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Teaching Hispanic English language learners in the general education setting: a phenomenological study

Kathleen Mackenzie
Northeastern University

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Teaching Hispanic English Language Learners in the General Education Classroom:
A Phenomenological Study

by

Kathleen Mackenzie

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Abstract

This study used a phenomenological study design to better understand the phenomenon of teaching Hispanic English language learners in the general education setting. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and researcher memos, and analyzed using the Listening Guide method. The study focused on white, English-speaking teachers to maximize the language and cultural differences between teachers and students. The study also focused on Hispanic students because of the current political climate associated with recent Hispanic immigration trends in this country. Participants included four white, English-speaking teachers at Harbor Elementary School, which is a large, diverse, urban school with a large and rapidly increasing Hispanic population. This study used Critical Race Theory and Socio-cultural Theory to help answer the following question: *How do white, monolingual, general education teachers at Harbor Elementary School describe their experiences with teaching Hispanic English language learners?* Secondary questions focused specifically on the linguistic and cultural aspects of teachers' experiences.

Findings from this study support previous research findings demonstrating the importance of specialized training for teachers of ELL students, and the need for parent engagement programs. This study also makes an important contribution to the literature by offering a new perspective about white teachers working in low-income, racially diverse schools with limited resources. Findings suggest that teachers' experiences are wrought with emotions, and that institutional and cultural barriers, more so than negative cultural/language attitudes, may be partly responsible for the negative aspects of teachers' experiences. Findings from this study suggest that time spent eliminating these barriers would be time well spent. Recommendations include providing culturally appropriate training for general education teachers, providing in-

school resources to support these teachers, and developing parent engagement programs to facilitate parent/teacher communication and to establish a collaborative working relationship between home and school.

Key words: *General education teachers, language attitudes, Hispanic English language learners, Critical Race Theory, Socio-cultural Theory, the Listening Guide*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study used Socio-cultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1933, as cited in Jaramillo, 1996) and Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 2005) to learn about teachers' lived experiences with managing increased language diversity in the general education classroom. The study examined the language and cultural attitudes, beliefs, and feelings teachers expressed as they described their lived experiences with teaching Hispanic students, particularly those who are English language learners. For the purposes of this study the term English language learner (ELL) refers to students whose first language is Spanish and who have not yet mastered English. Other terms which refer to these students include English learner (EL), English as a Second Language (ESL), and Limited English Proficient (LEP). These terms can be used interchangeably but for the purposes of this study the term English Language Learner (ELL) will be used unless in the case of quotations or citations. For the purpose of this study the term Hispanic rather than Latino is used in order to highlight "language" as a key component in the study, with full acknowledgment that "Hispanic" is a "lump sum" category which ignores one's country of origin (Pollock, 2004, p. 20). This is not to minimize the cultural differences between people of different nationalities, but rather to identify and examine the umbrella under which all Spanish-speaking people in this country are placed by English-speaking America.

Educational Problem of Practice and Significance

This study was conceived due to recent Hispanic immigrations trends and changes in educational policy. Both of these events have resulted in an increasing number of ELL students being placed in the general education setting. This scenario has generated two interdependent concerns. First, general education teachers typically are not trained to teach ELL students (Garcia-Nevarez, Stafford, & Arias, 2005). Second, Hispanic ELL student performance lag far

behind their English-speaking peers (Goldberg, 2008). The study was conducted at Harbor Elementary School in Seaside, Massachusetts.¹ Massachusetts is one of three states which have all but eliminated bilingual services for ELL students through its implementation of Sheltered English Immersion Programs (see literature review for more details). Harbor is situated in Seaside, which is a low income, urban district with a diverse population, multiple social problems, and limited access to educational resources for ELL students.

White, monolingual, general education teachers served as the participants for this study. White teachers were chosen for a couple of reasons. First, 86 percent of teachers in Seaside are White (www.doe.mass.edu). This closely represents the national average of 82 percent (Aud, Hussar, Planty, Snyder, Bianco, Fox, Frohlich, Kemp, & Drake, 2010). Second, cross cultural dynamics between Hispanic linguistic minorities and the dominant norms of the American educational system was an underlying theme in this study. According to Liggett (2008), white teachers represent the dominant norms in American society regardless of their style of practice. Participants were also monolingual in English because this study explored the dynamics between students and teachers who do not share the same language.

The focus was on general education teachers in order to keep the observable phenomenon as purely defined as possible. Since most general education teachers are not trained to teach English language learners, restricting participants to general education teachers created a greater likelihood that participants had little or no prior training in second language acquisition instruction (SLA). Monolingual special education teachers, although they may or may not have this type of training face different challenges. For example, at least some of their ELL students truly have a learning disability (Harry & Klingner, 2006). There is also a high percentage of English language learners in special education as compared to the general student population

(Harry & Klingner, 2006). Hence, the number of differences between ELL students in the general education setting and special education setting along with the differences in training between general education teachers and special education teachers would have made it more difficult to assess the cross cultural teaching/learning dynamics within teachers' experiences. Thus, keeping the population of students and teachers as uniform as possible helped maintain the validity of the data and facilitated the data analysis process.

This study focused on teachers of Hispanic students for three reasons. First, the Hispanic population as a whole has a long history of high dropout rates and low college completion (Nasir & Hand, 2006). Both problems have improved over time, but the gap remains significant enough to warrant ongoing concern. In a study done by the Pew Hispanic Center nearly half of the 16- to 25-year-old survey respondents who stopped attending school said they did so due to their difficulties with the English language, while others reported not liking school (<http://pewhispanic.org/>). Ongoing research and statistics suggest that the U.S. educational system must significantly modify its practices if it is to effectively eliminate the educational factors that contribute to these outcomes (Nasir & Hand, 2006).

Second, rapid demographic changes have created a sense of urgency to resolve this situation. From 2000 to 2007 the increases in the nation's Hispanic population accounted for fifty percent of the U.S. population growth (<http://pewhispanic.org/>), and more than half of the children accounted for at that time had at least one foreign-born parent (<http://pewhispanic.org/>). By 2050 the U.S. Census Bureau projects close to 30 percent of the U.S. population will be of Hispanic origin (<http://www.census.gov>). As of the 2010-2011 school year the Hispanic student population in Seaside had already reached 27.8 percent and at Harbor the Hispanic student population was 45.7 percent (www.doe.mass.edu).

Third, within the ongoing influx are sizeable numbers of Hispanic immigrants who come to Seaside with limited education and high illiteracy rates. Illegal immigration has further complicated the scenario. Undocumented or poorly educated immigrants with little to no experience on how to coach or support a child through school would be less likely to communicate with the schools, and would be less likely to ask how they might better help their children at home (Sanchez & Sanchez, 2008; Smith, Stern & Shatrova, 2008). This is of particular concern for educators because undocumented immigrants are more likely than either U.S. born residents or legal immigrants to have children living at home (<http://pewhispanic.org/>). Failure to successfully educate these children may help to perpetuate a large underclass and create social, political and economic consequences, which may eventually prove to be too difficult to overcome (Sanchez & Sanchez., 2008).

Finally, the increased prevalence and use of the Spanish language in this country is a highly emotional and political issue for many people. Strong feelings and attitudes about linguistic diversity potentially complicate the educational process for both teachers and students. Teachers' language attitudes and/or language politics could follow teachers into the classroom and therefore are relevant to an investigation on teachers' experiences with Hispanic ELL students.

Intellectual Goals

The primary goal of this research was to better understand what happens at the classroom level between white, monolingual, general education teachers at Harbor Elementary School and Hispanic ELL students. An equally important goal was to examine the language and cultural attitudes/beliefs and feelings of these teachers as they described their experiences teaching ELL students. Examining teachers' language attitudes and beliefs may help educators better

understand the dynamics involved in general education teachers' experiences. A better understanding of the underlying dynamics within teachers' experiences may help teacher training programs develop more comprehensive educational programming for in-service teachers, and it may inform curriculum development efforts for pre-service teacher certification programs. A better understanding of the situation may lead to more effective resource management and improve general education teachers' practices with ELL students.

Research Questions

Four questions were developed in order to achieve the research goals. There was one main overarching question which addressed participants overall experiences, and three questions which addressed the linguistic and cultural aspects of their experiences.

The main research question was:

How do white, monolingual, general education teachers at Harbor Elementary School describe their experiences with teaching Hispanic English language learners?

The secondary questions for this study were:

1. *What are the language attitudes and/or cultural assumptions that these teachers express as they describe their experiences with teaching Hispanic English language learners?*
2. *What linguistic and cultural themes are most prevalent when these teachers discuss their experiences with Hispanic English language learners?*
3. *What linguistic and cultural opportunities and challenges do these teachers report as they describe their teaching experiences with Hispanic English language learners?*

Contents and Organization

The following sections are organized into eight sections: the remainder of this chapter discusses the two theoretical frameworks that informed this investigation; Critical Race Theory

and Socio-cultural Theory. Chapter Two reviews four bodies of literature. These include a history of language politics, a review of literature associated with race and cultural issues, a review of educational practices with ELL students, and an overview of the teacher attitudes research. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology. It explains phenomenology and provides a rationale for utilizing phenomenological research methods to conduct this study. It also describes the research site and participants, the methods of data collection and analysis, and threats to the validity and credibility of the data. Chapter Four presents large amounts of participant data in order to give the reader a rich description of the phenomenon under investigation. Chapter five answers the research questions, discusses the research findings within the context of Critical Race Theory and Socio-cultural Theory, and compares these findings to prior research findings. It also discusses implications for practice and makes recommendations for further research. Endnotes, references, and appendices make up the final three sections of this report.

Theoretical Frameworks

This researcher used Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 2005) and Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory (as cited in Jaramillo, 1996) to better understand the social and cultural dynamics that white, monolingual, general education teachers described as they reported their experiences teaching Hispanic English language learners. Critical Race Theory provided a framework for understanding the dominant norms that entrench the U.S. educational system as a whole. Socio-cultural Theory provided a framework for understanding the cultural and linguistic dynamics within the context of a smaller environment such as a community or school, and more importantly between students, parents and educators. Each theoretical framework helped

facilitate the process of examining the literature, and with analyzing research studies associated with teaching Hispanic ELL students.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings, 2005) was born in the late 1980s from the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). The CLS movement consisted of legal scholars who examined and critiqued the role of law in justifying social inequality. Critical Race Theory expanded the conversation to include the role of race and racism in American law, while still maintaining the larger goal of eradicating all forms of inequality. Over the years CRT has expanded to incorporate the racial experiences of women, Native Americans, Asian Americans and Hispanics (Yosso, 2005).

According to Daniel Solorzano there are certain aspects of CRT that are particularly pertinent to the field of education (as cited in Yosso, 2005). Two of these include the notion that race and racism permeate our society and help to explain how US society functions, and second that our emphasis on individualism, meritocracy, and the belief in self-created worth permeates our educational system and serves to perpetuate inequality. For example, individualism reflects the belief that social inequality exists because of individual flaws rather than due to the fact that our society is comprised of inequitable social structures (Cammarota, 2006, p. 4). Individualism does not take into account the fact that as an institution schools have been influenced by a longstanding history of racially and culturally unfair policies and practices. It also assumes that all students, regardless of their cultural or linguistic background are granted equal access to the opportunities that education has to offer.

Individualism can also lead to a “colorblind” mindset. According to Critical Race theorists, colorblindness is detrimental to racial harmony. The colorblind concept is the idea that

race should not influence how we treat others. True colorblindness means “not showing favoritism or discrimination to certain students based on skin color” (Castro Atwater, 2008, p. 246). This concept can be applied to people with cultural and linguistic differences as well. At first glance the concept of colorblindness sounds appealing. The idea suggests that if all students are treated the same then they are all being treated fairly, but in reality this is not the case. According to the American Psychological Association "psychological research conducted for more than two decades strongly supports the view that we cannot be, nor should we be, colorblind" (as cited in Castro Atwater, 2008). Teachers who ignore or minimize one of the defining elements of a student's identity send a message which suggests that those aspects of a student are not important in the school environment (Liggett, 2008). Since school represents the broader mainstream culture students receive the message that mainstream society does not recognize or value who they are.

In a qualitative study conducted by Liggett (2008) six white English language teachers participated in a study that explored how racial issues are addressed in the classroom. Throughout the study the investigator noticed a tendency for teachers to minimize the negative racial comments made to English language learners. One of the teachers justified her actions by implying that since everyone was so racially different identifying these differences would not be important. Liggett (2008) argued otherwise; "So long as race is applied to nonwhite people and whites are not racially named, whiteness functions as the norm" (p. 392).

This colorblind mindset contributes to the fact that many white people do not consider themselves to be members of a racial group. This is an unconscious bias that potentially keeps white people from applying the concept of race to themselves. Most white teachers in America do not see their race as playing a factor during their interactions with racial and ethnic minorities

so they typically do not understand how their actions play a role in oppressing minority students (Liggett, 2008). This may make it easier for teachers to ignore the issues of race in the classroom.

Colorblindness also contributes to teachers' lack of awareness regarding their own racial, cultural, and linguistic attitudes. Part of this may be due to the paradoxical nature of racism in this country. According to Delgado and Stefancic (1990) public ideology at this time is non-racist, meaning that it is politically incorrect to express racist thoughts and feelings. That said, the United States is historically a racist society, and contemporary Americans have been exposed to the attitudes and beliefs that predate our present society. Delgado and Stefancic (1990) argue that the dichotomy between our history with racism and our current non-racist ideology creates a paradoxical situation for Americans and makes racism something which is both an "irrational and normal" part of American society (p. 641). They state "when our culture teaches us to be racist and our ideology teaches us that racism is evil, we respond by excluding the forbidden lesson from our consciousness" (Delgado & Stefancic, 1990, p. 641). In this study it was important to recognize how unconscious biases, attitudes, and beliefs might influence a teacher's cross cultural experiences with English language learners.

Another concept that was helpful to consider as part of this study was what Critical Race theorists have identified as "deficit thinking." According to Yosso (2005) a deficit perspective assumes that schools function well and that "students, parents, and the community need to change to conform to an already effective and equitable system" (p. 75). For example, in a study which examined the "altruistic incentives" of nine white female teachers who tutored Hispanic students, extensive interviews and journal entries were used to show that although the teachers were committed to the students, they each believed that the children's Hispanic culture was a

deficit to their success (Liggett, 2008). Consequently teachers who consider a student's culture as something which is detrimental to their academic success might be less likely to incorporate culturally relevant materials into their lesson plans, and even less likely to recognize cultural experiences and culturally-based knowledge as legitimate sources of knowledge.

Critical Race theorists recognize that the experiential knowledge of cultural and linguistic minorities is a legitimate source of knowledge which should be viewed as a strength (Ladson Billings & Tate, 1995; Yosso, 2005). In fact, CRT recognizes minority experiences as a form of cultural capital within ethnic minority communities. Unfortunately these forms of capital often go unrecognized by dominant American society. For example, within the early childhood educational environment teachers may place value on students who enter school having had prior exposure to school-relevant skills such as exposure to literature and/or knowledge of colors, shapes, and number concepts. Students who obtain these skills or who arrive at school already possessing these skills are recognized as having cultural capital, as defined by mainstream society (Yosso, 2005).

CRT recognizes six forms of cultural capital that are distinct to minority communities. Among those are linguistic capital, aspirational capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistance capital (Yosso, 2005). Linguistic capital values the multiple language skills that many ethnic and linguistic minorities bring to the table. Aspirational capital refers to the ability to remain hopeful in the face of difficult situations. Familial capital is cultural knowledge within families that is passed down through generations. Social capital refers to the networks and social supports within minority communities. Navigational capital refers to the ability to navigate through racist institutions and environments such as schools, the workplace and the community. Resistance capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and strength minorities

need to oppose discrimination and subordination (Yosso, 2005). Without the knowledge and appreciation for these types of capital, teachers might be less likely to integrate minority experiences into what is considered to be “official knowledge” (Delgado Bernal, 2002).

Research findings have shown that students who have difficulty bridging the gap between culturally-based knowledge and school-based knowledge may have more difficulty adapting to school norms (Cummins, 1986; Foley, 1991; Rist, 1973, as cited in Nasir & Hand, 2006). This is especially true for students when the expectations at home are much different than the expectations at school. The differences in expectations are not necessarily culturally-based but for many ethnic minorities they are. The added complication of a language barrier between Hispanic ELL students and school community members is likely to compound the problem (Cammarota, 2006). Hence, a working knowledge of CRT will assist in recognizing and understanding the role of dominant norms in the experiences of White, general education teachers at Harbor Elementary School.

Socio-cultural Theory

Socio-cultural Theory was developed by Lev Vygotsky in the 1930’s (Arievitch & Haenen, 2005). Vygotsky argues that learning happens within social situations. He states that the social aspects of human interaction influence the way students think about and interpret the world around them. These types of interactions occur primarily through shared language between the learner and the more knowledgeable other (MKO), and are critical to the learning experience (Arievitch & Haenen, 2005). When teachers and students do not share a common language the teaching and learning environment can become compromised.

According to Dixon, “Language is the principal way human beings interpret and describe the world and communicate their thinking with others. The more developed people's language is,

the more developed their thinking is” (as cited in Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 78). According to Socio-cultural theorists, the spoken language is what connects the social and cognitive aspects of learning (Cazden, 2001, p. 2). In fact, spoken language is the method through which most teaching takes place, and is the method through which most students demonstrate what they have learned to the teacher. Spoken language is even more important in contemporary schools now that students are required to explain their thought processes on standardized exams.

Social constructionists believe that humans use words and language to construct their reality. They believe that members of organizations, such as schools, must talk with each other in order to co-construct a collective meaning and build a shared understanding of the world around them (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 78). This means that students with limited English language skills may be unable to fully comprehend the collective understanding of education, and teachers with limited Spanish language skills are not able to co-construct a classroom culture that includes ELL’s without considerable effort on both their parts. Without the full participation of everyone in the classroom there is limited shared meaning. Without shared meaning or shared “language” among community members, there is limited shared culture in the classroom.

Socio-cultural Theory views cultural practices as an important unit of analysis and helps us understand the role of classroom culture in the educational process (Nasir & Hand, 2006). According to Socio-cultural theorists, culture is more than just a set of practices, beliefs and artifacts that are carried from place to place and which endure over time. It is also what gets “produced and reproduced in moments of time as people ‘do’ life” (Nasir & Hand, 2006, p. 450).

Rogoff focuses on three aspects of social interaction that help analyze development within cultural practices. The first is the personal plane of social interaction which includes people’s thoughts, feelings, values, and beliefs. The interpersonal plane of social interaction

involves interpersonal communication, conflict style, cooperative activities, social roles, and helping behavior. The community or institutional plane of social interaction involves rules, language, history, values, beliefs, and identities (as cited in Nasir and Hand, 2006, p. 459). Each of these planes of analysis is not mutually exclusive and constitutes interdependent parts of a whole.

Understanding each plane of analysis allows us to understand the social and cultural developmental processes in the classroom. Typically this form of analysis is used to understand processes associated with the student, but in this study it can also be used to understand the processes associated with teachers for the following reason. To some extent there is a parallel developmental process occurring between Hispanic ELL's and white, English-speaking, general education teachers. Essentially both are learning to co-construct a shared meaning or culture within the context of doing so from different cultural perspectives. Each is in the process of figuring out how to negotiate the cultural and linguistic chasm between them in order to reach a common understanding. Therefore both can be considered learners in this scenario.

That said, teachers control most of the process. They control whose voice gets heard by granting or limiting students' airtime during classroom discussions. They also assign value to certain students and certain forms of knowledge, by validating or invalidating the information students discuss (Cazden, 2001). For young children this often happens during activities such as sharing time. Sharing time gives students who speak an opportunity to talk about what is personally relevant to their lives. It gives other students an opportunity to develop their listening and cognitive processing skills, and it gives the teacher an opportunity to communicate to students what they feel are important things for students to know. How each student experiences sharing time however, will depend on the quality of the communication between the teacher and

student, and the student's ability to understand and follow along with the teacher's agenda (Cazden, 2001).

According to Socio-cultural theorists, activities like sharing time can be particularly problematic for both teachers and cultural minority students for a couple of reasons. First, teachers may not grasp the significance of the cultural experiences students share and consequently may discount their relevance during classroom discussions. Second, linguistic minority students may be unable to follow a teacher's lead when he/she attempts to relate the student's experiences to the larger classroom agenda, leaving them disconnected from the educational process. According to Cazden (2001), these examples illustrate what she refers to as "a pervasive teaching dilemma" (p. 22). The dilemma for teachers is in how to validate a student's personal meaning while keeping the student connected to the broader knowledge of mainstream society.

Summary

Works that examine issues of race, culture, and learning recognize that teachers' preconceived notions about race or language can impact their expectations and interactions with students (Williams & Naremore, 1974). Seaside has its own unique set of demographic and political attributes; however these do not trump the cultural influences of dominant American society. Critical Race Theory helped bring to light the broader cultural context within which all schools in America function, and Socio-cultural Theory assisted in looking at cultural dynamics at the local level, meaning the cultural context of the school, the cultural context of classrooms, and the nature of classroom instruction (Nasir & Hand, 2008). Using both Critical Race Theory and Socio-cultural Theory together helped create a comprehensive understanding of the

importance of context, and helped distinguish classroom-based cultural experiences from the dominant cultural norms in the U.S. educational system.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Four main bodies of work were included in this review. These included a review of literature associated with race and cultural issues in the U.S., a review of language politics in this country, a review of instructional practices with English language learners, and an overview of the teacher attitudes research. A review of educational practices with ELL students and language politics in this country helped establish the scholarly significance of researching the cultural and language-based experiences of white, general education teachers. Literature related to racial and cultural issues in this country was reviewed in order to help the reader understand how prejudice, institutional racism, and power dynamics between mainstream teachers and ethnic minorities might contribute to cultural tension in the classroom. A review of instructional practices for English language learners informed the reader about best practices with linguistic minorities, and highlighted the tensions between mainstream instruction and instruction that meets the needs of cultural and linguistic minorities.

Literature related to teacher certification and professional development was beyond the scope of this review. Although teacher training is relevant to teachers' overall experiences as educators, the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' classroom experiences. Thus a review of the professional development literature at this stage of the inquiry would have been premature.

History of Language Attitudes and Language Politics in the United States

For the purposes of this study, teachers' thoughts and feelings about language diversity are referred to as language attitudes. The term 'language attitudes' is used according to

Tollefson's (1999) definition, which describes 'language attitudes' as "cultural assumptions about language and the nature and purpose of communication" (Ray, 2008, p. 28). According to Ray (2008) Americans have had an ambivalent relationship with language diversity throughout history, and language attitudes and politics have fluctuated dramatically depending on the political climate of the time. Historians have identified four periods in American history, each marked by distinct attitudes toward language diversity. These periods are defined as the Permissive Period (1700 to 1880), the Restrictive Period (1882 to 1960), the Opportunistic Period (1960 to 1980), and the Dismissive Period (1982 to the present), (Ray, 2008).

