CALL FOR PAPERS

The Publications Officers are now accepting submissions for Volume 5, No. 1 of Texas English Language Teaching (TexELT), an online journal, a publication of Texas Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages-Region V (TexTESOL V).

This is a peer-reviewed electronic publication which will be posted on the TexTESOL V website and will be available free of charge to members through email Newsletter link and to the general public through the public access portions of the TexTESOL V website. Submissions are due March 30, 2016. It is anticipated that manuscripts selected for consideration will be sent to members of the peer jury of readers by April 5, 2016 and returned to the Publications Officers with Level One Protocol advice by April 17, 2016. Online publication is tentatively scheduled for September 2016.

All submissions should be sent electronically to ritadeyoe@yahoo.com. If you do not receive a return email confirming receipt within three days, please send a follow-up email.
Publication Priorities

Action Research Reports

Brief reports on action research in which the writer has developed a plan to do something in a particular way to try to improve student outcomes, gives some evidence of having compared that approach with previous or simultaneous alternative approaches, evaluates the outcomes, and critically examines both implementation issues and outcomes. This does not need to be at the level of an experimental or quasi-experimental design, but ought to present evidence of thorough planning of details, and be based on a review of relevant available literature.

Critical Reviews of Textbooks, Teaching Materials, and Teacher Preparation Texts and Resources

Brief critical reviews of new textbooks and materials for teaching English or preparing teachers of English as a Second Language at any of the levels (elementary, secondary, adult, and higher education), in which the writer points out personal experiences in using the text or materials—positive and negative—and or details benefits and defects, as perceived by the reviewer, for the sorts of student populations our membership serves within the North Texas context. TexTESOL V members work in both urban schools and colleges with extensive bilingual, newcomer and ESL programs and also in rural districts with limited programs and few ESL-qualified professionals. The reviewer should state clearly his/her own context and experience and the settings for which the text or materials reviewed are considered.

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Well-structured syntheses of the best practices for our regional needs or the needs of a particular type of situation that exists in our region, according to research from a wide variety of sources, but with critical attention to "applicability", and the perceived quality of the research.

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1. The research topic should be of fairly general interest to practicing ESL teachers at one or more of the levels addressed by our Interest Sections: Elementary, Secondary, Adult and/or Parent Education, Higher Education. This includes post-secondary ESL students and Bilingual/ESL Teacher Preparation.
2. The manuscript should be in Times New Roman 12pt font and should follow APA format 6th edition for citing all sources. You may request information on this format from the Publications Coordinator.
3. The manuscript should be sufficiently edited with regard to errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, idiomatic usage and document format to resolve all errors identified by Spell Check.
4. All sources should be cited properly and completely so that the reader can easily consult the original source or access it electronically if it is available online.
5. All authors are solely responsible for ensuring that no plagiarism occurs in their submissions, and authors whose work is selected for publication will need to sign a statement to that effect. At their option, the editors may submit papers to an anti-plagiarism service for originality comparisons.
6. No specific length is required because the online publication format does not create arbitrary limitations on the quantity that can be published. However, our members (and our peer jury) will prefer brevity with substance and simplicity with sufficient detail to comprehend fully the contexts and applications discussed.

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Contents


Contents of this issue of *TexELT: Texas English Language Teaching*, 4(1), 3.


Welcome to the Fourth Issue of Texas English Language Teaching (TexELT)

Three years ago, TexELT’s debut issue presented three articles by experienced academic writers who were all university faculty members in the United States and Canada. The six contributions two years ago included three full-length articles and three shorter papers. The six authors were far more diverse, and more than half of those writers have been and continue to be English language learners themselves as well as ESL professionals, who brought new perspectives to our journal. For our third issue, the authors were experienced academics with previous publications, but both articles took their authors into new research directions as they worked with our editors to provide unique contributions to our readers. This fourth issue features three articles from very diverse authors and perspectives. Please take time to read the authors’ biographies along with the articles to see how diverse the writers are even though a common concern brings their efforts together to seek the best learning opportunities for the ESL and EFL students they have been teaching or preparing others to teach.

The TexELT publications team this year, as last year, included our Publications Copy Coordinator, Dr. Jeyasharee (Jey) Venkatesan, two other current or former TexTESOL V Board members who volunteered to continue supporting and assisting me in this effort as reviewers and/or editors, as well as an additional reviewer who brought strengths in content and copy editing, including in-depth experience with the details of APA format. As previously, our talented and hard-working primary content reviewer, Margaret Redus, made essential major commitments early in the editing process as our primary content reviewer and as the primary content editor. She persevered through several revisions to guide the authors in shaping their manuscripts so that their messages would be clear, understandable, and useful for the professional purposes of our readership. Her work was supplemented and shared with our additional reviewer and content and format editor, Dr. Lana Sloan. For the always-important copy-editing issues such as spelling, syntax, redundancy, and word choice, we were fortunate to continue to call on the expert who serves on the TexTESOL V Board as our Publications Copy Coordinator Dr. Jeyasharee Venkatesan. Thus once more, I had the good fortune to be able to bring these talented individuals together with our authors to produce a valuable contribution to our profession. --Rita Deyoe-Chiullan, Ph. D., Publications Coordinator, TexTESOL V and Editor, TexELT, 4(1).
Introduction to the Contents of this Issue

One of the greatest joys of serving as content editor is the discovery of fascinating and productive research ongoing in the service of English language learners worldwide. Another rewarding aspect of the work is the interaction between author(s) and reviewers to develop the shape and scope of the work to best deliver the content to the needs of our readership. For the receptiveness and prompt responses of the selected authors this year, we on the TexELT team are very grateful.

Our first article, co-authored by Dr. Alma Contreras-Vanegas and Dr. Mary Petrón, both professors at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, TX, shines much-needed attention on the under-representation of Hispanic ELLs in talented and gifted programs in Texas. The authors begin by examining the state’s definition of GT students and then discuss limitations in the definition that may account for failure to detect appropriate candidates among the Hispanic ELL population. They present literature on aspects of GT characteristics in diverse populations, focus on specific attributes manifested by Hispanic GT ELLs, and make specific, research-supported recommendations for testing and otherwise detecting Hispanic students eligible for GT programming.

In the second article, Virgil Ross Green, a ninth grade English and English ESL Sheltered teacher at Cleburne High School in Cleburne, TX, presents an in-depth study of the causes for underachievement of the Cleburne HS ELLs in English classes and in English I and II STAAR/end-of-course exams. He begins by documenting the rapid rise of the proportion of Hispanic students in the school to 40% and the decline of the white population to 50% and considers the preparedness of its teachers for working with this shifting demographic. He then explores literature focusing on minority students’ perception of instruction as being majority-based and on teachers’ perceptions of minority students. He then sets up a very detailed study of the perceptions of English language learners and their teachers to identify factors in the educational environment that can be changed to improve the performance of the ELL population.

Next in this volume is an article by Charity Mensah, who describes a mixed methods case study she conducted while working as an English instructor at a Danish elementary school. English is considered a second language in Denmark and an essential tool for the economic well-being of the country. Recently the government mandated stronger standards to improve English language performance in public elementary school students, beginning in first grade. The case study described was designed to gain greater insight into student and teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of the school’s English instruction. Ms. Mensah begins with a review of literature on teaching methods for primary and secondary language and then focuses on recent data on the performance gap between native Danish speakers and Denmark’s increasing immigrant population, all of whom are learning English. She next offers details of her study and closes with an analysis of the results.

Finally, Dr. Rita Deyoe-Chiullán offers brief recommendations in support of six books published in 2015 that she considers must-reads for ESL and EFL professionals.

--Margaret Redus, M. L. A., Primary Content Review and Content Editor for TexELT 4(1).
Helping Teachers Identify Hispanic English Language Learners (ELLs) for Gifted and Talented Programs in Texas

by

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Abstract

The identification of gifted and talented (GT) English language learners (ELLs) continues to be a challenge in the state of Texas. The GT definition and identification processes fail to recognize linguistic and cultural diversity. The majority of teachers who initially refer children to GT testing are monolingual and white. Many have little familiarity with Hispanic culture and bilingualism. Once referred, students are tested with instruments designed for native English speakers. To educate teachers and GT specialists, the authors provide examples of the cultural and linguistic characteristics of Hispanic ELLs. Recommendations for improving the identification and assessment process are provided.

Key Words: gifted and talented, identification of ELLs for GT, English language learners

Citation
Introduction

Texas is a minority majority state, with Hispanics representing 37.1% of the total population of the state (U.S. Census, 2011). Despite large numbers of minority students, there continues to be an underrepresentation of certain minority groups in Texas gifted and talented (GT) programs. African Americans are severely underrepresented; they make 12.7% of all public school students and only 6.6% of the GT population. However, both Asians and whites are overrepresented in GT programs. Asians make up 3.6% of the school population and 8.5% of GT students; white students account for 30% of Texas K-12 students and 41.6% of the GT population. The underrepresentation of Hispanic students is not as severe as that of African American students. Statistics indicate Hispanics make up 51.3% of the Texas K-12 school population and only 40.6% of the GT population. Unfortunately, while the number of Hispanics in GT programs is reported, data are not disaggregated based on language proficiency. All Hispanics are not second language learners. In Texas, 51.3% of K-12 students were Hispanic, but ELLs represented only 17% of Texas public school children (Texas Education Agency, 2013). While Hispanics as a whole are only somewhat underrepresented, Hispanics who are ELLs may indeed be grossly underrepresented.

Overrepresentation of Hispanic ELLs has proven to be the case in special education. Linn, Lira and Larke (2008) found that, at the state level, Hispanics were not overrepresented in special education. However, when English language proficiency was considered, the Hispanic ELL population was severely overrepresented in special education classrooms in many districts. Although little research exists on the issue, it is reasonable to assume the situation in GT classrooms is similar. Garza (2007) found in Laredo, Texas, that the greater the number of ELLs, the smaller the number of GT students in a school. Although research in Texas is limited, it would appear that ELLs are being referred for special education because they do not know English well and not referred for GT programs for the same reason.

It is also possible to infer that there is underrepresentation of ELLs in Texas GT programs based on socioeconomic status (SES). At the state level in 2012-2013, 60.3% of the total K-12 population was considered economically disadvantaged, while only 38.1% of GT students were categorized as being of low socioeconomic status (SES), indicating severe underrepresentation. Bilingual/ESL students are overwhelmingly poor; currently, 88.2% of ELL students are low SES (Texas Education Agency, 2013). Consequently, it is accurate to assume they are also underrepresented in GT programs since GT classes have far fewer economically disadvantaged students.

The underrepresentation of Hispanic ELLs in GT programs in Texas may also be due to the narrow definition of GT, which does not consider attributes of cultural and linguistic diversity. Gifted and talented children are described by the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students as follows:

A child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who
(1) exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area;
(2) possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or
(3) excels in a specific academic field (Texas Education Agency, 2009, p.11).
Clearly, the definition does not specifically reference a particular language; however, the identification process is often dependent upon assessment in which proficiency in English is a pre-requisite (Ford & Grantham, 2003). Despite their absence in the GT definition, language and culture influence the way in which GT is manifested in individuals and should be considered important in the identification process. For example, a student who is not a native English speaker may have a difficult time expressing himself/herself in English while being able to do so eloquently in the native language. A teacher may assume the student does not possess an extensive vocabulary. Furthermore, culture influences the way a person thinks. Creativity is a product or an idea that is original to the creator (Starko, 2005). Starko (2005) mentions that “…each culture and discipline sets standards for creative activities…” (p 7). Furthermore, as Kopala (2000) noted, “Creative achievement has traditionally been based on Western ideals or art, music, and so on” (p. 67). For instance, culturally and linguistically diverse children may create artistic products that reflect their own particular culture’s folk art, or they may tell an imaginative story using references heard only in their culture. If teachers do not consider the cultural contexts of students’ lives when determining creativity (Starko, 2005), they may fail to notice the students’ creative thinking.

