and provided additional clarification prompts. These additional prompts were used to follow-up on answers that were incomplete or to help gain more depth into the participant's responses (Alcock, 2009; Morrissey & Higgs, 2006).

The discussion progressed through the interview topics presented in Appendix B, using the probing interview questions as needed. These topics served as a guide for the discussion, to ensure that similar topics were covered with all of the participants (Alcock, 2009). However, the goal was to hear the individual lived experiences of each participant in order to pull out units of commonality.

At the completion of the interview, participants were thanked for their participation. I explained that they would receive a word-for-word transcript of the session that they could review, amend, and/or expand upon to provide for member-checking of the data. I also explained how the participants could contact me with any feedback and obtain results of the study by providing their mailing address.

The interviews addressed all of the research questions focusing on the daily experiences of former ESL students as they transitioned into mainstream classes. By asking about the students' day to day experiences in the classroom, research question 1, "What are the daily experiences of ESL students during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?" was addressed. Research question 2, "How do students understand the educational change from ESL to mainstream classes," was addressed by asking about their other classes and what could be more helpful in this transition. Research question 3,

“What experiences do former ESL students perceive helped or hurt them during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?,” was addressed by questions about helpfulness of their classes and struggles in the classroom.

When speaking with individuals about personal experiences, discrepant cases were sure to emerge. Discrepant cases resulted from responses that were very different from other participants (Lewis, 2009). However, discrepant information was often helpful in understanding the perspectives of participants. For instance, when one participant viewed things differently from the others, this presented new information or information on the needs of that particular participant. However, these cases could have interfered with theme building. I did not ignore these types of cases. Instead, I included them in my results with a note that they were only presented in a limited number of participants.

Data Analysis Plan

Using Giorgi’s (1985) 7 step approach, I (a) prepared a summary of what was said to become familiar with the data and gain a sense of the overall interview. Next, I (b) reread this summary to (c) identify units of experience. Deductive coding of participant responses for the interview was conducted. Coding is described by Creswell (2003) as a way to analyze narratives to produce an overall description of the interpreted data. I transcribed all of the interview answers into the chosen software program, Atlas.ti. At this point, a written copy of the transcribed interview was sent to the participants. The use of member-checking allowed participants to verify that their answers were accurate reflections of their experiences and participants had the opportunity to amend or add to their verbal responses (Creswell, 2003; Lewis, 2009). After the sessions had been

member-checked and transcribed, I (d) analyzed the narratives and determined codes that presented themes, or meaning units, that showed up in the answers as identified by the Atlas.ti software. Themes presented themselves as being common among interviewee responses and/or areas of focus in the interviews. As Giorgi (1985) recommended, I (e) reflected on these themes in the language of the participants, (f) transformed these themes into scientific language, and then (g) synthesized these themes to understand the overall meaning behind the experiences of the participants.

Atlas.ti is the coding software that was used to analyze and synthesize the data (Atlas.ti, 2010). Atlas.ti allowed for many ways to annotate information and apply code ratings that could be changed throughout the study. It consisted of a transcription tool that worked with coding quotes. The ability to compile many different formats of data into one data set was beneficial to this study that compiled audio-recorded information with written changes on transcribed interviews. The interviews were transcribed and input into this software package. The Atlas.ti software package allowed me to produce codes that identified different themes in the answers provided. Reviews of Atlas.ti indicated that it was very versatile, user-friendly, and able to simplify the task of drawing themes between data sets (Atlas.ti, 2010). Reviews have also mentioned that the ease of transcribing audio-recorded information seems to be of particular benefit (Atlas.ti, 2010). Themes were identified using coding procedures and presented relation to the prevalence of such responses. The results of the study were presented when these themes were synthesized into an overall picture of the meaning behind the experiences of former ESL students in the classroom.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Reflexivity, member checking, and negative cases were used to verify the credibility of this study. Credibility (or internal validity) focuses on the truthfulness of the information that the researcher presents (Lewis, 2009). Lewis stated that “researchers must identify and highlight their biases to ensure they do not influence the research results” (p. 10). This is defined as reflexivity (Carlson, 2010). I hold certain biases about the educational system’s approach to working with Spanish speaking, ELL students. These biases stem around the equity of the education that ESL students receive. However, this bias was not stated or implied in the interview sessions and was avoided in the data interpretation.

The credibility of this study was also verified using member-checking. Creswell (2003) described member-checking as sending the final report or specific data back to the participants to verify accuracy. In this study, the transcribed recordings of interview sessions were sent back to the participants. They were given a specific time frame to review the transcriptions and add to or amend the information that portrayed an inaccurate understanding of their experiences. These changes or approval of the transcription was collected from each participant before the final analysis was conducted. Using member-checking, confirmation of the data was provided by the participants themselves. I was the only person coding the data.

Negative cases in the data were also identified to ensure credibility as well as dependability. The negative cases approach requires that the researcher examine those responses that do not fit the trends in the data in order to see if any new areas of inquiry

can be determined (Patton, 2002). While these cases may not have been large enough to make a difference on the data themes, having and understanding of opposing experiences helped to maintain objectivity when trying to understand experiences in the program. Participant answers were explored in depth, with special consideration paid to negative cases, to gain richness in the responses.

Transferability (or generalizing) of the findings to other groups or populations is not the aim of phenomenological study. As stated previously, in depth description of is the primary aim. Thick description explains the setting and environment as well as the transcribed answers (Carlson, 2010). The data obtained from in depth, one-on-one, interviews with previous students of the high school ESL program provided a deep understanding of many details of the program. My notes of the interviews catalogued the setting and environment of the meeting as well as information on such elements of the participants' experiences. Maintaining an understanding of the environment in which the interviews took place is an important element to consider when analyzing the data.

Dependability is similar to the reliability of the study but it allows the researcher to identify and explain differences in setting, time of day, and other factors that could affect the ability to receive the same outcome in different sessions (Lewis, 2009). One method of reflexivity is to maintain field notes of impressions during the interview sessions. My field notes presented my opinions on the interviews while allowing me to see if my personal biases were affecting the discussion. This was a very helpful tool to keep my biases under control and observation.

As already discussed, reflexivity refers to the open presentation and understanding of any inherent bias that the researcher may bring to the study. Confirmability of the information was approached through the use of reflexivity (Carlson, 2010). With these biases in mind, I took measures to protect against such biases influencing the data analysis. The use of a list of interview topics helped protect against bias; however, active reflection of personal bias was paramount throughout the data collection and analysis steps.

Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants

It was important to make certain that the participants in this study were protected from undue harm. For instance, APA Ethical Code Standard 8.04 requires that the researcher make certain participants feel free to express their opinions without fear of recourse (APA, 2010). With the cultural differences of participants, it might have been intimidating for participants to share their honest opinions. Rules of confidentiality were explained to the participants. The information was stored using four digit codes to distinguish participants, names and other personally identifying information was not used. Individually identified information and opinions were not presented to the school system or UNG. It was very important that the participants trust the researcher to listen to them and protect them in order to gain legitimate feedback about the existing program.

As all participants were 18 or older, they could legally provide their own consent. With this consent, participants were informed about their participation in the study, the consequences and expectations of participation, as well as any risks or benefits that may come with participation (see Appendix A).

An application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University and the University of North Georgia was submitted and approved (approval number 07-26-13-0060150). The purpose of the IRB approval was to guarantee the ethically appropriate treatment of participants and data collection (IRB, 2012). Appropriate approvals of the procedures to access the participants and collect data from participants were approved by both IRBs before data collection began. The Walden IRB application for the study was approved (approval number 201349) before I met with the ESL director or the participants. I was the only person to have access to the data. It has been stored through the coding explained above and will be destroyed after five years.

Dissemination of Findings

Participants were given the opportunity to request a copy of the findings, or a Spanish summary, by providing their mailing address on their consent forms to indicate their wishes. The participants could also contact me by the e-mail or phone number supplied on the consent forms at any point to obtain results of the study as well. Results of this study may be presented in poster and paper format at the Walden University poster session in July 2015, assuming completion before that date. The research symposium at Walden University allows for poster and/or roundtable discussions about a number of research topics that focus on promoting positive social change. As a member of the Walden community, I hope to be allowed to present this research at the symposium as a first step toward positive social change for transitioning ESL students in high school settings. As a member of the Georgia School Counselor Association, this data may also be submitted for presentation at the 2015 Georgia School Counselor annual convention.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I presented an overview of the methodology and its implementation. The rationale for choosing the phenomenological approach, the role of the researcher, and the research questions were all addressed. The setting and sample section explained the elements of the study related to location and to how the participants were sampled and invited to take part in the study. In the data collection and analysis section, I explained information about the measure used and how the raw data was transformed and analyzed into a coherent whole. And finally, in this chapter ethical implications and how the rights of the participants was protected is reviewed. In Chapter 4 the results of the analysis of the transcribed data from participant interviews is shared.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to present the lived experiences of former ESL students as they made the transition from ESL to English-only classes. The data were collected to provide a deeper understanding of the perceptions and opinions of the former ESL students as adult representatives of those who were most directly affected by this transition. The study sample consisted of seven Hispanic students who participated in the ESL program of the selected county within the past 5 years. The seven participants volunteered to participate in the study and all completed the informed consent form. Written permission to recruit participants was granted by the IRB of the UNG (See Appendix D). The current ESL director at UNG was instrumental in determining which students fit the assigned criteria to participate and granted permission to recruit participants before and after classes. In this chapter, I report the results of the study and includes many examples of the opinions of the participants in their own words.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the format of the interview and the data collection:

- What are the daily experiences of ESL students during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?
- How do students understand the educational change from ESL to mainstream classes?

- What experiences do former ESL students perceive helped or hurt them during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?

Setting

Data were collected from participants recruited through UNG's Gainesville campus. While it was not a requirement that participants be enrolled at UNG, most were. Data collection took place at an office on the UNG campus as requested by all of the participants. As I am a lecturer at UNG, it was made clear to participants that this was my personal research toward my doctorate and was not affiliated with the university in any way. Therefore, information would not be released to anyone at UNG. However, the setting of the UNG office may have influenced the responses of participants who were students at UNG. The setting was also an influence on who decided to participate in the study.

Demographics

All of the seven participants in the study had exited the program within the past 5 years and were adults (over age 18) at the time of the interviews. Minor participant background information was obtained throughout the interview. All of the participants were of Mexican descent. There were four male participants and three female participants. Of these, five were born in Mexico and moved to the United States, while two were born in the United States.

Data Collection

The data were collected during UNG's 2014 spring semester. This was done through detailed, one-on-one interviews that ranged from 30-55 minutes with seven

Spanish speaking ESL students from the selected county's program. Participants each met with me once in an office on the UNG campus. Participants were assigned participant numbers from 1235-1241. This number was used as the only form of identification for interview taping and transcription in order to maintain participant anonymity. All of the interviews were audiotaped. The audiotaped sessions were uploaded and transcribed in the Atlas.ti software system.

Data Analysis

The discussion of the findings begins with a description of the study and the analysis representing the perceptions of the participants regarding their high school ESL experiences, including their opinions regarding how these experiences helped or hurt their learning and feelings they had regarding the program's use for future students. The data analysis began with the use of Giorgi's (1985) 7-step approach to data analysis, which consists of (a) summarizing the interview, (b) rereading the summary, (c) identifying units of experience, (d) analyzing the transcriptions to determine codes and themes, (e) reflecting on the themes in the participant's language, (f) transforming the themes into scientific language, and (g) synthesizing the themes into an overall understanding of the experiences of the participants. I detail all themes identified using this approach and my understanding of how these themes relate. The Atlas.ti coding software (Atlas.ti, 2010) was used to analyze and synthesize the data. Atlas.ti has a coding tool that allowed for easy coding of the data. After the interview transcripts were coded, similarities were noted among the codes. Atlas.ti allowed for common codes to be linked together into meaning units that showed if all or most of the participants reflected

these experiences. Themes appeared to align with the research questions. As themes were being focused, more codes were identified and the statements related to the themes were compiled. This software system allowed for memos about my impressions for journaling ideas, as well as a concise visual representation in the form of outlines and idea maps of thematic units within the data.