During the Permissive Period (1700-1880) the U.S. government was more concerned with life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness than they were about cultural and linguistic conformity. At that time the idea of establishing a national language was entertained but not actively pursued (Ray, 2008). The Restrictive Period (1882-1960) represented a time when linguistic intolerance was the norm. World War I, World War II, the common school movement, and the quest for greater civil rights (equal access to educational opportunity) all contributed to the high level of intolerance which characterized this era (Ray, 2008). During the Restrictive Period government agencies implemented language policies that suggested an effort to force linguistic conformity. Expectations to speak English continued to rise as schools became more bureaucratic. From 1940 to 1950 English-only policies prevailed and linguistic minorities were forced into classrooms with native English speakers (Beykont, 2002). Little to no second language support was provided, and by the 1950's English literacy skills were required in order to become a U.S. citizen (Beykont, 2002). The level of internationally-based anxiety increased with the onset of World War II, and people began to feel strongly that bilingual programs should be eliminated from the education system. Prior to the war many states had offered instruction in

German, but as fear of Germany increased, bilingual programs were eventually eliminated in favor of English-only instruction (Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2008).

Language attitudes during the Opportunistic Period (1960-1980) reflected a desire for Americans to compete with the Soviet Union. Once the Russians successfully landed on the moon, Americans realized they needed to examine the deficits within the U.S. educational system. In 1958 the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) was created to develop math, science, and foreign language instruction in elementary and secondary schools (Ray, 2008). In addition to encouraging monolingual English speaking students to learn a foreign language, the government enacted the Bilingual Education Act in 1968 to address the academic needs of students whose first language was not English (Sanchez & Sanchez, 2008).

Judicial support for educational programming for ELL students was also on the rise. In 1974 the Supreme Court case of *Lau v. Nichols* established the concept that "equitable treatment does not mean identical treatment" (Stuart, 2006, p. 237). The case was initiated as a class action suit by a number of parents in the San Francisco area on behalf of their Chinese-speaking children. The parents argued that students who are not provided curriculum materials in their native language, or at least in a language that the student understands, are not receiving the same educational opportunities as their English-speaking peers. The Supreme Court found in favor of the students and ruled that:

There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education (*Lau v. Nichols*, 1974).

The *Lau v. Nichols* case directly influenced passage of the Equal Education Opportunity Act in 1974 which mandated that appropriate programs be developed to educate English-

language learners. The programs were required to be theoretically sound, were to provide adequate resources for implementation, and were to include a protocol for modifying inadequate programs. However, the legislation provided no other guidance to educators, nor did they endorse any specific programs. As a result schools found it difficult to fulfill the mandates (Sanchez & Sanchez, 2008).

Language attitudes shifted again in 1980. Since that time there have been ongoing and heated debates between those who believe immigrants should assimilate into the English-speaking culture and those who favor cultural pluralism. Hispanic immigration trends have intensified this debate, and there is a growing contingency within our population which outwardly expresses anger towards immigrants (Beykont, 2002). These disagreements over language are evident across political, social, and legal venues, and language policies run the gamut from English-only policies to those which provide federal funding for programs intended to ensure equal educational access for linguistic minorities (www.Englishonly.org).

Understanding Linguistic Prejudice and Discrimination

According to Zuidema (2005) linguistic prejudice is one of the few "acceptable" prejudices in contemporary American society. As is true with other forms of prejudice, linguistic prejudice is characterized by the idea that someone can accurately assess another person based on the language or dialect they speak. When people put these ideas into action it becomes an active form of discrimination.

Linguistic prejudice is difficult to address because it exists in practically every corner of our society. For example, Lippi-Green (1997) states:

We regularly demand of people that they suppress or deny the most effective way they have of situating themselves in the world. *You may have dark skin... but you must not*

sound Black. You can wear a yarmulke if it is important to you as a Jew, but lose the accent...You're the best salesperson we've got, but must you sound so gay on the phone? (pp. 63-64).

Mainstream society in the United States endorses this bias to such a degree that on some level it is almost unrecognizable. In fact there are numerous examples of the myriad ways our government and institutions endorse linguistic discrimination. For instance, the term Hispanic, which refers to people who come from Spain or Spanish-speaking Latin America, is used by the U.S. Census Bureau and various government agencies to categorize an entire group of people based on their linguistic origin. If government practices typically categorized all people based on linguistic origin, the practice of doing so might not seem so discriminatory, but this is not the case. People of Spanish-speaking descent are the only people in the United States who are routinely singled out based on the language they speak. By doing so, the government and its agencies essentially place people of Hispanic descent at odds with the English speaking population (Stuart, 2006).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides a theory and methods for analyzing factors that contribute to linguistic discrimination. CDA views language as a social practice which holds no power of its own, but which can gain strength and meaning depending on its context. For example, as we know, social agreements are made using language. Yet, without access to a common language, linguistic minorities may not have a full understanding of certain interactions or agreements. According to Blackledge (2006), as the context of an agreement evolves it may become more difficult to renegotiate it, and at some point it may become non-negotiable if the "agreement" gets adopted into law (p. 40).

For instance, as mentioned in Blackledge (2006), British politicians have argued for legislative change that requires everyone in Britain to demonstrate English proficiency in order to qualify for British citizenship. The argument put forth is that if everyone in the country learned English, then everyone would be able to participate as active citizens in the democratic British society. However, the argument does not take into consideration the fact that not everyone will learn a second language and those that do may become proficient enough to function within daily society, but may never gain a full understanding of the nuances of the language. There is also no guarantee that those who learn the language will automatically be accepted and welcomed into the majority community. In this example, the rationale for obtaining English proficiency in order to qualify for citizenship was put forth within the “authoritative” context of the government. Blackledge (2006) argues that a proposal made within this context has a higher chance of being perceived as legitimate, and therefore accepted. Consequently, those with limited English skills and/or a compromised ability to understand the nuances of the language are at a higher risk of being hurt by the law, and are less likely to be heard by those in power. Once the proposal is signed into law, the opportunity to renegotiate the “agreement” disappears. This is just one example that Blackledge (2006) offers to illustrate how linguistic discrimination becomes publicly endorsed.

According to Stuart (2006) this dynamic is less prevalent in countries where ethnic groups share power. In such countries ethnic group membership and language differences do not influence the power structure. Therefore language differences between groups bear no consequence to either group. But in the United States ethnic groups do not share equal status, and members of American society are noticeably stratified according to people’s race and ethnic background. American policies routinely subordinate the Spanish language, which essentially

puts Spanish speakers in an inferior position as well. Since language is an important aspect of nearly all Spanish-speaking cultures, language politics in this country is intimately connected to issues of race, power, and the educational process (Stuart, 2006, p. 246).

Pedagogy vs. Policy

Numerous research studies have shown that using a student's native language during academic instruction is critical to the academic success of English language learners (Karathanos, 2009; Lucas & Katz, 1994; Ramos, 2001; Ramos, 2005). Students who are able to maintain their native language while learning English have a much greater advantage over students who are thrust into English-only programs (Lucas & Katz, 1994). According to the second language acquisition literature it takes most people 2 to 3 years to develop oral language fluency in a second language (Lucas & Katz, 1994). This level of fluency Cummins (1981) calls Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS). This level of fluency is sufficient for day-to-day communication, but leaves onlookers with the impression that the English learner has achieved mastery over the language. However, it takes 4-7 years to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in another language (Cummins, 1981). Contextual clues such as environment, body language, and social context make BICS easier to develop than CALP. CALP is more difficult to achieve because academic language is often presented in the absence of contextual clues. Researchers argue that students who are learning English should receive content instruction in their native language until they have achieved academic proficiency in English; doing so allows ELL students to keep academic pace with their English-speaking peers (Karathanos, 2009).

Providing native language instruction also allows teachers to capitalize on the language skills that ELL students already possess. According to Cummins' (1979), linguistic

interdependence principle, proficiency in one's native language increases a person's chance of obtaining proficiency in a second language, because the skill set acquired learning a first language can be borrowed and applied to developing a second language. Thus native language instruction helps provide the linguistic continuity students need to connect their prior knowledge and current knowledge to the new concepts they are learning. This also helps promote academic and cognitive growth and facilitate language development in both English and one's native tongue (Karathanos, 2009). Students who do not receive content instruction in their native language tend to fall behind their English-speaking peers as a consequence of trying to learn academic content before they have achieved an adequate level of English proficiency to do so (Lucas and Katz, 1994).

In addition to language supports researchers have also discovered a variety of instructional strategies that work well with the ELL population. These include providing ELL students with a cooperative learning environment in order to develop English language skills, through increased and meaningful exposure to language usage with peers. They also include providing ELL students with meaningful representations of concepts, using instructional conversations, providing culturally responsive instruction, teaching cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and building on students' prior knowledge (Waxman & Tellez, 2002). Building on student's prior knowledge is a particularly helpful strategy with ELL students. Garcia (1991) found that "when prior knowledge is controlled, performance differences between Hispanic and monolingual English-speaking students essentially disappear" (as cited in Goldenberg, Rueda & August, 2006, p. 282).

California has extensive experience educating Hispanic ELL students. According to ESL competency requirements, California Teachers of English language learners are expected to

successfully address known areas of academic difficulty for ELL students. These include language structure and use, syntax and semantics, and language pragmatics (www.ctel.nesinc.com). Teachers should also understand the differences between primary and secondary language acquisition, and be able to use appropriate instructional strategies for each. They are also expected to recognize and address common barriers to ELL education. These include student affect, assessment tools, and socio-cultural/political factors such as family expectations, acculturation patterns, parents' prior educational experience, school culture and organization, differential status of English and Spanish, and language policies and planning (www.ctel.nesinc.com).

Despite evidence which shows that ELL students benefit from native language supports, bilingual or ESL instructional strategies, and culturally informed teachers, the battle over pedagogy continues. California, Arizona and Massachusetts have led the assault against bilingual services for ELL students. For example, in 1998 California passed Proposition 227 which eliminated most of the bilingual classes in the state in favor of English-only instruction (Gandara, P. & Hopkins, M, 2010). At that time many ELL students were placed in transitional programs. These programs were taught primarily in English and typically did not last for more than one year. Massachusetts followed suit in 2002 and mandated that all schools provide Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) to their ELL students (www.doe.mass.edu). Students receive instruction primarily in English and are expected to move into a mainstream, English-only classroom after only one or two years. According to Beykont (2002) it is not uncommon for states who have implemented these types of programs to transition ELL students into mainstream English-only classrooms long before they have achieved academic proficiency in English.

Preliminary research studies suggested that transitional programs like these were beneficial to ELL student performance. Research conducted 10 years after implementation however, have found transitional programs not only have failed to close the achievement gap between ELL students and their English-speaking peers, but in some cases those gaps have widened (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010, p. 3). According to Gandara and Hopkins (2010), Massachusetts has essentially prevented teachers from using strategies they know to be effective with ELL students. This has left teachers feeling frustrated and incompetent (p. 3). ELL students who receive English-only instruction before they are ready, are placed in what language experts call a “sink or swim submersion” type of program (Lessow-Hurley, 2003).

Two-Way Immersion Programs also known as Dual-Language Programs are considered ideal for all students. They serve both ELL students and native English speakers, all of whom are placed in the same classroom. The goal of dual-language programs is to develop second language skills for both populations. This type of program is considered to be “additive” because each group of students adds a second language without compromising their native language skills (Lessow-Hurley, 2003, p. 39). ELL students add English while continuing to develop their native language, and native English speakers learn a new language at no expense to the development of their English language skills (Lessow-Hurley, 2003, p. 39). Dual-language programs might not be feasible for schools that have several different languages represented by their ELL student populations, but several communities throughout the country now have adequate numbers of Hispanic students to support English/Spanish dual-language programs.

Advocates of bilingual or dual-language education recognize the intellectual and personal benefits of exposure to diverse languages and cultures (Stuart, 2006). Research has shown that bilingual students, in the long run, have better language skills overall and are more successful

than their monolingual peers (Lessow-Hurley, 2003). Dual-language programming throughout the country could not only help improve graduation rates among the Hispanic community, but would also improve the language abilities of all students, enrich the culture of our nation, help meet our need for more bilingual professionals, and put us on more culturally competent footing with the rest of the world (Stuart, 2006).

Unfortunately politics rather than our knowledge of best practices seem to have controlled the trajectory of education for ELL students (Lucas & Katz, 1994). Language policies have all but eliminated the ability for Hispanic students to maintain their Spanish language skills while learning English. Ongoing and heated debates between those who support cultural pluralism and those who support cultural assimilation continue to compromise how we educate ELL students. Current educational policies and programming for ELL students suggest supporters of cultural assimilation are winning the debate (Lucas & Katz, 1994).

Language Attitudes Research

Much of the literature associated with teaching linguistic minorities focuses on teachers trained in second language acquisition instruction, typically referred to as ESL teachers (English as a Second Language). Few studies have focused on general education teachers who teach ELL students, yet this information is sorely needed for a couple of reasons. First, current immigration patterns along with limited resources have resulted in more ELL students being placed in general education classrooms. Second, mainstream classrooms are structured differently and have a different focus than classrooms specifically designed to teach language minorities. General education classrooms also have their own set of stressors (Youngs & Stanosheck Youngs, 1999). Therefore, rather than review research associated with ESL teachers,

this section will examine the historical trends in language attitude research and piece together findings from various studies associated with white, general education teachers. Studies include topics such as teachers' attitudes toward language diversity and ELL students, mainstream teachers' educational philosophies regarding teaching ELL students in the general education classroom, and general education teachers' views on the advantages and disadvantages of teaching ELL students.

Historical Trends in Language Attitudes Research

Interest in attitudes about language diversity started to appear in the literature during the Civil Rights Era, when investigators tried to understand prejudicial attitudes towards different English dialects (Williams, Whitehead, & Miller, 1972). Williams, et al. (1972) were some of the first investigators to examine language attitudes within the educational environment. In 1994 Deborah Byrnes from the Department of Elementary Education at Utah State University and Gary Kiger from the Department of Sociology at Utah State University made their first major contribution to the field when they developed the Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale (LATS). In 1996 Lee Manning from Old Dominion University joined forces with Byrnes and Kiger, and together they continued to explore teachers' language attitudes. Their overall research efforts and the LATS in particular have created a solid foundation for subsequent investigators, and the results of their work continue to be heavily cited in the literature (Byrnes et al., 1996). More recently, the bulk of contemporary research on language attitudes has been conducted in states like Texas, Arizona, and California, where some of the largest Hispanic immigrant communities are located.

Research Methods Used in Language Attitudes Research

Historically investigators of teachers' language attitudes have predominantly employed quantitative and mixed method research designs to examine teachers' attitudes toward language diversity. Each paradigm had a unique value depending on the type of inquiry and depth of understanding the investigator wished to pursue. According to Creswell (2005), quantitative surveys are most appropriate for examining attitudes, determining the relationship among variables, or comparing groups (p. 377). Both quantitative and mixed method studies in this area of inquiry have almost exclusively used surveys or closed-response questionnaires to measure teachers' language attitudes (Williams et al., 1972; Byrnes & Kiger, 1994; Byrnes et al., 1996; Byrnes, Kiger, & Manning, 1997).

Simple correlational research is a type of research within the quantitative research paradigm that "employs a statistic that yields a single number (called a correlation coefficient) that expresses the extent to which a pair of variables (two sets of numbers) is related" (Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 2010, p. 96). Studies which have implemented the Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale (LATS) are some of the most poignant examples of simple correlational research, and have been pivotal to research related to teachers' language attitudes and English language learners (Byrnes & Kiger, 1994; Byrnes et al., 1996; Byrnes et al., 1997). The LATS has been a valuable instrument with which researchers have measured a number of structural and social psychological variables associated with teachers' language attitudes. These areas include; language politics, limited English proficient (LEP) intolerance, and language support (Byrnes & Kiger, 1994).

It is clear from the trajectory of the language attitudes research that language attitudes studies were initially designed to better understand prejudice, racism, and social stratification

based on language differences. Items on Byrnes & Kiger's (1994) Language Attitudes Scale (LATS) were developed by adapting attitude measures from the race and ethnicity literature that suggest a guiding principle similar to those found in the critical theories of race.

Teachers' Attitudes toward ELL Students in the General Education Classroom

Later investigators expanded the focus of language attitudes research to see how language attitudes and overall feelings toward ELL students presented in the general education classroom. Among the limited amount of research on mainstream teachers teaching linguistic minorities, findings suggest that the presence of cultural and linguistic minorities in the general education classroom present both challenges and opportunities to the teacher (Harklau, 1994, Penfield, 1987; Platt & Troudi, 1997, as cited in Youngs and Stanosheck Youngs, 1999, p. 16; Pettit, 2011; Reeves; 2006). Studies also found that most general education teachers were not trained to teach second language acquisition, and that general education teachers were not inclined to seek out this type of training (Clair, 1993, 1995, as cited in Youngs & Stanosheck Youngs, 1999, p.16). Other studies have shown that mainstream, general education teachers recognize the benefits of having ELL students in their classrooms, but that negative thoughts and concerns about having ELL students in mainstream classrooms may outweigh the acknowledged benefits.

In a study conducted by Walker, Shafer, & Iams (2004) the investigators examined the nature and extent of mainstream teachers' attitudes toward ELL students, the factors which affect teacher attitudes toward ELLs, and how these attitudes varied by community context. The investigators used a grounded theory approach to guide their study design and analyses. Their work culminated in the development of a new theory they called the theory of attitude development. The theory argues that teachers in homogeneous schools or in schools with a low number of English language learners tend to start out with positive, neutral, or open-minded

attitudes about English language learners, but when teachers find themselves unprepared or unsupported to meet the challenges of working with ELL students, negative attitudes can emerge (Walker et al., 2004, p. 153).

Youngs and Stanosheck Youngs (1999) were able to further uncover teachers' attitudes about ELL students. In their study they asked teachers to identify the advantages and disadvantages associated with having English language learners in the general education classroom. The investigators found that teachers had both positive and negative feelings toward having ELL students in class. The authors identified seven categories of advantages and 15 categories of disadvantages that teachers associated with having English language learners in the mainstream classroom. Within these categories the researchers found that teachers were twice as likely to refer to classroom-wide benefits when discussing advantages of having ELL students in a mainstream classroom and four times more likely to refer to ELL students or teachers when discussing the disadvantages of having them in class. The most frequent responses indicated that "mainstream teachers believe (ELL) students trigger cultural awareness, that they are good students to teach, and that they can learn from mainstream English-speaking students. In contrast, mainstream teachers also believed that (ELL) students bring unique emotional and personal experiences to class that are difficult for mainstream students to appreciate, that they create extra work for frustrated teachers, and that they are not well enough prepared to learn effectively in the mainstream classroom" (Youngs & Stanosheck Youngs, 1999, pp. 26-27).

The Relationship between Teachers Beliefs and Behaviors

One possible reason why researchers examined teachers' attitudes toward language and cultural minorities was because of an underlying concern that negative attitudes and beliefs contributed to teachers' negative behaviors toward minority students. Research conducted by

Bandura (1986) focused on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and behaviors. Based on those results Bandura felt that teachers' affect was the best determinant of their decisions. The connection between teachers' attitudes/ beliefs and teachers' behaviors however, has not been well established (Elbaz, 1983; Nisbett & Ross, 1980, Shulman, 1986; as cited in Ramos, 2001). For example, Ramos (2001) was unable to establish a link between teachers' beliefs and teachers' behaviors. In his study he examined mainstream teachers' opinions about using native language instruction with ELL students. His theoretical assumption was that as teachers learned about the benefits of using native languages in the classroom their beliefs about using them would change, and that ultimately they would incorporate native language strategies into their classrooms. In his study there were a number of mainstream teachers who supported the theory behind using native language instruction in class, but almost none of them incorporated these strategies into their practice. A study conducted by Karathanos (2009) confirmed these findings, but neither study was able to account for the discrepancy between teachers' support for native language instruction and their failure to use it in class.

Wilcox-Herzog (2002) conducted a related study with the sole purpose of examining the relationship between teachers' beliefs and behaviors. It was developed out of work conducted by Clark and Peterson who argued that "teacher beliefs and or theories serve as a 'contextual filter' through which teachers screen their classroom experiences, interpret them, and adapt their subsequent classroom practices" (as cited in Wilcox-Herzog, 2002, p. 82). Although findings from Wilcox-Herzog's (2002) research found no connection between teachers' attitudes and their actions, what the findings did confirm was that several internal and external factors not only impact the development of a teacher's attitudes and beliefs but also facilitate and/or inhibit the expression of those attitudes/beliefs. For instance, failure to provide culturally appropriate

services to ELL students might have as much to do with a lack of resources and administrative support as it does with teacher bias and institutional racism.

For example, in a study conducted by Lucas and Katz (1994), monolingual teachers who might have typically been “against” native language instruction used a number of different strategies to incorporate native language support into their instruction. The major difference between these teachers and teachers from other studies was that these teachers were well supported with resources and by the administrators of their programs. Although these particular studies found no connection between teachers’ beliefs and behaviors, results from similar studies have. These inconsistent findings suggest that teachers’ “contextual filters” are so complex that we have many more contextual variables to explore before the attitude/behavior connection is fully understood.

Summary

In summary, studies which have used quantitative or mixed method research designs to examine the association between teachers' attitudes and teaching ELL students have greatly contributed to the field of teaching ethnic and linguistic minorities. Quantitative studies have successfully determined a number of social and psychological variables that correlate with teachers’ attitudes. They have also helped improve our understanding of cognitive complexity and the role it plays in the development of teachers’ attitudes (Byrnes & Kiger, 1994; Byrnes et al., 1996; Byrnes et al., 1997; Ramos, 2001). Mixed method research has expanded upon this knowledge by allowing researchers to examine multiple factors simultaneously (Garcia-Nevarez, 2005; Lucas & Katz, 1994; Wilcox-Herzog, 2002; Ramos, 2005; Walker, 2004). Examiners have been able to look not only at teachers’ attitudes but also at mainstream teachers' perspectives regarding the theory and practice of using native language instruction with ELL

students in the general education setting (Garcia-Nevarez, 2005; Lucas & Katz, 1994; Ramos, 2005). Investigators have also been able to cross analyze factors related to teachers' attitudes toward English language learners, teachers' attitudes toward the use of native languages in the classroom, and contextual variables hypothesized to influence teachers' attitudes (Karathanos, 2009).

Ultimately, research findings support the notion that understanding teachers' attitudes and experiences is a difficult and complex process. Attitudes are difficult to qualify and measure. They are also impacted by multiple factors and can be different for the same person depending on the context and time of the inquiry. And although research has helped us understand the challenges mainstream teachers face while teaching ELL students, researchers have done little to capture the lived experiences of general education teachers who have ELL students in their classrooms (Karathanos, 2009). This research study addresses this gap in the literature.