**Issues in the Identification of Hispanic ELL GT Students**

Teachers need to be educated to recognize talent in culturally and linguistically diverse children. The identification/testing of GT students in Texas is done primarily by monolingual white teachers because they, in fact, represent two-thirds of all public school teachers in the state (Ramsay, 2013). These teachers often lack education in cultural and linguistic diversity and may view diverse students through a cultural deficit lens (Ford, Grantham & Whiting, 2008). Hawley and Nieto (2010) assert that ethnicity and race influence teaching and learning as “they affect how students respond to instruction” (p. 66) and “they influence teachers’ assumptions about how students learn” (p. 66). Hispanic ELLs will not be tested for GT programs if they are not referred by teachers. Since giftedness may manifest itself in accordance with first language and cultural norms, teachers unfamiliar with these norms may not recognize the characteristics.

Teachers may fail to identify giftedness in Hispanic ELLs because they lack knowledge of the processes of second language acquisition. For example, ELLs may demonstrate shyness and fail to participate in classroom discussions. It is common for ELLs in general to be less willing than native speakers to participate orally in the classroom (Aguirre & Hernandez, 2011), particularly in large groups. They often fear putting their lack of English proficiency on display. It takes 1-3 years to develop conversational skills in English and 5-7 years to develop academic language proficiency (Cummins, 1979). Since English-speaking GT students can often be very assertive and verbal (Aguirre & Hernandez, 2011), teachers may overlook a shy, silent student without giving a second thought to potential GT status. Hispanic ELLs may indeed be able to participate at high levels if the language of instruction is Spanish. Teachers who understand that the process of second language acquisition is long and that reticence to speak in English is to be expected might be less likely to rely on verbal skills in English in the GT referral process.
Teachers may also lack familiarity with Hispanic cultural norms. For example, in the Hispanic culture, it is a sign of respect to look down or away from an adult who is talking to you (Reyes-Carrasquillo, 2000). This gesture may be interpreted as rude or disrespectful by someone who was raised in mainstream U.S. culture (Gollnick & Chinn, 2013). Hispanics are also less likely to question authority figures such as the teacher in Spanish or English. Hispanic children usually rely on their parents to tell them what to do or wait for others to speak to them first (Aguirre & Hernandez, 2011). This behavioral norm may be viewed by a mainstream teacher as a child not being proactive or inquisitive. Hispanic ELLs may also tend to be less competitive (Brulles, Castellano & Laing, 2011; Castellano, 2011) since they are being raised in a family structure emphasizing cooperation and responsibility for siblings. Consequently, they may not self-promote, and they may display giftedness when working with others rather than by themselves.

GT Characteristics of Hispanic ELLs

To better understand GT characteristics in Hispanic ELLs, it is important to recap general aspects of giftedness. Frasier and Passow (1994) describe 10 core GT characteristics in children from diverse backgrounds in the following categories: motivation to learn, intense interest in an unusual topic, advanced communication skills, effective problem solving ability, superior memory, inquisitive nature, great insight, advanced powers of reasoning and logic, superior imagination/creativity, and the ability to understand and produce humor and to catch on quickly. A GT child may not necessarily possess all of these traits.

How do Hispanic GT ELLs exhibit these characteristics? Hispanic GT ELLs generally have very advanced language development in Spanish rather than English. In addition, although they are reading at a very basic level in English, they may be able to read in Spanish two or more grade levels above their grade (Brulles, Castellano & Laing, 2011; Castellano, 2011). Hispanic GT ELLs often demonstrate accelerated growth in their command of English. They have a strong desire to continue to develop in both languages, not just in English (Brulles, Castellano & Laing, 2011; Castellano, 2011). They frequently demonstrate a strong sense of pride in their cultural and linguistic background and seek to share their language and culture with others (Brulles, Castellano & Laing, 2011; Castellano, 2011).

Like other GT students, Hispanic GT ELLs may demonstrate high interest in certain topics in particular content areas such as mathematics, social studies, or science. However, this heightened interest may be manifested in Spanish, instead of English. It is important to ask the parents if the child seems exceptionally inquisitive and curious about various topics since these behaviors may occur more often at home than at school because of the language. The inquisitive nature of a GT child can take on a cultural component. Hispanic ELLs may be very curious about and have an awareness of other cultures and languages.

Hispanic GT ELLs may have the ability to improvise with everyday objects at home, in the classroom, or on the playground. They may take on the role of leader with other native speakers of Spanish, organizing group activities or play. The Hispanic GT ELL may be the child other Hispanic ELLs seek out for help. It is advisable to observe Hispanic ELL children interacting with other ELLs in Spanish. Even if the teacher does not know Spanish, it is possible to recognize the child who other Hispanic ELLs turn to for help or who seems to take the lead among them.
Hispanic ELLs and Testing

Language-dependent tests, whether written or oral, are problematic. Hispanic ELLs may not have the opportunity to fully demonstrate their potential if they are given an assessment in English rather than a nonverbal or Spanish language test. For example, it is common to use IQ assessments when screening students for gifted programs. Such assessments require students to speak, read, and write fluently in English (Harris, Rapp, Martinez & Plucker, 2007). Therefore, having a student take such an assessment is in part measuring their English language ability (AERA/APA/NCME, 2014).

Tests in Spanish, such as the Aprenda-2 (SAT-Spanish), could be used for monolingual Spanish speakers since tests used for GT identification in English fail to tap into their talents and abilities. Bilingual tests, such as the Bilingual Verbal Ability (BVAT), could be used with students who have developed bilingual abilities since their language proficiency and knowledge base are spread across two languages. With respect to nonverbal assessment, tests such as the Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence-Second Edition (CTONI-2) can be used since in its development, attention was given to reducing sources of cultural, linguistic, racial, and gender bias. In addition, the CTONI-2 norm group reflected the diverse nature of the U.S. population (Delen, Kaya & Ritter, 2012). It is also important to note that tests of any kind, even those that do not require proficiency in English, carry both language and cultural biases (Ouyand & Conoley, 2007). For example, a typical analogy question from an IQ test might be worded as follows: Tennis is to racquet as golf is to _____ (Newman, 2013). A Hispanic ELL from a low-income family may have had little exposure to tennis or golf. Consequently, even if this question were stated in Spanish, the child might answer incorrectly. Therefore, exams should not be the sole basis for GT identification.

Additional Considerations

In addition to GT testing at school, parents of Hispanic ELLs could be given a questionnaire about their child to be used in the identification process. It is important to note that parents from working class backgrounds may tend to underreport their child’s abilities and talents because they are unaccustomed to showcasing their children (Lareau, 2011). It may be more informative to meet with parents of Hispanic ELLs. They may be more inclined to provide information about their child in a face-to-face setting even when a translator is used as an intermediary. Asking the parents to compare the child under consideration with their other children may provide insight into this child's talents.

Administrators should offer opportunities in which general education teachers can gain knowledge on how the GT screening works in their school. Administrators should also reinforce the fact that being gifted and talented is not dependent upon English language proficiency. Many schools may have a GT specialist on campus to assist teachers or to answer any questions they have. For instance, a GT specialist may have forms or activities for teachers to use in their classroom and may also help teachers identify potential GT students.

The best way to identify ELLs for gifted programs is by using multiple criteria (Harris et al., 2007). This would involve intelligence assessments, portfolios, observations, checklists, and parent interviews (Castellano, 1998). Martorell (2000) found bilingualism is significantly related to creativity, and it should be a factor in the identification of creative students and distinguishing between gifted and
nongifted students. Martorell (2000) stated that using creativity as a means of identifying potential gifted students would “… overcome biases in the classification of giftedness among various populations and … would broaden the concept of giftedness among bilingual and language-diverse students…” (p. 95). Therefore, creativity should be another factor when determining if a child is to be considered for a GT program.

**Recommendations**

As teachers consider referring particular students for GT identification screening, they should be aware of the unique cultural and linguistic characteristics of Hispanic ELLs. Being GT presents itself differently depending on a child’s cultural background (Aguirre & Hernandez, 2011; Brulles, Castellano & Laing, 2011; Castellano, 2011). English proficiency should never be a prerequisite for access to GT education. In order to increase the number of Hispanic ELLs in GT programs, the following measures should be taken. First, both classroom teachers and GT specialists should educate themselves on the cultural backgrounds of the children as well as the second language acquisition process. Professional development, particularly in the area of understanding creativity, will assist teachers to recognize talents demonstrated in culturally and linguistically diverse children. Second, extra effort must be made to connect with the parents in order to obtain input on the children’s strengths, interests and talents. ELLs and their parents are often relatively powerless in the education system due to language barriers; therefore, teachers must become their allies and advocates. Finally, evidence should be systematically collected. Examples of evidence are artistic products and anecdotal records of classroom observations. This evidence and parental input should represent a fundamental part of both the initial referral and also the assessment for the GT program. Certainly, there are GT assessments that are non-verbal or in Spanish. The representation of Hispanic ELLs in gifted programs may increase if they are given assessments that account for diversity. However, the referral and assessment process must go beyond test scores. By creating a network between the school and home, we can build equitable GT programs that recognize the strengths of ELLs.
References


Citation
Authors’ Biographies

**Alma L. Contreras-Vanegas**, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at Sam Houston State University in the Department of Language, Literacy, and Special Populations. There she teaches courses that prepare future educators concerning second language acquisition, English language learners, and multicultural education. Alma’s doctorate is from Texas A&M University in Educational Psychology with an emphasis in bilingual education. Her research interests include bilingual/ESL/dual language education, Hispanic gifted identification and second language acquisition.

**Mary Petrón**, Ph.D., is an associate professor of bilingual and ESL education in the Department of Language, Literacy and Special Populations at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, TX. She teaches graduate and undergraduate classes in second language acquisition and applied linguistics. She has a Ph.D. in Foreign Language Education from the University of Texas at Austin and an MA in Hispanic Studies from Northwestern University. She has significant experience teaching Spanish and English as a second language at all levels. Her research interests include ESL teacher education, U.S.-Mexico transnationalism and context-specific language education.

Acknowledgements

The authors are thankful to the TexELT editor, Dr. Rita Deyoe-Chiullán, for her continuous encouragement throughout the process of preparing this manuscript for publication.

Citation

“Soy inteligente, aunque algunas veces no comprendo todas las cosas, pero me esfuerzo por hacerlo”

Cleburne High School Hispanic Limited English Proficient Students’ Collective Cultural Model, Teacher Perceptions, and the Impact on English Test Achievement*

by Virgil Ross Green

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Abstract

Cleburne High School English language learners have struggled to pass the STAAR/End-of-Course English I and II examinations since the tests’ inception in the 2011-12 academic school year. To determine if the relationship between English language learners and their peers, teachers, administrators, and community hinders their learning experience in English courses and, thus, their performance on EOC examinations, Cleburne High School English language learners and English instructors were surveyed to determine their perceptions and beliefs regarding Latino students, their behavior, their opinions of education, and academic success. The results are then compared to theories of oppositional culture to determine if improving test scores depends on changes in curriculum and instruction or culture.