Participants were encouraged to share their personal information openly and without fear of recourse during the private interview sessions. The responses of the participants were lengthy on certain topics and concise on others. While the participants had differing experiences, there were not many discrepant cases. The discrepancies primarily centered on the differences in teachers, classrooms, and personal experiences. These discrepancies were included in the analysis to enhance the level of understanding of the programs. The probing questions were used to gain a deeper understanding of this information and of each research question.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I met with each participant individually in a private office on the UNG campus, which was important for gaining an understanding of the experiences and opinions of the participants. In this private venue, participants were able to discuss feelings and experiences that might have been censored in a more public arena. The participant interview script was used each time (See Appendix B) as a guide during the interview. The script was used to ensure that all of the interview topics related to the research questions were addressed with every participant. The probing questions were used as needed to gain a deeper understanding of the topics. The participants often went beyond

the interview script in sharing personal information that they found important and meaningful in their experience. This gave me many new ideas that were not considered as a part of the original study's design. The interview ranged from 30-55 minutes in length and each was digitally recorded and transcribed.

Credibility

Reflexivity, member checking, and negative cases were used to verify the credibility of this study. Credibility (or interval validity) focuses on the truthfulness of the information that the researcher presents (Lewis, 2009). I hold certain biases about the educational system's approach to working with Spanish speaking, ELL students. These biases stem around the equity of the education that ESL students receive. However, I approached each interview with an open ear to the words of the participants. I also presented the actual quoted words of the participants in the results to ensure that bias was not incorporated. I avoided leading questions by focusing on a prescribed set of interview topics and probing questions presented in Appendix B. Another method of reflexivity is to maintain field notes of impressions during the interview sessions. My field notes presented my opinions on the interviews while allowing me to see if my personal biases were affecting the discussion. This was a helpful tool to keep my biases under control and observation.

The credibility of this study was also verified using member-checking. The transcriptions were sent to the participants for member-checking using the route requested by the participant; however, all of the participants requested e-mail copies of the transcriptions. The participants were given a time frame in which to respond to the

member-checking request. Following the Walden IRB application, they were informed that not responding by the designated time would act as their approval of the transcription as is. Only one of the participants did not respond, and the other six approved the transcriptions as they were written.

Negative cases in the data were also identified to ensure credibility as well as dependability. The negative cases approach requires that the researcher examine those responses that do not fit the trends in the data in order to see if any new areas of inquiry can be determined (Patton, 2002). Where participants had experiences that did not fit the trends that others experienced, I paid particular attention to how and why those differences existed to see if they would lead to newer ideas. This helped with looking at the interviews from different perspectives as well.

Transferability

Transferability (or generalizing) of the findings to other groups or populations is not the aim of phenomenological study. As stated previously, in-depth description of is the primary aim. In thick description the researcher explains the setting and environment as well as the transcribed answers (Carlson, 2010). In the results section, I detail the environment as being in an office at a local university. I also mention that the university setting could influence the answers of the participants. The depth of information obtained by the use of probing questions, combined with the influence of the setting, work together to provide a depth of analysis that might not have been obtained under different conditions.

Dependability

Dependability is similar to the reliability of the study but it allows the researcher to identify and explain differences in setting, time of day, and other factors that could affect the ability to receive the same outcome in different sessions (Lewis, 2009). One method of reflexivity is to maintain field notes of impressions during the interview sessions. My field notes presented my opinions on the interviews while allowing me to see if my personal biases were affecting the discussion. This was a very helpful tool to keep my biases under control and observation.

Confirmability

As already discussed, reflexivity refers to the open presentation and understanding of any inherent bias that the researcher may bring to the study. Confirmability of the information was approached through the use of reflexivity (Carlson, 2010). With these biases in mind, I took measures to protect against such biases influencing the data analysis. The use of a list of interview topics helped protect against bias; however, active reflection of personal bias was paramount throughout the data collection and analysis steps.

Results

Using Giorgi's (1985) approach, each interview transcription was reread and summarized to gain an overall understanding of the participant's perceptions. From there, I identified units of experience, which Giorgi defined as elements that appear often in the data, which were consistent throughout the interviews. The following units of experience were found: (a) slower pacing in ESL classes by covering less material in a semester, (b)

teacher influence on the students' attitudes about school, (c) social issues with other students, (d) parental and family influences on performance, (e) self-confidence regarding mainstream classes, (f) extracurricular influences on students' focus in school, (g) course design issues, and (h) feelings about school in general. These units of experience were used to determine codes that were assigned throughout the transcriptions. Each interview transcript was analyzed in-depth and codes were placed on specific statements of meaning (or quotes) in the text. These codes were then incorporated into themes that related to the initial research questions. Table 2 shows the initial codes, the number of quotes per code extracted from the interviews, and the meaning of each code.

Table 2

Codes used for data analysis in transcribed interviews

Code	Number of occurrences	Meaning of code
Bias in Education	17	Participant related feelings of bias in the school system either for or against ESL students.
Cultural Differences	10	Participant spoke of cultural issues that affected their education.
ESL Education	34	Participant shared their understanding of the ESL program's approach.
ESL Teachers Helping	23	Participant spoke of ways ESL teachers helped them in their classes.
ESL Teachers Not Helping	9	Participant spoke of ways ESL teachers did not help them in their classes.
Extracurricular Influences	8	Participant referred to sports or clubs as affecting their education.
Graduation Tests	6	Participant relayed information on how their

		ability to pass the graduation tests was affected by their education.
Group Cohesion	12	Participant spoke of Spanish speaking ESL students being a tight-knit group, which affected learning.
Spanish speaking Students in ESL	5	Participant relayed the prevalence of primarily Spanish speaking students in their ESL classes.
Home Language	11	Participant spoke about the primary language used in their homes.
Home Life- No Work	6	Participant shared that they did not have a job while enrolled in high school.
Home Life- Work	1	Participant shared that they did have to hold a job while enrolled in high school.
Immersion	8	Participant spoke of the influence of immersion with English speakers on their language ability.
Mainstream Set Up	17	Participant explained their understanding of how mainstream classes were conducted.
Monitoring	3	Participant shared evidence of monitoring by ESL teachers after exiting the program, where teachers maintained contact or checked in with them on a regular basis.
ESL Negatives	15	Participant shared negative feelings about the ESL program.
No Transition	2	Participant explained that they did not make a full transition out of ESL until after high school.
Non-ESL Teachers Helping	8	Participant spoke of ways mainstream teachers helped them in their classes.
Non-ESL Teacher Not Helping	4	Participant spoke of ways mainstream teachers did not help them in their classes.
One-on-one Help	14	Participant spoke of the impact of one-on-one attention from teachers.

Parental Support	14	Participant explained the importance of parental support on their education.
Positives of Mainstream	3	Participant shared positive feelings about the mainstream classes.
ESL Positives	15	Participant shared positive feelings about the ESL classes.
Programs	4	Participant spoke about different programs they used to learn English, such as Rosetta Stone and/or local community educational programs.
Slower Pacing	8	Participant mentioned that they learned information at a slower pace in ESL classes, where less material was covered over the semester.
Social Struggles	17	Participant spoke of social issues outside of class that affected their education.
Spanish Used in the Classroom	5	Participant shared that Spanish was used, allowed, or encouraged in the ESL classroom.
Struggles	11	Participant explained where their main struggles were while in high school.
Student Initiative	16	Participant showed personal initiative as an influence on their educational success.
Student Problems with Others	18	Participant shared stories of students in the ESL classes that caused problems or hurt the participants' learning.
Students in Classes	4	Participant provided a general idea of the ethnicity of students that were enrolled in ESL classes.
Success in School	12	Participant referred to specific successes they had in high school.
Suggestions	13	Participant offered suggestions for the future of the high school ESL program.

Teacher-No Spanish	8	Participant shared that their teacher did not understand or speak Spanish.
Teacher-Spanish	3	Participant shared that their teacher did understand or speak Spanish.
Transition to Mainstream	10	Participant spoke about their experiences in the transition to mainstream classes.
Transitional Struggles	5	Participant shared struggles they encountered while transitioning to mainstream classes.
Typical Day	11	Participant referenced what a typical day consisted of in their classes.
Understand Class	6	Participant gave their understanding of why they were in the ESL classes.
Understand Transition	4	Participant gave their understanding of why they were transitioned to mainstream classes.

From these codes, the information was sorted into themes based on similarity to the research questions. Common codes were linked together into meaning units and then these units were analyzed to see if all or most of the participants reflected this experience. This was the criteria for determining a theme. Most of these themes directly related to the study's research questions. While each code found placement into the themes, there were certain codes that could also be viewed outside of the research questions of the study. This process of summarizing, theming, coding, and condensing allowed me to view the data from many different angles over different time periods. This helped greatly with maintaining objectivity throughout the analysis. As Johnson and Christianson (2004) explained, the phenomenological approach requires the researcher to suspend his or her own beliefs and spend time understanding participants' daily experiences. The depth and

focus of Giorgi's (1985) 7 step approach allowed for multiple opportunities of analysis that resulted in the discovery of new areas of focus for ESL researchers and educators.

The participants provided information regarding many different areas of their experiences with the high school ESL program. From coding the interview transcripts, four main themes emerged:

- (a) daily experiences with ESL and mainstream classes,
- (b) participant understanding of the ESL classes and transition to mainstream,
- (c) participant opinions concerning elements of the programs that hurt or helped their education, and
- (d) participant suggestions for ways to improve the programs for future students.

The following table presents the final themes, the codes that fit within each theme, and the number of occurrences found in the interview transcripts (see Table 3).

Table 3

Themes related to codes

Themes	Code	Occurrence
Daily experiences with ESL and mainstream classes	ESL Education	34
	Spanish speaking ESL Students	5
	Mainstream Set Up	17
	No Transition	2
	Programs	4
	Slower Pacing	8
	Spanish Used in the Classroom	5

	Student Problems with Others	18
	Students in Classes	4
	Teacher-No Spanish	8
	Teacher-Spanish	3
	Typical Day	11
Participant understanding of the ESL classes and transition to mainstream	Bias in Education	17
	Cultural Differences	10
	Graduation Tests	6
	Transition to Mainstream	10
	Transitional Struggles	5
	Understand Class	6
	Understand Transition	4
Participant opinions concerning elements of the programs that hurt or helped their education	ESL Teachers Helping	23
	ESL Teachers Not Helping	9
	Extracurricular Influences	8
	Group Cohesion	12
	Home Language	11
	Home Life- No Work	6
	Home Life- Work	1
	Immersion	8

	Monitoring	3
	ESL Negatives	15
	Non-ESL Teachers Helping	8
	Non-ESL Teacher Not Helping	4
	One-on-one Help	14
	Parental Support	14
	Mainstream Positives	3
	ESL Positives	15
	Social Struggles	17
	Struggles	11
	Student Initiative	16
	Success in School	12
Participant suggestions for ways to improve the programs for future students	Suggestions	13

Participants were encouraged to share their personal information openly and without fear of recourse during the private interview sessions. The responses of the participants were lengthy on certain topics and concise on others. While the participants had differing experiences, there were not many discrepant cases. The discrepancies primarily centered on the differences in teachers, classrooms, and personal experiences. These discrepancies were included in the analysis to enhance the level of understanding of the programs. The probing questions were used to gain a deeper understanding of this

information and of each research question. Responses to each of the themes are presented below for ease of understanding data interpretation.