Chapter 3: Research Design

This research project is not a language attitudes study yet language attitudes research provided valuable insight during the study design process. Attitude research has shown that simple correlational studies do not adequately capture the subtle nuances of people's attitudes and beliefs. Teacher attitudes research also tells us that understanding the context of a situation may help us better understand why people feel the way they do about a situation. It may also help us better understand which contextual factors might influence people's attitudes and feelings about their experiences. This study employed a qualitative research design in order to address these two issues. The Listening Guide is a qualitative methodology, explained in depth later in this chapter, which helped the researcher conduct an in-depth exploration of participants'

thoughts and feelings about teaching English language learners. It also helped capture the richness of participants' experiences.

Research Questions

This study examined the experiences of white, monolingual, general education teachers who have increasing numbers of Hispanic ELL students in their classrooms. Several themes came into play in order to understand this phenomenon. These included educational practices and philosophy, cultural contexts within classrooms, schools and communities, teachers' attitudes towards cultural and linguistic minorities, unconscious racial and linguistic biases, and language politics. The goal of this research was to better understand what happens at the classroom level between white, monolingual, general education teachers and Hispanic ELL students. In order to achieve the goal of this study data were obtained to answer one main question and three secondary questions. The main question was as follows:

How do white, monolingual, general education teachers at Harbor Elementary School describe their experiences with teaching Hispanic English language learners?

Secondary questions focused more specifically on the linguistic and cultural aspects of teachers' experiences as they related to the Spanish speaking population in general, and to Hispanic ELL students in particular. The secondary questions were as follows:

1. What are the language attitudes and/or cultural assumptions that these teachers express as they describe their experiences with teaching Hispanic English language learners?
2. What linguistic and cultural themes are most prevalent when these teachers discuss their experiences with Hispanic English language learners?

3. What linguistic and cultural opportunities and challenges do these teachers report as they describe their teaching experiences with Hispanic English language learners?

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design. Qualitative research designs typically include any combination of four basic types of data collection procedures including interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative studies typically provide investigators with the tools needed to explore the subtle nuances and contextual variables associated with a topic under investigation. Interpretive research is a form of qualitative research which seems to be the most prevalent qualitative method in the teacher attitudes research, whether as a standalone study or as the qualitative component of a mixed method design (Garcia-Nevarez, 2005; Lucas & Katz, 1994; Wilcox-Herzog, 2002; Yoon, 2007; Ramos, 2005; Walker, 2004).

As is true in interpretive research this investigator served as the primary instrument of data collection and sought to explain the phenomenon under investigation using "an extensive collection of thick description (detailed records concerning contexts, people, actions, and the perceptions of participants)" (Locke et al., 2010, p. 184). Given the likelihood that teachers' attitudes and experiences would be complex and highly contextual; a qualitative study design was an appropriate choice for this study. Since the purpose of the study was to investigate a phenomenon, conducting the study using a phenomenological study design was the logical choice.

According to Van Manen (1990) phenomenological research uses interpretive methods and descriptive/phenomenological methods to examine the lived experiences of the research

participants (as cited in Hatch, 2002, p. 29). Phenomenology is rooted in the philosophical perspectives of Edmund Husserl (1859 -1938), a German mathematician who wrote extensively on phenomenological philosophy from 1913 until his retirement (Hatch, 2002). According to Husserl, phenomenology is about understanding people's perceptions of a phenomenon. Perception, according to Husserl is the primary source of knowledge and is realized by integrating ones intentions and sensations (as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 52). Van Manen (1984) describes phenomenology as the "application of logos (language and thoughtfulness) to the phenomenon (lived experience), to what shows itself" (Van Manen, 1984, p.4). The goal of phenomenological research is to better understand the structure or essence of the phenomenon. In this case the goal was to understand the essence of teaching Hispanic English language learners in the general education setting.

Site and Participants

The study was conducted at Harbor Elementary School in Seaside, Massachusetts. Seaside is a low income, diverse city with a population of approximately 91,000 people (www.census.gov). The city has a fairly long history of social and economic problems including gang and domestic violence, high unemployment rates, drug trafficking, prostitution, and drug abuse. Immigration has been an integral part of the city's history. Immigrants from both Portugal and Cape Verde have a longstanding presence in the community, and over the past ten years Hispanic immigrants have significantly added to this population. According to recent census data nearly 40 percent of Seaside's residents over the age of five speak a language other than English at home (www.census.gov).

Harbor Elementary School is situated within a school district which services 12,538 students, many who fall within high risk categories. For example, 71.2 percent of students in

Seaside are considered low income and are eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. In 2010-2011 the overall dropout rate in Seaside was 7.1 percent, and for Hispanic students it was 9.2 percent (www.doe.mass.edu). According to state guidelines, Seaside is considered “underperforming” and is presently under corrective action by the state.

One of the district’s biggest challenges has been meeting the demands for services. According to district-wide data, as of 2010-2011 English was a second language for 21.4 percent of Seaside’s student population. At Harbor Elementary School English was a second language for 35.7 percent of its students (www.doe.mass.edu). A large percentage of those students were Spanish speakers. Several schools throughout the district operate on extremely limited budgets, and are forced to provide services with insufficient resources. At the time of this study Seaside had one Spanish-speaking speech pathologist and no Spanish speaking occupational therapists, physical therapists, or psychologists to formally assess or service ELL students. SEI classes were not necessarily taught by Spanish bilingual teachers. Some were staffed with English-speaking teachers, and some with bilingual teachers who spoke a language other than Spanish.

Harbor Elementary School became the chosen site for this study for several reasons. The decision was based on a thorough examination of school factors and demographic trends in the city. As stated before, Seaside is a city experiencing rapid increases to its Hispanic population, many of whom come from Puerto Rico and South or Central America (www.doe.mass.edu). Not all schools in the city are affected by this influx, however. Of the 20 elementary schools, three middle schools, one high school, one alternative Jr. /Sr. high school, and one small alternative high school in the city, only seven of the 26 schools in the district had a high percentage of Hispanic students at the time this study was conducted. These included four elementary schools, two middle schools, and the high school. Demographic statistics for two of

the elementary schools indicated high but static numbers of Hispanic students over the past ten years. Demographic statistics for the other two elementary schools, two middle schools and the high school indicated rapid increases to their Hispanic student populations (www.doe.mass.edu).

Harbor was one of these elementary schools and was chosen as the site for this study for two reasons. First, elementary schools tend to more closely represent the community they serve than do middle schools or high schools, which have students from several different neighborhoods. Second, Harbor Elementary School was a particularly good location for this study, not only because it is the largest elementary school in the city, but also because its neighborhood has a rapidly growing population of first generation Hispanic immigrants (www.doe.mass.edu).

This investigator used a purposive sampling technique to select participants for the study. Purposive implies that there is an intentional selection of participants based on specific criteria established by the researcher at the outset of the investigation. According to Moustakas (1994) the researcher may wish to consider general characteristics such as the participants' age, ethnic background, gender, or other identifying characteristics, but the primary criterion for inclusion in a phenomenological study is that the participant has experienced the phenomenon under investigation. In this study the criteria included white, monolingual, general education teachers who have Hispanic English language learners in their classrooms.

The investigator solicited the help of two school adjustment counselors at Harbor to identify teachers who met the criteria for the study. According to Creswell (1998) long interviews with up to 10 people is the recommended amount of participants for

phenomenological research. A sample size between 2 and 10 participants is enough to reach saturation. The investigator's goal was to secure 4-6 participants for the study.

With the help of two school adjustment counselors at Harbor eleven teachers from preschool through grade 5 were identified as potential research participants. Each teacher received an invitation (Appendix A) asking them to consider participating in the research study. Only one teacher responded to the initial inquiry. Upon further investigation it came to the researcher's attention that at the time the invitation was sent out teachers were in the process of relocating their classrooms. Given the level of upheaval in the building teachers received a follow-up e-mail to ascertain whether or not they had received the hard copy invitation. The remaining ten teachers responded to the e-mail. Four declined to be involved and six agreed to hear more about the study. The initial plan was to hold a meeting at the school with all prospective participants, but given the chaotic situation in the school the researcher decided to explain the research study to potential participants by phone. The investigator spoke to five teachers by phone. The sixth did not respond. The information teachers received by phone can be found on the disclosure statement/consent form (Appendix B). All five teachers agreed to participate in the study. One participant was eventually eliminated because it was later discovered that she did not meet the criteria for the study.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a qualitative method called semi-structured in-depth interviewing. According to Kvale (1996) the qualitative interview is "literally an inter view, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (as cited in Groenewald, 2004, page 13). The interviews lasted approximately one and a half hours each. The interviews took place in quiet, private locations which were mutually agreed upon by the

investigator and participants. During the interviews participants were asked to describe what it has been like both personally and professionally to teach Hispanic English language learners in the general education setting. Participants were asked to consider four main areas that have been closely associated with teaching cultural and linguistic minorities. These included their educational philosophy about teaching linguistic minorities, their feelings about teaching linguistic minorities, their attitudes toward linguistic and cultural diversity, and their views regarding the relationship between culture and learning. The interview protocol is outlined in Appendix C and addresses these areas of consideration.

In addition to teacher interviews, data were collected from the investigator's memos and from what is called the "listener's response." Memos included written records, which the investigator wrote immediately after conducting the interviews, and included the investigator's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about the interview sessions. Data were also gathered from separate memos called the "listener's response." These were memos written by the investigator during or immediately after listening to the audio tape of each transcript. These included the personal assumptions, personal circumstances, and personal agendas that emerged as the investigator listened to the interviews (Cruz, 2003, p. 10). The investigator then separated the interview data from the investigator's data in order to isolate the voices of the participants and minimize the influence of her feelings, opinions, biases and personal agendas on the data analysis process.

Data Analysis

The investigator analyzed the data using a voice-centered methodology called the "Listening Guide." The Listening Guide was developed by Carol Gilligan in the early 1980's and is a method of analysis which directs researchers to "listen" to research interviews multiple

times while being mindful of specific aspects of the interview data each time they listen (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertsch, 2003). Raider-Roth (2005) describes the Listening Guide as “a blend between Piagetian clinical interviewing exploration methods, which focus on the meaning of ideas, words, and terminology, and a relational approach... which centers on the meaning embedded in life experiences” (Raider-Roth, 2005, p. 12). The Listening Guide has universal application and is similar enough to traditional methods of phenomenological data analysis that it is considered a valid method for analyzing phenomenological data. For example, Moustakas’ (1994) modifications of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of data analysis and the “Listening Guide” both call for the researcher to record a full description of each co-researcher’s experience of the phenomenon. Both methods instruct the researcher to examine each statement in the transcript to determine its level of significance in the phenomenon. Both methods involve recording all relevant statements from the participants and noting all inconsistencies. Both methods instruct the researcher to relate and cluster the unique qualities of the experience into themes and to synthesize each meaning and theme into a “textured” description of the experience. Each requires the researcher to reflect on his/her own experience of the phenomenon and to construct a detailed description of the meanings and essences of his/her experiences. Finally, each method involves integrating all individual descriptions into a composite description of the phenomenon which serves to represent the participant group as a whole (Moustakas, 1994).

The difference between traditional methods of phenomenological data analysis and the Listening Guide method is that the Listening Guide method offers a conceptual framework which helps researchers “listen” to their participants in a mindful and meticulous fashion. “Listening” according to the Listening Guide method does not necessarily mean listening in the

literal sense, although listening to the audiotape while reading a transcript is part of the suggested protocol. Rather “listening” means the investigator is fully present during the interview and analysis process. It means the researcher makes every effort to fully understand, as Raider-Roth (2005) put it, not only what is said but also what is “silenced.” It is a way of “hearing” what a participant is saying, what a participant wants to say but cannot, and what the participant chooses to avoid altogether. The reason for listening to the audiotape several times is to hear all aspects of a participant’s voice. As stated in Gilligan et al. (2003) a person’s “voice” is often textured, meaning there are many layers to what a person says. These voices may be “in tension” with each other, with the voices of others or with the culture or context of their experiences.

The method breaks the analysis into four distinct phases or “readings” of the interview transcripts, each focusing on different aspects of the narrative (Byrne, Canavan, & Millar, 2009). The first phase involves two steps, finding the main ideas or plot of the transcript and recording the “listener’s response” to the interview. In the second phase the researcher attempts to identify the participants’ first person voice. This is done by developing what is called an I-poem. The I-poem is constructed using “I” plus the accompanying verb, and serves to highlight the physical and emotional qualities of the participants’ experience. In the third phase the investigator looks for the “melody” within the participants’ voice; the places of harmony or disharmony between their thoughts and statements (Gilligan et al., 2003). This phase starts to tease out ideas and comments that address the research questions. The fourth phase of the process pulls together everything that was learned about the participants and their experiences and applies it to the research questions, one participant at a time (Gilligan et al., 2003).

During the first phase of analysis the researcher identified and coded 27 types of phrases and words that appeared repeatedly throughout each transcript. These 27 codes were ultimately

consolidated into seven major codes and each transcript was re-read several times to ascertain the relevance of each phrase based on these codes. During this initial phase the investigator also recorded her "listener's response" memos as previously explained. The process resulted in 5 major themes and 14 sub-themes. During the second phase of analysis the investigator developed an I-Poem for each participant. To do this the researcher copied each of the participant's I-statements in their order of appearance into a separate document. This helped the investigator understand how participants viewed themselves, and it helped provide insight into participants' unconscious biases. I-statements were also helpful in creating a profile for each participant using their own words and perceptions of self.

In the third phase, the investigator examined the transcripts one at a time to find complimentary and contradictory statements within each transcript to gain a better understanding of the participants' experiences relative to the research questions. In the fourth phase the researcher considered all of the information and data on each participant to better understand the experiences of each participant. The completed analysis included a textured description of cross-referenced data from all participants.

Validity and Credibility

According to Creswell (2009) validity in qualitative research refers to the accuracy of the findings and is one of the strengths associated with qualitative research; however, the researcher must use multiple validity strategies to ensure valid findings and gain the trust of their readers. Creswell (2009) outlines eight strategies researchers can use to check the accuracy of their findings. These include triangulation of data, member checking, use of "rich, thick description" to relay the findings, disclosure of researcher bias, presentation of all information found in the

research study including conflicting and contradictory themes, prolonged time in the field, peer debriefing, and use of an outside auditor to review the entire project.

Six of the eight strategies were employed in this study. Some have already been discussed within the data collection and data analysis sections of this proposal but are worth reiterating here. Since this study is a phenomenological study the triangulation of data was already incorporated into the design. For example, each interview was cross-referenced before the researcher generated a final description of the phenomenon under investigation. Member checking was also built into the study design described herein. The researcher sent each participant her transcript for review. Each participant participated in a one hour follow-up phone call to discuss the researcher's analysis in more detail. Participants were encouraged to make additional comments, clarify their statements, and challenge the researcher's interpretation of their words. The investigator also utilized SPC members at Northeastern University as peer readers to review the study, offer constructive criticism, and challenge the findings. As previously discussed the process of checking for conflicting themes and discrepant information amongst the data was accounted for in the "Listening Guide" method of data analysis. The investigator also wrote her findings using "rich, thick" descriptive language not only for validation purposes but also to provide a thoughtful and meaningful presentation of participants' points of view.

The researcher also addressed threats to the validity of this study. According to Green and Caraceli (1997) qualitative research focuses on themes within the context of a research site. For this reason, findings from qualitative studies may not easily transfer to other venues. In this case there were many school and community variables that contributed to the highly contextual nature of this study. This is not to say that findings from this study cannot be applied to other

sites, but it was important to carefully outline the contextual details so the reader can determine whether or not findings from this study are transferable to other venues. That said, one of the biggest threats to the validity of this study was researcher bias.

Researcher Bias

At the time of the study the investigator worked in a trilingual office that serviced preschool-ready children from all over Seaside. The office was located within the central administration building and had experienced a tremendous increase in children from Spanish-speaking homes. Many of these children lived with first-generation Hispanic immigrants who did not speak English and who did not have access to English-language supports. As one of the few bilingual people in the building, the researcher was well aware of the pressure that communication barriers placed on everyone in the building. The monolingual, English-speaking staff was often unable to communicate with Spanish-speaking parents, and bilingual staff felt pressured each time they were pulled away from their jobs to translate in other offices. The researcher needed to guard against making assumptions about how this dynamic played out at Harbor Elementary School.

The investigator was also a strong supporter of bilingualism and felt that Harbor Elementary School had the perfect conditions to implement a dual-language program at the school. This point of view could have potentially interfered with the researcher's ability to maintain an objective outlook on data obtained from teachers who might have strongly believed in English-only education. That said, the researcher's political views about the possibility of Spanish becoming an official language in this country were mixed. She supported language diversity, but a lack of resources had prevented her from providing documents to parents in their native language. Experiences like this one may have led the researcher to over identify with

participants who were frustrated with a system that does not supply the resources necessary to meet the requirements of its own mandates. Additionally, the researcher has seen white, monolingual staff and administrators outwardly refuse to help language minorities and parents who do not speak English. The researcher needed to guard against expecting that all white, monolingual teachers would share this same mindset.

Authenticity

According to Haggman-Laitila (1999) one of the crucial steps to maintaining authenticity during data collection and data analysis begins well before the data collection process. She recommends for researchers to design the themes and key questions for their interviews prior to conducting an interview. For this reason an interview protocol was developed prior to conducting the interviews. This helped the investigator become aware of her points of view and guard against asking leading questions that solely reflected the researcher's frame of mind. The interview protocol was informed by the literature and can be found in Appendix C.

During the data analysis process it was also important to identify the differences between the investigator's point of view and the points of view of the participants. According to Haggman-Laitila (1999) the researcher does this in order to formulate a new way of thinking about the topic under investigation. This is done by using the views of everyone who participates in the study, while keeping researcher assumptions at bay. She says the researcher needs to move back and forth between the parts and the whole of the data in order to recognize the similarities between messages and ultimately create new meanings.

This was addressed by generating memos immediately after conducting teacher interviews and by keeping a record of the investigator's responses to the interview data (listener's

response). Between these two documents the investigator documented her thoughts, feelings, and biases throughout the research project and separated them from participants' data.

Protection of Human Subjects

Participation in this study presented minimal risk to the participants. There were no medical procedures or other potentially harmful interventions that would have compromised the health or well-being of either the participants or the investigators. That said, participants may have worried about the potential political consequences of being involved in this study. For example, participants may have felt uncomfortable disclosing information about their school and may have feared retaliation if they expressed negative opinions about the principal, school policies, and/or district-wide practices. They may also have felt pressured by their peers to disclose information that might have been perceived as helpful in getting additional resources into the school.

Participants may have also experienced minor emotional discomfort during their interviews while discussing sensitive issues associated with this topic of inquiry. The investigator tried her best to respect participants' boundaries during the interview process and made sure that part of the consent form let participants know in advance that the study was voluntary, that they could have refused to answer any of the interview questions, and that they could choose to drop out of the study at any time with no questions asked.

A potential benefit for participants was to have the opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts about having English language learners in the classrooms. Teachers who are minimally impacted by this phenomenon may not have viewed this as a benefit, but teachers who have been overwhelmed by having ELL students in their class may have felt relieved knowing someone cared enough to listen to their stories.

To guard against some of the risks, the investigator made every effort to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. Once teachers expressed an interest in participating in the study, the researcher established a confidential means of contacting the teachers. Interviews took place in a private location. Data were recorded on a digital recorder, and the identity of the participants were not revealed on the tape or in any documents associated with the study. The names of the participants have not been and will not be disclosed to anyone at any time during the study or in any publication associated with this study, without written permission from the participant. Fictitious names for both the school district and the school were created so readers could not identify the participants or the exact location of the study.

The data were collected using a digital recorder and then transcribed by hand. Each participant was given a code and all files containing data were saved under this code. The data were backed up to an external drive at the investigator's home. The codes which identify the participants were placed in a locked box in the researcher's home and will remain there for five years at which time they will be destroyed. The digital recordings of all interviews were maintained in a different locked box in the investigator's home office until the data analysis process was complete. Once the analysis was completed the digital audio files were deleted.

The researcher also made herself available to research participants for one year following the study to discuss any harm that may have occurred to them during the study. Participants were also given the names of the Principal Investigator and Director of Human Subject Research Protection at Northeastern University should they need further assistance.

Chapter 4: Research Results

The purpose of this study was to apply phenomenological research strategies to examine the experiences of white, monolingual, general education teachers who teach English language learners (ELL) in the general education setting. The goal was to develop a rich description of the participants' daily lives teaching ELL students in a diverse, low-income, urban elementary school with a large and rapidly growing Hispanic population. This chapter includes a profile of each participant, a description of the major themes and their associated sub-themes. It also includes a detailed presentation of the data, accompanied by tables arranged by major theme and participant.

Teacher Profiles

Lisha

Lisha is the youngest participant with 5 1/2 years of teaching experience in the early elementary grades. She originally intended to enter the medical field but decided to enter teaching instead. At the time of the interview she was actively working on her master's degree and reported having had one half-day of training on instructional strategies for teaching ELL students. She had 19 students in her class, and two were English language learners.

She said she loves the people she works with, and her colleagues are the reason she remains at Harbor. Lisha said she tries her best to make sure her ELL students are able to access the curriculum. She begins her day with a morning meeting and uses that time as an opportunity to review the skills she taught the day before. On Fridays she gives everyone a chance to share something about themselves with the class (Lisha, p. 50). The first time an ELL student was

“mainstreamed” into her class from the SEI class she admitted she was initially anxious, but that overall it was a positive experience.

The first little boy that was being mainstreamed into my room, it was definitely a positive, and I started off the year like ‘I don't know how this is going to be.’ I didn't have the brightest outlook on it. And he ended up being... I just loved this little boy. And when I see him in the hallway I always ask "how is everything?" ... He is such a nice little boy. He's such a good student and just tried really hard. ‘I don't know how this is going to be.’ I didn't have the brightest outlook on it. And he ended up being...I just loved this little boy. And when I see him in the hallway I always ask "how is everything?"...He is such a nice little boy. He's such a good student and just tried really hard.” (Lisha, p. 66)

She said not all of her experiences with ELL students have been positive. She spoke about one student in particular who left her feeling distressed.

They just up and left and I didn't know they were moving. They just left and I thought ‘she's having such a hard time and now someone else is going to have to get to know her.’ And I had gone through all these steps to try to help her and now she's going to have to start all over again." (Lisha, p. 20)

Lisha said she feels her skills with English-language learners have improved since she first started teaching. Over the years she has also expanded her repertoire. "I've definitely progressed and have learned other strategies. It's gotten better I think, better for me, better for the kids, and again, having extra support around (has) helped” (Lisha, p. 15).

Maureen

Maureen is an early elementary grade level teacher at Harbor with seven years' experience. She had always wanted to be a teacher but was told when she first entered college that there were too many teachers. After working for 20 years in another profession she revisited her desire to teach. Maureen has been at Harbor Elementary School for the past year and really enjoys her job. At the time of the interview she had one white student in her class and 19 other students of varying ethnic backgrounds, which included Hispanic, African-American, Cape Verdean and Portuguese students. She knew of two students in her classroom who lived in homes where Spanish was the only language spoken.