Key Terms: English language learners; oppositional culture theory; acting white phenomenon; test performance.

* This study was conducted for the Educational Research course requirement for the Concordia University School of Education master’s program. It has been edited as an article for this publication.

Translation: “I am intelligent, even though sometimes I do not understand everything, nevertheless, I do try.”

Citation

Introduction

Cleburne High School and the community it serves currently function while toiling with a crisis in identity. Once comprised predominantly by white middle-class citizens supported by its Santa Fe Railway Maintenance Facility and proximity to corporate jobs in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, the demographics of Cleburne began to shift rapidly at the turn of the 21st Century. By the 2010 U.S. Census, 27.1% of Cleburne’s 29,747 residents were identified as Hispanic or Latino—an increase of 7.2% from the 2000 U.S. Census—and 20% of the population reported that it spoke a language other than English at home (“Cleburne (city), Texas,” 2014; “Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000 Census,” 2000).

The demographics of Cleburne Independent School District’s (ISD) student population have mirrored the change in the town. According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Hispanic students accounted for 42.9% of the entire district’s population, compared to its majority population, white students, who accounted for 49.3%. Similarly, 18.6% of the district’s 6,600 students were classified as English language learners in the same school year, a proportion 1.5% higher than the state average (“2012-13 Texas Academic Report: Cleburne ISD,” 2013). The focus of the district and its only high school, Cleburne High School, reported similar demographics for the same time period: Hispanic students accounted for 40.6% of its population, compared to its majority population, white students, who accounted for 51.6%, and 6.7% of the campus’ 1,668 students were classified as English language learners in the same school year (“2013-13 Texas Academic Report: Cleburne High School,” 2013). The student body composition of the school almost a decade and a half earlier was dramatically different: in its 1998-99 campus profile, Hispanic students accounted for only 16.4% of its population, whereas its majority population, white students, accounted for 77%, and merely 1.6% of its 1,456 students were classified as English language learners (“Academic Excellence Indicator System 1998-99 Campus Report: Cleburne HS,” n. d.)

State achievement test scores reflected the school’s inability to respond to its swift transformation in population demographics. In the 2011-12 academic school year, Cleburne High School received an unacceptable campus rating from TEA when Hispanic students scored 8% below the passing rate, and district administrators responded that they were “not sure what went wrong” and that there were “a lot of things [the district and campus were] going to do differently,” (Kendall, 2011). The district’s superintendent, Dr. Timothy Miller, told reporters of the town’s daily newspaper, the Cleburne Times Review,

[t]here were 482 students in that group. A small percentage are kids with English as a Second Language. It’s not so much a language issue. I don’t even think it’s a cultural issue. It’s motivation…there may be a cultural aspect we can tie into a certain group of kids, but I don’t think it’s about sub-pops,” (Kendall, 2011).

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1 Cleburne’s Santa Fe Railway Maintenance Facility ceased operations in 1987 (“The ‘Beep’,” n.d.).
2 “The terms English language learners” and “limited English proficient students” are used interchangeably in many TEA reports.
3 In the 1998-99 school year, Cleburne High School was awarded a Recognized Campus rating with additional acknowledgement in mathematics (“Academic Excellence Indicator System 1998-99 Campus Report: Cleburne HS,” n. d.)
As district and campus administrators targeted mathematics intervention to improve performance on the newly implemented STAAR End-of-Course exams, the scores of Hispanic limited English proficient students waned. Despite identifying writing scores, specifically those of limited English proficient students, on the End-of-Course English I and II exams and outlining that these students would receive additional English language instruction using the Rosetta Stone language-learning system to improve test scores and raise the rate of limited English proficient students who met standard according to TEA’s Title III Annual Measureable Achievement Objectives (“2013-14 Cleburne High School Campus Improvement Plan,” 2014), two Cleburne High School limited English proficient students achieved a passing score on the STAAR End-of-Course English I and II exams. When the district hired its new superintendent, Dr. Kyle Heath, in July 2014, board president Teddy Martyniuk stated that Heath’s experience in a district with a diverse student population, Mansfield Independent School District (MISD), would act as a boon:

> We’ve got to accomplish our curriculum for our demographic, and Dr. Heath has a lot to offer in demographic growth. We have to build our infrastructure, get that set and other things will come. If you look at the growth that [MISD] has had and look at the demographic growth that [MISD] has had, it has been huge. We have to have somebody that is visionary that’s looking out. It’s an exciting time for us,” (Luna, 2014).

**Problem Statement and Purpose of the Study**

The aim of secondary education—to prepare students for post-secondary education or career training and viable futures—must stand at the forefront of this study. Although the majority of parents and students nationwide believe that earning a college degree is essential to obtain stable and economically rewarding work in the future, Hispanics have the lowest rates of high school and college degree attainment among racial categories (Schneider, Martinez & Owens, 2006). With only two Cleburne High School English language learners passing the STAAR/EOC End-of-Course English I or II exams in the 2013-14 school year, these students remain at risk of not graduating, as both tests must be passed to earn a high school diploma. Workers without a high school diploma, on average, earn $20,241 annually, an income 50% less than high school graduates and approximately 150% less than college graduates (Breslow, 2012).

In addition to student underachievement, teachers are often ill prepared to support English language learners based on their needs. In a 2002 study, 42% of survey teachers responded that they taught English language learners, yet 12.5% of respondents admitted to attending eight hours or fewer of professional development specifically designed to address the instruction and inclusion of English language learners (NCES, 2002). Many educators, it seems, contend that “just good teaching” consisting of the activation of prior knowledge, the use of collaborative learning, the integration of hands-on activities into curriculum, and the use of process writing, will transfer when instructing English language learners, but proponents of such pedagogy provide no evidence of the linguistic prerequisites for each content area (de Jong & Harper, 2005).

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4 Students must also pass Algebra I, Biology, and United States History STAAR/End-of-Course exams to graduate (“TEA announces initial assessment requirements under HB 5,” 2013).
Because of questions regarding the validity of the “just good teaching” pedagogy, many educators explain that minority students underperform compared to their peers due to cultural differences between students of ethnic minorities and the American educational system, citing the hypothesis that many students of ethnic minorities actively oppose opportunities for educational success to establish an identity that is openly adverse to the dominant culture as a form of rebellion (McWhorter, 2005). This study will test the latter opinion: that Hispanic English language learners at Cleburne High School actively dismiss the educational opportunities given to them in English classrooms by displaying characteristics of cultural inversion described in oppositional culture and cultural ecological theories. A mixed methods design will be used in which survey and narrative responses regarding English instruction, self-perception of performance and behavior, and campus climate from both English language learners and Cleburne High School English teachers are collected and analyzed to determine if a correlation exists between possible negative social output and low achievement scores on state normative English exams.

To improve Cleburne High School English language learners’ underachievement in both English course classes and English I and II STAAR/End-of-Course exams, understanding English language learners’ opinions on education, the climate of their classroom and campus, their self-diagnoses of their academic performance, potential, and behavior, and their teachers’ perceptions of English language learners, the English as a Second Language (ESL) program, and their confidence in ability to teach English language learners is imperative. Without doing so, each student falls prey to becoming a statistic included in further reports on the Hispanic achievement gap crisis in the United States.

Definitions of Terms

Because of the length and ambiguity of many terms in this research, the subsequent list of definitions has been provided to lend clarity and coherence throughout the report.

- **Limited English proficiency**: According to Texas Education Code (TEC) Sec. 29.052, a student is classified with limited English proficiency if his or her “primary language is other than English and [his or her] English language skills are such that the student has difficulty performing ordinary classwork in English” (“Bilingual/ESL Programs in Texas,” 2012).

- **English language learner**: Any student classified with limited English proficiency. Although some researchers call for such students to be classified as “Emergent Bilinguals” (Garcia, Kleifgen & Falchi, 2008), this term, shortened to *ELL*, will be used due to educators’ familiarity with the phrase as well as its usage in Texas Education Agency texts.

- **First-year monitor student**: Any student who has met the criteria to exit limited English proficiency status in the previous school year. In the current school year, (s)he is monitored by the district during the first year of enrollment without support from English as a second language staff to determine if (s)he should return or permanently exit the English as a Second Language program.

- **English as a Second Language Program**: The program used to teach non-native speakers English concurrently with instruction in core subjects. In this report, it is shortened to *ESL*.

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6 Although McWhorter’s thesis applies to African-American students, it is often cited when examining behavior in students from other ethnic minorities.
• **STAAR/End-of-Course Exam**: The normative tests developed by TEA to gauge student achievement in English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology, and United States History high school courses. In this report, it is shortened to **STAAR/EOC exam**.

• **Cultural model**: Developed by Ogbu (1992), this term describes a person’s worldview that guides and influences his or her interpretations of events, people, and own actions in the world (289). This term will appear extensively in the analysis of ELLs’ survey responses.

• **Hispanic**: Any student whose culture or ethnic identity originates from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Central America, or South America, excluding Brazil. Hispanic students are often referred to as Latino/a.

• **Dominant culture**: Once labeled “White culture” and its members “White Americans,” dominant culture refers to the culture and its members, both white and non-white, who adhere to traditional American language, values, and social customs.

Terms associated with theoretical concepts will be defined upon appearance.

**Theoretical Explanations for English Language Learners’ Underachievement Due to Cultural Difference and Opposition**

While numerous case studies detailing the correlation between African-American students’ low performance in schools and their cultural model have been conducted, little research regarding Hispanic students’ adherence to the studies’ conclusions exists (Harris, 2008). In this study, the theories developed from such research will be applied to the sample group. The following theories, predominantly developed by Nigerian-American anthropologist John Ogbu, often coalesce and form the theoretical framework for this research.

**Minority Status and Group Difference**

Ogbu (1992a) argued that minority status, both within and across races, is unequal and explains low performance in many minority students. Ogbu classified minorities into three subpopulations:

• **Autonomous minorities**, which may be culturally or linguistically different than members of the dominant culture but are politically, socially, and economically similar, such as Jews, Mormons, and the Amish;

• **Immigrant or voluntary minorities**, the members of which moved to the United States for economic and social opportunity and/or political freedom and use these desires as motivation to overcome subordination and prejudice faced in the United States;

• **Non-immigrant or involuntary minorities**, the members of which arrived in the United States due to slavery or colonization and have no “homeland” to which to return upon experiencing subordination and prejudice in the United States (290-1).

Ogbu considered Mexican Americans to be involuntary minorities due to their country’s conquest and annexation in the 19th Century (291). Additionally, Mexican and Central Americans’ immigration\(^7\) to

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\(^7\)This trend seems to be declining in Mexican immigrants. In 2010, net migration flow from Mexico to the United States reached zero (Passel, Cohn & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012), and only 11% of Mexicans, according to a Gallup poll, want to immigrate from Mexico, down from 21% in 2007. Similarly, 11% of Americans also responded that they wished to emigrate from the United States (Torres & Dugan, 2013).
the United States in the past two decades due to sparse economic opportunity, drug cartel violence, and political disregard could be considered forced immigration, although little research on the hypothesis exists.

Involuntary minorities, according to Ogbu, remain skeptical that they can succeed through mainstream beliefs and strategies, and their experiences with subjugation and institutionalized discrimination lead them to distrust authority and view their linguistic and cultural differences as symbols of their dismissal of traditional American culture, not to be assimilated or altered by their presence in the nation. This cultural difference, marked often by hostility or ambivalence, is considered secondary, having developed after continuous experiences perceived as oppression, while cultural differences developed prior to introduction to American society, considered primary, are interpreted as obstacles to overcome (289). Examples of primary differences include native language and traits of non-verbal communication, among others, while examples of secondary differences include cognitive, communicative, interactive, and learning styles (Ogbu, 1992b).