Theme A: Daily Experiences with ESL and Mainstream Classes

This theme related directly to Research Question 1 (What are the daily experiences of ESL students during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?). This resulted in 12 codes and 119 specific quotations related to the topic. The typical day of participants varied greatly by class, teacher, and school.

Well, she start with a lesson and then she got mad and sent people to the principal because they start messing up with her and she would try to focus again on the lessons and everything. But it was just like quizzes and tried to explain all the grammar and everything... writing... (Participant 1236)

It was like a fairly amount... it was splitted up. Sometimes it was book work, sometimes it was lectures, and then sometimes it was group projects and stuff. So, it was like a little bit of everything, I guess. (Participant 1239)

Well... In the class there'd be like two teachers. The class would be like a lot smaller than like a regular class. We would sometimes go over like the test before... and um, sometimes, like during a test he'll take some people out of that class into another classroom for more time. That's basically it, for what I remember. (Participant 1240)

A typical day was students arriving to class loud. Teachers were, for the most part, trying to get their materials ready for class. Not all the time people were in their desks seated ready to go to work. Once class started, the teachers' lectures were not as in depth as the regular courses. (Participant 1241)

While the typical day of participants varied, there were similarities in the approach to ESL education. Overall, the focus on reading and writing appeared common within ESL education. The focus on taking time to help each other, either through teacher support or group work, was spoken of often.

So, in ESOL, they teach us how to start reading little by little. Understand the reading first, if you don't understand it, read it again. And, if you don't understand

the word, just mark the word and see what it is first, like a dictionary. Because we were allowed to use dictionaries. So, look up the word and understand first and then try to read the question and answer it. It just go steps by steps so that helped. (Participant 1235)

In English, those classes, we did. We read a lot. (Participant 1235)

I don't remember reading a lot, but I remember like writing a lot, a lot, a lot... (Participant 1236)

But she had like specific lessons, like verbs and stuff and adjectives and like parts of speech. Pretty much. And then the reading comprehension. Just reading passages and what you understood from it and stuff like that. (Participant 1239)

We, um, the reading we did was I guess class readings. The teacher read some and then the students read some, usually we listened to the teacher and then it went over to another student and stuff like that. Usually stories. Nothing with writing papers and stuff like that, researching... there was a couple of research, but mostly reading and listening. Or watching a movie about the book. Yeah there was more material and hands on and type learning than you going out there and writing something for yourself. (Participant 1241)

These experiences appeared to have both positive and negative elements. While the typical ESL classroom varies quite a bit, the typical mainstream classroom experiences appear quite consistent. The majority of responses surrounding mainstream experiences mentioned the inability to slow down and get help. Many of the participants shared that there was not enough time or enough support to get help when struggling with material in the mainstream classes.

But, in like a regular class when you're with someone like that you don't have the time to stop... hey, we don't understand this, can you repeat it again, you can't. (Participant 1235)

But, I think they just, I don't know how to explain it, but um... I guess because in the regular English we gotta pay more attention and sometimes the teacher just keeps talking and talking and talking. If you see, if you understand it, ok. If not, well, you gotta ask later or something like that. (Participant 1236)

Like in a normal class you only have one teacher, so... with 30 students, it's hard. (Participant 1238)

In like a regular class they would pass by it, they wouldn't go back through it. (Participant 1240)

One common element that appeared among most participants' experiences in the ESL class dealt with the pace of the classes. All of the participants explained that the ESL class teachers approached course material at a slower pace than the mainstream class teachers did. Some participants believed that this was a positive factor because it allowed for a better understanding of the material before moving forward, while others felt that the slower pace held them back from learning necessary course content.

I was like going slower than the regular classes. (Participant 1237)

I just kind of felt like those classes were too easy for me. And I felt like it was just like I'm done. Like ahead of everybody else and just sit there. (Participant 1239)

The topic would probably last 2-3 times longer than a regular course for students would last. So, it's a little bit longer. (Participant 1241)

They would go more in detail and the class was like... it wasn't slow paced but more like until everybody caught up and was on the same page. (Participant 1239)

I felt that sometimes it was... it handcuffed you to what you could learn. It was like a walk in the park; it wasn't challenging. (Participant 1241)

Another element that was noteworthy during the analysis of ESL students' daily experiences revolved around the other students in the ESL classes. Most of the participants spoke about the other students as having an influence on their education. In some cases, the students worked together and helped each other, but more often, participants spoke of problem students who impeded their education.

Actually, because sometimes the others, the other people that was in the class... some of the people were like bad. They were like in gangs and all that stuff. So,

basically, they didn't care... So she struggled a lot with the discipline. (Participant 1236)

...and there was the other guys that they were just there just because it was easier, I mean... (Participant 1237)

...it was almost like, um, a disobedient class that you would just go and try to learn. The students don't really behave. They... the teachers have hard times dealing with students. Very hard times. And I guess the material is appropriate standard-wise, but the students don't take it serious. (Participant 1241)

Among the participants interviewed, all said that the majority of students in their ESL classes were Spanish speakers. While I was aware of the large numbers of people from Spanish speaking backgrounds in the selected region, the participants mentioned that there were few students from any other backgrounds. This was eye-opening and brought up questions related to the use or understanding of Spanish in the program. If the majority (to all) of the students were of Spanish speaking origin, it was possible that the use of Spanish by the teacher could help with education. However, there were very few teachers who understood Spanish. There were even fewer teachers who allowed Spanish to be used in the classroom setting. There was only one participant who spoke of the use of bilingual education in the ESL classroom. In this class, a translator was used to assist the teacher so that course content would not be delayed because of a lack of understanding the language. While this participant had mixed feeling about the specific person chosen as the translator, the participant did not mention a benefit to having a translator in the classroom.

Yeah, parapro. And, she was from Peru, well she speak Spanish so... Yeah. The bad thing is that sometimes she translate like the wrong thing. She was sometimes more talk because she didn't like the guy or something, so it was kind of like over. (Participant 1236)

Theme B: Participant Understanding of the ESL Classes and Transition to Mainstream

This theme addressed Research Question 2 (How do students understand the educational change from ESL to mainstream classes?). This resulted in seven codes and 59 specific quotations related to the topic. For the most part, students had a good understanding of the ESL class and its purpose. When it came to understanding the transition to mainstream, there were mixed opinions. Some of the students understood that they were being transitioned because of their fluency with English and welcomed the transition.

For me, it was pretty normal. Actually, it wasn't that much of a difference for me. (Participant 1240)

I mean... if I didn't understand like something like I would go back to that teacher that from the ESOL I had. He was always there to help me out. (Participant 1238)

Yes because I notice that I did better in my English classes, like in my regular classes, than I did in ESOL. And I don't even know why, it was just... (Participant 1236)

One of the participants preferred to not make the change to mainstream classes because he like not being challenged in his ESOL class.

I had to... I more or less learned what I did in school and if I had any homework I guess I'd make time for it but I didn't really. That's why I wasn't too against me not leaving ESOL. I was considering how easy it was. (Participant 1241)

I was a little nervous at first because it seemed that everybody knew their... everybody knew everybody once... throughout Middle school that everybody knew everybody and when I got there I was like oh my god, I've got to make new friends and stuff. (Participant 1241)

However, there were other participants who did not appear to understand why they were being transitioned. This could suggest the need for better communication with the

students about the change from supported ESL classes into monitored or unsupported mainstream classes.

It didn't make sense. They were just like hey you're gonna start regular courses now. And I was like ok. (Participant 1241)

In response to the question of understanding why they were being transitioned, participant 1236 said “No... not really”.

Theme C: Participant Opinions Concerning Elements of the Programs that Hurt or Helped Their Education

This theme related well to Research Question 3 (What experiences do former ESL students perceive have helped or hurt them during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?). The majority of the interview time was spent on this research question. This resulted in 20 codes and 210 quotations related to the topic. This topic took the most time during the interview sessions and yielded many different results. The participants had many opinions on helpful and harmful elements of the program. However, almost all of the participants spoke of the importance of family support in the program.

...my parents were really supportive, so that helped. (Participant 1235)

I like had a lot of help from my parents. They always, they were there for me. (Participant 1236)

My mom! (Participant 1237)

Yes. They're always supportive. They, um, my Mom main thing to me is graduated from college... (Participant 1238)

My dad was like okay, after high school you girls, because I have a younger sister, you guys have to do more than what your mom and I did. (Participant 1238)

I think that honestly it was just them pushing me... They've always been like very supportive and like school has always been like a priority. (Participant 1239)

Most students focused on the support of teachers either within or outside of the ESL program. Teacher support appeared to be helpful for students.

I had a good teacher who was not even an ESOL teacher that you could go to and just help you out. He would have math, math, I think a math class for ESOL students, and mostly were Hispanics. And, he was great. He would just, any questions you had you could just go through him and just he would just... he didn't know because he was a math teacher and I would ask questions. (Participant 1235)

Well, I mean, there's this personal teacher that really helped me a lot and everytime I needed help he was always there for me. And like, like coming to college he told me if I ever needed help go back to him... (Participant 1238)

My Social Studies teacher, he was more like talking and trying to get everything together for us. Sometimes he would look in Internet for some words in Spanish to help us and stuff like that. (Participant 1236)

Yes! It was... it was really helpful for all my friends and me were like, I know we can if you guys struggle with something, we can go and ask him. And he try to explain it the best he can. (Participant 1236)

...if I didn't understand like something like I would go back to that teacher that from the ESOL I had. He was always there to help me out. (Participant 1238)

The teachers were actually, I'd say, well... they did their job well. They don't make students feel like that. (Participant 1241)

However, teachers taking time to offer one-on-one attention for the students appeared influential as well. Many of the participants credited this attention as one of the primary reasons they were successful in high school.

My math teacher, he's amazing... he's an amazing guy. He helped me a lot. He's like the main reason that I graduated, I think. (Participant 1237)

Yes. Because even after she gradua... graduated... even after she retired, she told us if we needed any help after we finished getting to the point where we were about to graduate, she could help us out with HOPE or scholarships or like

anything that we needed... she would still come back and help us. (Participant 1239)

He would just, any questions you had you could just go through him and just he would just... he didn't know because he was a math teacher and I would ask questions for... (Participant 1235)

And she would tried to explain it as many different ways as she could. As long as, you know, she was like did you get it this way? (Participant 1239)

Overall, teachers who motivated the students by either believing in them or encouraging them, left a great impact. In such cases, the use of the teacher as a mentor for the students was helpful.

He actually took the time to learn some Spanish to talk to me. So, that felt like different... like special, you know? (Participant 1237)

I don't know... kind of like... kind of felt like she actually like believed in me. Because I've always kind of like, math hasn't really been my thing. So, like, she was like, she was very patient. And she would tried to explain it as many different ways as she could. As long as, you know, she was like did you get it this way? I'm like no. So she would... she wouldn't get like fussy about it or get frustrated about it, she would be like ok, well we're going to try this other method. And then she was very patient with me. (Participant 1239)

Just the teachers encouraging you, like, to learn helped... that helped a lot. (Participant 1235)

Yeah, I mean in all of us. She told that to all of us. She told that whatever we wanted to do in life, as long as we believed in it and we still kept on motivate... our parents motiving us and stuff, you know, we could achieve anything we wanted to do. We just had to believe in ourselves. (Participant 1239)

Many of the participants spoke of the group cohesion among Spanish speaking students, especially in the ESL classes. A few considered this a benefit, while others felt that this hurt their ability to learn English quickly. From this, the idea of immersion into English-only classes emerged.