During our interview Maureen spoke freely about her feelings and experiences as a teacher. She frequently used "I" statements, which suggests ownership of her feelings and experiences. She emphatically used the term "MY student(s)," suggesting a high level of commitment to her students. Based on her reports, she has an engaging teaching style and is open to using a variety of instructional strategies. She is a member of an online learning community and often uses her time away from work to improve her teaching skills. Maureen said she tries her best to advocate for her students. "I'm sorry; I'm not here for the school system. I'm here for these kids and these parents" (Maureen, p. 58). "Anytime I can help a parent advocate or manipulate the system to their benefit I'm a happy camper" (Maureen, p. 69).

Maureen says she loves her job but admits that the pace of the demographic changes at Harbor overwhelms her. She said working with ELL students can sometimes be frustrating, but that overall her attitude has improved since she started teaching them. She identified three different phases to her experience. Initially she felt positive. "I think I started off with 'okay, you're non-English-speaking at home... Okay we can deal with this. We can make this work.'"

(Maureen, p. 10). As she faced more challenges she said she started to feel more helpless. "I could remember just like 'okay, fine whatever' kind of like throwing your hands up and saying 'whatever.' You do what you do; you do what you can do, and what you can't do... oh well" (Maureen, p. 11). This year she entered her third phase and said, "I think you need to be realistic about the situation. Yeah, I'm doing the best I can, and you know what, so are they" (Maureen, pp. 77-78). Ultimately she felt there is still room to improve the way ELL students are serviced in school.

This will be my third year working with this population and I have a better understanding that it's not the kids' fault. They are trying their hardest to learn. It's not the parents' fault either because they don't speak English, but we need to find a way to make it work better (Maureen, p. 12).

Olivia

Olivia is an early elementary grade level teacher with the longest teaching career of all the participants interviewed. She has been teaching for twenty years, has been trained in the Wilson reading program, and has worked with students in every grade at the elementary level. She said she was exposed to a few bilingual/ESL concepts but has not received any formal training to speak of. At the time of the interview she had 19 students in her classroom. Spanish was the first language for four of them, and three lived in homes where Spanish was the only language spoken. This year she didn't think any of her ELL students were encumbered by not being able to speak English but described her experiences teaching ELL students as frustrating, challenging, and also gratifying, particularly when students overcame some of their language-based learning obstacles.

Olivia described herself as a fairly structured teacher with a clear agenda. Every morning she conducts “circle time” in her classroom using a focused agenda to help her students stay on track during classroom discussions. As she stated, the discussion "could easily go in a direction that you don't want to take." She said she's also not a big fan of show and tell because "you end up with something that you'd rather not show and tell" (Olivia, p. 28). Olivia described herself as an introspective teacher and said each year she looks back and thinks about how she can improve her teaching for the following year. Some of the things that she has come to realize over the years is that the “social issues, the educational issues and the language issues (of ELL students) are intermeshed” (Olivia, p. 58). She has also found that ELL students who have had preschool experience are more prepared to learn (Olivia, p. 33).

She admitted that she does not feel as qualified as she would like to be to meet the needs of ELL students, and feels she needs more training in this area (Olivia, p. 43). She said even though it is up to her to learn more on her own it would also be nice to have someone in the school/district provide training as well (Olivia, p. 68). She expressed a desire and hope that professional development would be offered to teachers in the near future (Olivia, p. 58).

Tonya

Tonya is an early elementary teacher who has been teaching for a total of eight years, five of which have been at Harbor Elementary School. Prior to teaching, she worked part-time before going back to school to become a teacher. At the time of this interview she had 21 students in her classroom. Four of her students lived in homes where Spanish was the only language spoken. Based on her interview data, Tonya appears to be a socially and politically active member of the school staff. She has been involved in the PTO and has also been active in helping with the school improvement plan. She appeared well versed in social justice issues and appeared

comfortable talking candidly about cultural and racial issues. She said she has never had a student that doesn't speak English, but has had students who do not speak English in any other place but at school. She said it was not a “big startling experience” to have students in her class who only spoke Spanish outside of school (Tonya, pp. 6-7).

Although she seemed acutely aware of the demographic change in the Hispanic population at the school, Tonya said she did not feel ELL students struggle any more than do 80% of her class. In her opinion, the culture of poverty trumps any Hispanic cultural/language variable that might impact ELL student performance. Consequently, most of the strategies she uses with her ELL students are similar to those she typically uses with other students.

As a part of her practice she has all of her students write daily in a journal. She said this is the primary way she gets to learn about her students' lives, and it also helps generate student-centered topics during classroom discussions. The thing Tonya spoke about most during our interview was her concern about the lack of parent involvement among the ELL population. She felt this was the number one issue the school needs to address.

Definition of Major Themes and Sub-Themes

Based on a review of interview transcripts and an analysis of the data, the researcher identified five major themes and fourteen sub-themes associated with participants' experiences. The five major themes are listed and defined below along with their corresponding sub-themes.

1. ***Teaching Challenges*** – The teaching and learning challenges that participants perceived as being specific to English language learners and the obstacles participants encountered in meeting these challenges. Sub-themes include: *Teaching English as a Second Language, Teaching Academic Content, and Student Assessment.*

2. **Teaching Strategies** – How participants changed the way they deliver instruction and/or make accommodations to address the specific academic and social needs of ELL students. Sub-themes include: *Instructional Accommodations, Peer and/or Sibling Tutoring, Creating a Culturally Sensitive Classroom.*
3. **Parent Engagement** – How participants described the degree to which parents become members of the school community. Sub-themes include: *Parent/Teacher Communication, Parent Involvement, and School/District Resources and Initiatives.*
4. **Language Attitudes** – How participants described their beliefs and assumptions about language and the nature and purpose of communication. Sub-themes include: *Attitudes toward the Role of Native Language in Education and Attitudes toward Language Diversity.*
5. **Teachers' Cultural Perceptions** – How participants described their perceptions of school and home cultures, the degree to which these cultures are aligned, and their tendencies to address cultural issues with students and parents. Sub-themes include: *ELL Student Integration, Relationships between Culture and ELL student performance, and Teachers' Cultural Perceptions of Parents and/or Students.*

These themes and sub-themes are the central focus of the following section.

Review of the Data

Below is a review of data obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews. Each section is presented by theme and includes the following four components: a brief overview of the major theme including a table with comments by every participant; a narrative presentation of interview data which illustrates the theme; a presentation of related sub themes; and a brief summary. Not all participants are quoted in every theme's narrative. Tables allow the reader to

view comments from every participant regarding one or more sub-theme in each section. Blank sections mean the participant did not make a direct comment about that particular sub-theme.

All comments throughout this chapter are direct quotes, unless otherwise specified. Words in parentheses indicate insertions by the researcher to provide context or to clarify a participant's statement. Ellipses (...) indicate word deletions by the researcher. Most often the researcher used ellipses to eliminate unnecessary words like "um" or "you know," or to skip over pieces of text to help the reader maintain fluency and stay focused on the main message. At times participants communicated their messages using silence or by rewording their comments, sometimes mid-sentence. Therefore, segments of text which contain cumbersome or awkward statements indicate that participants' pauses and/or missteps were significant to the message.

Theme One: Teaching Challenges

Participants reported three main challenges to teaching ELL students. These included: teaching English as a second language; teaching academic content; and conducting accurate student assessments. Table 1 provides a snapshot of participants' thoughts, feelings, and opinions and/or contains examples of these challenges.

Table 1: Teaching Challenges

Teaching Challenges	Lisha	Maureen	Olivia	Tonya
Teaching English as a Second Language	It's those vowel sounds that are sticking in my head right now. They have presented a challenge (p. 49)	Ohhh. It gives me the shivers. It gives me the shivers (p. 39)	The people in our pod really work hard at trying to teach the Spanish children how to speak the language (p. 5)	They don't understand the whole nuances of your language. So that gets lost, and therefore they could struggle (p. 10)

Teaching Challenges	Lisha	Maureen	Olivia	Tonya
Teaching Academic Content	Photosynthesis, lifecycle of a butterfly, certain words that I can't necessarily draw a picture for, or something, or I'm trying to explain it and maybe he's not heard this word before (p. 68)		There was no secret other than ... how difficult the academic language is for these children to acquire, because it's not spoken at home. You're only giving it to them for so many hours in the day and the academic language for ELA is different from the academic language for math, and that's a lot... for students (p. 66)	Reading is something that goes through all the subjects. Even if you're good at math and computation, if you can't read the directions on your own on a test, to read it, then the math could very well be wrong (p. 13)
Student Assessment	It's difficult (p. 9)	I don't know... is it a language barrier or is it a learning barrier? (p. 22)	She really didn't understand what the purpose of the calendar was. Whether or not it was a lack of exposure or language I couldn't tell you that (p. 13)	Sometimes you say "well it's because they don't know the language that they are behind." So I think it kind of takes longer sometimes to figure out "Do they need an IEP?" (p. 26)

Teaching English as a Second Language

One of the biggest issues participants discussed as they talked about teaching ELL students was the difficulty they had teaching English as a second language. Every participant articulated certain aspects of the English language that were difficult to teach to someone whose

first language is not English. These included grammar, writing, sound recognition, correct usage of words, short vowels, phonetics and vocabulary. Maureen said she felt writing was the most difficult aspect of her overall experience teaching English to ELL students and described her experience as follows:

The greatest challenge is just teaching them the English language (Maureen, p. 36). For me it's very overwhelming. I think that teaching English to English speaking kids is difficult enough. Teaching English to non-English speaking kids is ridiculous. It's ridiculous... because there are so many rules and changes, you know, it just doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense to me as an adult" (Maureen, p.6). Writing is the worst because there are so many rules, and I guess from what I'm learning; there are words that we have in the English language that don't exist in Spanish. Things like, I guess what I am learning is, when you speak Spanish you don't say 'do you want to go to school?' 'Do' is not a word and yet we have the word 'do,' and trying to explain what 'do' does...sometimes I don't even know what 'do' does... We just take it for granted because we talk it, we say it. But they don't say it or talk it so, wait a minute. (Maureen, pp. 36-37)

Olivia said the biggest challenge for her was to be consistent with her ELL students in teaching them "how we speak, how our language works, and how the grammar works" (Olivia, p. 43). She said there were also general terms they may not have understood, and it was her job as an educator to help ELL students express themselves and feel comfortable doing so (Olivia, p. 44). Another challenge for her was teaching sound recognition. She said,

I'm not sure which one it is but they really had a hard time learning the short vowels. It was the 'a' sound, of course the vowel sounds are so close in English in the short 'e' the

short 'i' and the short 'a.' It's hard for them to distinguish them, to hear it. I find it very hard for them to hear it. (Olivia, pp. 7-8)

Tonya expanded the conversation by discussing her concerns about phonetics and its impact on spelling, reading and overall academic performance. She felt some of her ELL students were able to pick up phonics right away whereas some of her other ELL students struggled with it. She felt difficulties with the English language in general along with difficulties decoding words and reading could impact all academic areas, particularly for students who are not able to read directions and/or word problems in math (Tonya, p. 13).

Maureen and Lisha talked about the added difficulty of teaching English to second language learners when they have English-speaking students in the classroom who model poor oral language skills. Maureen said “a lot of kids that go to Harbor do not pronounce their words correctly. There are no ending sounds on their words and it's a lot of slang. There is cuz, ain't, gonna. So when they go to spell something I have gonna, I have cuz, ain't, and the (word) endings fall off” (Maureen, p. 40). Lisha's talked about a boy in her class who quite possibly may have developed improper reading skills by imitating the speech habits of an English-speaking peer who received speech therapy to address language and articulation difficulties. In both cases participants felt poor role modeling complicated the teaching process, not only because they had to fight against these influences but also because it made it difficult to determine if students' language difficulties were due to poor role modeling, the language barrier, or a language-based learning disability.

I have a little boy this year... who is; very thick accent, Spanish-speaking home. When he reads a past tense verb that has an “ed” at the end like “pecked” he would say pect-ed.

So he sticks the “t” sound and then the “ed” sound, and the way I'm trying to teach him he's just not remembering it. I started to wonder, is that a language thing? I don't really know... I also have another little boy who...is an English speaker...he gets speech services and he does the same thing. (Lisha, pp. 49-50)

Teaching Academic Content

Some participants not only talked about the difficulties with teaching the English language, but also with getting students to understand academic content. Some of these difficulties included teaching abstract concepts without the benefit of visual aids; leading a discussion using new vocabulary; and bridging the gap between cultural knowledge and academic knowledge. Olivia's example illustrates her frustration trying to teach abstract vocabulary associated with understanding academic content and/or the purpose of an academic activity:

It would be frustrating for me if she (the student) couldn't understand something and I wasn't able to help her to understand it. Now let's take a term, something that we might talk about that she might not understand and that I had no way of actually showing her what I was talking about... like the theme of a story. That's a lot for somebody who is a non-English-speaking child, but yet that is such a big part of reading. They have to understand that we are reading for a purpose, and the purpose is to understand the theme. (Olivia, p. 18)

Tonya felt her difficulties with teaching academic language might be directly related to ELL students' lack of exposure to academic language at home. She said at times she uses terms during a lesson that may be meaningful to an ELL student if they are exposed to a visual representation of the term, but in the absence of visuals many of the terms are meaningless to

them. Consequently their comprehension of the lesson suffers. “You can't stop all the time to explain the vocabulary and vocabulary is the number one... problem” (Tonya, pp. 13-14).

Tonya said it is important to relate academics to a student's background knowledge but “What they know might not necessarily be the same as what we know, I know, or what the student next to them might know. That's a huge issue, I think, a disadvantage” (Tonya, pp. 13-14). Olivia also mentioned the difficulty ELL students had in maintaining the academic language without continued exposure to it at home.

I think you know, initially when you've checked them, or you've worked on them for a week and you check them on a Friday and they've got it, but if you go back to the same thing...two or three weeks later and double check them again, they are not as secure with it as they were before. So you need to repeat that. So if you're introducing new vocabulary it has to be constant. You can't just give it and think they've got it and reuse it without re-explaining it to them. I'm sure that they are words that are not used at home. They are not their common language, so in order for it to be their common language we have to use them more frequently in the classroom. (Olivia, pp. 31-32)

Olivia also said she thought it was important to introduce academic language early in a student's career. By working on academic terms in the lower grades she feels students will be more prepared for the statewide standardized tests starting in third grade. She said, “It takes direct teaching, it takes lots of repetition, it takes consistency. You can't do it in one day and then let it go” (Olivia, p. 62).

Student Assessment

Every participant reported difficulties assessing their ELL students, and said they often couldn't tell if their students' academic difficulties were due to poor English language skills or

some type of learning disability. They also reported difficulty determining the reason(s) for their ELL students' lack of engagement in class. Disengaged behavior was particularly confusing because they could not tell if the behavior was due to confusion about a lesson, anxiety about their language skills, a shy personality, or adherence to parent expectations to remain quiet in class. Maureen described her confusion with assessment as follows:

(With) an English-speaking child you can see if there are learning disabilities going on. The behaviors for a non-English-speaking child or an English-as-a-second-language child, I don't know. Is it that they're not hearing me correctly? Is it, you know, that my words are too...are words they don't understand? I can figure that out...with an English-speaking child because I speak English and kind of have a family back(ground), you know, you kind of know families...but with a second language child I don't know if there's, you know, "are you hearing me?" Or "are you connecting the words in your brain? Are you just looking at me and just nodding because that's what you're supposed to do?" (Maureen, pp. 21-22)

One of Lisha's experiences with student assessment had more to do with trying to distinguish between a language issue and a processing issue.

I think sometimes in her head you could see her, I would be talking and you could see her trying to translate what was coming out of my mouth into Spanish. I would watch her and I'd be like "I think she's trying to process" but I'm trying to figure out if she's trying to process from English to Spanish and she's going to try and figure out how to process a response, or I thought she also had an issue with just processing information in general. (Lisha, pp. 11-12)

One of the biggest problems participants said they faced once they felt a student might have a learning disability was convincing other professionals in the building that the student should be formally assessed. As Tonya said, even though students should not be placed on an IEP (Individual Education Program) solely because they speak another language, the process of getting an ELL student who legitimately needs special education services onto an IEP is often too long. She said she has never had an ELL student on an IEP and thinks by the time staff determines what is happening with the student he or she would have already moved on to the upper grades (Tonya, pp. 26-27). Participants said that even with the professional opinion of the SEI teachers; it was difficult to convince the special education staff or administrators that the student needed help. Lisha said,

I teach very closely with the girl that's next door to me and we've had kids in the past where they are definitely English language learners who we think "they may need to be tested for Sped (Special Education)." And we've been told "we think it's a language issue." Well no, I think it's more than that because we had the SEI teacher ask them questions in Spanish and they couldn't even answer those questions in their native language. So it's still an issue. So I definitely think that's something that we run into with these students. (Lisha, p. 9)

Despite difficulties with the referral process to special education services Maureen said she feels lucky that the general education teachers at Harbor have SEI teachers in the building. She feels consultation with an SEI teacher is a "critical" piece in assessing these students and if the school did not have SEI teachers she would be forced to rely on the advice of the special education staff (Maureen, p. 22).

Summary: Teaching Challenges

Participants reported three main challenges to teaching ELL students. These included teaching English as a second language; teaching academic content; and conducting accurate student assessments. Participants felt “affective factors” such as students’ level of motivation, inhibition, anxiety and self-esteem, and “school barriers” such as school practices or school culture were major obstacles to student assessment. For example, all of the participants reported difficulties understanding the affect and/or behaviors of their ELL students, and most of them felt school barriers paralyzed their efforts to access assessment resources.

Theme Two: Teaching Strategies.

Teaching strategies was another major theme associated with participants’ experiences. The data below outline ideas and strategies participants said they have used working with ELL students. These included using visuals and hands-on activities; re-teaching vocabulary and concepts; using a direct and structured style of instruction; and checking for comprehension. All participants wished they could learn more strategies to help their ELL students. Table 2 illustrates participants’ thoughts, feelings, and opinions, and/or provides examples of strategies they have used with ELL students.

Table 2: Teaching Strategies

Teaching Strategies	Lisha	Maureen	Olivia	Tonya
Instructional Accommodations	You can't just keep saying, I guess I have tried it, but you can't just keep saying the word louder and louder...you need other supports (p. 44)	...dictionaries, explaining, drawing, examples. I mean I'm the type of teacher that...I've been known to crawl on floors. Hey whatever it takes (p. 19)	I think constant repetition of those words is important because sometimes you think "oh they've got it" but they haven't heard it enough to own it (p. 30)	I think it's just basically trial and error (p. 11)
Peer and/or Sibling Tutoring	I would set him (Anthony) up with a peer partner and ask "Can you help Ms. Lisha help Anthony connect on this? And they would, and that would help him (pp. 66-67)	I went to the sister and said "look your sister really needs to read more at home. Can you read with her?" (p. 57)	I try to put the child that speaks Spanish at home, of course, with a child that is certainly a very good English speaker so that they can really work at it together (p. 9)	Tonya states that peer tutoring is part of her everyday teaching strategy with all students (p. 20)
Creating a culturally sensitive classroom	There are certain stories that we read where the words are in Spanish and I say "O.K. Ms. Lisha is trying her best" and they'll laugh at me and say "no, no, you say it like this." ...they like to see that you mess up sometimes too (p. 15)	(To the students) Bring in your world. I would love to know your world. I would like to be a part of it, learn about it. And I am sure there are other kids who would love it too (p. 47)	I think it comes from being interested in knowing who they are, and not just saying "this is the way you are going to learn here." We all want to learn from each other (p. 16)	Talking, I mean that's one thing, sharing, it is definitely a way that we find out...what they do at home, even where they come from (p. 42)

Instructional Accommodations

Based on their reports, participants have tried a number of different strategies to help ELL students perform better in class. But all of the participants admitted they have not had enough training in ESL strategies to know if what they are doing represents best practices for this population. As Tonya said, it's been a trial and error learning process, and much of what she does now was not a part of her practice earlier in her career. In describing the beginning of her career she stated:

I would actually say I was not quite sure what to do, nor was I trained ...to know what to do. Oh that was very frustrating and you know, you're feeling kind of ineffective. As a teacher we are supposed to be able to teach the kids and help them in any way. Those were definitely barriers...definite barriers. (Tonya, pp. 11-12)

Tonya said now she typically pairs her students together, uses more visuals, gets the students to the board, and/or tries to find a way for everyone to understand the concepts using techniques other than just verbal presentations or reading (Tonya, p. 12). She also admitted "there wasn't one thing that I did or said, or that they (students) said that made us all understand" (Tonya, p. 12). Because of this she felt ELL students get frustrated with the whole situation as well. Maureen talked about her frustration trying to find online teacher sites, educational materials or professional development trainings that might offer instructional strategies appropriate for teaching ELL students. She said she typically reads blogs online to learn new strategies, but she has never come across anyone who has offered suggestions for working with ELL students. She said she takes what she knows and hopes for the best. "You do things for the kinetic learner, you do things for the auditory learner, you do things for (the visual learner) and hopefully somewhere in there the non-English-speaking learner will get it too. I haven't found

anything specific to do” (Maureen, p. 20). But she did talk about using repetition, and for writing she said she does a lot of sentence editing on the board, where she intentionally makes mistakes and then has students correct them (Maureen, p. 39). Other strategies the participants reported were drawing pictures, using visual aids and/or re-explaining concepts in a different way.

Olivia thinks teaching in a systematic, and direct instructional manner has been the best approach for her. She believes “you can't dummy down your curriculum” (Olivia, p. 63). She also believes it is important to present curriculum information within the context of maintaining high expectations for the students. In addition to her systematic style of presentation she tries to integrate curriculum content and vocabulary into the students' play and functional living activities.

If you are teaching them positions like ‘on’ or ‘over,’ you make that part of their playtime and, you know, when they are doing something... If they were building (something with blocks) I would sit in so that those children that were doing it could explain "I'm going to put that on top," or "I'm putting it underneath," or I'd put a block behind them and they'd have to tell me where it is so that they are using those words. And again I think constant repetition of those words is important because sometimes you think "oh they've got it" but they haven't heard it enough to own it. (Olivia, pp. 29-30)

Olivia also talked about self-assessment as an important step in honing one's skills as a teacher, particularly with the ELL population.

You as a teacher have to be constantly assessing and looking at what you're doing and how it's affecting those students. And sometimes it takes a multiple number of assessments to be able to be aware of how well you are succeeding, more than with your

other English-speaking students. And that's difficult sometimes to stay really on top of that with a class; it really is. (Olivia, p. 63)

Homework was a specific area which participants felt needed particular attention and accommodation. According to all participants ELL students typically do not complete homework on a regular basis. All participants believed the main reason for this was a lack of parent support at home. One participant believed the home life was too chaotic for parents to provide the structure needed for homework completion. Another participant thought education might not be a priority in Hispanic homes, but all of them believed students did not get help at home because Spanish-speaking parents were unable to understand the homework enough to help their children.