The Oppositional Culture Theory
Bred from Ogbu’s cultural-ecological theory, the oppositional cultural theory posits why minority students dismiss the opportunities provided by the American education system. According to Ogbu, two components contribute to group differences in academic success: historical and present school and societal forces (environmental-ecological) and community and individual forces (cultural), which form a cause-effect relationship (Harris, 2005). Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) reduce the theory to four core hypotheses:

1. Because involuntary minorities perceive fewer educational returns and occupational opportunities, they dismiss educational opportunities (537).
2. Because involuntary minorities perceive fewer educational returns and occupational opportunities, these students exhibit greater active resistance to education than their peers (540).
3. Because involuntary minorities are socially ostracized for educational success, they dismiss educational opportunities (542).
4. The gap between white students and their minority peers has developed due to involuntary minorities’ perception of unequal opportunity during and post-schooling and repellence of provided educational opportunities (545).

Because oppositional culture theory functions under the premise that involuntary minorities consciously reject the fair educational opportunities presented to them, pundits argue that no moral impetus exists to resolve disparity between the academic success of white students and involuntary minority students. However, Lewis (2012) dismisses both the theory and its justification. Even if involuntary minority students have “anti-intellectual preferences” stemming from their dislike of school because of its administration by the dominant culture, the desire for other preferences post-school, whether occupational, economic, or a life void of difficulty, should outweigh adverse affect for education (143). Additionally, because students often cultivate negative associations with school before their ability to make rational decisions about how to succeed academically, their accountability for dismissing educational opportunity and conforming to pre-established behavioral norms that conflict with the characteristics of a “good student” is null (143; 145). Lewis concludes that regardless of the origin—or, as he claims, questionable legitimacy—of oppositional culture, society as a whole has an ethical duty to rectify the achievement gap many claim is caused by its opposition (132).
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**Cultural Inversion**

Theorists label such exhibitions of resistance to educational opportunities as cultural inversion. Defined as the “tendency for involuntary minorities to regard certain forms of behavior, events, symbols, and meanings as inappropriate for them because these are characteristic of [the dominant culture],” cultural inversion manifests in differences between in-group vocabulary and dialect, opinions of time and punctuality, and appropriateness of behavior depending on setting and context compared to the dominant culture (Ogbu, 1992b), and often result in high rates of truancy, delinquency, dismissiveness, disengagement, and dropping out (Ogbu, 1978). As Irving and Hudley (2005) note, involuntary minorities adopt cultural frameworks in explicit conflict to those of the dominant culture as a means to preserve identity (489), and as an act of rebellion through the rejection of the dominant culture’s expectations of what is socially acceptable (Ogbu, 1992b). Traits of cultural inversion, according to Ogbu (1992b), are developed by previous generations in response to collective discrimination in

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politics, economics, and sociocultural domains regardless of the involuntary minority’s abilities, education, training, or economic or social status (9). However, the idea of cultural inversion as a cognizant decision has been challenged by theorists such as Lewis (2012), who claims that “the risk of ostracism, especially where there are no alternative social groups to join, is often enough to motivate [the] compliance [of an individual],” (137).

The Acting White Phenomenon

According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), when involuntary minorities attempt to achieve in areas deemed dominated by the dominant culture or in which members of the dominant culture can succeed, the involuntary minorities receive ridicule from their peers, which can cause an internal stress marked as affective dissonance, or the belief that they are betraying their culture’s collective identity, as well as psychological stress from the fear that they will not be accepted by the dominant culture upon succeeding (182). This, in turn, causes many members of involuntary minorities to shun educational and social advancement for self-preservation. In their research, Fordham and Ogbu, after interviewing African-American students at Capital High School in Washington, D.C., at which only two students were not African-American, discovered that following activities were considered “acting white,” according to respondents:

1. Speaking standard English
2. Listening to music considered “white”
3. Studying coursework
4. Reading and writing for enjoyment
5. Succeeding in school (i.e., earning high grades or praise from teachers)
6. Engaging in the arts (i.e., visiting a museum; attending a symphony, opera, or ballet, et al.)
7. Engaging in outdoor activities (i.e., hiking, camping, mountain climbing, et al.)
8. Attending cocktail parties or parties without music
9. Arriving on time to appointments
10. Acting pretentiously (186).

However, many researchers have dismissed the acting white phenomenon as cause for the achievement gap because it lacks quantitative data (Fryer, Jr., 2009) and is an oversimplification of a cultural issue that transcends academic performance (Cokely, 2013).

Teacher and Campus Perception and Prejudice

In a meta-analysis of studies on Hispanic academic achievement, Schneider, Martinez and Owens (2006) note that Hispanic students’ interactions with their teachers and campus impact their education in addition to home activities and language acquisition and instruction. Students who experience and internalize a sense of belonging in the school community are more likely to value, pursue, and achieve academically (198). More specifically, Hispanic students’ perception of their teachers’ opinions of their culture and themselves personally impact learning immensely.

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9 The acting white phenomenon gained mainstream attention when, during the 2004 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address, U.S. Senator Barack Obama urged inner city citizens to “eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white,” (“Remarks to the Democratic National Convention,” 2004). The controversy has even extended to sports when, in 2014, reports surfaced that teammates of Seattle Seahawks thought quarterback Russell Wilson wasn’t “black enough,” leading National Basketball Association Hall of Fame member Charles Barkley to comment that “successful African-Americans have to deal with so much crap in your life from other black people” because “the loser kids tell them ‘you’re acting white,’” (Lowry, 2014).
When Hispanic students and their teacher fail to develop a bond, Hispanic students disregard their teacher’s educational ethos and resist opportunities to learn; additionally, when Hispanic students perceive educators have assigned negative stereotypes to them, “stereotype threat” occurs, which produces underperformance and lower scores on aptitude and cognitive ability tests (198-9). In a 2003 study, Mexican-American students responded that they felt more excited, more self-confident, happier, and as if they were meeting their own expectations when away from their teachers; however, when in the presence of their teachers, the same students reported that they felt teachers had more negative opinions of them than of students of other ethnicities (199).

Research, too, has shown that some secondary teachers have lower expectations in class for students of color and believe that students of color are less likely to attend college than their white peers, which are critical determinations due to the predictive accuracy of teacher expectations of academic success compared to student motivation and effort when measuring (Boser, Wilhelm & Hanna, 2014). In a 1994 study, writing teachers were more likely to assign negative connotations to their students of color, according to DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho (2011). Surveying 226 secondary education teacher candidates in a Southern Californian suburban university by displaying pictures of youth of various ethnicities and asking them to predict their educational futures based on provided outcomes, researchers found that respondents believed black and Hispanic students were more likely to join a gang, commit a crime, become a parent, or drop out of high school than their white and Asian peers, who they believed were more likely to excel in academics (52-3).

Prejudice from students of the dominant culture also negatively impacts student achievement. From a survey of 668 Hispanic students in ninth and tenth grade, researchers found an indirect relationship between the amount of discrimination students faced and their academic success; a poor evaluation of school climate in Hispanic students who faced discrimination; a rise in discriminatory events as Hispanic students progressed through school; a higher level of discrimination in more ethnically diverse schools; and lower grade point averages and higher absence rates in Hispanic students who reported discrimination. Brenner and Graham (2011) note that Hispanic students’ experiences of discrimination are “a major stressor that can take their toll on physical and mental health of ethnic minority youth [that cause Hispanic students to] lose confidence in themselves and in their ability to be self-efficacious.” (p. 509)

Additionally, minority students receive prejudice from other minority students, especially in ESL classrooms. A Canadian study found that racism was “rampant” and “extensive” in ESL classrooms, especially if the classroom population is of the same race. Respondents revealed that Eastern Asian, South Asian, Southeastern Asian, Latin American, European, French Canadian, European, African, and Caribbean students displayed racial and cultural prejudices equally toward one another (Stuart, 2005).

Research Methodology

To assess if ELLs’ collective cultural model and English teachers’ perceptions of ELLs and the ESL program correlated with low scores on EOC English I and II exam scores, a mixed methods design was implemented to collect both qualitative and quantitative data.
Limitations of the Study’s Research

A number of limitations to the study were present during research. Of the 65 ELL students enrolled at Cleburne High School for the 2013-14 academic year who completed either or both the EOC English I and II exams, 45 participated in the study. Twenty were no longer enrolled at the school, were absent on the day the survey was administered or declined to participate in the study. The absence of these students’ data could affect the distribution of responses to questions and subtract from the amount of historical information and narrative responses to open-ended questions.

Of the 11 English teachers asked to engage in the study, only seven opted to participate. This, too, could affect the mean, median, and mode of responses to questions and subtract from the amount of historical information and narrative responses to open-ended questions.

Six teachers of ELLs who took either or both the EOC English I and II exams are no longer employed by the Cleburne ISD and could not be reached to invite participation in the study. Their familiarity with the Cleburne High School ELLs would have benefited the study by providing a more comprehensive analysis of student behaviors and experiences as well as estimations of the campus and community climate regarding ELLs. Of the seven teachers who took part in the study, three were in their first year of employment with the Cleburne ISD, which may have limited the scope of their knowledge in answering survey questions.

Because of time constraints, follow-up interviews with survey participants were not conducted. These interviews could have clarified answers as well as allowed the researcher to provide guided questions to further illuminate opinions expressed in the survey and should be completed in the future.

Finally, in any qualitative study that collects information via survey, questionnaire, or interview, the prospect that respondents completed the survey with social desirability bias was possible. Although the researcher ensured that respondents’ identities would remain anonymous and respondents would not receive punishment or reward for completing the survey or the connotation of their answers, the tendency for respondents in surveys to provide answers that are socially acceptable, diplomatic to sensitive issues and the persons they affect, and/or self-gratifying or preserving (“Social desirability bias,” 2013), may have impacted the accuracy and validity of data.

Qualitative Data Collection, Student-Produced

The 45 ELLs who participated in the study were given a computer-based survey created on Google Drive in a computer lab located at Cleburne High School. In groups of approximately five, the campus’ ESL coordinator supervised the students as they accessed and completed the survey from their school-provided e-mail accounts. In an attempt to remain objective, the ESL coordinator provided no instruction other than how students could access their e-mail accounts, open the survey, and submit the survey.

The survey consisted of 43 questions regarding students’ value and opinion of education; their families’ value and opinions of education; their perceptions of peer, English teacher, administrator, campus, and community opinions of their culture and selves; their perceptions of English course curriculum and instruction; their analysis of their behavior in English classrooms; their opinions on how their academic performance could improve, and their beliefs on how race impacts education.

10 A copy of the consent form provided to survey participants appears in Appendix A.
All questions were answered using a Likert scale with a response range from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Additionally, eight open-ended questions with no length requirements were offered for students to provide narrative feedback about their personal histories, their self-perception and self-identity, and recommendations to improve their performance in English courses. All questions appeared in English and Spanish.