You were like in a group where everybody understood each other cause we were on the same level. Some knew more but they weren't like, Oh, I'm better than you... no, it wasn't like that... The only good thing is that you are really good in the group where everybody is about the same. So, that's a good thing because my group were my friends and all of them, they really, I mean they were all in ESOL classes, so you kind of were on the same level. (Participant 1235)

Because basically in the ESOL we are like the same culture. It's different cultures and everything but we speak the same language and it was kind of like, in groups. (Participant 1236)

Well, like um, when we were struggling... I taught um... I was friends with mostly all my classmates, so if we were struggling we go to library and um go over the material once again and if I had any, if I knew something and he didn't, I explained it... (Participant 1238)

I was kind of more biased to being around the Mexicans and Hispanics in Middle school because I was in ESOL as well. And I guess it was that thing that is understood sort of that you're in ESOL, you're kind of degraded, you're kind of a lower student. So, there was that. But then High school it was... it was interesting to see that there's less bias and more equality. (Participant 1241)

Participants did have opinions on the negative aspects of the ESL program, but there were many positive elements as well. Some of the negative comments dealt with being held back in their education and feeling inferior to other students.

I just feel like... I feel like with the ESOL classes, they keep you from (how do you say that word) from being with the other people. (Participant 1236)

Sometimes you just depended on your teacher and you wouldn't do your work so much because you were like, oh... you just tagged along, I guess... Because sometimes I would doubt myself and be like, at one point was like, I'm in ESL classes because I'm dumb. I thought I was dumb. (Participant 1239)

I felt different, like, I was not like the other students. I felt like I was like a weird student. (Participant 1240)

However, many positive statements about the ESL program were shared as well. These centered on being taken to another classroom to take their tests, teachers being patient, and being prepared for later education.

Well like I said there was two teachers and the teacher of ESOL, when we ever had a test or quiz, he had his own personal room so he took all the students from these... so we were in a normal class, right, we were in a normal class and there was like 10 ESOL students. And when it was a test or quiz we went to another classroom so it was just 10 instead of 30. (Participant 1238)

Um, we had another teacher in there. So, like they would always ask us if anybody wants to go out and take their test somewhere else, you can raise your hand and go. So, we always had that choice to either stay in the classroom and take the test or go somewhere else and take it with the other teacher. (Participant 1239)

Well, I mean, the teachers did a good job. At least the ones I had. Because all of them were kind and were... patient. That's a big one, yeah. (Participant 1237)

I mean because certain words that right now that I'm learning in the ESL classes that I have now, I already know them. And, I know that some of my classmates are just like oh I've never heard of this before. And I'm just like okay I already know this. (Participant 1239)

I think like that I'm a more like hands-on learner. (Participant 1239)

Overall, one of the most beneficial elements to success in the ESL program came from the student's initiative to do well in school and be successful.

Yeah, you can do it. You can take advantage of the learning. And they give you opportunities to learn, you just have to take them. (Participant 1235)

You have to adapt. You have to catch up. So, you can't really just like sit there and expect something to happen. You actually have to do something. (Participant 1237)

But I think that's what I liked about it too because I kind of, it wasn't like I was uncomfortable, but it kind of made me do more of my work, so I wouldn't have to like ask so much and be like dependent on it. So, it kind of like made me like study more and stuff like that. (Participant 1239)

I pretty much just try to learn it on my own. And then I guess with a group of friends. We were always like hey there's this test coming... we've got to study. So that's all I did. Keep myself reminded of stuff. (Participant 1241)

Theme D: Participant Suggestions for Ways to Improve the Programs for Future Students

The final theme related to information that was not covered by the research questions. More specifically, each participant was given the chance to provide his or her opinion concerning suggestions to improve the current ESL program. Most of the participants had ideas that they felt could help. While most agreed that the current program is very helpful, there were 13 quotes about ideas that might benefit students more. These ideas ranged from focusing on English first,

I think for me it was learning the language first and then I was able to understand better and do better in school. (Participant 1235)

having teachers who understood Spanish,

It is easier and it is easier for us when you're like with somebody who knows your language. (Participant 1235)

having a more rigorous screening process for those in ESL to allow for less students and more support,

...like if the teachers have less students maybe they can help you more instead of those who don't need the help and their just there in the class because they want an easy grade. (Participant 1235)

Probably, try to pick who really wants to be in the class because some of the guys they didn't want to be there. (Participant 1236)

I think they could have like met me after class and see what I'm having trouble with. So they could help me improve on that specific point. (Participant 1240)

immersion or interaction with English speakers,

Well, I think it would be better to mix with the whole school. Without ESL classes. Because I learned more when I was in my regular classes then in the ESOL. They helped me with my writing and all that stuff but, because in the

regular classes you got to talk to them. In the other one they give you the option to talk or not. (Participant 1236)

So maybe if you were using English only you would have learned English faster. (Participant 1236)

They should have like some of the classes mixed with regular classes and ESOL classes. That would help a little bit. That way the people that's learning English can interact with people who like really talk to them. (Participant 1236)

to encouraging students to succeed.

I guess somehow try to encourage students to go out and look for education more. That's what I'm guessing. Because what I see my friends that were in ESOL, that even though there were three of them, I was still the only one who graduate... passed their graduation tests the first time and some never could. They went back 5 times and I guess they just quit. They never could, so they just... they don't really care about education much. They just... and I mean, it's just kind of how it is, but every child needs to go to school, so... just go to High school and just do your time and that's about it. Then go to work. (Participant 1241)

While these are all helpful suggestions, learning English first is counter to immersion into the English-only classes. However many participants did encourage the idea of interacting with English speakers on a more regular basis, either through class, projects, or extracurricular activities.

Summary

In order to present the lived experiences of former ESL students as they made the transition from ESL to English-only classes, a phenomenological study was conducted using individual interviews with participants who went through the program in one selected county. The goal was to understand the program from the perspective of those students directly involved with it. Through the responses of the participants, I was able to understand the perceptions of the participants as well as their opinions on the program's strengths and areas for improvement. Four themes emerged from the data. Responses to

theme (a), daily experiences with ESL and mainstream classes, addressed research question 1 through the variations in daily activities within the same ESL program as well as the influence of other students, teachers, and the program on the learning of the students. Responses to theme (b), participant understanding of the ESL classes and transition to mainstream, addressed the second research question and identified the participants' understanding of the purpose of the ESL program and the transition they made into the mainstream program. Responses to theme (c), participant opinions concerning elements of the programs that hurt or helped their education, related to research question 3 and yielded varied information on the helpful parts of the ESL program and the parts that the participants felt needed improvement. These responses encouraged the use of family as a support network, teachers as personal mentors, and one-on-one support for the students. Participants also identified feelings of inferiority and less depth in course materials, which could hold students back from achievement. From these responses, it appeared that support for students to achieve and believe in themselves was paramount. Responses to theme (d), participant suggestions for ways to improve the programs for future students, presented itself outside of the research questions and came from the participants' willingness to share suggestions for growth of the program. These suggestions were varied, but focused on helping transitioning ESL students find more success in the mainstream classroom. Chapter 5 addresses the ways in which this study might be used to affect social change in the educational system. It will provide recommendations for ESL educators based on the feedback gained from former ESL students.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This study was conducted in order to present the lived experiences of former ESL students as they made the transition from ESL to English-only classes. Seven volunteer participants took part sharing their perceptions through individual interviews of their experiences when transitioning from the ESL to mainstream classes while they were in high school in one selected county. An interview script was used with each participant that included topics to be covered, and probing questions were used as needed. This script ensured that the research questions of interest for this study were addressed with all of the participants.

The following research questions guided the format of the interview and the data collection:

- What are the daily experiences of ESL students during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?
- How do students understand the educational change from ESL to mainstream classes?
- What experiences do former ESL students perceive helped or hurt them during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?

The data obtained from the participant interviews were analyzed through Giorgi's (1985) 7-step approach to determine codes and themes that emerged. As presented in Chapter 4, each of these codes related to a theme. A brief summary of the findings shows the themes of (a) daily experiences with ESL and mainstream classes, (b) participant

understanding of the ESL classes and transition to mainstream, (c) participant opinions concerning elements of the programs that hurt or helped their education, and (d) participant suggestions for ways to improve the programs for future students. While the participants had similar backgrounds, each participant's experiences influenced the outcome of his or her high school education in different ways. From this understanding, each was able to present ideas about the ESL transitional program so that such practices may be continued or enhanced in order to effectively support future students. In this chapter, I will present interpretation of the main findings, implications for social change related to the data, recommendations for use of the research, as well as suggestions for further study in this area.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings that resulted from the in-depth participant interviews were varied by participant, school, and level of ESL education and many were unexpected. It was interesting to see how different the experiences were for students within the same educational system. Differences appeared to relate to the teacher, the class, the school, the year in school, personal backgrounds, and even home life, which will be shown in this section. However, there were some important similarities in the findings related by the participants of the study. Pacing of the classes, transitional support, group cohesion, family influence, and teacher influence were a few common elements throughout the data. Each of these relates to the themes and the research questions in different ways, which will be explored in this section.

Theme A: Daily experiences with ESL and Mainstream Classes

Following from the first research question on daily experiences of ESL students, there were differences in typical daily experiences for the students in the ESL classes related to pacing of classes, relations with teachers, and experiences with peers. Otway (2007) also found that ESL classrooms often approach the course material differently depending on the teacher. However, most of the participants in the current study reported that their experiences in the different mainstream classes were similar in format of instruction which used lecture and individual practice as primary elements. This was surprising that the ESL classes differed so much more than the mainstream classes in format as it seems that a small program such as ESL would be more cohesive than the multiple programs being offered in the mainstream subjects. However, it is important to bear in mind that these were the opinions of students who were new to the mainstream program and may not have completely understood the new systems. The responses surrounding the inability to get help in mainstream were most troubling. The question remains as to whether the pacing was too fast, the students were not adequately prepared, or the students did not seek out assistance. Putting focus on these elements could increase success for future students.

Almost every participant mentioned that the ESL class worked at a slower pace than the mainstream classes. Other researchers have found that slower pacing is a consistent alteration in the ESL classes (Commins, 2008; Gibbons, 2008). Some of the participants felt that this was helpful and allowed them to focus on the material better. They even wished that the mainstream classes could go at a slower pace. However, other

participants complained that the pace “handcuffed” (Participant 1241) them with what they were able to learn. They felt they were not being prepared to do well in the mainstream classes by not being pushed in ESL. If the ESL classes are indeed, as many participants said, too “easy,” are students being effectively prepared? This worry was also presented by del Carmen Salazar (2008). Finding a balance with appropriate pacing may be something of an individual issue for each student. One idea that was spoken of by a participant was to scaffold the pacing of the ESL classes with the student’s English abilities, where those who were closest to transitioning moving at the fastest pace. This could be an important element to consider.

Also related to daily experiences, the importance of the influence of other students in the classroom is mentioned in Chapter 4. Peers can either be a substantial support system or a hindrance to learning (Paz, 2008). A few of the participants suggested that improvements to the ESL program should address choosing students for the program that were dedicated to learning and not allowing students into the program as an “easy” class. Understanding the intent of particular students would be almost impossible for school administrators. While classroom discipline would need to address this, schools could also focus on fostering the prosocial interactions of students in the classroom by having students work together on assignments or in study groups. This would also foster the group cohesion and the feeling of fitting in that many mentioned helped them while learning a new language and cultural system.