Participants often addressed the homework issue by allowing students to complete homework in school. Maureen said she tells students that if they cannot understand a homework assignment, have their parent sign it so she knows the student attempted it, and then she works with the student in school. She said since she started taking this approach she has been less frustrated with her students and their parents, and she feels the students are less distressed about it as well. She admits that her approach has not been completely successful and spoke about one girl in particular:

She came from a Hispanic home...and would come in crying at times because "I didn't do my homework." Or come in with homework wrong because she tried to do it at home and they couldn't do it at home. And I would take her side a lot and, you know, "It's okay if you can't do it. I'd rather you bring it back and say you can't do it, or "I tried it" and this is what you came up with and that it didn't work, whatever, than not do it at all." And you

know I try not to get upset over it, but this particular girl, the family was very, is very strict on needing to learn. (Maureen, pp. 13-14)

Maureen also talked about a one-on-one intervention she used with a boy in her class who she knew was capable of completing the homework but might not have felt confident enough to complete it on his own at home.

They have to write sentences as part of their homework, and this boy comes in all the time without writing sentences, and he's capable. He's capable. So a lot of times I have to sit with him and like he'll sit in front of me and I'll be doing something else but it's like he needs that security, that he's able to do it. He doesn't have capitals were capitals belong; he doesn't have ending marks were ending marks belong. He doesn't necessarily have it correctly written, but he's capable of writing the sentence. You know, he may not have everything in order but I think at home he doesn't feel secure enough to do it.

Because once I sit down and say "here are the words, here's your paper, go for it," he's able to do it. I just don't think he ...has it in himself to say "okay I feel good enough that I can do this." (Maureen, pp. 15-16)

Olivia has addressed the homework challenge by using positive reinforcement with the class. She said she randomly picks a day and offers students a reward if the entire class completed their homework that day. She believes making a big deal out of the fact that everybody got it done was a better approach than punishing students for not doing it (Olivia, p. 26).

Peer and/or Sibling Tutoring

All of the participants talked about using peer tutoring in the classroom and/or older siblings to help students read or complete homework at home. Even though all of the

participants used these approaches each one used them in different ways. Lisha said she uses peers by creating a buddy system with heterogeneous groupings, where English-speaking students help ELL students feel more comfortable with the work (Lisha, p. 17). Olivia uses the opposite strategy and pairs ELL students with Spanish-speaking students so they can each use their native language to gain an understanding of the work.

I found that putting two or three of the children that spoke Spanish at home, or that had Spanish spoken mostly at home together was also helpful for them because they were able to discuss, kind of, in their own little language what it was. But I found as the year went on they needed that less and less. They were more comfortable with being able to do it. It was never total immersion because they didn't need total immersion, but it was emergence into more English than Spanish, and it took time. And I would probably say for this little girl, it probably took until January before she was really comfortable enough to speak to the other children in English and be comfortable with that (Olivia, p. 14). I think when you see a little one who is having trouble describing something to you and they can turn and describe it to a friend in Spanish, and between the two of them they can help you understand that one got the gist of it and was able to help the other to see it is wonderful...They would actually work together with the strength of each other to both understand and to teach each other what was necessary, or what was being taught at the time. (Olivia, p. 39)

Olivia and Maureen talked about their experiences recruiting siblings to help ELL students at home. Olivia said she tries to accommodate the homework in a way that makes it easy for siblings to help at home. One strategy was to provide flashcards so siblings could practice sight words with her students. She said,

How does a mother practice sight words with a child when she doesn't really know how to read them herself? She doesn't even know if she's said them right or wrong so that (using a sibling) worked for me...I found the siblings were very open, but of course, you know, again it depends on how much interest the child, the foundation in the home is too. (Olivia, pp. 24-25)

Maureen said it was not always easy to convince an older sibling to take time out of their day to help a younger sibling, and that sometimes sibling tutoring has not necessarily been academically beneficial to her students. But for at least one student Maureen said that sibling tutoring helped relieve her student's anxiety about not being able to do homework at home.

I did talk to the sister often. "What can you do? How can we help?" And she would come down to my classroom to pick up her sister to leave at the end of the day because they walk home together, and I would start joking with her and pull her into the classroom just trying to make her feel more comfortable with what my requests were and what my expectations for her sister were and how she can help. It didn't change a whole heck of a lot but I think MY child, MY student felt better about it. It didn't change the student academically, but it just made my student feel a little bit better about it because there wasn't that concerned look on her face anymore. (Maureen, pp. 64-65)

Creating a Culturally Sensitive Classroom

All of the participants discussed different approaches to creating classroom culture. Three of the four participants talked primarily about opening a cultural dialogue between students around the holidays. "It's not just Christmas. We try to expose them to Hanukkah and Kwanzaa, but then I like to ask them, 'what does your family celebrate? What does your family

do? What foods do you eat?' Different things like that, just to find out 'Does your family get together? Do you visit different houses?' They love to tell about that kind of stuff" (Lisha, p. 54).

Maureen said she starts earlier in the year and works the class toward a discussion about holidays by first talking about community helpers. This leads to a discussion about families, which then leads into a discussion about holiday traditions. She said she encourages them to bring in artifacts and often asks, "So what are your traditions at home? What do you do? How do you celebrate? Are we celebrating things that you are not celebrating? Are you celebrating things that we are not celebrating?" (Maureen, p. 48). Lisha talked more specifically about the cultural activities she welcomes into her room.

I had one of the girls this year who is Cape Verdean and she speaks Creole very well. And I love it because whenever it's somebody's birthday she'll say "can I sing to them?" We sing happy birthday in English and she often stands out by herself and sings in Creole to them every time, and I think that's so sweet. And I try, especially around holiday time you can get more of those cultural type things, or in a journal entry. I do journal prompts every week, either free write or a set topic. Around the holidays it's like "tell me what your family does; customs, traditions." And we talk about that. So at that time I get to be exposed to different things that the kids do. (Lisha, p. 53)

Olivia talked about her general philosophy toward developing a classroom culture, including the manner in which she addresses cultural diversity:

Basically the greatest challenge for me is to help these students to become part of the community, and to be comfortable in that community... in my classroom, and to help them to see and understand...the importance of education and the importance of

communicating with others in a manner that isn't threatening (to them)... And again I think establishing a sense of importance for each and every one of them, that they have a value, and that what they have to say is important, whether they say it in Spanish or they say in English. What they say is important, and it's my job to help them to be able communicate that (Olivia, pp. 42-43). I think you have to get them to trust you, and I think that trust comes from being interested. Well, "how do you say that in Spanish?" I want to know some of the Spanish words that she knows. I think that comes from being interested in knowing who they are. (Olivia, pp. 15-16)

What Olivia found was that even within a culturally sensitive classroom environment sometimes communication between English-speaking students and ELL students broke down. Even though Olivia described her English-speaking students as "persistent" in trying to understand ELL students, she said if ELL students took too long to get their message across, the English-speaking students would eventually give up. "Well, I guess it wasn't that important anyway" is kind of what they were thinking. "Okay I don't get that, I'm moving on" (Olivia, p. 41). But she found that for the most part her English-speaking students and her ELL students tried hard to work together to find a mutual understanding about schoolwork and about each other (Olivia, p. 41).

Tonya reported taking a more indirect approach to introducing cultural issues to the class. She tended to initiate discussions about cultural issues as part of a lesson rather than as a freestanding inquiry about students' backgrounds. She gave an example of how a lesson on maps and immigrants spring boarded a classroom discussion into a conversation about students' culture of origin.

Looking at a map, it's interesting to see how many people...weren't born in the United States. One day we were talking about, it was in the book, in our reading books, about immigrants. And nobody knew, they didn't know the word 'immigrant.' It seemed like a universal that no one knew. But then I said "Well, it's when you're born in another country. You weren't born in the United States." I said, "Everyone has a relative that at some point way back when or..." and it was amazing to see how many kids, if they weren't born in another country, either their parents were or their grandparents, who aren't really that old. So they know what an immigrant is, that there are many, many kids who had an immediate family member, if not themselves, that were born in another country. So, maps. That's a way to find out without saying "Where were you...?" You can't, I mean you're not going to say "Where were you born?" or "Where was your mother born?" But, you know, it's, it's really through communication, discussion, just finding, you know, finding out about the students in general and then it (cultural information) sort of comes out that way. (Tonya, pp. 42-43)

Summary: Teaching Strategies

Based on their reports, all of the participants seem to have implemented at least some of the instructional strategies ESL teachers are expected to use. These included using visuals, hands-on activities; re-teaching vocabulary and concepts; using a direct and structured style of instruction; and checking for comprehension. All of the participants felt their skill set for teaching ELL students was incomplete, and all felt they needed more training.

Participants all said they have used peer tutors, student groupings, and/or sibling tutors to help them teach ELL students. Some participants felt these strategies were helpful, while others questioned their usefulness. Every participant felt it was important for ELL students to feel

comfortable in class, and every participant thought it was important to show respect for each student's culture. Three participants said that during the holidays they like to actively incorporate cultural themes into classroom activities and discussions. The fourth teacher said she typically addresses cultural issues as they arise. Even though none of the participants reported having access to culturally diverse curriculum materials, each participant appeared to have an open stance toward cultural differences in the classroom. Each of them appeared to communicate that stance to their ELL students.

Theme Three: Parent Engagement

Participants talked more about parent engagement than they did any other aspect of their experiences teaching ELL students. Parent/teacher communication was their primary concern, with concerns about parent involvement being a close second. In general, participants appreciated parents who showed initiative or put forth a mutual effort to communicate with them. Participants tended to feel frustrated with parents who did not make an effort to do either, but also felt parents did not have access to the resources they needed to do so. Table 3 documents participants' feelings and thoughts about parent engagement.

Table 3: Parent Engagement

Parent Engagement	Lisha	Maureen	Olivia	Tonya
Parent/Teacher Communication	I would hate for anyone to feel like I'm kind of shutting them out from their child's education. That's the last thing I want to do (p. 26)	Communicating obviously, you know, that's the number one (problem). I think that's the only one, because getting past that, the responses, the reception has always been positive (p. 66)	I think...the communication is lacking which makes me sad as a teacher, because I think I could make a difference there (p. 45)	It (the language barrier) is a little uncomfortable because of course you want to be able to answer their questions, or you want to be able to, you know, say what you need to say (p. 8)
Parent Involvement	"I like my kids to read, obviously at home." And I say (to parents) "Have them read to you. If you cannot read the book that I'm sending home that's fine. I am not expecting you to read it. But can you sit and listen?" (p. 58)	I think there's always a lot of complaining (among staff) based on the difficulty level of getting the support from home (p. 5)	The child doesn't understand the homework, and the mom doesn't understand what the child is doing here with the way we teach them. That's a big piece, and I think that it could cause some difficulty for the child and the parent (p. 22)	Here are parents (for the PTO) who want to come, which is great because that's what we want, but (because of the language barrier) there's still, they still are at a disadvantage. We are all at a disadvantage (p. 10)

Parent Engagement	Lisha	Maureen	Olivia	Tonya
School/District Resources and Initiatives	When we have PTO meetings, they always send home the flyer...one side English, one side Spanish, and in the past they have put on there that there will be a translator (p. 41)	I'm supposed to send home an English report card and a Spanish report card (p. 80)	We need somebody, granted it will not be a full time job...who is available to write for us... some people do it very willingly and some people are a little "that's not my job." (p. 47)	I mean we're always talking about these school/home connections. Well it ain't happening. It's not happening if you can't speak the same language (p. 9)

Parent/Teacher Communication

All participants agreed that it was difficult for both parents and teachers to transcend the language barrier between them, but participants also expressed frustration with parents who they believed intentionally chose not to communicate with them. They attributed parents' decision not to communicate to their cultural beliefs and/or parents' lack of interest in education. One participant was not as concerned about how parents and teachers communicated as she was about the lack of communication between parents and teachers. As a rule, participants agreed that the consequences of not communicating with parents included an inability to share their expectations for and concerns about their students' education with parents; an inability to teach parents about the culture of the school; and at least one teacher felt it compromised the communication she had with English-speaking parents as well.

Lisha talked about a time when she feels most vulnerable and frustrated trying to communicate with Spanish-speaking parents.

I'm thinking about open house definitely. Starting at the beginning of the year, or even the first day of school when you're standing outside going "Which way is your child going to be dismissed?" because we have two sides (of the building that are used for dismissal) and the first day of school is just CHAOS! Where are the kids going at the end of the day? So you've got to point "Are you going to meet them outside over here, over there?" if they are not understanding you. And when they come in for open house I find that at that school a lot of the students come in with their parents so that's helpful. So I give my beginning-of-the-year spiel, and I give it in English and hope that the kids are translating or that the parents are getting some words here or there. I guess when they send notes to me they hope that I'm getting some words here and there too. (Lisha, pp. 30-31)

She said once in a while she hears teachers complaining about the parents. "This is tough. What do you want me to do?" But her thought is "You need to communicate with them somehow. Obviously you're trying to communicate with them for an issue, for a reason. If there's an issue... you have to find a workaround, you have to find a way around it" (Lisha, pp. 59-60).

Olivia said she tries to do her best to communicate with parents but most often she has to rely on non-verbal communication. "I am smiley and, you know, I think they can tell by your tone whether you are happy with their child or you're not happy with their child... But again it depends if they take the bus or if they walk to school. You can't communicate nonverbally over the phone" (Olivia, p. 53). Olivia said she feels like she has had a lot of missed opportunities and admitted that unless there was a real difficulty, she does not communicate with Hispanic parents. For example,

I'm thinking of one child in particular where there were a lot of celebratory moments with that child that I wasn't able to share with the parents, that I would have had I been able to pick up the phone or to speak to them on my own, or drop them a note. That was hard. Certainly I tried to send home the papers in whatever language they speak, but we are getting those from downtown. But again, like report cards, to be able to put the comments on report cards and not have the ability to put them in, in Spanish I think is tough... How do you tell the parents, you know, I want you to read to them every day? How do you make that, you know, important other than sending home that Spanish book that might free them up to do it, if you don't have that ability? I find it's, the communication is lacking, which makes me sad as a teacher because I think I could make a difference there (Olivia, pp. 44-45). If you can't, for myself, call the parent when I have a concern I find it very difficult because I can't express myself to them, to the parent the way I want to. And there isn't somebody always available to do that for you. So you are at a real disadvantage if you can't explain to them what your feelings are and what your concerns are. (Olivia, p. 2)

Teachers also reported feeling frustrated and helpless, even those who had fairly easy access to translation assistance from an SEI teacher. Here we see how Maureen flip-flops between a lack of frustration with parent/teacher communication and a realization that parent/teacher communication is more difficult than she first realized.

The communication is an issue, but because I have the SEI person who is MORE than willing to help me anytime, you know, communicating with parents is not frustrating because I can always ask the SEI teacher to "Please can you make a phone call for me? Stand by and we can have a chit chat?" But it was the frustration of, well maybe I'm

wrong, maybe it's a combination because having to ask her to write a letter for me, to get the parents to understand what's in the letter, to get the parents to respond to the letter, to get the kids to do the work from the letter, it just gets, it just gets very frustrating and overwhelming and again honestly I can remember just saying like "okay fine, whatever."
(Maureen, p. 11)

Tonya also voiced her frustration with written communications to the home, and admitted that at times she decided not to send notes home with any of her students. She said unless it was really important there were times when she would “skip” the process altogether (Tonya, p. 45).

I am less likely to send something home (to the whole class) if I could have just typed up a little something about what was going on in school, because now I know I have to translate, or should translate what I'm sending home...so maybe I wouldn't send it home.
(Tonya, p. 4)

Tonya said one way for her to communicate with Spanish-speaking parents (and sometimes students) has been through parent translators.

When we line up on the playground, that is the place where communication is best... One of my student's mothers... would interpret for other kids in my class ... right before going into school or at dismissal. Or parents who had questions that they wanted to ask the teacher, and they would use another parent to ask. (Tonya, pp. 7-8)

Parent Involvement

Participants talked about a number of factors they felt have fostered and/or inhibited parent involvement at Harbor. They all thought parent involvement at Harbor was unacceptably

low, and felt social problems and school practices were universal factors that contributed to this trend. The language barrier and cultural differences were seen as additional factors that contributed to the lack of involvement among Spanish-speaking parents. All participants considered the language barrier to be the most significant barrier to parent involvement, and some said it impacts parent participation from the moment parents enter the school.

The problems from my (perspective) are the fact that most of the teachers speak English (Tonya, p. 2). We're fortunate enough that we have a couple of people that work there (in the office) that happen to speak Portuguese and some Spanish, and we have other teachers because of the SEI classes and para (paraprofessionals) that can translate, but that's not their official job. And it's just by chance that we have someone who can interpret in the office. That's a big issue in terms of communication because the people that come in...right off the bat...there's that issue, the whole coming in and they can't say what they need, or people can't understand what they want. So the language definitely, the language barrier is evident right as soon as they walk in the door. (Tonya, p. 3)

Participants felt the language barrier also interfered with parents' ability to understand what teachers expect from them. For example, they felt parents may not understand that teachers think of them as co-educators. "I always tell all my parents...Read. Read to them, read with them, have them read to you, have them read to a younger sibling, have them read, please...but how much are they getting? Can the parents...access what you're sending home?" (Lisha, pp. 57-58).

Participants thought the language barrier might also interfere with parents' ability to enforce homework completion. "There is nothing they (parents) can do when I say they (students) are not doing their homework. Well, there's nothing the parents can do about that

because the parents can't do the homework or help them with homework” (Maureen, p. 67).

Teachers also thought parents might not get involved because they don't understand school and classroom procedures.

Some participants thought perhaps Hispanic parents had different expectations regarding their involvement in schooling. “I think (parents feel) as long as they (ELL students) are there and they are doing their part then everything is okay” (Maureen, p. 61). Another participant thought the lack of parent involvement may be due in part to a lack of interest in education altogether. “I don't think education is a strong priority (for Hispanic parents) and yes, I think there is a desire for the child to be well behaved. There is a desire for the child to present well in appearance but the basic, well, there are some parents who put an emphasis on academics but it's not the majority (Olivia, pp. 69-70).

Participants felt social factors such as socio-economic status, lifestyle choices, and the school's method for getting parent volunteers also had a negative impact on parent involvement. Most of the participants felt these factors were true not only for Hispanic parents but for most of the parents at Harbor. “In our situation at Harbor with the socioeconomic pieces I think that a lot of parents either are working when they are at home or unable to come into the building for whatever reason. I don't see a lot of parent involvement at all, either English-speaking or Spanish-speaking” (Olivia, p. 57). Two participants talked about the school's practice of conducting CORI (Criminal Offender Records Information) checks as a major deterrent to parent participation.

You're not supposed to let someone into the building that isn't CORI-ed. At one point... I had parents come in and talk about different holidays and different customs and now we

aren't able to do that. So I think the opportunities are getting less often. They present themselves infrequently, and that's challenging in itself. You can't, we are not going to move (forward) if we can't have (contact with the parents). (Olivia, pp. 56-57)

Regardless of the fact that participants were frustrated and disappointed with the level of parent participation among all parents, some participants admitted to having seen Hispanic parents get involved despite the barriers participants described. Here Tonya talks about parents who joined the Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO):

The parents that wanted to be involved, they didn't let the language stop them from coming in...I think that's great because they are representing the population that's here, so they should be at the PTO meetings and they should be able to help out ...Fortunately we were able to get someone to come in and translate. I thought that was terrific...I mean...eye opening...that 80% of the group was (Hispanic), and probably there were only 10 people there, so 8 out of 10 people could not speak English. (Tonya, pp. 40-41)

School/District Resources and Initiatives

There were a variety of resources that participants said they have accessed in order to make meaningful contact with the parents of their ELL students. Participants typically obtained their resources in one of two ways, either the school or district provided them, or participants found them on their own.

Participants were very appreciative of school/district efforts to help facilitate the home/school connection. This included providing teachers with Spanish language report cards and emergency contact forms, and providing district-wide notices in the parent's native language. Translations of IEP's are also provided upon parent request. Participants said they

appreciated the effort but also felt there hasn't been enough done to help teachers and parents manage the day-to-day challenge of trying to get connected and stay connected. Consequently participants have been forced to find their own way. Some of the resources participants said they have accessed include parent or student translators, SEI teachers, bilingual staff and/or online translation services.

All of the participants said despite the amount of staff in the building, the bilingual staff could not possibly service the number of Spanish-speaking parents who are at the school. All of the participants thought people had been more than willing to help them but felt several factors interfered with them doing so. These factors included the lack of protocol for accessing translators, staff absences, and/or interfering agendas, but the biggest factor was participants' hesitation to pull someone away from their other responsibilities.

They all have other jobs, like I'm thinking...the two paras. They are supposed to be in the classroom, and the SEI teachers are supposed to be in their classrooms and they're more than willing to help you but...they all have other things they are supposed to be doing also. (Tonya, p. 44)

Even participants who had a strong working relationship with an SEI teacher hesitated to ask for help. "She's very accessible to me...and she's wonderful. I mean I am thankful that I have her. I hesitate to ask her because she has her own class of kids" (Maureen, p. 22).

Participants with limited or no access to bilingual staff said they would not know whom to approach. The school has not formally identified anyone as being willing and/or competent enough in Spanish to translate important and/or confidential information between teachers and parents, and even if they had, there was no system in place to access them (Tonya, p. 45).

Three teachers felt bilingual staff were more than willing to help, but without an official commitment from them to serve as translators, and without the authority to mandate their attendance at meetings, teachers had to rely on the informal commitment and generosity of the bilingual staff to help them. Unfortunately competing agendas and unexpected circumstances derailed the best intentions of those staff.

It's not necessarily because they didn't think it was important. It's just that it was at the end of the school year and everybody was doing (other things). They were on field trips, moving the building around, they were taking days off. (Tonya, pp. 45-46)

All of the participants felt it would be helpful if the school had a translation service available to parents and teachers. Three chief reasons were cited: it would lessen teachers' burden to find their own resources; it would help teachers feel more competent as communicators; and it would help teachers feel more protected. Participants felt they were liable for things they say to parents and felt it was important to accurately communicate information to parents about their ELL students. Report card time was an area of concern for most participants. Participants said they are expected to fill out two report cards for Spanish-speaking students: one in English and one in Spanish. Two participants said they stopped filling in the Spanish report card because they were not sure if the English and Spanish versions were identical. "I can't read the Spanish report card. So...I fill out the English report card and I staple the Spanish copy but not filled in, so that they can translate (it)...I'm not putting my name on something that I can't read" (Lisha, p. 65). Olivia expressed concern about her lack of ability to write personalized comments on her ELL students' report cards and at one point thought about having her comments translated online. Here she talked about the risks of using web-based translation services.