**Qualitative Data Collection, Teacher-Produced**

The 11 teachers who have ELLs in their class populations were e-mailed the survey on November 13, 2014. The survey consisted of 43 questions regarding the teachers’ opinions of ELLs’ opinions of education; peer, administrator, campus, community and their own opinions of ELLs’ culture and selves; their perceptions of English course curriculum and instruction; their analysis of ELLs’ behavior in English classrooms compared to non-ELL peers; their opinions on instructional strategies for ELLs, their opinions on the success of Cleburne High School, and their ability to speak another language. All questions were answered using a Likert scale with a response range from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Additionally, six questions to collect demographic and historical data were attached, and one open-ended question with no length requirement was offered to provide narrative feedback on how to improve ESL achievement in English courses. All questions appeared in the teachers’ native language, English, and the term “students in the ESL Program” was substituted for ELL to avoid confusion, as many teachers refer to ELLs as LEP (limited English proficient) students. On November 21, 2014, the survey was e-mailed again to teachers who had not completed the survey in an attempt to increase the number of received responses.

**Quantitative Data Collection**

Exam results from the 2013-14 administration of the EOC English I and II Spring exams were collected from Eduphoria, the data collection and disaggregation software used by Cleburne ISD educators. Data was collected in the following subsets:

- Collective score of Cleburne High School ELLs on EOC English I exam
- Collective score of Cleburne High School ELLs on EOC English II exam
- Individual scores of Cleburne High School ELLs on EOC English I exam
- Individual scores of Cleburne High School ELLs on EOC English II exam
- Collective score of Cleburne High School ELLs on TEKS Objectives on EOC English I Exam
- Collective score of Cleburne High School ELLs on TEKS Objectives on EOC English II Exam
- Individual scores of Cleburne High School ELLs on TEKS Objectives on EOC English I Exam
- Individual scores of Cleburne High School ELLs on TEKS Objectives on EOC English II Exam
- Individual responses of Cleburne High School ELLs on each question posed on EOC English I and II exams

Across each data set, Cleburne High School ELLs performed below expectations. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 highlight the average of the 64 and 36 test results from the EOC English I and II exams, respectively. Tables 1.3 and 1.4 highlight how ELLs scored on the six testing objectives outlined by TEA, which are below.
Testing Objective Categories, EOC English I and II Exams

- **English I/II.1**: Students will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze a variety of written texts across reading genres.
- **English I/II.2**: Students will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze literary texts.
- **English I/II.3**: Students will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze informational texts.
- **English I/II.4**: Students will demonstrate an ability to compose a variety of written texts with a clear, controlling idea; coherent organization; sufficient development; and effective use of language and conventions.
- **English I/II.5**: Students will demonstrate an ability to revise a variety of written texts.
- **English I/II.6**: Students will demonstrate an ability to edit a variety of written texts.

**Table 1.1**: Disaggregated Scores from 2013-14 EOC English I Exam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>35.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High/Low Scores</td>
<td>52%/10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1.2**: Disaggregated Values from 2013-14 EOC English II Exam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>35.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>28%, 29%, 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High/Low Scores</td>
<td>57%/8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1.3**: Scores in Each Testing Objective Category on 2013-14 EOC English I Exam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Score</td>
<td>28.19%</td>
<td>37.25%</td>
<td>37.13%</td>
<td>34.69%</td>
<td>45.63%</td>
<td>32.25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11 Data in Tables 1.3 and 1.4 are skewed higher, as First-Year Monitor students are included in LEP scores in district analysis and cannot be disaggregated.
Table 1.4: Scores in Each Testing Objective Category on 2013-14 EOC English II Exam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Testing Objective Category</th>
<th>English II.1</th>
<th>English II.2</th>
<th>English II.3</th>
<th>English II.4</th>
<th>English II.5</th>
<th>English II.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Score</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>31.89%</td>
<td>36.59%</td>
<td>32.93%</td>
<td>45.39%</td>
<td>46.96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative Data Analysis

Based on testing objective categories, quantitative data are grouped into three sets for analysis: Text Comprehension and Analysis, Written Composition, and Revising and Editing. Additionally, Tables 1.5 and 1.6 compare ELL scores in each testing objective category on EOC English I and II EOC exams to the campus score as well as comparative scores statewide.

Text Comprehension and Analysis

On the EOC English I Exam, ELLs scored consistently in their comprehension and analysis of both literary and informational texts, scoring higher on comprehension and analysis of literary text by only .12% compared to informational texts. On the EOC English II exam, this discrepancy was larger and inverse; ELLs scored 4.7% higher in their comprehension and understanding of informational texts compared to literary texts. On both exams, ELLs struggled to understand and analyze across genres with similar themes and topics, scoring 28.9% and 22.5% on the EOC English I and II exams, respectively.12

Written Composition

Of ELLs who took the EOC English I exam, 34.69% achieved a passing score on written composition; ELLs who took the EOC English II exam scored similarly, with 32.93% achieving a passing score on written composition. Such scores deviate from the standard belief that written composition is the most difficult task for ELLs to master, as ELLs who took the EOC English I exam scored lower on cross-genre text analysis, and ELLs who took the EOC English II exam scored lower on cross-genre text analysis as well as literary text analysis. Reporting did not account for scores in each written composition area. Writing scores district-wide remained an area of concern, however, and in 2014, the district implemented a vertically aligned writing program to attempt to improve them.

Revising and Editing

ELLs scored highest in revising and editing testing objective categories. In each category, scores approached 50% passing except for editing scores on the EOC English I Exam, on which only 32.25% of ELLs achieved a passing score. Intense focus on grammar in language acquisition courses could account for high scores in revising and editing.

ELL Passing Rates Compared to Campus Passing Rates

Tables 1.5 and 1.6 highlight how ELLs’ scores in each testing objective category compared to aggregate scores of the entire Cleburne High School campus’ testing population. ELLs scored lower than their peers in every category, a result most find ordinary due to the test’s composition in ELLs non-native language.

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12 Reporting did not indicate the differences in scores between the written portion of cross-genre and literary/information text comprehension and analysis and objective portion of cross-genre and literary/information text comprehension and analysis.
However, no standard measure has been developed to determine success for the average score that ELLs achieved compared to their peers. For this study, scores were measured against the average scores of ELLs statewide compared to their peers.

Table 1.5: Comparative Scores in Each Testing Category Between Cleburne High School ELLs and Campus Testers and Statewide ELLs and Testers, EOC English I Exam, Spring 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English I.1</th>
<th>English I.2</th>
<th>English I.3</th>
<th>English I.4</th>
<th>English I.5</th>
<th>English I.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleburne High School Comparative Scores, EOC English I Exam, Spring 2014</td>
<td>-16%</td>
<td>-18.77%</td>
<td>-20.66%</td>
<td>-16.74%</td>
<td>-18.33%</td>
<td>-18.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide Comparative Scores, EOC English I Exam, Spring 2014</td>
<td>-13%</td>
<td>-20%</td>
<td>-21%</td>
<td>-13%</td>
<td>-15%</td>
<td>-18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.6: Comparative Scores in Each Testing Category Between Cleburne High School ELLs and Campus Testers and Statewide ELLs and Testers, EOC English II Exam, Spring 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English II.1</th>
<th>English II.2</th>
<th>English II.3</th>
<th>English II.4</th>
<th>English II.5</th>
<th>English II.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleburne High School Comparative Scores, EOC English II Exam, Spring 2014</td>
<td>-23.5%</td>
<td>-22.72%</td>
<td>-18.02%</td>
<td>-21.15%</td>
<td>-21.19%</td>
<td>-20.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide Comparative Scores, EOC English II Exam, Spring 2014</td>
<td>-19.3%</td>
<td>-20%</td>
<td>-25%</td>
<td>-15%</td>
<td>-20%</td>
<td>-17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Matched to statewide averages, Cleburne High School was on par in how their ELLs performed on EOC English I and II exams compared to the general population except for the English II Composition category, in which Cleburne High School scored 6.15% lower than the state average. Cleburne High School eclipsed state averages on EOC English I Literary and Informational Text Comprehension and Analysis category scores and on its EOC English II Informational Text Comprehension and Analysis score. Scores were closer to state averages on EOC English I testing category scores most likely from ELLs exiting from Cleburne High School’s ESL program upon passing.
the EOC English I Exam and entering the general testing population for the EOC English II Exam; ELLs who took the EOC English II exam, thus, had not yet passed a state normative test in English-language arts.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The aim of the study’s qualitative research was to determine if Cleburne High School ELLs scored poorly due to factors other than instructional deficiency, such as cultural misunderstanding and distrust between ELLs and English instructors. Survey responses from both students and teachers were analyzed separately and then compared in the solutions portion of this report.

Student-Produced Qualitative Data Analysis

For analysis, responses to the survey’s 43 questions were grouped into six categories:

1. Demographic Information
2. Value of Education
3. Cultural Understanding and Appreciation of Campus and Community
4. Behavior and Performance in English Courses
5. Evaluation of English Course Curriculum
6. Open-Ended Responses

Survey questions and overall data collected from the survey are found in Appendix B.

Demographic Information

Sixteen respondents emigrated from Mexico or other Latin American countries ranging from when they were 2 years old to when they entered the ninth grade. Six respondents were born in the United States, and 23 respondents declined to provide their places of birth or immigration status.

Twenty-six respondents—although three fewer answered that they were immigrants in the previous demographic question—revealed that their families moved to the United States for educational and economic opportunity. One respondent claimed that (s)he came to the United States for better medical care, and another respondent said that (s)he came to the United States to “learn the language of [his or her] birthplace,” implying that (s)he was born in the United States, moved to a Latin American country, and returned. One respondent did not know the reason his or her family immigrated to the United States, and one respondent answered that (s)he and his family moved for a “better futer (sic),” a response too imprecise to classify. Answers indicate that Cleburne High School ELLs born in foreign countries are voluntary immigrants as defined by Ogbu (1992a), a group he believes wishes to advance in American society despite cultural or linguistic differences and does not react to prejudice adversarily.

Values of Education

To determine if ELLs underachievement was due to a cultural belief that de-valued education, respondents were questioned on both their and their parents’ opinions of the educational system. Eighty-two percent of respondents answered that they agreed or strongly agreed that they value the goal of education—to produce intelligent citizens capable of success after high school—and 92% answered they agreed or strongly agreed that their parents valued the goal of education. Ninety-three percent of respondents answered that they believed they needed a high school diploma to achieve success in the future, and 88% answered that their parents believed the same. Only one respondent answered that his or her parents did not believe a high school degree was essential for future success and opportunity.
Seventy-six percent of respondents answered that they agreed or strongly agreed that earning a college diploma was necessary for future success and opportunity; however, 11 total respondents disagreed, strongly disagreed, or had no opinion on a college diploma’s effect on future success and opportunity, a concerning statistic considering college graduates earned 98% more per hour on average compared to people without a degree in 2013 (Leonhardt, 2014).

Race appeared to have little to no impact on expectations of success in respondents’ opinions. Eighty-two percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that all students could achieve, and only 9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their peers would accuse them of “acting white” if they were academically successful. Likewise, only three respondents explicitly stated that they felt they were unintelligent, and only one believed (s)he could not be a successful student regardless of environment or instruction.

### Cultural Understanding and Appreciation of Campus and Community

To determine if ELLs perceived prejudice or subjugation that would result in displays of culturally oppositional behavior, respondents were queried on their views of how persons on and off campus viewed them as an Hispanic student. Overwhelmingly, respondents answered that they perceived acceptance of their race and cultural identity from others, especially school faculty.