Theme B: Participant Understanding of the ESL Classes and Transition to Mainstream

Following from the second research question on the participants' understanding of the ESL program, the participants all seemed to understand the point of the ESL program. Most agreed that it was meant to help them and was successful in helping them learn English. The schools appear to be explaining the ESL program well. However, the communication did not appear as effective when students transitioned into mainstream classes. The lack of understanding has been shown to be a hindrance to students who are already struggling to understand a new language and cultural system (Gasbarra & Johnson, 2008; Juarez, 2008). Some participants mentioned that they were ready for the change while others were not. Some students felt that they were supported during the transition, while others felt they were simply dropped from the ESL program. If students had a better understanding of the program, they might have a better understanding of when they were ready to transition. When a student transitions into mainstream courses, they are in "monitored" status where their grades are being tracked and students are meeting with the ESL teacher to discuss if they are transitioning successfully. Some teachers follow through with this monitoring differently than others, which was also found by Otway (2007). Three of the seven students stated that they did not understand why they were transitioning, and it would be helpful to have better communication about the transition and what to expect. Teacher training seems to focus on educating ESL students instead of monitoring them (Starkman, 2008). Additional training regarding

effective monitoring and follow through with transitioned students might be beneficial and an area for future research.

Theme C: Participant Opinions Concerning Elements of the Programs that Hurt or Helped their Education

The third research question on the participants' perceptions of things that helped and hurt them during their transition presented many areas of focus such as relationships with family, peers, and educators that can be interpreted in different ways. Some participants thought that the ESL program was helpful in their future successes, while others felt that the ESL program held them back in their education. These differences of opinion affected the information that was presented in the interviews. As an example, one participant felt that the transition to mainstream boosted his self-esteem, while another related that the transition hurt his feelings about school. These different opinions could influence the participants' opinions on the helpful and harmful elements of the program. However, there were some common elements that can be analyzed in more detail.

Family appears to be a very important motivating force in Mexican-American culture, and in this exploration, as every participant that successfully completed the ESL program mentioned the importance of their families supporting them in their education (Hernandez & Nesman, 2004). As I noted in Chapter 2, coming from different environments may negatively affect more Spanish speaking students in terms of parental understanding and involvement with grading structures and graduation requirements (Gasbarra & Johnson, 2008; Juarez, 2008). However, Hernandez and Nesman (2004) found that parents encouraging homework and helping with studying were important

factors in predicting student dropout rates. Four participants also mentioned how friends of theirs struggled when they did not have such familial support. It seems that the school system could use this factor to the benefit of the ESL program by working with families and offering resources for parents, being open to helping families find motivational tools. However, it is also important for schools to be aware of the cultural differences and worries families have about acculturation and losing their culture of origin. One of the participants related that his father only encouraged Spanish at home because of the fear of losing their heritage, impeding him from learning English. When schools address working with families, this would be an important element to bear in mind.

Feelings of acceptance with their peers in the ESL class seemed to be important to many of the participants. They discussed feelings of comfort when spending time with people of their same language. However, some mentioned that by only socializing with Spanish speakers, their language development was held back. Even still, most chose friends of their same language of origin. It is not difficult to interpret why this group cohesion occurs. Everyone wants to feel accepted. What is difficult to define is whether it would be more beneficial to encourage language based cohesion through activities such as group work or to encourage interaction with students who are not in ESL to create a sense of belonging with students outside of those who speak Spanish. This is an element that could benefit from future research.

Finally, participants spoke about the importance of at least one teacher who took a genuine interest in them or their education. Many credited a teacher as the sole reason they graduated from high school. Researchers have shown that students who scored better

in schools tended to receive higher levels of support from their school environments (Hernandez & Nesman, 2004; Iachini, Buettner, Anderson-Butcher, & Reno, 2013). As this theme arose in each interview, it is easy to interpret that teacher-student relationships are a very important element in the transition from ESL to mainstream education. One-on-one attention and motivation from teachers was even more beneficial. It was interesting to see how pivotal it was for participants to feel that a teacher believed in them to be successful. Therefore, it seems that teacher-student mentor programs may be helpful as students make the transition into mainstream classes. Schools could focus on the use of teacher mentors during this process to increase student success. The findings suggest that mentors need to be genuinely interested and invested in the success of the student, and creating this link between a teacher mentor and a transitioning ESL student could increase ESL students' retention and graduation rates.

Theme D: Participant Suggestions for Ways to Improve the Programs for Future Students

A theme outside of the three research questions emerged around suggestions for improvement to the ESL program. These suggestions ranged from focusing on English first, having teachers who understood Spanish, having a more rigorous screening process for those in ESL to allow for less students and more support, immersion or interaction with English speakers, to encouraging students to succeed. Researchers have addressed the benefits of many of these suggestions already, whether or not schools have implemented them. For instance, Edl et al. (2008) found that Latino students felt more accepted in the classroom when they had a good understanding of English. Therefore, the

suggestion of interaction with English speakers has received support (Haneda, 2008). As language barriers have continued to cause Spanish speaking students to stick together, integration in schools and society has remained difficult (Burroughs, 2008). Socialization with English speaking peers came easier to those students who were taught in English-only classrooms.

Researchers who studied teacher demographics in relation to language and culture have also supported the suggestion of teachers being able to speak or understand the language of their students. Bauer (2009) discussed the problems surrounding such a low number of bilingual educators. Chen et al. (2008) found that teachers who can relate to their students either culturally, linguistically, or emotionally have higher success rates. Finally, Baker and Rossell (1993) found that teachers who were proficient in the native language of the students, but only used it for clarification purposes, worked best with the students.

However, providing instruction in the first language has helped in this regard as well. Students who have built proficiency in their first language tend to learn a second language with greater ease (Brice et al., 2008). It has also helped students who are concerned about losing their heritage and being ostracized by their cultural group if they move to English-only (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008). Studies have shown that when a second language was balanced with a first language, students achieved at higher rates (Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002; Vacca-Rizopoulos & Nicoletti, 2009). Finding a balance between languages in the classroom seems important.

Theoretical Framework

While the theoretical framework of this study focused on transitional bilingual education, the mixed results obtained about the use of bilingual education in the daily experiences of participants created unanswered questions. As I presented in Chapter 4, all of the participants relayed that their ESL classes primarily consisted of Spanish speaking students and that Spanish was discouraged in the classroom. In fact, only one participant spoke of approved use of Spanish in the classroom through the use of a Spanish translator. However, her personal experiences with the translator were not positive. One participant perceived that immersion into English-only was most helpful. However, others mentioned that the use of transitional bilingual education may have been more of a benefit in the early years. Using transitional bilingual education early in English development was supported by Cummins when he originally presented the approach (1984). I expected to see more opinions on this topic. However, as the participants could not speculate about a program they were not exposed to, it is understandable that there would be ambiguity. Cummins claimed that academic literacy in a student's primary language could support literacy and academic achievement in the second language. Therefore, when there is a teacher present who speaks their native language during ELL students' transition process, students are able to comprehend English and match the academic achievement of monolingual English speaking peers (Chen et al., 2008). As a result, during the ESL to mainstream transition, students experience more success (Cummins, 1984). This may be one way to increase the likelihood that Spanish speaking

ELL students will remain engaged in and confident about academic skills and, therefore, more likely to remain in and graduate from high school.

Some teachers have fought to empower students and use their experiences, education, and bilingualism to add to the overall education of the class (del Carmen Salazar, 2008). The experiences of the participants in this study supported this idea when they worked one on one with their high school teachers. Participants related that those teachers who valued their abilities and took an active interest in them both inside and outside of the classroom were most helpful in their academic growth.

Limitations of the Study

As I discussed in Chapter 3, I am a professor at the university from where the participants were recruited. While none of my students took part in the study, my role at the university may have affected the relationships built with the participants. For instance, some participants seemed more relaxed speaking with someone in a comfortable environment on their college campus. However, it is possible that participants might have been intimidated or influenced by the surroundings leading them to present only positive information about their educational experiences. Overall, this did seem to be an issue for one of the participants who appeared uneasy and asked me for advice on college planning. It is important to acknowledge the effect this could have had on responses to the interview questions. It might be beneficial to reproduce this study with an interviewer that has no affiliation with any educational institution to see if results are altered.

Recommendations

The population change in the chosen state has produced a cultural change with a large increase in Spanish speaking students that needs to be addressed from a new perspective. Researchers have used the phenomenological approach when there was either a lack of understanding of a new phenomenon or a cultural change that has called into question our past way of approaching things (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). As a phenomenological study is meant to be a first step toward research on a topic, there were many areas of future research that appeared throughout the data. Many have already been discussed. However, there are a few important areas to note again here. First, additional teacher training for how to work as effective mentors with monitored ESL students is an area that still needs research. Also, it would be helpful to have more data to support or negate encouragement of group cohesion as a positive tool in educational growth. Finally, it may be beneficial to research the idea of scaffolding in the pacing of course content delivery across language development levels to see if there is a benefit to a slower transition into mainstream pacing based on these varying levels.

The research process was an enjoyable one that resulted in data that was both expected and surprising. The experience of meeting with participants who had been successful with the ESL transition into mainstream classes was enlightening. However, only meeting with successful students may have produced some bias in the information obtained. For future research, it would be beneficial to have participants in the study who had not been successful with the transition to mainstream classes.

Johnson and Christianson (2004) explained that the phenomenological approach requires that the researcher suspend their own beliefs and spend time understanding the daily experiences of participants. While personal biases and preconceived notions were deliberately suspended during the interviews by focusing on the words of the participants instead of underlying meaning, it is possible that they came across during the study and influenced the participants. It was interesting that the personal bias toward bilingual education did produce a preconceived notion that the majority of the participants would be in favor of the program. However, most of participants either had no opinion or were not in favor of bilingual education. I did not take into account that by not participating in transitional bilingual education, participants would not be able to offer an opinion on the topic.

Implications

Implications for Social Change

Large scale educational social change begins with one student. By speaking individually with those students who were impacted by the transition from ESL to mainstream classes, ideas for social change within the educational system have been presented. However, the results of this study are intended to be used to bring about positive social change for Spanish speaking ESL students. If the education system changes suggested by participants, such as teacher mentors, were incorporated into educational policy, the possibility of increased retention and decreased attrition of Spanish speaking students would be an important social change for the Mexican-American culture in the United States.

ESL directors and teachers could use this research to influence social change in the classroom and in the quality of teacher-student interactions in several ways. As Otway (2007) found, ESL students often fail to succeed in the U.S. educational system, partially due to a lack of support when they exit from the ESL program. Support for students through individualized attention from teachers may present a major social change that could support ESL student success and encourage ESL students to strive for higher education. The empowerment that the participants felt when a teacher believed in them was very influential on the students' beliefs in their abilities. Allowing for this empowerment by encouraging interaction between teachers and students could be an element to positive social change in ESL education.

Implications for Methodology

Quantitative research does not allow for the perceptions and interpretations of the participants. Thus far, most of the research on ESL experience has been of a quantitative nature. This study is important in influencing social change through understanding the needs and perceptions of those involved with the program directly. The former student experiences presented ideas for change that they felt could impact education and increase success.

Implications for Practice

When interacting with ESL students, general education teachers often feel unprepared and untrained (Chen et al., 2008). Yoon (2007) found that many of the achievement differences between ESL and general education students can be attributed to feelings of inadequacy that many ESL students possess. Therefore, mainstream teachers

need to help ESL students feel like competent contributors to class discussions. They also need to help these students adjust to the mainstream classroom and fit in with their peers. One way of doing this could be assigning students to individual teachers and encourage relationship building activities. Shalom, Diab, and Rousseau (2007) applied this idea to teachers to show that working toward a common goal can bring people of different backgrounds together.