Somebody found a program (online) that you can type in English words and they will give you some Spanish, but when the Spanish-speaking person checked it, it was not grammatically correct. So you don't want to send that. It's frustrating because you don't want to send that. So it's a real quandary. How are we going to get this out there in a manner that's right for the parents...we want them to be able to be involved in education but what are we doing to make that happen? (Olivia, pp. 46-47)

Olivia said she would rather see schools provide teachers with universal access to translators so teachers could accurately and professionally communicate with parents.

My recommendation would be, as far as school goes, to have a person that was available for that particular purpose (translating) so that you're not asking somebody for a favor, that it's something that's available to everybody. So that may be at report card time...if you want to have your comments translated into Spanish get them here on Tuesday and we'll have them ready for you on Friday. (Olivia, pp. 66-67)

Olivia said without teacher comments in Spanish parents may feel that teachers don't "care enough" to write their comments so parents can read them (Olivia, p. 67). Olivia also thought it might be helpful if the school accessed some of the services she saw being provided to parents at another school.

(A teacher in the district) speaks Spanish and Portuguese and she...did demo lessons and invited parents to come. So she met with them before and spoke to them in Spanish and then after she had done her lesson in English she would go back and go over what they had done with techniques, and that's a huge piece. Huge. You know, that's what we need, to be able to do that. And that made them feel (included), and we could see the numbers

of people that came increase. I mean one year we had like two and the next year you had about six, so word-of-mouth was out there. (Olivia, pp. 75-76)

But participants felt the process of seeking out additional resources was a problem for both teachers and parents. Participants did not know where or how to access supplemental services for themselves, nor did they know what community services were available for parents. All participants felt it was important to be able to refer parents to someone who can help them contact the school, particularly parents who do not feel comfortable approaching the school and/or who cannot find their own resources to do so. One participant felt that even if she knew where to send parents they may decide not to access services because of their immigration status. In addition to the lack of school resources and the lack of knowledge about community resources, participants talked about the lack of communication among school staff regarding the issues that affect parent engagement, and the lack of planning to address the problem.

I'm sure a lot of people are saying the same things but we haven't had, really, we should have sort of a forum to say "Okay, this is something that needs to be addressed." Instead of complaining, "Well parents don't want to do anything" which is easy to say, you know, or, "The parents aren't there," maybe we need to be a little bit more proactive on the whole thing and just come up with some ideas, or find out who has ideas about a better way to get parents involved. In the school we're almost 50% Spanish. I mean it's not like it's a few kids, you know. (Tonya, p. 51)

Tonya thought maybe the school could increase parent participation by serving as a parent resource center. Part of that effort could include free English classes to Spanish-speaking parents who want to learn English. She thought part of the goal should be to help empower

parents who have limited access to English, or who have limited ability to get to an English class outside of their neighborhood.

So I thought “Well why can't we have...an English class for parents who want to learn English?” I mean, you know, no cost. I mean someone should be able to figure out how to fund that. Then if you want to learn English (you can)... because...if you work at a certain place, or don't work, or stay in your neighborhood ...or you don't have a car and you can't drive to an English class, or you can't get a bus fare, or it's too much trouble, you know. There are so many things that get in the way if you're an adult. And I think it would be good to empower them more than anything else. (Tonya, pp. 35-36)

In addition to English classes for parents and translation services for teachers and parents, all participants felt it would be helpful to offer more professional development to general education teachers. One teacher said she heard about a training that had been offered to SEI teachers but felt it would be important for the district to give all teachers an opportunity to learn more about ELL-related strategies and concerns.

I think that if we are all having this population, I mean we can't deny that they are here. They are here. So we need to all learn how to deal with these children. I don't mean to say "deal with them" because they are not bad people, but how to work with them and help them. I think the trainings need to be more broad-spectrum than selective (Maureen, p. 72). Even to be able to sit in a room with teachers from other schools to hear what their strategies have been and, you know, you don't necessarily need to go out and hire somebody and spend all this bazillion dollars on a boring speaker. You could just have us learn off each other. (Maureen, p. 76)

Summary: Parent Engagement

Participants felt parent involvement at Harbor was poor, not just for Hispanic parents but for all parents at Harbor. The factors participants felt affected all parents included poverty, poor lifestyle choices, and school policies. Factors specific to Hispanic parents included the language barrier, disparities between home and school cultures, and a lack of culturally appropriate programming at school. Participants said they had difficulty accessing their own resources on a regular basis and said they would feel more comfortable if the school provided a designated person, like a parent liaison, to help parents and teachers communicate. They also felt the school should proactively address parent involvement by providing resources such as free English classes to encourage and empower parents, and by providing more training to the staff.

Theme Four: Language Attitudes

Participants expressed a variety of opinions and attitudes regarding language and its role in education. Participants talked about the costs and benefits of language diversity among students and parents and voiced their opinions about using native language strategies with ELL students. Table 4 gives examples of teachers' attitudes toward language diversity and their thoughts about making native language instruction and resources available to ELL students.

Table 4: Language Attitudes

Language Attitudes	Lisha	Maureen	Olivia	Tonya
Attitudes toward language diversity	I guess I should take a class in Spanish (p. 70)	I think the bilingual brain is a phenomenal brain. Wow! I wish I had that brain. If we could tap into that, wow! (pp. 26-26)	I think the younger ones (teachers) are more tolerant than the older ones...when I was in school nobody spoke a different language (p. 78)	Not to say that everyone has to speak English but I think it would...definitely empower people to be able to speak the language that they need, and not rely on their 8 yr. old or 10 yr. olds (p. 36)
Attitudes toward the role of native language in education	(I would) do 90% Spanish and 10% English then gradually shift that as the year goes on so that towards... June now you have primarily English (pp. 44-45)	You teach them the way they can learn, and if they can learn in Spanish then you teach them in Spanish until they learn English...I totally agree with that philosophy (p. 25)	I...have sent home some Spanish books so they (parents) could read to the child in Spanish (p. 22). Some people would throw them out...why throw them out? (p. 75)	...you should read. You've got to read. English or Spanish or anything (p. 14)

Attitudes toward Language Diversity

All participants supported language diversity and thought the ability to speak more than one language was a valuable skill. "I did tell this little boy that as he's teaching his father to speak English 'don't ever stop speaking Spanish,' are you kidding me? To be able to speak two languages or more, haa! Oh my God the gift, the gift, the gift they have" (Maureen, pp. 23-24). "I think they're going home and speaking Spanish primarily at home, so I think that helps keep it (the language) strong, which is good" (Lisha, p. 57).

Participant support of language diversity extended to the parents as well. In fact participants were concerned when parents did not speak English with their children and felt it was important for parents to learn English in order to communicate with teachers and help their children at home. All participants expressed some level of frustration with parents who did not speak English and one participant felt that most teachers have experienced some degree of frustration with these parents.

I do think there is that mentality that they (parents) should be speaking English by now and (some teachers say)...”Why should we be trying to meet their needs?” There is a part of me that would like to see them make an effort but the fact that they don’t is not the child’s fault. (Olivia, p. 76)

Another participant said in addition to feeling frustrated with parents who do not speak English she has also been frustrated with parents who expect her to speak to them in Spanish.

I definitely have had at least one or two parents who just assume you speak Spanish...and when you don't they just kind of look at you like, "Well?" Yeah, they look at me like what's wrong with me. How come I don't speak it? So that's been frustrating. I go home and say "You're here, you know. Help. Get a couple of words maybe." And I hope that doesn't sound ignorant but I feel like it's kind of ignorant for you to assume that I'm just going to be able to do what you need. So that's been frustrating a couple of times. (Lisha, p. 26)

Attitudes toward the Role of Native Language in Education

Despite participants’ expectations for parents and students to learn English, all participants felt ELL students should be taught in their native language until they have mastered

the English language enough to fully understand English-only instruction. “I think that everybody feels that English needs to be the primary language. I totally agree with that but...we need to start where they are” (Maureen, p. 25). Participants agreed with the use of a student’s native language to such a degree that none of them could understand the rationale behind the SEI teaching philosophy. Lisha wasn’t exactly sure what happened in an SEI classroom, but she knew what she had heard and questioned why SEI teachers taught their classes in English.

There's got to be a reason why they tell these teachers "Don't teach in Spanish." There has to be a reason. Does it take too long when they teach in Spanish? Is that the problem? That they would spend too much time teaching in Spanish and the kids would be missing too much curriculum? I don't really know the rationale for why they've been told to teach like that... (Lisha, pp. 46-47)

Tonya was confused by the configuration of SEI classes. She said often times there are students in the same class who speak different languages, and on more than one occasion she has seen teachers who speak one language teaching students who speak a different language.

It's nice to have somebody who can speak their language as a teacher, but...they run the whole class in English...and the only thing that they can do is maybe clarify in their language, and they (SEI teachers) don't even always know the language (of the kids) that they're teaching. I mean some of them are speaking Portuguese and they have Spanish kids. (Tonya, p. 16)

Maureen showed her support for using a child’s native language during instruction as she talked about how she might feel if she was put in a class and forced to learn academic content in another language.

Would you want to go to a foreign country as a kid, never mind an adult, who didn't ask to go to this foreign country and people just keep talking to you, you know, I mean they just keep talking, talking, and talking, and you have no clue what they are saying.

Wouldn't you rather feel better or feel more adjusted if they talk your language until you get the new language? I guess I don't understand that philosophy (SEI instruction). I guess I just have a hard time. Well I know that that's the rule and that's what's supposed to happen, that you just teach in English, but I think that, I don't know all the SEI teachers but the ones that I know think that it's, you teach the way you need to teach to get them to learn. I mean you do what you gotta do because these kids have to learn. (Maureen, p. 29)

Olivia was also supportive of native language instruction and felt the language attitudes in this country have compromised our willingness to provide linguistically appropriate instruction to ELL students.

When we had gone away it's just amazing how many people speak multi-languages and I always think "shame on us," but again our culture. We're so isolated...Our thinking is that when they come here they should learn our language and not that we should...help them feel included in ours. So I think that cultural piece of it is huge. (Olivia, p. 77)

All four participants said that if someone trained them they would be willing to learn Spanish and/or add native language strategies to their repertoire. Despite their willingness to learn, two participants felt they did not have the capacity to learn a second language, even if they wanted to. Olivia said she would be willing to put English and Spanish words around her classroom in order to help all her students learn English and Spanish vocabulary (Olivia, p. 9).

She also mentioned a time when she had given credit to a student who had only been able to demonstrate her understanding of certain concepts in Spanish.

One girl ... would be looking at a picture that was supposed to be giving her a clue and she would know the word in Spanish, but she wouldn't know the word in English. So she said "I know the Spanish word for that." ... I would give her credit for that because the point of the picture was to give her a clue and she learned to use that as a clue, but just couldn't give me the proper word for it. (Olivia, p. 11)

Lisha said she might be willing to translate homework directions if she thought it would get parents to help their children at home. When she first thought about it she said, "Like every night? I'd probably cry!" But when she thought about it some more she felt if the parent had been the one to request it she might actually consider doing it. She said, "In that case I would do it because 'thank you for helping your kid at home at night'" (Lisha, p. 32).

Summary: Language Attitudes

The general consensus among participants was that language diversity is a good thing. Some participants actively encouraged their ELL students to maintain their bilingual skills while others had a more hands-off appreciation for their students' language abilities. Participants' respect for language diversity also came with the expectation and/or desire for parents to develop their English language skills, if for no other reason than to help their children at home.

Theme Five: Teachers' Cultural Perceptions

Participants discussed the differences between school and home cultures and how they felt culture influences ELL student outcomes. When "culture" was the topic of conversation, participants stated their perceptions outright. At other times participants' cultural perceptions

were embedded within discussions about other topics. This section focuses on participants' cultural perceptions of ELL students in the classroom environment, ELL students and their parents, and the degree to which home and school cultures support one another. Table 5 provides examples of cultural perceptions expressed by participant.

Table 5: Teachers' Cultural Perceptions

Teachers' Cultural Perceptions	Lisha	Maureen	Olivia	Tonya
ELL Student Integration	Play is a language everybody can speak (p. 18)	Everybody is mixed together and there doesn't seem to be anything different socially amongst them. (p. 34)	You could see that they were very comfortable when they were able to speak in their own language (pp. 36-37)	The ESL kids in my class, within my class, I don't see a great distinction at all. I think they get along just as well as any of them do (p. 16)
Relationships between Culture and ELL student performance	I haven't been exposed to their culture a whole lot. That's been an opportunity that has been lacking (p. 39)	I don't know what's worse; living over there in this chaos or coming over here... I mean these kids come with so much baggage (p. 50)	I think it's real important for them to know that what they have, like how they celebrate the holidays is cool... (p. 9)	I'm all for it (diversity) but...you need to know more about the culture in order to really teach the best that you can (p. 4)

Teachers' Cultural Perceptions	Lisha	Maureen	Olivia	Tonya
Teachers' Cultural Perceptions of Parents/Students	I have been very lucky with the parents. Even if they can't communicate directly with me, they seem to have instilled in their kids... "you need to respect school, you need to respect the teacher" (p. 37)	I think they are wonderful kids and I do find the parents very supportive. They come from strong families, from the kids that I know (p. 44)	I'm sure it has to be frustrating for them (parents). But then again it's expectations. I don't know what they are expecting (p. 46)	Each family is different (p. 32)

ELL Student Integration

Participants presented conflicting observations regarding their perceptions about ELL student integration. When asked specifically about the degree to which they felt ELL students integrated with their classmates, all participants felt their ELL students were well integrated with their peers. "I think a positive thing is that you can be in school and...there isn't that significant difference in that you are Spanish. The integration I think is amazing" (Tonya, p. 19). One participant felt students at her grade level were not aware of cultural differences enough to make integration a concern. "They are all kids and that's what is great about this grade level is that they know they are all kids. Yeah 'your skin is different and my skin is different,' but 'oh you like G.I. Joe and I like G.I. Joe, cool. Let's get together'" (Maureen, p. 36).

Another participant said integration wasn't much of an issue because of the high number of Spanish-speaking students in her class. "Most of the kids in the class speak Spanish so that

hasn't really seemed to be like anyone is feeling they're being left out or feeling ostracized. That hasn't been an issue" (Lisha, p. 16). One participant felt Spanish was so prevalent that it almost created a natural curiosity among English-speaking students, which in turn has helped ELL students feel a part of the class.

I think the children are so surrounded by it (Spanish) all the time that it's not... it wasn't difficult... If somebody didn't know something you'd hear that child say it in Spanish, and another child that knew the word in English would explain that word to another child, so they would help each other, without a doubt. (Someone would) say something in Spanish, and the little English people would say "What does that mean? I don't know that word." So it was very good. It was nice to see that there was an interest in knowing more about what they talked about. (Olivia, pp. 36-37)

Participants thought ELL students were not only integrated with their English-speaking peers in a social setting, but some also felt their ELL students were well integrated in the classroom environment. For example, when participants talked about peer tutoring or group activities they felt their ELL students participated to the same degree as the other children.

I don't see any differences. I don't hear any differences. I don't hear people, other students getting upset... And you tend to, or I tend to, or the teachers tend to group the kids based on academic levels so they are not all grouped together in the same groups because some are better academically than others. (Maureen, p. 34)

Tonya said she thought her ELL students felt a part of the class because she treated all of her students the same, and because she expected them to work cooperatively with one another.

It's your class and they are all treated the same way, and expectations are the same, and to get along they have to work together. We're always in groups and I honestly can't say that I see that (integration) as an issue, like being separated or not being able to integrate, or not knowing enough of the language to not feel comfortable with their peers. (Tonya, pp. 17-18)

Additionally, all participants felt ELL students were just as likely to help English-speaking students as English-speaking students were to help ELL students. "Say someone Spanish is good in math that might be something that they might help somebody else with. So, I mean those kinds of things happen all the time" (Tonya, p. 20).

That said, some of the participants talked about cultural and value differences among ELL students that suggest a certain level of separation between ELL students and their classmates.

I hate saying this because it just doesn't feel right but... I think the American-born children are raised with the "you owe me" attitude and the non-American-born are raised with the "you don't owe me anything. I need to learn it." I think there's just a difference in the classes and I hate saying that because they're just kids, but I see it so vividly. "You're here to teach me." But you are here to learn too. It's not a give and take a lot of times and that's so sad, so sad. I want to say the gratefulness, and I don't mean that I'm the best thing since Swiss cheese, but there's so much "wows" and "thanks so much," gratefulness that you don't (get) from some of the other kids. I can do the same thing. I can bend over backwards the same way and, "okay, so what?" And then the other kids they're like "thanks so much, wow!" Like we've been passing out stuff that's old and decrepit and

instead of throwing them out, like we have books that instead of throwing them out we give them to the kids, and some of them are like "oh my God, books!" (Maureen, p. 45)

Maureen also talked about what she believed were culturally based behavioral differences between her ELL students and the rest of the class.

The other kids in my class have NO problems coming in and spilling the beans. No problems. Oh my God, and sometimes it's like, "Okay, I don't want to know that." And sometimes they're like, "My mom yelled at my father last night because he was drinking." Okay thank you, TMI. No, I don't have the Hispanic kids blurting out; not at all, never ever have. (Maureen, pp. 51-52)

She also talked about significant differences in some of the ELL students' life experiences that might interfere with ELL students' ability to fully relate to other students in the class. Maureen talked about the lives of some of the ELL students she knows.

I love the melting pot idea. I just think that it's so cool to have people from all over the world who have experienced so many different things. I mean unfortunately some of these kids have experienced horrible things, like they didn't buy a plane ticket and hop a plane to come here. Some of them ran away (Maureen, p. 47). Yeah, I would see that impacting on somebody's life. Crossing the border illegally, walking through the desert. When you run for your life, you know, I know that in the SEI class there are a few that their fathers had been murdered and they had to leave that night, because I talked to the teacher and like "so-and-so is so shy!" For some of these kids shy...they're like buried around themselves." And she's like, "yeah because some of these kids they're hiding and

their parents told them to be quiet." And, you know, can you imagine that life? No. No. (Maureen, p. 49)

Reports from other participants also suggest that ELL students are not as integrated in the academic environment as they are in the social environment.

I am thinking of a little one, and at the beginning I think she was very quiet. She would ask me, she had a good command of some language but would come to me to ask a question. It was very much one-on-one. I think she was very conscious of her language barrier, that she knew she didn't speak the way some of the other children did. So she would come to me and very quietly say "I go to the bathroom please?" Or when we were having group discussions she would be very reluctant to say anything, whereas the other children would be talking. (Olivia, pp. 12-13)

Tonya talked about a similar situation with one of her ELL students. The difference with her student was that he tended to shut down. Rather than approach the teacher with his questions he chose to remain silent.

There's a little boy in my class and he worked hard but he got easily frustrated, I think, and it took a lot of encouragement...to get him to think it was worth it...I see a lack of motivation sometimes. I think maybe it's more the fact that... things are too hard and they don't want to ask. So it's easy to sit there and be quiet and he wasn't acting out or anything but he really wasn't motivated to, you know. I think it's easier to be quiet than to raise your hand and say "I don't know what that means. I don't understand what you're saying." (Tonya, pp. 25-26)

Maureen also witnessed a lack of participation among ELL students and said it often took some time before ELL students felt comfortable in class. She said they tend to be more withdrawn or reserved in the beginning of the year and as the year unfolds they tend to gain a little more confidence in class. "Yeah, they come out of their shell. As the year goes on they tended to come out of their shell more. Again not a behavioral out of their shell, but you know, "Mrs. Maureen I didn't understand it" (Maureen, p.33).

Although interview questions about student integration were geared toward ELL students within participants' classrooms, two participants said they felt SEI students had more difficulty integrating with general education students than did ELL students within the general education classroom. "I'd see them (SEI students) even like at lunch for instance. I don't see them interacting as freely as all the other kids. They kind of stay with their class" (Tonya, p, 16). Maureen said she has witnessed the same dynamic between SEI students and general education students, but not within her pod. She thought one reason for the separation between SEI and general education students was because of teachers' attitudes within each pod.

I guess when I first started here... I've heard nasty things about "bilingual people are over there and we are over here," and oh my God, you know, they are kids. I have kids, you have kids, they are all kids, so you know, I guess our SEI person was surprised because the pod where I work in we are very close and everyone is included. It's not that they are SEI and we are gen ed. (Maureen, p. 26)

Participants appeared to judge their students' ability to integrate with peers based on ELL students' behavior within the social arenas at school e.g. the playground, the lunchroom, or during cooperative group activities in class. They knew some of their ELL students did not

participate in academic activities as much as other students, but none of them associated this with difficulties integrating.

Relationship between Culture and ELL Student Performance

All of the participants felt ELL student performance is adversely affected by cultural factors. Each presented a fairly consistent picture about the social and cultural factors they believed adversely affect ELL students. Participants felt certain cultural influences not only impact ELL students but also impact many of the other students as well. These factors included poverty, school culture/practices, and educational policy. Tonya talked about the time when she first realized how many students at Harbor lived in poverty.

Poverty was something at Harbor that was a lot more...in your face. It's not necessarily color or race or, it's poverty. And what goes along with the culture of poverty... being minutes away from a disaster all the time that affects their lives so much that it's just, I mean, that was shocking. (Tonya, p. 6)

In her opinion she felt the negative impact of poverty trumped any other cultural or language influence that might impact an ELL student's performance in school.

I don't see (academics) as a challenge for Spanish-speaking students any more than it is for, you know, 80% of my class. They struggle but there's so many other kids that struggle. There's a challenge but I can't say that it is language-based. I think it's, again what comes along with ...low income, transient people moving all the time, and just the whole poverty issue... I don't really see it as being a Spanish poverty versus the rest of them. They don't have a lot to connect what they're learning at school with what they're learning at home. It's a lack of exposure across the board. It's really hard, that's a really

frustrating thing that happens all the time, but I can't say that it's more language (or more poverty). (Tonya, pp. 23-24)

Maureen also expressed strong feelings about the negative impact of cultural factors on ELL students. In her discussion she alluded to issues of poverty as she talked about educational policy in relation to underperforming schools.

I walked into the classroom the first year and saw what I was up against just in the classroom, never mind getting the kids. The haves will have and the have-nots will have not, and the have-nots will never know what they could have had, and I think it's pathetic...I mean this whole MCAS (statewide standardized test) and this money always goes to the performing schools. Well the performing schools are the schools that have supportive parents, the capably supportive parents. The underperforming schools have the low income, low educated parents. So you're going to put money into schools where they already have the support! And you're not going to put money into the schools where they don't have the supports!...And they'll never know what they could have had because the money is going the other way. (Maureen, pp. 68-69)

One participant thought teachers' cultural attitudes about people speaking Spanish in this country also hurt ELL students in the school and thought veteran teachers might be more likely to have these negative attitudes than teachers who have recently entered the field. She thought part of their attitudes might be due in part to difficulties dealing with change. She said newer teachers were more likely to have had ELL students in their class from the day they started teaching, whereas veteran teachers have gone from teaching all English speaking students to teaching a diverse student body. She said these attitudes "might not be expressed in the teacher's

room” but would probably be more noticeable in their classrooms. For example, teachers with negative language attitudes and/or resistance to change might be the ones she has seen discard Spanish books rather than send them home with students, as a way to say “I’m not going to contribute to it. Let them speak English” (Olivia, pp. 79-80).