#### Table 1.7: Student Responses to Perceived Opinions from Faculty, Peers, and Community Members on Culture and Well-Being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage who agreed or strongly agreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My English instructor understands and appreciates my cultural identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My English instructor cares for my personal well-being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My administrator understands and appreciates my cultural identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My administrator cares for my personal well-being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My non-Hispanic peers understand and appreciate my cultural identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My non-Hispanic peers care for my personal well-being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community members understand and appreciate my cultural identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community members care for my personal well-being.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results should not dismiss the presence of prejudice or subjugation on campus and in the community, as displays of each could be veiled and go unnoticed by respondents. However, if such displays were not perceived or acknowledged by respondents, they could not be labeled as the genesis of oppositional behavior that interfered with learning.
Additionally, the drop in confidence in the degree to which non-Hispanic students and community members were perceived to understand and appreciate respondents’ cultural identity and care for their personal well-being compared to instructors and administrators was worth noting. Rather than continuing education for educational professionals in multicultural education, non-Hispanic students might benefit from training in the subject, and opportunities for community members to interact with Hispanic persons and culture might provide value, as 32% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that others would care more for their personal well-being if they were not Hispanic.

**Behavior and Performance in English Courses**

To determine if ELLs displayed traits of oppositional culture theory, respondents were surveyed on their behavior in English courses. Using the Cleburne High School Student Code of Conduct, questions asked if students exhibited behaviors considered “disruptive” in English class, specifically because they felt disenfranchised or unhappy with their treatment by teachers.

The majority of students reported that they were not consciously upset by their treatment due to ELL status.

**Table 1.7: Student Response Regarding Anger Because of Perceived Treatment due to ELL Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage who agreed or strongly agreed</th>
<th>Percentage who disagreed or strongly disagreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel angry about how I am treated by teachers, administrators, and peers due to my ELL status.</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the presence of unconscious anger, which would go unidentified to students, would require observation in the classroom and/or interviews with respondents for verification.

In response to their perceived mistreatment due to ELL status, respondents replied the following regarding their behavior, all of which showed little active disobedience due to the school climate.

**Table 1.8: Student Self-Reports of Negative Behavior in Response to Perceived Mistreatment Due to ELL Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage who agreed or strongly agreed</th>
<th>Percentage who disagreed or strongly disagreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I ignore my English instructor’s and administrator’s directions.</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use offensive language.</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use my native language rather than English.</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In future research, administering a similar survey to non-ELL students regarding their behavior in response to perceived mistreatment may supplement teachers’ comparisons of ELL and non-ELL student behavior.
Although misbehavior was scarcely reported, the two categories in which students responded they behaved negatively—ignoring directions and finding reasons to leave class—might hinder student learning, as instruction could not be fully absorbed if students disregarded or were absent for it. These displays, though, could be considered passive disobedience rather than active dismissal. The majority of students’ adherence to the code of conduct, rules developed by the dominant culture without their consent, further demonstrated their acceptance of the campus environment.

Responses varied on changes that would improve their behavior and English course performance. Suggestions of greater understanding and respect for culture from educators; an increase in Hispanic teachers and Hispanic culture and role models in curriculum; the ability to communicate in Spanish in class; inclusion in classes with only ELLs; and campus activities that incorporated Hispanic culture to increase productivity were approximately similar in distribution across Likert Scales.

**Open-Ended Responses**

At the end of the survey, respondents provided suggestions to improve their academic achievement. Many respondents provided self-evaluations, which might indicate they believed the impetus for change lay on their own effort rather than their campus, but the majority of responses were educationally, not socially or culturally, based. Examples of each are below.

**Responses Calling for Self-Improvement**

- “stay focused”
- “no changes have to be made. If anything to do better in school I have to improve on myself.”
- “Estudiar mas y echarle ganas” (“Study more and put in effort”)

**Instructional or Curricular Changes**

- “a spanish english teacher”
- “more time in English classes”
- “an esl teacher to be there to help me”
- “stories that are more modern”
- “more class time”
- “group work” (Replied by two respondents)
- “Read english books”
• “Mas clases bilingues” (“More bilingual classes”)
• “By going to the library at least once a week”

**Overall Analysis**

If results from student surveys hold true, ELLs desire and need more instructional support rather than behavior modification or greater pushes for assimilation into educational culture. Few admitted that they actively opposed education, although responses could be inaccurate because students did not see their actions as oppositional or failed to adequately identify their behavior. Based on results, the cultural model of Cleburne High School ELLs could be described as follows:

- Positive toward the American educational system and its goals
- Eager to advance from secondary school to post-secondary education
- In families that encourage students to succeed in school
- Trusting of those in positions of authority on campus
- Generally well behaved

Such descriptors are inconsistent with the characteristics of students who adhere to oppositional cultural theory.

**Teacher-Produced Qualitative Analysis**

To gain additional perspectives of Cleburne High School ELLs’ underperformance, teachers responded to 43 evaluation questions through which they appraised similar queries regarding campus climate, curriculum and instruction, and behavioral trends. For analysis, responses to the survey’s questions were grouped into six categories:

1. Demographic Information
2. Perception of ELLs’ Values of Education
3. Perception of Cultural Understanding and Appreciation of Campus and Community
4. Perception of ELLs’ Behavior and Performance in English Courses
5. Evaluation of English Course Curriculum and Opinions on ESL Program
6. Open-Ended Responses

Survey questions and overall data collected from the survey are found in Appendix C.

**Demographic Information**

Six of seven respondents were female, and all respondents classified themselves as white. All respondents had earned undergraduate degrees, while one had earned a master’s degree and had hours toward her doctoral degree. On average, respondents had taught for 9.14 years on the secondary level; however, one respondent had taught for 31 years and, when her experience was excluded, the other respondents had taught for 5.5 years, on average. The same teacher had taught at Cleburne High School for her entire 31-year career, producing an average of 7.57 years taught at Cleburne High School, but if her experience was excluded, respondents had taught at Cleburne High School for 3.33 years on average14.

Four respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were comfortable speaking another language, while two remained neutral. Only one strongly disagreed.

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14 Three teachers who responded are in their first year teaching at Cleburne High School.
Perception of ELL and Families’ Value of Education

Respondents indicated through their answers that they believed ELLs and their parents valued education but did not recognize the importance of earning a high school or post-secondary degree. A majority of respondents answered in the center-left of the Likert scale (Disagree—Neutral—Agree) in response to questions about the opinions of ELLs and their parents regarding the necessity of a high school and post-secondary degree for future success. Their responses were at odds with the responses from student surveys.

Perception of Cultural Understanding and Appreciation of Campus and Community

Respondents’ answers suggested that the majority of resistance to Hispanic culture and persons came from non-Hispanic students and the community. Results of each question are below.

- All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they understand and appreciate the culture of students in the ESL Program, and all strongly agreed that they care for the personal well-being of students in the ESL Program.
- Five respondents agreed or strongly agreed that administrators understand and appreciate the culture of students in the ESL Program and care for their well-being, while only one disagreed.
- Two respondents each disagreed and strongly disagreed that non-Hispanic students understand and appreciate the culture of students in the ESL Program, while two remained neutral.
- Six respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that community members understand and appreciate the culture of students in the ESL Program. Four respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that community members care for the well-being of students in the ESL Program, while two remained neutral. The disparity between teacher and student responses might arise from their respective definitions of “community”: ELLs might consider their community the Hispanic community within Cleburne, while teachers might consider their community members of the dominant culture in Cleburne.

Perception of ELLs’ Behavior and Performance in English Courses

All questions regarding the behavior and performance of ELLs in respondents’ classes asked them to compare ELLs to their non-Hispanic peers and mirrored the questions provided to student participants that were derived from disruptive behavior described in the Cleburne High School Code of Conduct. Results of each question are below.

- Six respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that students in the ESL Program ignore their directions more than their non-Hispanic students, while one remained neutral.
- Five respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that students in the ESL Program talk during instruction more than their non-Hispanic students, while two remained neutral.
- Six respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that students in the ESL Program verbally disrespect them more than their non-Hispanic students, while one remained neutral.
- Six respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that students in the ESL Program distract others during learning more than their non-Hispanic students, while one remained neutral.
- Five respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that students in the ESL Program skip class more than their non-Hispanic students, while two remained neutral.
• Five respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that students in the ESL Program find reasons to leave class more than their non-Hispanic students, while one remained neutral and one agreed.
• Five respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that students in the ESL Program damage or deface school property more than their non-Hispanic students, while two remained neutral.
• Four respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that students in the ESL Program dress inappropriately more often than their non-Hispanic students, while three remained neutral.

Generally, respondents found that ELLs acted similarly to their non-Hispanic peers. However, they did not indicate the quality of behavior of non-Hispanic students. Similarly, only one respondent reported that ELLs earned lower grades than their non-Hispanic peers in their English classes.

**Evaluation of English Course Curriculum and Opinions on ESL Program**

Respondents remained in the center of the Likert scale (Disagree—Neutral—Agree) in their evaluation of the presence of Hispanic role models and cultural celebration in the English curriculum, but six of seven agreed or strongly agreed that they added such study on their own accord. Likewise, respondents remained in the center of the Likert scale on the benefits of Hispanic teachers for Spanish-speaking ELLs.

Respondents were divided on the necessity of ELLs’ fluency in English prior to entering a mainstream English classroom, with three respondents each agreeing and disagreeing, respectively. However, five of seven respondents agreed or strongly agreed that exclusionary classrooms consisting of only ELLs did not benefit students.

Five respondents believed that ELLs achieved more when engaging in meaningful tasks, while one remained neutral and one disagreed. Four respondents agreed that ELLs needed extensive instruction in grammar usage and mechanics prior to engaging in challenging coursework in English classes, while two remained neutral.

During academic coursework, three respondents agreed that ELLs should be limited to English when discussing activities, while two remained neutral. Five respondents, however, disagreed or strongly disagreed that social conversation should be limited to English, while two remained neutral.

**Open-Ended Responses**

Respondents provided numerous suggestions on how to improve the academic success of ELLs. They were categorized into Instruction, Emotional Support, and Parent-Teacher Support.

**Instruction**

• One respondent believed that cross-curricular planning, such as “doubling up for English and social studies classes—classes that require intensive reading and writing,” would aid students in language acquisition.
• One respondent called for “more integration of Hispanic history, culture and literature in ELA classes,” echoing the belief that engaging in meaningful work produces greater academic result.
• One respondent argued for a number of supports, including technological and cross-curricular, and urged teachers to promote native-language use in writing and speaking.
Another respondent believed teachers should “allow students to engage in English and not make them overly dependent on their native language” but did not elaborate further.

**Emotional Support**

One respondent believed that ELLs needed more “confidence and motivation,” but did not offer ideas on how to promote them.

**Parent-Teacher Support**

One respondent asked for “more teacher training and increased parental involvement/support,” reiterating participants’ opinion that ELLs’ parents do not value education as much as needed.

**Overall Analysis**

With such a small sample population, overgeneralizations about Cleburne High School English instructors’ characteristics were a concern. However, based on responses, these teachers could be described as

- Accepting of ELLs’ cultural identity
- Disappointed in parental involvement, support, and opinions of education
- Wary of the academic challenges ELLs face
- Wary of the social challenges ELLs face from non-Hispanic peers and community members
- Under-informed on linguistic acquisition
- Under-trained on how to successfully instruct ELLs

**Answering the Question: Is ELL Underachievement Due to a Culture of Opposition?**

From the data provided by both ELLs and their English instructors, ELLs did not deny learning opportunities nor defy the educators who provided them. Both ELLs and teachers did not remark that ELLs exhibited behaviors any different than native-speaking students, a key trait in the theory that oppositional culture produces achievement gaps between members of the dominant culture and minority students (Ogbu, 1978). ELLs’ aspiration for academic success countered the dismissal of educational opportunities attributed to cultural inversion, and the absences of distrust and animosity toward the dominant culture in their responses indicated that they are voluntary minorities who wish to succeed within American society instead of in spite of it. Largely, they did not equate academic success with the dominant culture—they saw academic success as independent of race, class, and gender.