My recommendations for practice are to first address teacher training on the importance of building a relationship with the students and then incorporate a student-teacher relationship for ESL students who are transitioning out of ESL classes and into general education classes. Paz (2008) introduces a five step method to help teachers address cultural competency. Some of the participants felt that their teachers did not understand their struggles or the importance of students maintaining their Spanish language. The first step is to train teachers to build an appreciation of, and value for, diversity in their students. The second step shows teachers how to explore their own biases and cultural backgrounds. The third step shows teachers how to become consciously aware of how different cultures interact with each other. The fourth step addresses using cultural information in the classroom. Finally, the fifth step shows teachers how to adapt their lessons for different cultural groups.

School administration and school counselors are the people who influence the culture of schools. Therefore, it is important that they are aware of these findings and are encouraging of new ideas and avenues of support for transitioning ESL students. Administrators and counselors are the first people that parents will interact with, so

understanding the struggles ESL students face as well as the importance of family support is pivotal when working with Spanish speaking families. The school administrators and counselors can work to support social change for these students by maintaining an approach of inclusion, support, and understanding.

Conclusion

After speaking individually with former students of the high school ESL program, there were quite a few changes in my opinions and beliefs about ESL students and the ESL program. First, the importance of family in the success of students was emphasized. The personal initiative of the participants to succeed in high school and beyond was impressive and the influence of both family and educators on this initiative was eye-opening. High school aged students often present an aura of disinterest in parents, family, and adults, so learning that adult figures were pivotal was enlightening. It was interesting to note that teens are greatly motivated by adults believing in their potential and supporting their success.

This research has generated information on the daily experiences of students who transition from a high school ESL program to general education classes. The participants were given a voice in educational change that not only empowered them, but also helps to empower future students in the educational process. As the research has shown, adult approval, support, and belief in the abilities of students is greatly influential to their future growth in both educational and personal avenues. Hopefully, participants felt empowered by being contributors to positive educational social change that could affect

future generations of ESL students, and this will provide meaningful growth for the developers of ESL transitional programs.

There is not one program that will save all students from dropping out of high school before graduation. However, the road to the goal begins with the first step. The goal of most educators is to save the world, one child at a time. Hopefully this research will serve as a start to the journey of trying to keep ELL students in school and make them feel supported and successful in the classroom environment.

References

- American Psychological Association. (2010). Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>
- Alcock, M. M. (2009). *Phenomenological study of effects of student mobility on middle- and high-socioeconomic high school students* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text database. (UMI No. 3366731)
- Applebaum, M. H. (2011). Amedeo Giorgi and psychology as a human science. *Neuroquantology*, 9(3), 518-525. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.14704/nq.2011.9.3.463>
- Atlas.ti (2010). Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis [software]. Retrieved from <http://www.atlasti.com>
- Babad, E. Y., Inbar, J., & Rosenthal, R. (1982). Pygmalion, Galatea, and the Golem: Investigations of biased and unbiased teachers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 74(4), 459-474. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.74.4.459
- Baker, K., & Rossell, C. (1993). *Blinded by theory in the search for effective programs for LEP students: A call for testing new research hypotheses*. Information Analyses, 1-33. A paper presented for the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Atlanta, GA on April 12-16, 1993.
- Batt, E. G. (2008). Teachers' perceptions of ELL education: Potential solutions to overcome the greatest challenges. *Multicultural Education*, 15(3), 39-43. Retrieved from <http://www.caddogap.com/periodicals.shtml>
- Bauer, E. B. (2009). Informed additive literacy instruction for ELLs. *The Reading*

- Teacher*, 62(5), 446–448. doi:10.1598/RT.62.5.8
- Bentz, V. M., & Shapiro, J. J. (1998). *Mindful inquiry in social research*. London, England: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Brice, A. E., Shaunessy, E., Hughes, C., McHatton, P. A., & Ratliff, M. A. (2008). What language discourse tells us about bilingual adolescents: A study of students in gifted programs and students in general education programs. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 32(1), 7-33. Retrieved from <http://www.prufrock.com>
- Bryant, B. (2010). School year 2009-2010: Enrollment by gender, race/ethnicity, and grade (PK-12). *Georgia Department of Education*. Retrieved from http://app3.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/fte_pack_ethnicsex.display_proc
- Burroughs, N. F. (2008). Raising the question #10 non-native speakers of English: What more can we do? *Communication Education*, 57(2), 289-295.
doi:10.1080/03634520701851573
- Cadiero-Kaplan, K., & Rodriguez, J. L. (2008). The preparation of highly qualified teachers for English language learners: Educational responsiveness for unmet needs. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 41(3), 372-387.
doi:10.1080/10665680802179444
- Camarena, M. (2009). The culture of teaching ELL students successfully: A two-way bilingual. *Online Submission*. Retrieved from ERIC.
- Carlson, J. A. (2010). Avoiding traps in member checking. *Qualitative Report*, 15(5), 1102-1113. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol15/iss5/4>
- Carpenter, D.M., & Ramirez, A. (2007). More than one gap: Dropout rate gaps between

and among, black, Hispanic, and white students. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 19(1), 32-64. doi:10.4219/jaa-2007-705

Center on Education Policy (2007). *Caught in the middle: Arizona's English language learners and the high school exit exam*. Washington, D.C.: Center on Education Policy.

Charles, C. Z., & Massey, D. S. (2003). How stereotypes sabotage minority students. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 49(18), B10–B11. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/section/Home/5>

Chang, D. F., & Demyan, A. (2007). Teachers' stereotypes of Asian, Black, and White students. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 22(2), 91-114. doi:10.1037/1045-3830.22.2.91

Chen, C., Kyle, D. W., & McIntyre, E. (2008). Helping teachers work effectively with English Language Learners and their families. *School Community Journal*, 18(1), 7-20. Retrieved from <http://www.adi.org/journal>

Cline, Z., & Necochea, J. (2003). Specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE): More than just good instruction. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 5(1), 18-24. doi:10.1207/S15327892MCP0501_4

Cline, Z., Reyes, M., & Necochea, J. (2005). Introduction to the special issue: Education lives on the border. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 4(3), 149-152. doi:10.1207/s1532771xjle0403_1

Cohen, C. C., & Clewell, B. C. (2007). Putting English language learners on the

- educational map the No Child Left Behind act implemented. *The Education Policy Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.uipress.org>
- Cohen, J. (2007). A case study of a high school English-language learner and his reading. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 51(2), 164-175.
doi:10.1598/JAAL.51.2.7
- Coltrane, B. (2002). English language learners and high-stakes tests: An overview of the issues. *ERIC Digest*. Retrieved from <http://www.cal.org/ericcll/DIGEST>
- Commins, N. L. (2008, November). Responding to linguistic diversity. *School Administrator*, 65(10), 10-11. Retrieved from <http://www.aasa.org>
- Coyne, I. (1997). Sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful and theoretical sampling; merging or clear boundaries?. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 26(3), 623-630.
doi:10.1111/1365-2648.ep4514143
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design* (2nd ed). London, England: Sage Publications.
- Cummins, J. (1984). *Bilingualism and special education: Issues in assessment and pedagogy*. San Diego, CA: College Hill Press.
- del Carmen Salazar, M. (2008). English or nothing: The impact of rigid language policies on the inclusion of humanizing practices in a high school ESL program. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 41(3), 341-356.
doi:10.1080/10665680802174783
- Department of Education (2008). Mapping Georgia's education progress 2008.
Retrieved from www.ed.gov
- Doherty, R. W., & Hilberg, R. S. (2007). Standards for effective pedagogy, classroom

- organization, English proficiency, and student achievement. *Journal of Educational Research*, 101(1), 24-34. doi:10.3200/JOER.101.1.24-35
- Edl, H., Jones, M. H., & Estell, D. B. (2008). Ethnicity and English proficiency: Teacher perceptions of academic and interpersonal competence in European American and Latino students. *School Psychology Review*, 37(1), 38-45. Retrieved from <http://www.nasponline.org/publications/spr/index-list.aspx>
- Ernst-Slavit, G., Moore, M., & Maloney, C. (2002). Changing lives: Teaching English and literature to ESL students. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 46, 116-128. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40015434>
- Fairbairn, S. B. (2009). Inclusive achievement testing for linguistically and culturally diverse test takers: Essential considerations for test developers and decision makers. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, Spring, 10-24. doi:10.1111/j.1745-3992.2009.01133.x
- Field, R. F. (2008). Keeping pace in suburbia and rural America. *School Administrator*, 65(10). Retrieved from <http://www.aasa.org>
- Fischer, C. T. (2009). Bracketing in qualitative research: Conceptual and practical matters. *Psychotherapy Research*, 19(4/5), 583-590. doi:10.1080/10503300902798375
- Fry, R. (2008). The role of schools in the English language learner achievement gap. *Pew Hispanic Center*, June. Retrieved from <http://pewhispanic.org>
- Fry, R., & Gonzales, F. (2008). *One-in-five and growing fast: A profile of Hispanic public school students*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved from

<http://pewhispanic.org>

Garcia, E. (1991). Educational of linguistically and culturally diverse students: Effective instructional practices. *Educational Practice Report, 1*. Retrieved from

<http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED338099>

Garcia, S. B., & Ortiz, A. A. (2006). Preventing disproportionate representation:

Culturally and linguistically responsive prereferral interventions. *Teaching*

Exceptional Children, 38(4), 64-68. doi:10.1177/004005990603800410

Gasbarra, P., & Johnson, J. (2008). Out before the game begins: Hispanic leaders talk

about what's needed to bring more Hispanic youngsters into science, technology

and math professions. *Public Agenda, America's Competitiveness: Hispanic*

Participation in Technology Careers Summit. Retrieved from

<http://www.publicagenda.org>

Gersten, R. (1996). Literacy instruction for language-minority students: The transition

years. *The Elementary School Journal, 96* (3), 227-244. doi:10.1086/461825

Gersten, R., & Baker, S. (2003). Practices for English-language learners. An overview of

instructional practices for English-language learners: Prominent themes and future

directions. *Information Analyses, 70*(142), 2-14. Retrieved from

<http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED445176>

Gibbons, B. (2008). Elementary preservice teachers' utilization of English language

development instructional strategies in the teaching of science to English learners.

Multicultural Education, 50-53. Retrieved from <http://www.redorbit.com>

- Gilbert, K. R. (2002). Taking a narrative approach to grief research: Finding meaning in stories. *Death Studies*, 26(3), 223-239. doi:10.1080/07481180211274
- Giorgi, A. (Ed.). (1985). *Phenomenology and psychological research*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Goh, M., Wahl, K. H., McDonald, J. K., Brissett, A. A., & Yoon, E. (2007). Working with immigrant students in schools: The role of school counselors in building cross-cultural bridges. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 35(2), 66-81. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2007.tb00050.x
- Gomez, S., Strage, A., Knutson-Miller, K., & Garcia-Nevarez, A. (2009). Meeting the need for K-8 teachers for classrooms with culturally and linguistically diverse students: The promise and challenge of early field experiences. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Fall, 119-140. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23479287>
- Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(1). Article 4. Retrieved from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_1/html/groenewald.html
- Haneda, M. (2008). Contexts for learning: English language learners in a US middle school. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 11(1), 57-74. doi:10.2167/beb425.0
- Hansen-Thomas, H. (2008). Sheltered instruction: Best practices for ELLs in the mainstream. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 44(4), 165-169. doi:10.1080/00228958.2008.10516517