Two participants felt the cultural composition of the staff might also be problematic for ELL students. Lisha said she understands the concerns about staffing but had mixed feelings about the rising expectation that schools employ culturally appropriate staff for Hispanic students.

I know some people say "Well, you don't represent my child, meaning I'm not Spanish. It's not even necessarily our parents at our school. I'm talking about when I watch Fox news and whatnot. You know people say that if half of your demographic is Hispanic than your teachers should be representing that...It's not my fault that I'm not. I guess I understand that gripe in a way but that doesn't mean I can't do a good job. That doesn't mean that I'm not trying to do everything I can. I don't sit there and say "too bad for your kid." I would never do that. I do all they can to reach all my kids no matter what language they're speaking. (Lisha, pp. 22-23)

Teachers’ Cultural Perceptions of Parent/Students

Participants had a variety of opinions and thoughts about parents and students based on the cultural perceptions they have about ELL students and their families. Two participants talked about cultural differences within the Hispanic community and one participant spoke about her perception of the Hispanic community as a whole. In general, participants felt ELL students and their parents were culturally different from mainstream English-speaking students, but all

admitted that they were not exactly sure to what extent. Lisha admitted she doesn't often know the background of her ELL students because she doesn't ask. As a result, she admitted her assumptions have sometimes been incorrect.

I had a little boy who landed in my room...and he is, his family is Spanish-speaking. I have to send forms home in Spanish for him and I said "where did you come from?" Probably naively thinking that he just came from somewhere else like from a different country, and he said 'I came from (Texas).' (Lisha, pp. 3-4)

Tonya's perception of ELL students and their families varied based on the family's country of origin. She felt the practice of identifying all Spanish-speaking people as Hispanic was artificial. In fact, they had differences in dialect, values, and behavior between each group. She said every family is different and she didn't want to make sweeping generalizations about any particular group, but she also said she has noticed some clear differences between the Guatemalan population versus other groups within the Hispanic community.

I think with different cultures there are different rules and that (Guatemalan) culture to me seems different...It's like there was this definite emphasis on school and really being, like, you know, school is really high on their priority. And the parents were a little more visible I think, and also a little more willing to try to communicate even if they didn't really know the language. I mean it's just, that's from my own experience...I think there's a lot more help at home for the kids... and I think the Spanish kids don't get as much help at home. (Tonya, pp. 30-33)

Some participants felt parents of their ELL students did not share the same educational beliefs and values with the middle-class English-speaking population. For example when Olivia talked about the value of reading she said,

It's not part of their (culture)...In ours you just did it. It was just part of being a parent, and yet...the lower socioeconomic people in our district, they don't read to their children either because it is just not their (custom), or maybe they weren't read to, I don't know. I mean you give from your own experience, let's face it. (Olivia, pp. 79-80)

Two participants felt parents of their ELL students did not share the same advantages as educated people when it came time to interface with schools. They felt Spanish-speaking parents were part of a group of parents who were unable or unaware of how to navigate the educational system and who were less likely to be taught by others how to do so.

The educated people know how to work the system. There are some uneducated people who know how to work the system too, don't get me wrong, but they know how to advocate for their kids. They know what is available. They know if they don't want to sign an IEP they don't have to sign an IEP, and they can get a lawyer to advocate for them. Do you think our parents know that? Absolutely not, and are we supposed to tell our parents that? Absolutely not! (Maureen, pp. 69-70)

One participant felt parents who were unable to navigate the system on their own were sometimes forced to use their children to help them, and that this was embarrassing for both the parent and the child.

I think... it's hard enough to come into school for a lot of parents. I think the lack of speaking English definitely compounds the whole thing, like as far as feeling comfortable and welcome...Kids (are) a little more parentified... It's different (because) their parent

doesn't speak English...can't communicate...I would say it's probably a little, not necessarily embarrassing, but it could be embarrassing. (Tonya, pp. 38-39)

Tonya felt most families of ELL students lived in much of the same conditions as any other poor family, which for her meant they lived with parents who were overworked and overwhelmed. She felt these challenges tended to create a household that is not conducive to academically supporting students at home.

With the kids in our class... a lot of the parents either work at night or are, they only have one parent, and we have many...single family headed households. And they might be at their aunt's house or their cousin's house or, you know... there's not a lot...of daily routine. There's a lot of things that can happen which gets them to not do their homework, so it's hard to know if...they're not getting the help because of the language, or if it's that they're not getting the help because days, nights are so different. It's not like, "Okay it's seven o'clock. Let's do your homework." (Tonya, pp. 33-34)

Another participant also felt Hispanic families held a certain set of values and beliefs that were common among people living in poverty. Here she talked about her observations of ELL students in relation to a book she read on poverty.

There was a piece (in the book) ... about how important it is that they (children in poverty) look perfect; that they are outsiders, always that they are well dressed, and that their shoes matched their outfits. And I found that very interesting, because I found that with most of my children that came from Spanish-speaking homes. One little girl came in one day and she had on her sneakers, and her sister came in and brought her into school one day and she said to me "she is going to be in big trouble." And I thought "Oh"

because she had done something that day in school, copied someone's paper instead of doing her own... So I said, "Why is she going to get in big trouble?" And the sister said, "Well she didn't wear the new shoes that my mother put out for her." So there was just, there's a difference in culture there that you need to respect, but in the same token it's very difficult because what they see as important isn't necessarily what I as a teacher see as an important thing. (Olivia, pp. 19-20)

Some participants felt families did not value reading as much as they should, and felt it was part of their responsibility as teachers to help parents appreciate reading.

Reading at home is not something that is done frequently.... Again it goes back to helping the parents develop, to grow and to be here, and I don't want to compromise on that at all. I just think we have to let them know how important it is, even if they can't (read). (Olivia, pp. 23-24)

Maureen had a different perception about parents' cultural attitudes toward school. She agreed that parents did not read at home but attributed the lack of reading to parents' inability to read English and/or access books in Spanish. She described one family as follows: "The family is very strict on needing to learn. 'You need to learn, you need to succeed. You need to learn, you need to learn English.' Again they are supportive parents. They just don't have the skills" (Maureen, p. 14).

She talked about giving several of her books away when she found out some of her students didn't have books at home.

Some of these kids don't have books. Can you imagine not having a book in your house? I can't even fathom the idea. I was like "Here, take them, take them, take all of them." I don't care. Take all of them. How can you not have books in your house? When you don't

speaking English of course you're not going to have books in your house. What's the use? Because you can't read them! It doesn't make sense. And they're not too many Spanish books out there, not that I've seen in bookstores. So now that they're learning it, it's like "Oh my God, take the books." And they are forever grateful. (Maureen, pp. 46)

All of the participants had positive things to say about their ELL students. Two participants attributed their students' behavior and demeanor to the emphasis parents place on education. Lisha said,

I have been very lucky where the parents, even if they can't communicate directly with me, they seem to have instilled in their kids, you know, for the most part, like "You need to respect school, you need to respect the teacher." I found a lot of these kids might seem to come to school with that attitude. So it hasn't been really bad. Some of the other kids, your English speakers, some of them not so much. They don't necessarily have that kind of attitude. (Lisha, p. 37)

Maureen said her ELL students have the best attendance of any of her students. "They are one of my more steady students, unless they are sick with the flu or something. Other than that they are there; rain, shine, snow, or sleet, they are there" (Maureen, p. 63). Some participants also described ELL students as quiet, shy, respectful, and well behaved.

I can tell you of the Hispanic population, I don't think I've had one child that has ever been a behavior child. I just think it's the homes that they come from. I think they are told to respect their elders, their authorities. I think they are told that you go to school, you get your education, this is what's really important and this is what we're here for. (Maureen, pp. 31-32)

Summary: Teachers' Cultural Perceptions

All participants said their ELL students had no difficulty integrating with their English-speaking peers. Some of this had to do with the fact that many of their peers spoke both English and Spanish, but participants also felt ELL students had no difficulty integrating with students who only spoke English. Every participant said their students played well together and that the level of integration among their students was “impressive.” That said, there were enough social and cultural differences between ELL students and their English-speaking peers to suggest that ELL students may be one step removed from being fully integrated into the classroom environment.

Participants thought cultural factors such as poverty, school practices, and educational policies negatively affected ELL student outcomes. They felt poverty and educational policies affected all students, while certain school practices harmed ELL students specifically. Poverty resulted in a “lack of exposure” to educationally relevant information at home, and educational policies directed additional monies away from Harbor and toward performing schools. School practices that participants thought were particularly detrimental to ELL students included a disproportionately low number of Hispanic teachers on staff, and the sabotaging behaviors of teachers with negative attitudes toward language diversity.

Participants' cultural perceptions of ELL students and their parents varied. At times participants felt parents valued education and at other times they felt the opposite was true. Some participants felt parents were limited in what they could do for their children because many parents had limited knowledge about school practices, or because of the language barrier. One participant described this situation as intimidating for parents and potentially embarrassing

for students. As a rule participants described ELL students as quiet, respectful, and well behaved in school, and felt parents were responsible for instilling these behaviors and their children.

Chapter Five: Findings, Discussion, Limitations, and Implications

Research focused directly on teaching ELL students in the general education setting has been difficult to locate. Most studies related to this area of inquiry have used quantitative measures to examine teachers' language attitudes or attitudes toward having ELL students in the mainstream classroom (Byrnes et al., 1994; Byrnes et al., 1996, Byrnes et al., 1997; Karathanos, 2009; Williams et al., 1972; Ramos, 2001; Stanosheck Youngs & Youngs, 2001). Other studies have used quantitative and mixed methods research studies to better understand the challenges general education teachers encounter with ELL students (Youngs et al., 1999; Reeves, 2006). Studies exploring the connection between teachers' beliefs and their classroom behaviors have also provided some insight (Karathanos, 2009; Wilcox-Herzog, 2002; Ramos, 2001). This study is one of the first to provide detailed examples of what teaching ELL students in the general education classroom looks like in real time, from the perspective of four elementary classroom teachers.

This study employed a qualitative, phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of white, monolingual, general education teachers who teach ELL students in the general education setting. Four teachers from a low income, diverse, urban elementary school participated in the study. According to Creswell (2009) phenomenological studies can be conducted with 2-10 participants. Thus four participants were considered to be enough to saturate the data. Data were collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews and two different types of researcher memos. Data were analyzed using the Listening Guide method of data analysis in order to better access participants' underlying attitudes and feelings about their

experiences (Gilligan et al., 2003). The primary goal of this study was to understand the experiences of teachers who teach Hispanic ELL students in the general education classroom. The secondary goal was to understand these experiences within the context of teachers' language and cultural attitudes, beliefs, and feelings.

The study was conducted at Harbor Elementary School in Seaside, Massachusetts. At the time of the study Seaside was a low income, culturally diverse, urban school district. Almost half of Harbor's student population was Hispanic and 35.3 percent of the total population had been identified as students whose first language was not English (www.mass.doe.edu). The study focused on white teachers because white teachers symbolically represent dominant norms in society, regardless of their style of teaching (Liggett, 2008). Monolingual, English-speaking teachers helped maximize the linguistic differences between teachers and students. The study focused on general education teachers for three reasons: 1. general education teachers typically lack the training needed to teach ELL students, 2. public policies and national politics reflect negative attitudes toward Hispanic immigrants, and 3. to keep the participant pool as uniform as possible.

Findings

Interview data from four teachers helped answer one main question and three secondary questions. The main research question was:

How do white, monolingual, general education teachers at Harbor Elementary School describe their experiences with teaching Hispanic English language learners?

The secondary questions for this study were:

- 4. What are the language attitudes and/or cultural assumptions that these teachers express as they describe their experiences with teaching Hispanic English language learners?*

5. *What linguistic and cultural themes are most prevalent when these teachers discuss their experiences with Hispanic English language learners?*
6. *What linguistic and cultural opportunities and challenges do these teachers report as they describe their teaching experiences with Hispanic English language learners?*

The following section uses data presented in chapter four to answer the four research questions.

Main Question: *How do white, monolingual general education teachers at Harbor Elementary School describe their experiences with teaching Hispanic English language learners?*

Participants described their experiences with teaching Hispanic ELL students as frustrating, confusing and challenging. Their main sources of frustration included difficulties communicating with parents, teaching academic content, and accessing resources. Their main sources of confusion included understanding ELL student behavior, assessing student performance, and understanding parents' motivations and expectations. Their greatest challenges included teaching English as a second language, accessing resources, and getting other professionals to take their concerns about ELL students seriously.

The most challenging aspects of teaching ELL students included teaching English as a second language, teaching academic content, and conducting accurate student assessments. Participants across the board felt frustrated and helpless when they tried to communicate with parents. As a rule they felt they did not have enough opportunities to communicate with parents, and when they did they did not feel they could communicate their message in a way they would have liked to. Even with a translator, participants often felt parts of their message got lost in translation. Some participants said the time and effort it took to get something translated was often too great, and as a result it compromised the amount of contact they made with parents. At

least one participant even "skipped" sending notes home to parents. This had as much to do with her desire to treat students equitably as it did with finding the time and resources to translate them.

All the participants in this study said they often had to find their own resources to communicate with parents. Participants as a whole were resourceful and found various ways to do so, including soliciting help from bilingual staff and parents, and looking online. Three of the four participants knew a bilingual person in the building and felt they could access their help if necessary. None of the participants felt comfortable asking for help on a regular basis because it involved giving colleagues additional work. Overall participants felt the school should proactively address parent involvement by providing parents with resources such as bilingual parent liaisons, free English classes, and training to teach parents how to best help their children at home.

All participants said they enjoyed having ELL students in their class and said ELL students as a whole were polite, quiet, respectful children. They were impressed by the level of interaction between ELL students and English-speaking students, and appreciated having diversity within the classroom. Participants felt teaching ELL students was also a rewarding experience. They especially felt a sense of satisfaction when ELL students worked hard and overcame some of their language-based academic hurdles.

Secondary Question One: *What are the language attitudes and/or cultural assumptions that these teachers express as they describe their experiences with teaching Hispanic English language learners?*

All participants demonstrated positive attitudes toward language and cultural diversity. Participants described Harbor as a culturally interesting environment and expressed a great appreciation for people who could speak more than one language. All participants supported native language instruction, and some felt students should receive native language instruction until they are fluent enough to understand English-only instruction. All participants were willing to receive training that would teach them how to integrate native language strategies into their classrooms, but none of them had sought out this training on their own. Overall, participants empathized with ELL students and felt it was unfair to expect them to learn without native language supports. That said, participants endorsed English as the desired language of schools and felt the ultimate goal within the school setting was for all students to learn in English. They also felt parents should want to learn English in order to advocate for their children and help them at home.

Participants' cultural assumptions about parents and students were inconsistent. Participants described ELL students as shy, quiet, polite, appreciative, and well behaved. They worked hard to learn and kept their families' business private. As a rule participants attributed ELL students' behavior to parents' expectations to respect teachers and work hard in school. Participants' cultural assumptions about parents did not always reflect the cultural assumptions participants made about their ELL students. At times participants felt parents' cultural practices and beliefs did not reflect school values, and that parents were not capable of helping their children at home. Most participants attributed parents' lack of involvement to their family life, poverty, low education levels and the language barrier. That said, participants who had contact with parents said they felt parents were cooperative, and would do anything they could to help their children succeed.

Secondary Question Two: *What linguistic and cultural themes are most prevalent when these teachers discuss their experiences with Hispanic English language learners?*

Poverty, institutional barriers, language barriers, and difficulties accessing cultural information about families were the four most prevalent cultural and linguistic themes discussed by participants. Poverty was considered one of the greatest factors that complicated the process of teaching ELL students. Participants felt teaching ELL students meant having to battle against the influences of poverty, which they felt included low levels of education among parents, a lack of structure and academic support at home, and a lack of exposure to academic or literary activities at home. They felt the lack of exposure across the board made it difficult to get ELL students to understand what is going on in class. Participants also felt the culture of urban poverty interfered with teaching English, i.e. the use of slang by English-speaking peers made it difficult to teach ELL's proper English.

Participants said they felt strangled by some of the same institutional barriers that ELL students and parents face. These institutional barriers included state policies and school practices that prevented participants from providing their ELL students with equal access to educational services. At the state level this included mandates for English-only instruction (SEI). These mandates have all but eliminated the services general education teachers need to access resources. Participants also talked about state financial practices, which channel supplementary monies away from underperforming schools like Harbor.

At the district and school level participants felt unsupported. They felt the school does not take their concerns about ELL students seriously and has not provided them with a forum to discuss their concerns. The absence of translators and/or family liaisons, and the lack of

professional development training have created a sense of frustration and helplessness among participants. Participants felt these institutional barriers compromised their ability to acquire the cultural and linguistic information they need to successfully teach ELL students. Participants felt resources were difficult to locate and felt that they needed the school's help and guidance in order to access them.

Secondary Question Three: *What linguistic and cultural opportunities and challenges do these teachers report as they describe their teaching experiences with Hispanic English language learners?*

The most significant challenge participants reported, both linguistically and culturally, was communicating with parents. They all felt it was difficult to communicate with parents because of the language barrier, obviously. But they also felt the lack of communication with parents prevented them from getting accurate information about family culture. Participants appeared to understand that home-based knowledge and school-based knowledge may be different, and that differences between the two may negatively impact student performance. But, they felt without the ability to get to know parents on a personal level it would be difficult to determine the extent of these differences. The lack of contact with parents challenged participants' ability to understand their students to the fullest. It also made it more difficult for participants to share their expectations with parents and/or understand what parents expected from them as teachers.

Communication challenges also forced participants into a position of having to make cultural assumptions about parents and students. Participants who had at least some contact with parents were able to base their assumptions on observable behavior. These behaviors included

parents' attendance at meetings, parent involvement in the PTO, and/or parents' visibility on the playground before or after school. For the most part these observations seemed to lend themselves to more positive beliefs about parents. More often than not participants were forced to draw conclusions about family culture based on limited information, stereotypes, or hearsay. The most concerning assumptions included beliefs that parents did not value education, or that parents did not have the capability of helping their children at home.

In terms of opportunities, all of the participants said that ELL students increased participants' appreciation for cultural diversity. They felt having ELL students in the classroom encouraged them to expand their teaching repertoire. They also felt ELL students increased cultural diversity and cultural awareness among students. In addition, participants felt having ELL students in the classroom gave ELL students an opportunity to learn from their English-speaking peers, and every participant was impressed with the way ELL students interacted with their English-speaking classmates.

Discussion

Data from this study reflect a complex array of interactions between the participants and multiple components within the educational environment. These components included participants' attitudes and feelings, ELL students and parents, and the education system at large. Socio-cultural Theory helped separate these components into three sections. These sections neatly correspond to the three planes of social interaction involved in cultural developmental processes (Nasir & Hand, 2006). Participants' language/cultural attitudes, personal beliefs, emotions, and the standards they hold for themselves as professionals were characteristic of the personal plane of social interaction. Parent/teacher communication and student/teacher

relationships were examples of the interpersonal plane of social interaction. Cultural dynamics related to school culture, educational policies, school practices, institutionally accepted forms of knowledge, mainstream teacher trainings, and institutional barriers constituted the community/institutional plane of interaction. Critical Race Theory provided the additional insight at the institutional level of analysis. The Listening Guide helped achieve a deeper understanding of participants' experiences at the personal level.

As Gilligan et al. (2003) stated, a person's "voice" is often textured suggesting that there are many layers of meaning embedded in what a person says. These voices may be in tension with each other, with the voices of others, or with the culture or context of their experience. Understanding how each layer of a participant's voice interfaced with the three components of participant's experiences was a long and arduous process. It involved systematically examining the various meanings expressed within each participant's transcript. Examining these tensions helped identify which circumstances seemed to separate a participant from her authentic voice and which circumstances brought her closer to it. Understanding these dynamics opened the door to a more intimate understanding of these four teachers' experiences, which are best conceptualized as a complex matrix of possibilities rather than an inventory of events. That said, data from this study suggest the following findings:

1. There appear to be three important components involved in participants' experiences. These components were personal, interpersonal, and institutional in nature.
2. Participants described their experiences within each component using emotional terminology.
3. Negative attitudes and emotions at the personal level tended to emerge in the face of interpersonal or institutional barriers.

4. Barriers tended to separate participants from their own values and beliefs.
5. Participants felt they needed more resources, training, and support, and access to parents if they were going to successfully teach ELL students.

The following section will discuss findings from this study within the context of findings from other research studies and within the context of larger bodies of literature. The subsequent section establishes ‘emotion’ as a defining element of participants’ experiences. Participants’ emotions are then explored within the personal, interpersonal, and community/institutional realms of their experiences. It is important to keep in mind that a discussion about each component in isolation is somewhat artificial. Each component is more appropriately viewed as an interdependent part of the whole. That said, each component will be presented separately in order to make the information easier for the reader to digest.

Defining Teachers’ Experiences

Participants in this study reported a wide range of emotions associated with teaching ELL students. These included negative feelings such as frustration, helplessness, and inadequacy, and positive feelings such as appreciation and satisfaction. Results from this study were generated from a small sample of participants within a very demographically specific context. Yet these results reflect findings from a larger study, which differed in both its research methods and participants (Youngs & Stanosheck Youngs, 1999). The goal of the Youngs and Stanosheck Youngs (1999) study was similar, in that the researchers sought to identify the perceived advantages and disadvantages of having ELL students in the general education setting. The Youngs and Stanosheck Youngs’ (1999) study investigated the experiences of middle/junior high school teachers within the context of a community in the Great Plains. But despite differences in participant/school demographics, teachers in both studies expressed similar feelings about

teaching ELL students. Participants from both studies expressed positive feelings about having ELL students in their classrooms. They appreciated having ELL students in their classrooms because it encouraged them to expand their teaching repertoire. They appreciated the fact that ELL students increased the level of cultural awareness in the classroom, and felt having ELL students in the classroom gave ELL students the opportunity to learn from English-speaking peers. Participants also expressed a great level of satisfaction watching ELL students make academic progress (Youngs & Stanosheck Youngs, 1999).

Participants in both studies also felt frustrated with the lack of time they had to service ELL students. They felt frustrated by the demands of teaching ELL students, and they felt unsupported by schools. Both sets of participants also voiced concerns about their difficulties teaching academic content and felt they lacked the appropriate training needed to successfully teach ELL students (Youngs & Stanosheck Youngs, 1999). Thus data from the present study and findings from the Youngs and Stanosheck Youngs' (1999) study suggest that teachers who teach ELL students in the general education setting use emotional terminology to help define their experiences.