The absence of a prejudicial force in educators’ responses also indicated that ELLs did not face an active threat of which to oppose. Teachers’ acknowledgement of the difficulties ELLs face, reported understanding and appreciation of Hispanic culture, and desire to improve in their instruction of ELLs suggested a sensitive rather than dogmatic approach to English language acquisition as well as English-language arts success in which ELLs were offered empathy and open-mindedness toward their struggles and culture rather than forced to assimilate into the dominant culture. Respondents, it appeared, wanted ELLs to grow into successful students while maintaining, not abandoning, their cultural identity.

The underachievement of ELLs on End-of-Course English exams, it seemed, occurred due to a lack of instructional knowledge to adequately support students whose second or other language was English.
Possible Solutions

Identifying the cause of a problem cannot function as moral justification for allowing it to endure—change is needed, not only to improve ELLs’ normative test scores, but also their lives after they leave Cleburne High School.

Teachers indicated that they needed additional support and training on strategies to engage and instruct ELLs in their classrooms. This section provides possible solutions to the problems they encounter when teaching ELLs that incorporates ELLs into remedying the issue, empowering them to become active participants in doing so.

Language Acquisition

To promote language acquisition as well as engagement in challenging, meaningful work, a schedule in which ELLs attend both a linguistic development course and an English-language arts course simultaneously could, as one teacher responded, “double up” on the amount of reading, writing, and critical thinking practice they receive. According to Fischer (1990), language acquisition is successful when students engage in “communication in the moment and on the accomplishment of a meaningful task.” (1) Additionally, Goldenberg (2008) suggested that second language acquisition succeeded when students had the opportunity to experience “explicit teaching [to] learn features of the second language such as syntax, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and norms of social usage” coupled with “ample opportunities to use the second language in meaningful and motivating situations.” (13)

Based on best practice, creating a two-course English class for ELLs may benefit their language acquisition and application. One course, composed predominantly of ELLs, would focus on grammar usage and mechanics—parts of speech, punctuation, and situational application of each—and another would apply such learning in the context of authentic reading, writing, and speaking tasks in a general education classroom, with additional support provided by an ESL inclusion aide. Work produced in the general education classroom could then be used in the linguistically focused course, as grammar is best learned in the context of one’s own writing and conversation (Weaver, 1990).

Use of Native Language in Class

Although classes function traditionally as English-first environments, such a climate is counterproductive to building critical thinking skills. Teaching students to read and write first in their native language and then in their second language or doing so simultaneously promotes higher achievement in English activities than restricting ELLs to their non-native tongue (Goldenberg, 2008). Literacy and critical thinking transfer across language, as productive thought processes are not linked to the mode of oral communication. Because Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards focus more so on critical reading and analysis and the revealing of such skills through composition than rote grammatical knowledge, teaching higher-order skills is imperative despite the language used to do so.

Therefore, allowing ELLs to develop thoughts and responses to analytical questions in their native language and then transferring them to English upon completion will free non-native speakers to challenge themselves academically rather than remain hesitant to express themselves in a foreign language (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2006). The technique can be accomplished in the following ways:
During Reading: Provide students with a translation in their native language directly next to the English text. Doing so will allow students to practice reading in English without failing to comprehend the message and purpose of a text.\footnote{The same technique is used when reading texts in archaic forms of English, such as the works of Shakespeare.}

During Discussion: Provide students with a translation of open-ended questions in their native language directly next to the English version. In paired discussions, allow students to debate in their native tongue while outlining their conversation points. When asked to share with the entire class, students can then practice speaking in English with a guide to direct them if they struggle to express themselves.

During Writing: Provide students with a translation of prompts in their native language directly next to the English version. Allow students to pre-write and draft in their native language so meaning is not lost in translation. After revising and editing, students can then translate their composition into English using a dictionary or program such as Google Translate. Teachers must remember that the logical progression of ideas, clarity and coherence of thought, and depth of analysis are of greater importance in writing than grammatical accuracy, which can be acquired in the students’ language acquisition course.

Cultural Understanding and Interaction

While teachers admitted in the research survey that they considered themselves culturally aware of ELLs, additional study of the intricacy of a student’s culture can benefit the day-to-day interaction with the student (Colorado, 2007). Cultures differ in the manners in which their members acquire information, solve problems, communicate non-verbally, use symbols, and deal with information (Pratt-Johnson, 2006). By understanding differences between the norms of the dominant culture and the culture of ELLs, instruction and interaction can be tailored to maximize the benefit of each. Furthermore, ELLs should be introduced to the customs of American society, not to force them into assimilation, but to aid them in interacting with its members. Training in cultural awareness and responsiveness is available.

Acquisition of this knowledge, too, can be gained through increased involvement with the Hispanic community. Teachers responded in their survey that they believed a lack of parental involvement hindered the academic success of ELLs, so for both parties to gain cultural knowledge and increase parental support, holding events in community locations that parents believe are both neutral and safe could accomplish both needs. Such events should be informal and inviting while integrating entertainment and educational knowledge into the schedule.

Integration of Hispanic Culture and Role Models into Curriculum

By integrating Hispanic culture and historical figures into curriculum, ELLs will likely find greater meaning in and reason to engage in lessons and activities. Additionally, positive ethnic role models have been shown to increase self-esteem and benefit lifestyle choices and moral values in ELLs (Escamilla, 1996).

Teachers should be wary, though, of materials that provide ethnic literature and study, as many produce two extremes of Hispanic figures: the “superhero” that defies odds to achieve greatness, or...
members of the downtrodden, impoverished class helpless to overcome their plight (Escamilla, 1996). Providing authors and historical figures of importance and normality allows students to identify with persons they imagine they can imitate rather than once-in-a-lifetime protagonists or victims of the dominant culture that seem unrealistic or unworthy of modeling. Not only will ELLs take pride in the study of their culture, but also other students will increase their ethnic literacy and participation in multicultural education (Escamilla, 1996), an advantage for them in a highly globalized world.

Materials can be purchased at the campus- or district-level, or can be incorporated into curriculum by each grade-level team individually.

**Additional Instructional Training**

Teachers, although responding they felt successful in instructing ELLs, overwhelmingly answered that they could improve upon their success through additional training. Although all teachers in Cleburne Independent School District are required to attend Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training, additional training that is content-specific would allow teachers to apply techniques designed for their subject area. Additionally, administrative oversight in teacher implementation of instructional strategies should be constant to ensure not only its use, but also its effectiveness.

**A Final Thought**

Based on student survey responses, Cleburne High School ELLs did not indicate they displayed characteristics of cultural inversion, nor did they dismiss the opportunities they were given. Likewise, faculty surveys revealed that teachers perceived Cleburne High School ELLs as no different in behavior than their non-ELL peers. The title of this study, taken from a student respondent’s reply to the survey, was chosen with purpose: “Soy inteligente aunque algunas veces no comprendo todas las cosas, pero me esfuerzo por hacerlo.” Cleburne High School ELLs desire to learn and are willing to labor to succeed academically. As the respondent wrote, they are smart, but they sometimes do not understand. Nevertheless, they try. Cleburne High School English teachers, too, expressed the desire to teach ELLs so they might flourish in whatever endeavors they embarked upon after graduation. It is an exigency, then, to provide both students and teachers with the tools and knowledge to do so.
References


Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Forms Presented to Both Student and Teacher Survey Respondents

Student Consent Form

• This survey is for a research study on English Language Learners' performance in English class and view of Cleburne High School teachers, administrators, students, and activities.
• The purpose of this study is to understand and improve your experience at Cleburne High School, and for this aim, questions should be answered truthfully.
• This survey is being conducted independently of Cleburne High School and the Cleburne Independent School District. Although the researcher is a Cleburne Independent School District employee, the researcher is acting on his own accord.
• You are not required to take this survey.
• The answers submitted on this survey will remain anonymous.
• The answers submitted on this survey will not affect your grade or discipline record.
• The answers submitted will be collected and analyzed for you to view if you wish to view them.
• You will have an active voice in the solutions to better your education based on your answers.
• Any questions regarding this survey can be directed to the researcher at the e-mail address virgil.green@ctx.edu.

Teacher Consent Form

• This survey is for a research study on English Language Learners' performance in English class and view of Cleburne High School teachers, administrators, students, and activities.
• The purpose of this study is to understand your experience at Cleburne High School, and for this aim, questions should be answered truthfully.
• This survey is being conducted independently of Cleburne High School and the Cleburne Independent School District. Although the researcher is a Cleburne Independent School District employee, the researcher is acting on his own accord.
• You are not required to take this survey.
• The answers submitted on this survey will remain anonymous.
• The answers submitted on this survey will not affect your occupational safety, pay, or assignment.
• The answers submitted will be collected and analyzed for you to view if you wish to view them.
• You will have an active voice in the solutions to better this school based on your answers.
• Any questions regarding this survey can be directed to the researcher at the e-mail address virgil.green@ctx.edu.

Both consent forms appeared prior to the survey.
Appendix B: Summary of Student Survey Responses

Because Google Drive does not allow survey results to be exported, readers can find the survey results online at the following address: https://docs.google.com/a/cleburne.k12.tx.us/forms/d/1drFalTshKQEhuvQuSv13sNWqSkujCnAIwW1BoY7ARcw/viewanalytics.

Appendix C: Summary of Teacher Survey Responses

Because Google Drive does not allow survey results to be exported, readers can find the survey results online at the following address: https://docs.google.com/a/cleburne.k12.tx.us/forms/d/1VriOSQpfZWLCQuta8xFq-pOJDaFnBFwClc0aDjkuQ/viewanalytics

Citation

Author’s Biography

Virgil Ross Green is a freshman-level English instructor at Cleburne High School, his alma mater, in Cleburne, TX. In his five years of teaching, he has taught English I, English I Pre-AP, English I ESL Sheltered, Creative Writing, Introduction to Journalism, and served as yearbook adviser and UIL Academics sponsor.

Green earned his Bachelor’s of Arts degree in English Writing and Rhetoric from St. Edward’s University and is currently completing coursework to earn a Master’s of Education degree in Differentiated Instruction from Concordia University.

Acknowledgements
Ross would like to thank his wife, Cinthia, and son, Edwin, for inspiring him daily to make the world a better place.

Citation
English Language Study in Danish Elementary Schools: A Case Study of Skødstrup School*

By
Charity Mensah

Skødstrup School, Aarhus, Denmark
and CETADGHANA

Abstract

This mixed methods case study focused on the experiences and perceptions of students and teachers related to the teaching and learning of English in one Danish elementary school, Skødstrup Folkeskole. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data related to English language learning. The findings indicated that most students identified grammar as the most difficult aspect of learning English. This finding was confirmed by teachers in the study, and most students identified listening as the preferred mode for learning. Teachers identified technology and cooperative learning as the most effective instructional strategies for teaching English.

Keywords: English language, Danish elementary schools, elementary EFL, Skødstrup Folkeskole

*This research was done as a Master in Education program requirement for the American College of Education and revised as an article for this publication.