- Harper, C. A., de Jong, E. J., & Platt, E. J. (2008). Marginalizing English as a second language teacher expertise: The exclusionary consequence of No Child Left Behind. *Language Policy*, 7, 267-284. doi:10.1007/s10993-008-9102-y
- Hernandez, M., & Nesman, T. M. (2004). Issues and strategies for studying Latino student dropout at the local level. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 13(4), 453-468. doi:10.1023/B:JCFS.0000044727.93261.05
- Iachini, A. L., Buettner, C., Anderson-Butcher, D., & Reno, R. (2013). Exploring students' perceptions of academic disengagement and reengagement in a dropout recovery charter school setting. *Children & Schools*, online. doi:10.1093/cs/cdt005
- Institutional Review Board for Ethical Standards in Research (2012). *Office of Research Integrity and Compliance*. Walden University. Retrieved from <http://researchcenter.waldenu.edu/Office-of-Research-Integrity-and-Compliance.htm>
- Jimenez, R. T., Gersten, R., & Rivera, A. (1996). Conversations with a Chicana teacher: Supporting students' transition from native to English language instruction. *The Elementary School Journal*, 96(3), 1-9. doi:10.1086/461831
- Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2004). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches (2nd edition)*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.
- Juarez, B. G. (2008). The politics of race in two languages: An empirical qualitative study. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 11(3), 231-249. doi:10.1080/136133208022
- Kiefer, M. J. (2008). Catching up of falling behind? Initial English proficiency,

concentrated poverty, and the reading growth of language minority learners in the United States. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100(4), 851-868.

doi:10.1037/0022-0663.100.4.851

Kimball, C. (2008). *A phenomenological study of teachers' perceptions on teaching English language learners* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text database. (UMI No. 3336669)

Kritzer, J. B. (2007). *The relationship between primary language fluency and the future school success of Hispanic English language learners* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text database. (UMI No. 3270440)

Laguardia, A., & Goldman, P. (2007, March). School reform, standards testing, and English language learners. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 11(2), 111-131. doi:10.1080/13603110600700679

Laija-Rodriguez, W., Ochoa, S. H., & Parker, R. (2006). The cross linguistic role of academic language proficiency on reading growth in Spanish and English. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 30(1), 87-106.
doi:10.1080/15235882.2006.10162867

Lane, I. R. (2006, Summer). Good teaching: Truth or fiction. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 9-12. Retrieved from
<https://www.dkg.org/category/library/publications/bulletin>

Lee, O., Adamson, K., Maerten-Rivera, J., Lewis, S., Thornston, C., & LeRoy, K. (2008).

- Teachers' perspectives on a professional development intervention to improve science instruction among English language learners. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 19(1), 41-67. doi:10.1007/s10972-007-9081-4
- Lee, S. K., Ajayi, L., & Richards, R. (2007). Teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of the open court program for English proficient and English language learners. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 34(3), 19-33. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23478991>
- Lewis, J. (2009). Redefining qualitative methods: Believability in the fifth moment. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(2), 1-14. Retrieved from <http://www.iiqm.ualberta.ca/en/InternationalJournalofQualitati.aspx>
- Lewis-Moreno, B. (2007, June). Shared responsibility: Achieving success with English-language learners. *Phi Delta Kappa*, 88(10), 772-775. doi:10.1177/003172170708801016
- Llosa, L., & Slayton, J. (2009). Using program evaluation to inform and improve the education of young English language learners in US schools. *Language Teaching Research*, 13(1), 35-54. doi:10.1177/1362168808095522
- McCoy-Wilson, K. (2011). *Teacher perceptions of job satisfaction in an economically depressed rural school district* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text database. (UMI No. 3443645)
- McHatton, P. A., Shaunessy, E., Hughes, C., Brice, A., & Ratliff, M. A. (2007). You gotta represent! Ethnic identity development among Hispanic adolescents. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 9(3), 12-20. doi:10.1080/15210960701443557

- Minaya-Rowe, L. (2008). Options for English Language Learners. *School Administrator*, 65(10). Retrieved from <http://www.aasa.org/AASAPublications.aspx>
- Mora, M. (2000). English-language assistance programs, English-skill acquisition, and the academic progress of high school language minority students. *Policy Studies Journal*, 28(4), 721-739. doi:10.1111/j.1541-0072.2000.tb02059.x
- Mora, M. T., & Davila, A. (2002). State English-only policies and English-language investments. *Applied Economics*, 34, 905-915. doi:10.1080/00036840110061677
- Mora, A. P., Mora, M. T., & Davila, A. (2007). The English-language proficiency of recent immigrants in the US during the early 1900s. *Eastern Economic Journal*, 33(1), 65-80. doi:10.1057/eej.2007.4
- Morrissey, G., & Higgs, J. (2006). Phenomenological research and adolescent female sexuality: Discoveries and applications. *The Qualitative Report*, 11(1), 161-181. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR11-1/morrissey.pdf>
- Murtagh, L. (2007). Implementing a critically quasi-ethnographic approach. *Qualitative Report*, 12(2), 193-215. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol12/iss2/5>
- Necochea, J., & Cline, Z. (2000). Effective educational practices for English language learners within mainstream settings. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 3(3), 317-332. doi:10.1080/713693040
- O'Day, J. (2009). Good instruction is good for everyone-Or is it? English language learners in a balanced literacy approach. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 14, 97-119. doi:10.1080/10824660802715502

- Olivo, W. (2003, March). "Quit talking and learn English!": Conflicting language ideologies in an ESL classroom. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 34(1), 50-71. doi:10.1525/aeq.2003.34.1.50
- Olivos, E. M., & Ochoa, A. M. (2008, July). Reframing due process and institutional inertia: A case study of an urban school district. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 41(3), 279-292. doi:10.1080/10665680802182828
- Orfield, G., Frankenberg, E. D., & Lee, C. (2003). The resurgence of school segregation. *Educational Leadership*, 16-20. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership.aspx>
- Otway, M. (2007). *Teachers' practices, perceptions, and perspectives of instructing English language learners* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text database. (UMI No. 3274998).
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pray, L., & Monhardt, R. (2009). Sheltered instruction techniques for ELLs. *Science and Children*, 46(7), 34-38. doi:10.2505/3/sc09_046_07
- Paz, S. (2008). Cultural competency. *School Administrator*, 65(10), 36-39. Retrieved from <http://www.aasa.org>
- Public Law 107-110. (2002). No Child Left Behind act of 2001. Washington, DC: 107th Congress of the United States of America. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>

- Ramanathan, V., & Atkinson, D. (1999). Ethnographic approaches and methods in L2 writing research: A critical guide and review. *Applied Linguistics*, 20(1), 44-70. doi:10.1093/applin/20.1.44
- Rance-Roney, J. (2008, May). Creating intentional communities to support English language learners in the classroom. *English Journal*, 97(5), 17-22. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30046878>
- Reyes, R. (2008). "Cheating" as good pedagogy: Bilingual teachers defying English-only to foster student achievement. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 10(4), 209-213. doi:10.1080/15210960802526136
- Reyna, C. (2000). Lazy, dumb, or industrious: When stereotypes convey attribution information in the classroom. *Educational Psychology Review*, 12, 85-110. doi:10.1023/A:1009037101170
- Sanchez, H. T., Jr., & Sanchez, M. A. (2008). The politics of illegal immigration, bilingual education, and the commodity of the post-technological society. *Educational Forum*, 72(4), 329-338. doi:10.1080/00131720802362017
- Schiff, B. (2006). The promise (and challenge) of an innovative narrative psychology. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16(1), 19-27. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/ni.16.1.05sch>
- Shalom, Y. B., Diab, K., & Rousseau, A. (2007). The integrative-operational model: An eclectic approach for diversity training. *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, 7(1), 117-126. Retrieved from <http://ondiversity.com/publications/journal>

- Slavin, R. E., & Cheung, A. (2004). How do English language learners learn to read? *Educational Leadership, March*, 52-57. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership.aspx>
- Smyth, T. S. (2008). Who is No Child Left Behind leaving behind? *Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 81(3), 133-137.
doi:10.3200/TCHS.81.3.133-137
- Souto-Manning, M. (2007). Immigrant families and children (re)develop identities in a new context. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(6), 399-405.
doi:10.1007/s10643-006-0146-3
- Starkman, N. (2008). ELL spoken here. *T H E Journal*, 35(4), 32-38. Retrieved from <http://www.thejournal.com/>
- Strickland, R. (2009). *Secondary English Language Learners' Views on the Effectiveness of Instructional Strategies: A Phenomenological Study* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text database. (UMI No. 3369646)
- Toloie-Eshlaghy, A., Chitsaz, S., Karimian, L., & Charkhchi, R. (2011). A classification of qualitative research methods. *Research Journal of International Studies*, 20, 106-123. Retrieved from http://www.eurojournals.com/international_studies.htm
- Tsang, S.-L., Katz, A., & Stack, J. (2008). Achieving testing for English Language Learners, ready or not?. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 16(1). Retrieved from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v16n1/>
- Vacca-Rizopoulos, L. A., & Nicoletti, A. (2009). Preservice teachers' reflections on

- effective strategies for teaching Latino ESL students. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 8(1), 67-76. doi:10.1080/15348430802466829
- Watt, D., & Roessingh, H. (2001). The dynamics of ESL drop-out: "Plus ca change. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 58(2), 203-222.
doi:10.3138/cmlr.58.2.203
- What Works Clearing House (2007). WWW topic report: English language learners. *U.S. Department of Education*, 1-17. Retrieved from www.whatworks.ed.gov
- Wright, W. E., & Li, X. (2008). High-stakes math tests: How No Child Left Behind leaves newcomer English language learners behind. *Language Policy*, 7, 237-266.
doi:10.1007/s10993-008-9099-2
- Xu, Y., Gelfer, J. I., Sileo, N., Filler, J., & Perkins, P. G. (2008). Effects of peer tutoring on young children's social interactions. *Early Child Development and Care*, 178(6), 617-635. doi:10.1080/03004430600857485
- Yoon, B. (2007). Classroom teachers' understanding of the needs of English-language learners and the influence on the students' identities. *The New Educator*, 3, 221-240. doi:10.1080/15476880701484055
- Young, R. L., & Tran, M. T. (2001). What do you do when your students say "I don't believe in multicultural education?" *Multicultural Perspectives*, 3(3), 9-14.
doi:10.1207/S15327892MCP0303_3
- Zehler, A. M., Adger, C., Coburn, C., Arteagoitia, I., Williams, K., & Jacobson, L. (2008). Preparing to serve English language learner students: School districts with emerging English language learner communities. *National Center for Education*

Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 49, 1-69. Retrieved from
<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>

Zehr, M. A. (2007, Oct). Reading aid seen to lag in ELL focus. *Education Week*, 27(9),
20-21. Retrieved from <http://www.edweek.org/>

Zheng, Y., Cheng, L., & Klinger, D. A. (2007). Do test formats in reading comprehension
affect second-language students' test performance differently? *TESL Canada
Journal*, 25(1), 65-78. Retrieved from
<http://www.teslcanadajournal.ca/index.php/tesl/article/view/108>

Appendix A: Adult Informed Consent Form

ADULT CONSENT FORM

Hello, my name is Kimberly Watkins and I am doing a research project to learn about your experiences when you were in your English-language class. You were chosen for the study because you have transitioned out of the ESL program in the Hall County School District. I am inviting you to join my project. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” where you are given all of the important details about the study. I want you to learn about the project before you decide if you want to be in it.

I am a student at Walden University. I am working on my doctoral degree. I have worked in the high schools before in the Cherokee County School District as a counselor, but I am not connected with any high school now.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the daily experiences of ESL students as they transition out of ESL classes and into general education.

Procedures:

If you choose to be in this research project, you will be asked to:

- Meet individually with me on one occasion at a location and time of your choice for no more than 1 hour,
- Read a written version of our interview to make sure I understood you correctly, and
- Agree to be audiotaped during our interview for me to review later.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

You don't have to be in this project unless you want to. If you decide now that you want to join the project, you can still change your mind later. If you want to skip some parts of the project, just tell me.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Due to the confidentiality of your answers, risks to participating are small. However, you should be aware that the interview session will take about 1 hour of your time and the audiotaped sessions will be reviewed by me, as the researcher. But this project might help others by hearing what you have to say about your experiences in your classroom.