The Community/Institutional Component

One of the most common feelings among participants in this study was the feeling of inadequacy. Based on findings from other studies this should come as no surprise. Recent studies have shown that English-only instruction does not address the specific needs of ELL students (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010). Studies have also shown that teachers with bilingual training have a significantly higher sense of efficacy with ELL students than teachers with ESL training or no training (Ray, 2008). Studies that have examined the impact of transitional programs on ELL student performance indirectly support this argument. These studies found

that Sheltered English Immersion programs (SEI) in Massachusetts have prevented teachers from using effective strategies with ELL students. This has left teachers feeling incompetent (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010, p. 3). Although findings from these research studies refer to SEI teachers, teacher efficacy studies found no statistical difference in feelings of efficacy between ESL-trained and untrained teachers (Ray, 2008).

Poor student performance may also contribute to teachers' feelings of efficacy. Studies have shown that programs using primarily English instruction have not only failed to close the achievement gap between ELL students and their English-speaking peers, but in some cases have actually widened the gaps (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010, p. 3). These results in combination with results from the current study and findings from teacher efficacy studies suggest that teachers who are insufficiently trained to teach ELL students will feel inadequate. In fact, the learning domains which bilingual training programs have identified as important to ELL student success are the same areas of concern identified by participants (www.ctel.nesinc.com). For example, teacher-training programs have determined that teachers should understand the differences between first and second language acquisition and be able to teach English as a second language. They should understand the importance of understanding cultural knowledge, and they should know how to leverage cultural knowledge within the academic environment. Teacher training programs also expect teachers to recognize and be able to navigate through institutional and cultural barriers (www.ctel.nesinc.com).

Data from this study show that participants in this study knew they needed training in all of these same areas, even though they may not have realized to what extent. For instance, it is important for teachers to know that when ELL students do not share the same cultural values or beliefs as their classmates, they are at risk of feeling separated from the rest of the class. In the

present study some participants had enough information to make this determination but did not. For example, the description of the American-born students as “blurters” and ELL students as “quiet” indicated a divergence between these two groups of students. The observation that ELL students did not seem to adopt the uninhibited behavior of their English-speaking peers also suggests that ELL students may hold deep-rooted cultural beliefs and expectations about socially appropriate behavior that American-born, English-speaking students do not share. Yet all participants felt their ELL students were well integrated.

The scenario noted above is a perfect example of what Cazden (2001) describes as the “pervasive teaching dilemma” which refers to the challenge that teachers face when trying to keep the personal meanings of ELL students connected with the broader knowledge of mainstream society (p. 22). In this case participants did not seem to recognize how or when the cultural beliefs of their ELL students may have kept them disconnected from the learning environment.

Sociocultural theorists would identify these moments of cultural divergence as points of entry, where teachers can learn more about their students’ culture, and leverage cultural knowledge in the classroom environment (Cazden, 2001). Sociocultural theorists would argue that addressing these cultural blind spots is imperative if teachers are going to help keep ELL students fully integrated and engaged. Thus, findings from this study and other studies support the notion that specialized training is important. It will not only give teachers the skills they need to teach ELL students more effectively, but it may also help alleviate participants’ feelings of inadequacy.

Data from this study suggest that feelings of inadequacy are not the only negative feeling participants used to describe their experiences. Participants also reported feelings of frustration

and helplessness. Previous research studies have argued that teachers' negative experiences reflect teachers' negative language attitudes and/or negative attitudes toward ELL students (Walker, 2004). Data from the present study suggest an alternate explanation; teachers' negative attitudes and experiences might stem primarily from external obstacles that compromise teachers' job performance. In the present study institutional and language/cultural barriers were identified as these obstacles. Participants all agreed that anything standing in the way of their teaching was a source of frustration. Based on participant data, I would argue that institutional barriers were largely responsible for creating negative feelings among participants. Although language barriers were also significant, institutional barriers could be considered the primary source of frustration because institutions have the capacity to provide resources that can help teachers and parents transcend those barriers.

Results from a variety of different research studies support this hypothesis. For example, a framework put forth by Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2002) argues that teacher efficacy beliefs can be measured by weighing factors that interfere with teaching, against available resources that contribute to learning. In a language attitudes study that examined teachers' language attitudes by region of the country, researchers suggested that the differences in language attitudes may have been more related to the amount of support teachers received rather than to regional differences (Byrnes et al., 1997). Walker's (2004) theory of attitude development states that as teachers feel more overwhelmed and less supported negative attitudes emerge. In that same study Walker concluded that negative attitudes were due to the additional time and effort it took to teach ELL students, teachers' lack of training, the influence of negative administrator attitudes, and inaccurate information about effective ELL instructional practices. Findings from all of these studies suggest that teachers' negative feelings of frustration or

helplessness originated from external barriers rather than from preexisting attitudes toward language minorities.

This is not to say that teachers with negative attitudes toward ELL students do not exist. It is also not to say the negative attitudes of such teachers do not help define their experiences of teaching ELL students. Rather it is to say that data from several studies support the argument that institutional barriers serve as a common source of frustration for teachers. It is one variable which appears to apply across many settings and may help define the overall phenomenon of teaching ELL students in the general education classroom.

The Interpersonal Component

Data from this study suggest that participants' attitudes and emotional experiences may also reflect the quality of their interpersonal relationships with ELL students and their parents. In this study participants' relationships with ELL students were generally more positive than their experiences and relationships with parents. Barriers that interfered with participants' relationships with parents seemed to contribute to participants' frustration. Regardless of the source of frustration, there is no guessing how people are going to express that feeling. According to Allport (1979), people express their frustrations differently based on their level of frustration tolerance, and based on whether or not the source of frustration is acute or chronic. When feelings of frustration are chronic, there is a greater chance that those feelings might get directed toward "out groups" (p. 347).

For example, in the Walker et al. (2004) study, teachers appeared to channel their feelings of frustration into negative feelings toward ELL students. In the present study this was not the case. In fact, all of the participants described their relationships with ELL students as positive, regardless of their frustration with teaching them. Participants' experiences with

parents, on the other hand, were not always so positive. The differences between participants' experiences with ELL students versus participant's attitudes and experiences with some of their parents might be best understood within the context of intercultural communication and relationships.

For example, language barriers may help explain the differences in participants' attitudes with ELL students versus some of their parents. In this study, none of the participants felt language was a barrier to the relationship with their ELL students. However, with some parents, the language barrier prevented participants from establishing any type of relationship with them. According to Allport (1979), when communication barriers become "insurmountable" (p. 226) there is a much higher chance that someone will hold a negative image or stereotype about the person they cannot communicate with. This argument is supported by a study done by Spencer-Rogers and McGovern (2002). In their study they examined the role of intercultural communication barriers on attitudes toward ethno-linguistic foreigners. In the end, the investigators proved their hypothesis, which stated that emotions related to intercultural communication greatly contribute to attitudes toward ethno-linguistic out groups. They found that study participants who had less contact with members of an out-group expressed more negative attitudes towards them. As participants had more frequent contact with out-group members, more positive attitudes emerged (Spencer-Rogers & McGovern, 2002). Several other studies have noted similar findings (Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988; Nagda, 2006).

Data from the present study support the notion that limited intercultural communication can generate negative attitudes towards minorities. It also supports the notion that increased intercultural communication results in more positive feelings. For example, participants' positive

attitudes towards ELL students might be partially explained by the fact that participants had daily, meaningful interactions with their students. When participants expressed negative feelings about parents, those feelings seemed to coincide with participants' inability to contact parents. When participants had more frequent contact with parents, they appeared to express more positive language/cultural attitudes towards them. When participants had minimal or no contact with parents, they seemed to express less favorable attitudes toward parents, and toward parents' language and/or culture.

According to Allport (1979), perceptions and judgments about minorities are also more likely to be positive depending on the type of contact one has with the minority. Casual contact for instance, is not as likely to affect a person's perception of a minority as much as contact that results in the pursuit of a common goal. In this study participants who reported having solid working relationships with both ELL students and their parents expressed the most positive experiences and attitudes toward them.

The Personal Component

One of the most intriguing aspects of the current data is not only how institutional and communication barriers interfered with participants' relationships with parents, but also how these same barriers interfered with their relationships with themselves. "Listening" to participants' stories using the Listening Guide method of analysis helped identify tensions between the realities of participants' environment and their authentic selves. For example, some participants tried less often to communicate with parents, even though doing so separated them from their belief that parent/teacher communication was important. Data demonstrated similar inconsistencies between participants' language attitudes and their classroom behavior. For example, even though all of the participants had positive attitudes about implementing native-

language strategies with their ELL students, none of them did so to any significant degree. Participants attributed the inconsistencies between their beliefs and behaviors to their difficulties accessing resources, training, and/or support.

Wilcox-Herzog's (2002) study, which examined the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their actions, supports the notion that inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and actions may be due to external constraints rather than internal mismatches between teachers' thinking and behavior. In the present study, the level of tension between external constraints and participants' authentic selves manifested differently for each participant. Nevertheless, each participant said they felt frustrated, sad, or disappointed when she had to make choices that were inconsistent with her overall beliefs.

Interestingly, a study conducted by Lucas and Katz (1994) demonstrated how tensions between external factors and teachers' beliefs may not always result in negative consequences. The study, which examined the attitudes and behaviors of monolingual teachers, found that teachers who did not support the idea of native language instruction still incorporated native language support into their classrooms. The authors suggested that inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and behaviors might have been due to the availability of resources and administrative support.

Summary

This study set out to examine teachers' experiences with teaching Hispanic ELL students within the context of participants' cultural and language attitudes. However, as Karathanos (2009) previously stated, understanding teachers' attitudes is a difficult and complex process. Data from this study suggest that teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are not neatly

packaged into black-and-white categories. The data also suggest that contextual factors such as resources, barriers, and relationships create complex dynamics that make it almost impossible to determine how teachers' attitudes might influence their experiences. More research would be needed to examine this idea further, but it begs the question: Do external factors such as resources, institutional barriers, and/or relationships create teachers' experiences or are teachers' language/cultural attitudes responsible for creating their experiences?

Data from the present study suggest that participants' negative attitudes, feelings and experiences occurred when barriers separated participants from their authentic selves, or when barriers interfered with participants' ability to establish meaningful relationships. Therefore, a more prudent approach to this study might have been to recognize teachers' cultural and language attitudes as part of participants' experiences, and examine teachers' experiences within the context of their relationships and their environment. Based on the results of this study, I would argue that Harbor could dramatically improve the experiences of these four participants if it provided them with additional resources, training, and support, and expanded participants' opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with parents.

Limitations

These findings may be most relevant to teachers at Harbor Elementary School, or to teachers who teach in schools like Harbor i.e. large, diverse, low-income, urban, elementary schools with a large and rapidly growing Hispanic population. However, when data from this study are considered within the context of various other research findings, they may legitimately apply to teachers in other venues. As I have shown, results from this study reflect findings from

larger studies conducted in demographically different locations. I have also successfully used findings from broader research studies to support my claims.

That said, findings from this study should be considered within the present context. Therefore, the following factors could be limitations. First, participation in this study was voluntary. Results may have differed if teachers were mandated to participate. Second, participants in this study demonstrated an open stance toward cultural diversity. Results could have differed if participants included teachers with strong negative feelings toward linguistic minorities. Results may have also been different if the study had been conducted at the secondary level where parent/teacher communication is not expected to occur on such a regular and frequent basis.

The number of languages represented by English language learners at Harbor was also fairly limited. English language learners at the study site were predominantly Spanish-speaking. Portuguese and Cape Verdean Creole were for all intents and purposes the only other languages represented. Results from this study might have been very different had it been conducted in a school where ELL students represented a large number of languages. Findings from this study may not apply to teachers working in middle or upper middle class, suburban or rural towns. Bilingual or ethnic minorities working in the general education setting may have also generated different results.

Findings from this type of research may have also been quite different if the study had been conducted in a school that had adequate resources, training, and support available to its parents, students, and staff. That said, one might safely assume that white, English-speaking, general education teachers who practice in the face of insurmountable institutional, cultural and language barriers, regardless of the demographic composition of the school, are likely to

experience feelings of frustration, inadequacy, and helplessness, as was the case with the teachers in this study.

Implications for Practice and Research

Data from this study support the need for changes to our educational policies and practices. More specifically they clearly demonstrate why placing ELL students in general education classrooms with untrained and unsupported teachers is inappropriate. Doing so created feelings of helplessness and inadequacy among the four participants in this study. Unless an appropriate amount of training, language-appropriate support, and services are offered to these participants, they will likely continue to feel inadequately supported and unsuccessful. I would argue that decision-makers cannot afford to put our teachers at risk for developing a frustrated and helpless mindset. We must intervene and support teachers before they become paralyzed by their emotions. If this dynamic becomes a trend throughout the country our teaching force may be at risk for burnout, or they may leave the profession altogether (Bandura, 1995). It would be a grave scenario if feelings of helplessness were allowed to fester and infect our future generations of teachers.

That said, local administrators might want to consider the following recommendations:

1. Provide a forum for teachers to discuss their concerns
2. Provide relevant training and professional development opportunities to all teachers
3. Purchase culturally relevant curricula
4. Provide teachers with appropriate supports e.g. extra time to teach ELL students, time to collaborate with bilingual staff, bilingual classroom aids, designated translators etc.
5. Provide resources and supports that facilitate parent/teacher communication. This might include bilingual/bicultural parent liaison workers, free English classes and transportation

to the school for parents, parent training to explain school expectations and teach parents how to academically support their children at home.

It might be worthwhile for Harbor to implement a comprehensive parent engagement program as an action research project, and compare the results of that study with the results of the present study. Teacher efficacy researchers might choose to use a quantitative method to examine the correlation between quality of parent/teacher communication and teachers' feelings of efficacy. It would also be interesting to examine the correlation between parent/teacher communication and teachers' perceptions of their own cultural fluency. Further exploration of the relationship between general education teachers' language/cultural attitudes and access to resources might help corroborate findings from the current study. As noted in an earlier section, almost 60 percent of ELL students receive no bilingual instruction (Goldberg, 2008). Nearly half of the respondents in a study conducted by the Pew Center said they dropped out of school due to difficulties with the English language (<http://pewhispanic.org/>). Researchers may want to take a closer look at the correlation between amount of bilingual instruction and dropout rate of ELL students.

Concluding Remarks

Critical Race Theory, Sociocultural Theory, and the Listening Guide were useful tools that helped highlight the multiple points of entry where personal, interpersonal, and institutional cultural dynamics helped define participants' experiences. Understanding these multiple points of entry was imperative in order to make sense of the apparent contradictions in thoughts, attitudes, statements, and behaviors within each participant's 'voice,' as they discussed their experiences. Without these multiple perspectives findings from this study might have looked quite different. For example, Critical Race Theorists have argued that white teachers

intentionally or by default perpetuate the present system of racial and social injustice (Delgado Bernal, 2002). If we look at the contradictions between participants' statements and some of their behaviors through a Critical Race lens, one could argue that some of the participants' behaviors provide evidence in support of this viewpoint. However, by examining the inconsistencies between participants' statements and behaviors through the lens of all three frameworks, a different conclusion emerged.

This study makes an important contribution to the literature by offering data to support an alternate perspective about white teachers' relationship with institutions. This perspective recognizes that white teachers can be held hostage by the same barriers that shackle minority students and families. The obvious difference here is that white teachers are always free to move to a location where these barriers no longer apply. But for white teachers who choose to teach in low-income districts with large numbers of ethnic minorities, barriers that are typical for minorities in that venue can become barriers for teachers as well. In turn these barriers handicap teachers' ability to effectively service ELL students. This is not to discount Critical Race Theory and the massive contribution it has made to our understanding of racial and social injustice. Rather, it is to say that we should recognize the white teachers within our educational system who are willing and ready to flip the script and help create a more equitable learning environment for our minority students.

But how can we expect mainstream teachers to bridge the gap between mainstream culture and minority cultures when the only visible information in schools reflects white, middle class, English-speaking norms? It would certainly be easier to have cultural minorities continue to check their culture at the door. Once students step into school, everyone is exposed to the same reference points, are they not? It seems unreasonable to expect teachers to integrate

cultural information from minority communities in the absence of culturally informative curricula, resources, training, support, and meaningful relationships with language minority students and/or their parents. In the era of high stakes testing and No Child Left Behind it also seems unfair to place ELL students in the general education setting under the present scenario, when teachers are already at risk of losing their jobs if their students do not perform. Policy makers need to put their politics aside and do what is educationally appropriate for ELL students and teachers. The consequences of inaction are just too great to ignore.

Fortunately administrators in Seaside have already started taking positive steps toward changing the way ELL students are being educated within the district. For example, in an effort to avoid over identifying ELL students as learning disabled, the special education department is actively examining its methods of assessing ELL students, along with its methods for determining special education eligibility. A professional learning community (PLC) was also recently established with three goals in mind; 1. To better understand how educators in Seaside can best educate ELL students in general, 2. To determine the best ways to educate ELL students who are placed in the general education classroom, and 3. To determine the best way to service ELL students who are also learning disabled. The development of the PLC is particularly encouraging for three reasons. First, participation in the professional learning community was voluntary, and at least fifty educators from several different disciplines signed on to participate. Second, the large majority of participants were white, English speaking educators who were looking for better ways to service their ELL students. Third, these efforts were initiated independent of these research findings and recommendations. This supports my argument that there are white, English speaking educators within our system who not only recognize the need to change how we educate ELL students, but who also want to be part of the

solution. These are the professionals we need to locate and support, to help pave a brighter future for our ELL students and their teachers.

Endnotes

¹ The names of the city and school in this study are fictitious in order to help protect the identities of the participants.

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Appendix A: You are invited to Participate in a Research Study

Dear (name of prospective participant),

My name is Kathleen Mackenzie. I am a student at Northeastern University and I am planning to conduct a study at your school in order to learn more about teachers' experiences with teaching Hispanic English language learners within the general education setting. You have been identified as a teacher with this type of experience.

Your school is the perfect location for this type of study because there are a large number of Hispanic English language learners in the general education setting at your school. As you may know this scenario is becoming more common throughout the country. Your story could provide valuable information to other teachers in your situation. If you are interested in sharing your experiences with me please contact me ^{by} April 10th so I can provide you with more details about the study. You can reach me at 508-997-4511 x3356 or 508-982-8121. Thank you for taking the time to read this notice. I greatly appreciate your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Kathleen Mackenzie, MSW, LICSW

Appendix B: Disclosure Statement and Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: Understanding the Phenomenon of Teaching Hispanic English Language Learners in the General Education Classroom

Investigators: Kathleen Mackenzie, Doctoral Student, Dr. Jane Lohmann, Principal Investigator

The goal of this study is to better understand the experiences of White, English-speaking general education teachers who have Hispanic English language learners in their classrooms. In order to better understand teachers' experiences the study will examine the stories of 4-6 teachers who fit the following criteria:

1. You are currently teaching at the research site in a general education classroom.
2. You have been teaching at the research site for a minimum of 4 years.
3. You have had Hispanic students with limited English skills in your classroom.
4. You are White and only speak English.

Please note: Participating teachers will ideally represent different grade levels.

As a participant in the study will be asked to:

1. Participate in an in-depth, confidential, audio-taped interview lasting about two hours.
2. Talk about your experiences related to the increasing numbers of Hispanic English language learners in your classroom.
3. Participate in a short follow-up interview or be available for follow-up questions by phone as needed.
4. Review my interpretations of your responses to ensure that I have accurately represented you and your points of view.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. As a participant you may decline to answer any of the interview questions during the interview and may withdraw from the study at any time with no questions asked.

There is no compensation for participating in this project. However you may find satisfaction in having the opportunity to tell your story and share your insights with others. Complete confidentiality at the local level cannot be guaranteed. For example, as part of the approval process the names of the school district and your school have already been disclosed to the superintendent, the principal, the Principal Investigator of this study Dr. Jane Lohmann at Northeastern University, and the IRB approval department at Northeastern University. However the researchers will take every possible step from this point forward to maintain the confidentiality of all participants. They will not disclose your name to anyone at any time during the interview process or in any publication associated with this study, without your written permission to do so. The audiotape of all interviews will be destroyed once the data analysis

process has been completed. A fictitious name for both the school district and your school has already been created. Your school will be given the name of Harbor Elementary School and the city will be referred to as Seaside, Massachusetts. This is being done so that any reader will not be able to identify you as a participant or the exact location of the study.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this disclosure statement you can contact Kathleen Mackenzie at 508-982-8121. You may also leave a confidential voice mail message at 508-997-4511 x 3356 or contact her by e-mail at mackenzie.k@neu.edu. Questions or concerns may also be directed to Dr. Jane Lohmann, Principal Investigator at j.lohmann@neu.edu or at 617-756-3237. For questions regarding your rights as a research participant you can contact Nan Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115 at jrb@neu.edu or 671-373-4588.

Please sign below to indicate that you have read this disclosure statement and consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of Prospective Research Participant

Date Signed

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

I am interested in learning as much as possible about your thoughts and feelings related to teaching Hispanic English language learners in the regular education setting. I am focusing on the Spanish language because of the rapid influx of Hispanic immigrants into the city and because use of the Spanish language has dramatically increased in the community over the past several years.

We will be together for approximately one and a half hours. During that time I will conduct a semi-structured interview with you. Semi-structured means that I have a set of questions to ask, but there is also a lot of room to discuss other issues as they come up. I will first ask you general questions about the atmosphere in the school and how you feel the overall response has been to the increasing number of Hispanic students in your school. Then we will spend the remainder of the time talking about your day to day classroom experiences.

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me at what point did it become obvious that major demographic changes were happening at the school? Was it a gradual awareness or did it happen all at once?
2. How did you perceive the overall reaction of the staff to be?
3. How do you feel about the pace at which the school demographics are changing?
4. How do you feel about having students who speak little or no English placed in your classroom?
5. Describe to me in as much detail as possible what it was like to receive your first Spanish-speaking student?
6. How did you communicate with them? What was it like for you? For the student?
7. How do you communicate with the students in your class now?
8. Is this different from when you first started? If so, how?
9. Tell me what it's like to watch these students interact with their peers. To what extent are they able to integrate into the classroom and to what degree are you able to help them do that?
10. Describe some of the most memorable scenarios you have witnessed, both positive and negative, in regards to these students' peer relationships?
11. Describe what you see as the greatest challenges you have in working with these students?
12. Describe what you see as the greatest opportunities in working with these students?
13. Tell me about your experiences with parents who speak only Spanish or very limited English? How do you communicate with each other? What are those experiences like for you? For the parents? For the students?
14. Describe what you see as the greatest challenges you have experienced in working with these parents?
15. Describe what you see as the greatest opportunities you have experienced in working with these parents?

16. What has been your experience with accessing resources/trainings/support in your school and/or district?

Follow up Question:

1. What, if anything, might prompt you to seek out your own ESL or bilingual training?