Compensation:

You will not be paid anything for participating in this research.

Confidentiality:

Everything you tell me during this project will be kept private. That means that no one else will know your name or what answers you gave.

Contacts and Questions:

You can ask me any questions you want at our interview session. If you want to ask me for more information before or after, you can reach me at [REDACTED] or Kimberly.Watkins@waldenu.edu. If you would like to ask my university a question, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, then dial 1210.

Walden University's approval number for this study is **07-26-13-0060150** and it expires on **July 25, 2014**.

Please keep one of the provided copies of this form.

If you would like a summary of the research findings, please provide your mailing address here:

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I believe that I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Your Name	
Date of consent	
Your Signature	
Researcher's Signature	

Please indicate your best times to meet.

Days: _____

Times: _____

Please mark your preferred meeting location:

Strickland 194 Library Meeting Room Telephone

Please provide your phone number or e-mail address for me to contact you with the scheduled time for our interview:

Appendix B: Participant Interview

Interview Script:

- Welcome and introductions
- Verbally reiterate the information in the informed consent form
- Explain taping procedure and reviewing of data (by myself)
- Talk about the purpose of the study
- Opening prompt: “Please tell me about your daily experiences when you were in your ESL English class.”
- Follow interview topics below, using probing questions as needed.

Research Question	Interview Topic	Probing Questions
1: What are the daily experiences of English as a Second Language (ESL) students during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?	Day to day experiences in ESL English class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What activities in your ESL English class stick out most in your mind? Why? • How did you feel about the activities that you remember most? • Please tell me about any other experiences in your ESL English class that left an impact on you. Why?
	Experiences in other classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you feel about attending your English-only classes? Why? • How much do you feel you learned in your English-only classes as compared to your ESL classes? • What particular experiences about your English-only classes

		stick out in your mind? Why?
2: How do students understand the educational change from ESL to mainstream classes?	Preparedness for other classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please explain the purpose of your ESL English class. Why did you need to take this course? • Do you feel that it prepared you for your other classes? Why? • If you can remember, please tell me about any feelings in your English-only classes that were triggered by how you were prepared by your ESL class? • In retrospect, have your feelings about your ESL class changed in any way?
	What could help more?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you wish things had been done differently in your ESL class? What? And, why?
3: What experiences do former ESL students perceive have helped or hurt them during the transition from ESL to mainstream classes?	Struggles or problems in classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you please tell me about any personal situations that might have influenced your feelings about your classes? • Were there any areas in school that you felt were more of a challenge to your because of your English abilities? Will you explain them?
	How others have helped with this struggle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please tell me about an experience with a teacher or classmate in your ESL English class that had an effect on

		your feelings about school or your abilities.
	Most helpful part of your ESL English class	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you feel was the most important thing your move from ESL classes to English-only classes did for your feelings about school or your abilities? Why?

Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation from School District

Letter of Cooperation from a Community Research Partner

University of North Georgia
Gainesville Campus
Oakwood, GA

Dear Ms. Watkins,

Based on my review of your research, I give permission for you to recruit participants for the study entitled “English Language Learners and High School Transition Experiences: A Qualitative Study” from the population of students at UNG. As part of this study, I authorize you to recruit from classes with the permission of the instructors. I understand that the university will not be involved with the face-to-face interviews. Individuals’ participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

My signature acknowledges that the researcher, Kimberly C. Watkins, has presented a copy of her research plan, which I have reviewed. I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Dr. Harriett Allison
Director of ESL
University of North Georgia

Appendix D: IRB Approval from UNG



DATE: 11/12/2013

TO: Kimberly Watkins
Education

FROM: Teresa Fletcher
Chair, Institutional Review Board

RE: IRB Application 201349

Your IRB application (201349) entitled, "English Language Learners and High School Transition Experiences" has been considered *EXEMPT* and therefore approved. Please notify the IRB Chair at IRBchair@ung.edu for changes to the study.

Research studies are approved for one year beginning on the date of approval. If additional time is needed to continue data collection, data collection has been completed or there is an adverse event, the principal researcher (PI) must complete the Data Collection & Adverse Event Form and send to the IRB chair. If an extension is needed, the form must be sent 30 days prior to the approval expiration.

Good luck with data collection!

Appendix E: Invitation to Participate

You are invited to join a research project!

Hello, my name is Kimberly Watkins and I am doing a research project to learn about your experiences when you were in your English-language class. You were chosen for the study because you have transitioned out of the ESL program in the Hall County School District. I am inviting you to join my project.

The following form is part of a process called “informed consent” where you are given all of the important details about the study. I want you to learn about the project before you decide if you want to be in it.

What you need to do:

- If you agree to participate in my study, please send one copy of the completed “Informed Consent Form” back to me in the envelop provided. I will contact you to set up a time for us to meet!
- If you have any questions or would like more information, please e-mail me at Kimberly.watkins@waldenu.edu or call me at [REDACTED].

I hope to meet you soon!

Sincerely,

Kimberly Watkins
Ph.D. candidate

Curriculum Vitae

Kimberly Watkins, NCC**Philosophy of Education**

I believe that all students have the ability to succeed in life. Finding your potential and your calling in life can be difficult for many people. For this reason, it is important for students to be given a well-rounded education that can open their eyes to their strengths and the myriad of possibilities in careers. I conduct student-centered teaching that focuses on the application of material to real world problems. I hope to produce students who are able to question, analyze, and apply positive social change to the communities in which they live and work.

Education and Certification

Walden University, MN

Ph.D., Psychology- Educational/Teaching Track (currently complete except dissertation, ABD)
On campus residencies completed at the University of Colorado (Denver, CO), the University of Liverpool (Liverpool, UK), and the University of Minnesota (Minneapolis, MN)

State University of West Georgia, Carrollton, GA

M.Ed., Guidance and Counseling (December 2004) GPA 3.78

Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, GA

B.A., Psychology, Photography (December 2001) GPA 3.07

S-5 Certification in School Counseling

NCC Nationally Certified Counselor

Research

- *Designed and conducted a study on gratitude's effect on overall happiness levels. This data is currently being collected and will be presented at the Southeastern Psychological Association's annual convention in 2015.*
- *Designed and conducted research on transitioning services for English language learners from English as a second language classrooms into general education classrooms within the high school setting. This research is part of my final dissertation and is ongoing, currently.*
- *Designed and implemented a study on the perceptions of aggression as related to gender. It was found that men and women both find men to be more aggressive than women. These findings were presented in paper and poster format.*
- *Designed and implemented a study on the effects of teacher grading bias as related to the amount of experience the teacher had and the student's ethnicity. These data was presented in paper and poster format.*
- *Worked on data entry for a study Dr. Roberta Deppe conducted on the Oglethorpe University Core curriculum.*
- *Designed a study on recognizing suicidal indicators of teenagers. This data was presented to Dr. Li Cao for use by classroom teachers.*
- *Supervised research for multiple students: Game theory and aggression, Fear responses to Media, and Effects of authority on group outcome.*

Honors and Professional Affiliations

- American Psychological Association Member
- Georgia School Counselor Association Member

- *Psi Chi: International Honor Society in Psychology Member*
- *Chi Sigma: Honor Society in Counseling Member*

Related Experience

2014-current Lecturer of Psychological Sciences, University of North Georgia, Gainesville, GA

- *Courses: Introduction to Psychology, Psychology of Human Adjustment*
- *Sponsored the Psi Chi chapter for UNG students on the Gainesville campus*
- *Sponsored the Psychology Club and set up career information sessions and graduate school workshops*
- *Quality Matters (QM) Peer Reviewer to certify the quality of online and blended courses across the campus*
- *Instructed students through discussion, internet based lectures, powerpoint, and real world experience*
- *Conducted assessments via exams, papers, and group projects*

2013-2014 Full-Time Instructor, University of North Georgia, Gainesville, GA

- *Courses: Introduction to Psychology, Psychology of Human Adjustment*
- *Sponsored and instituted the Psi Chi chapter for UNG students on the Gainesville campus*
- *Sponsored the Psychology Club and set up career information sessions and graduate school workshops*
- *Appointed as a Quality Matters (QM) Peer Reviewer to certify the quality of online and blended courses across the campus*
- *Instructed students through discussion, internet based lectures, powerpoint, and real world experience*
- *Conducted assessments via exams, papers, and group projects*

2010-2012 Full time Instructor, Gainesville State College, Gainesville, GA

- *Courses: Introduction to Psychology, Psychology of Human Adjustment, Abnormal Psychology, Human Growth and Development*
- *Instructed students through discussion, internet based lectures, powerpoint, and real world experience*
- *Conducted assessments via exams, papers, and group projects*
- *Appointed as a Quality Matters (QM) Peer Reviewer to certify the quality of online and blended courses across the campus*
- *Designed a course on Human Adjustment for the new B.S. degree program*
- *Co-sponsored the Psychology Club and set up career information sessions and graduate school workshops*
- *Helped program and implement the Domestic Violence Awareness program at GSC*

2009-2012 Adjunct Professor, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, GA

- *Courses: Introduction to Psychology, Survey of Social Psychology, Survey of Child and Adolescent Psychology, Behavior Therapy, Writing for Psychology, Special Topics Course*
- *Presented need for a new course "Writing for Psychology" which I created, designed, and taught to undergraduate students.*
- *Designed Social Psychology, Introduction to Psychology, Behavior Therapy, and Child/Adolescent Development courses for the Evening Degree Program*
- *Instructed students through lecture, discussion, and journal formats*
- *Conducted individual assessments through midterm, final, group projects, and research papers*

2010-2011 Adjunct Instructor, Westwood College, Atlanta, GA

- *Courses: Abnormal Psychology, Human Relations, Introduction to Psychology*

- *Instructed students through discussion in Introduction to Psychology, Human Relations, and Abnormal Psychology*
 - *Conducted individual assessments through midterm, final, group projects, and research papers*
- 2011-2011** *Part time faculty, Saint Leo University, Atlanta, GA*
- *Courses: Counseling and Interviewing Skills*
 - *Instructed students through discussion, powerpoint, and real world experience*
 - *Conducted assessments via exams, papers, and group projects*
- 2010-2011** *Part time faculty, Georgia Gwinnett College, Lawrenceville, GA*
- *Courses: The Psychological Experience*
 - *Instructed students through discussion, powerpoint, and other deliverables*
 - *Conducted individual assessments via exams, papers, research, and group work*
- 2006-2010** *Counselor, Woodstock High School, Cherokee County, Woodstock, GA*
- *Coordinated and conducted group testing for the entire student body*
 - *Designed and implemented classroom guidance sessions*
 - *Performed individual counseling sessions*
 - *Maintained and implemented the school wide testing program*
- 2005-2006** *Counselor, Berkmar High School, Gwinnett County, Lilburn, GA*
- *Helped with design and implementation of testing schedules*
 - *Supervised and directed the career and educational choices of students*
 - *Performed individual counseling using Solution Focused Brief Counseling and Cognitive Therapy*
- 2005** *Counselor, Woodstock High School, Cherokee County, Woodstock, GA*
- *Implemented group counseling sessions for stress management*
 - *Designed and conducted classroom guidance sessions on post-secondary options, course of study, and personality typing*
 - *Performed individual counseling using Solution Focused Brief Counseling and Cognitive Therapy*
 - *Formulated testing schedules and school-wide events*
- 2004** *Practicum & Internship, Woodstock High School, Cherokee County, Woodstock, GA*
- *Performed individual socio-emotional counseling*
 - *Implemented the use of Solution Focused Brief Counseling*
 - *Worked toward designing guidance programs on study skills*
 - *Conducted assessments for the Georgia High School Graduation Test*