Citation

Introduction

Elementary education in Denmark remains a serious political topic. In June 2013, the Danish government and all political parties signed a memorandum of understanding to improve the standard of education in public elementary schools (Danish Ministry of Education, 2014). Not only were the authorities concerned with the students’ general educational performance but also specifically with their English language performance. This concern resulted in the reform, in which significant changes were made to enhance English language study. These concerns were and are justified mainly due to increasing internationalization and the fact that English is a second language in Denmark. The English language has increasingly become a global language with the number of users rising in 2014 to more than two billion people (Education First, 2014).

Furthermore, the Danish government has enacted a plan for attracting foreign skilled labor to Denmark by offering government-funded incentives to motivate an influx of highly skilled workers. The educational systems and related standards might also be a major factor in encouraging migrant workers to decide to work in Denmark. This possibility brings to the forefront the emphasis on English language study in Danish schools. The Danish Ministry of Education requires compulsory elementary education for every child between the ages of 6 to 16 years. That compulsory education requirement can be met via public schools or private sectors, including home schooling. The Danish Municipal Primary and Lower Secondary School is called the Folkeskole (Danish Ministry of Education, 2014). Denmark’s educational system is unique in that free tuition is provided for all students. Equally impressive, all teachers are required to have a master’s degree (Gonchar, 2014).

However, until recently, those positive trends were contradicted by the reality that students were not required to write complete formal examinations (Shiel et al., 2010). In addition to providing optional choices of learning other foreign languages in subsequent grades, the Danish School Reform unveiled by Prime Minister Helle Thorne-Schmidt in 2012 proposed the introduction of English as a compulsory language starting in first grade. With the proposed education reform already implemented, a unique opportunity was available to explore student and teacher perspectives in the learning and teaching of English in a Danish elementary school.

This study focused specifically on Skødstrup Folkeskole, a public school located in a small town approximately 20 kilometers from Aarhus, the second largest city in Denmark. This school was chosen primarily because it is the largest school in Aarhus Municipality and the researcher has personal experience within the school. Skødstrup School opened on April 21, 1944 and has undergone several large expansions since its inception. Three clusters of students are served by the school. Students in the first cluster range from 0 through 3rd grade. Fourth and fifth grade students make up the second cluster, and sixth through ninth grade students are in the third cluster. The approximately 1,000 pupils are divided across 43 classes with a total of 46 teachers. (Aarhus Kommune, 2014).

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes and perceptions of students and teachers regarding English language acquisition. Empirical evidence was sought for three main research questions. What are the perceptions and attitudes of students related to English language acquisition? What are the perceptions and attitudes of teachers related to English language acquisition? What
academic challenges do students and teachers experience in English language study? A mixed-methods case study approach provided answers to these research questions. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. Quantitative data were gathered from students and teachers through self-administered questionnaires. Qualitative data were collected through interviews with students and teachers to solicit in-depth knowledge of English language teaching and learning practices.

Literature Review

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Over time, theorists have noted that the first language has a significant impact on children’s academic success in their earlier educational years, and that this automatically translates to secondary language acquisition.

- Watson (1913) noted that behavior could be explained through observable acts, as one would see through language usage and acquisition.
- The connectionist theorists felt that language was built through connections but not rules (Keenan & Comrie, 1977). For example, one’s association with a word allowed meaning to be attached to it.
- Additionally, Bruner and Ratner (1978) believed that language was learned through active interaction between the child and the environment. Their social interactionist theory meant that language was learned through socialization.
- Piaget (1990) considered language an underlying part of cognitive development. He suggested language was part of other cognitive structures with language principles being no different from general cognitive structure, hence his use of the cognitive theory. This theory sought to explain human behavior in relation to language acquisition.
- Gleason & Ratner (1998) contended that language was autonomous, and concluded natural human language obeyed universal principles.

As with the acquisition of the first language, learning a second language can best be understood by assertions that “language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill...[but] acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language – natural communication” (Krashen, 1987, p. 7). Krashen also asserted that acquisition-learning is the most fundamental hypothesis relating to linguistic and language practice. Furthermore, Krashen indicated that there are two systems of language performance: the acquired system and the learned system. The former relates to learning one’s native language. As one interacts with the target language through natural channels, a meaningful communication occurs. The latter pertains to learning a second language. However, even in this learning of a second language, the role of conscious learning is limited. Krashen explained the acquisition of a second language using the input hypothesis. The input hypothesis relates to acquiring, rather than learning a new language. Here, the learner aspires to progress along a natural order of obtaining linguistic competence in his or her second language. Krashen also noted that the affective filter comprising factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety affected the success of individuals in acquiring a second language. Krashen’s assertion was confirmed by Colding et al. (2005), who indicated that English language acquisition is more effective using a language experience approach rather than a word reading approach.
Previous Literature

Extensive research has gone into comparing and contrasting ways the English language is taught and learned in non-English-speaking countries. In such countries, there are sometimes native English-speaking immigrants whose level of English language proficiency may be superior to non-natives. Nevertheless, even though studies have revealed more success for native speakers, the reasons behind variances have been attributed to language barriers, socioeconomic boundaries, and possibly lack of parental support. Looking specifically at Denmark, several studies have compared the academic performance of Danish and non-Danish students in the study of the English language (Rangvid, 2008; PISA Etnisk, 2005; Ohinanta and Ours, 2011). In these studies, researchers have concluded that students’ academic performance was determined by the level of proficiency in their native languages, socioeconomic background, and parental support.

Rangvid (2008) provided a detailed analysis of the performance of young immigrants and native Danish students enrolled in the Danish educational system. This study sought to investigate the attitudes of these young immigrants. Reflection on this study showed an emphasis on obligatory stages of schooling as opposed to devoting extensive efforts to achieving success within the Danish educational systems. Rangvid (2008) cited evidence of non-Western immigrants not making much use of the Danish educational system. Overall, results concluded that schools attended by native Danes had significantly higher reading scores than schools attended primarily by immigrants. Rangvid concluded that differences in the schools explained little about the test score gap and determined that cultural differences, attitudes and expectations of family, and working life significantly explain part of the remaining gap.

In a previous study, Rangvid (2005) sought to assess the reading score gap between immigrant and non-immigrant students in Denmark. Results identified underperformance of immigrants in Denmark in that second-generation immigrants often had lower levels of educational attainment due to their parents’ level of education. The study identified a host of factors, including gender, family characteristics, siblings, parental education, occupation, language at home, language at school, resources, and access to reading materials, as explanations for the performance of these students. Similarly Colding et al. (2005) identified inadequate Danish language proficiency of immigrants, parents and their children as the main reason of the educational gap between Danish and non-Danish.

Focusing on specific statistics from Rangvid (2005), the results showed that native Danish students had a test score distribution around 500 compared to immigrants from Pakistan who scored around 424. Thus, compared to immigrants, the test scores for native Danes were relatively higher. It should also be noted that these research results were related to socioeconomic characteristics, with all the countries included in the study having significant gaps from native Danes. Results showed that on average, typical immigrant scores were lower than 85% of native Danish students in reading literacy. This variation in scores was believed to relate to parenting behavior, family resources, and the students’ schools. “Danish students [often] attend schools with a limited number of first-generation immigrant students…” (p. 13). Therefore, most native Danish students from homes with higher levels of education attended schools where few immigrants were present. “As the proportion of immigrant students increases, however, the educational attainments of Danish households decline” (p. 13). This could be related to Danish parents’ choices and the selective process of sending their children to schools with lower percentages of immigrants.
Ohinanta and Ours (2011) sought to present the combined effects of fourth grade students who were motivated versus those who were not. Empirical analysis was based on two datasets assessed across three content areas with consideration provided for the linguistic requirements for all three. “The results showed that … immigrant children experience negative language spill-over effects on the test scores from immigrant children to native Dutch children” (p. 21).

Nusche et al. (2010) noted differences in native Danish students and immigrants across national and international studies. Typically, immigrants performed lower in science, mathematics, and reading. “Students with less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds and those with a non-Danish mother tongue face the greatest challenges in achieving good education outcomes” (p. 7). Also noted was the variance in starting and completing a Vocational Education and Training (VET program). Overall, 51% of all enrollees (both native and immigrant students) were expected to complete the program, yet 39% of all immigrant students enrolled in VET programs were projected to complete the program. When looking only at female immigrant enrollees, the completion rate increased to 47%. Also provided was the performance of fourth grade students in reading, mathematics, and science. On average, when students’ parents were both born in Denmark, the students’ average reading scores were 552 points higher than the average of all students in Denmark and the scores of those students who only had one parent native to Denmark. Immigrants scored 511 in reading, with 500 for the international average of all students.

Clearly, performance gaps exist between native and immigrant students. As a result, a need was identified for language-centric policies and other plans to target socioeconomically disadvantaged students (Nusche et al., 2010).

The Study of Foreign Languages in Denmark

All students attending school in Denmark, as in all European Union countries, are required to complete some compulsory courses with optional course selections for older students. These courses are taught by teachers who are qualified to teach at least three different subjects, making them semi-specialist teachers.

English is taught from grades 3 through 9. Meanwhile, grade 7 typically introduces another foreign language, which is mandated to be German, although French is also commonly offered (European Commission, 2014). This can vary within the EU, as the countries may choose the foreign languages they will offer. From age 13, students must choose a second language to study; beginning at age 16 through the age of 19, students will study up to three foreign languages. Evidence suggests that 80% or more of students in lower secondary education learn two or more foreign languages.

For students whose native language is not Danish, policy states that they should receive a culture course in addition to a Danish language course. Other classes are provided for these students in their native languages if they are from a European Union/European Economic Area country.

To better understand how language is taught in Denmark, it is important to note key changes that have occurred in public education recently. Students will now spend additional time in class with an even stronger focus on foreign languages. For example, students now begin learning English in first grade, rather than third grade, as policy had previously mandated (The Local, 2014). Additionally, students in grades 0 – 3 now attend school for a total of 30 hours per week, while students in grades 4 – 6 now attend school for 33 hours per week, and students in grades 7 – 9 now attend classes for 35 hours per week.
While attending classes, students must now actively learn the English language. This requires a number of language immersion techniques that include listening, grammar skills, and writing in English. Through the use of technology resources and other reference materials, students have more access to English gain a better understanding of the language.

**Data Collection**

Data collection tools in this study included student and teacher questionnaires and individual interviews with students and teachers to gather data that could not be easily obtained using a quantitative survey approach.

**Student surveys**

The entire student questionnaire is shown in Appendix 1. In this questionnaire, the 50 student respondents were asked about their demographic background and their native language. Students were asked to reflect on their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about school in general. In addition, queries sought to learn more about the effort students believed they were putting into getting a good education. They were also asked to rank four subjects from easiest to hardest based on their experience. Finally, students were asked to rank aspects of the English language from easy to difficult based on their experience.

**Teacher surveys**

The teacher questionnaire is shown in Appendix 2. Data were obtained from English teacher questionnaires with about one-half or 10 of the school’s teachers completing the instrument. Questionnaire items were used to collect data on teachers’ beliefs about challenges facing their students in acquiring English and whether they believed those challenges were related to language barriers, socioeconomic status, and/or parents’ education levels.

**Interviews**

Lastly, interviews were conducted with 10 of the original teacher participants and 10 of the original student participants to gain more in-depth information about how English language was taught and acquired. In addition, respondents were asked questions related to the current teaching and learning practices of the English language.

**Data Analysis**

**Student surveys**

Analysis of the 50 student participants’ responses indicated no connection between students’ status as a native or non-native Danes and their perceptions of English language acquisition. Thirty-two respondents noted that both parents were from Denmark, 10 students answered that one parent was from Denmark, and 8 participants stated that neither parent was from Denmark. A total of 42 students spoke Danish as their native language with only two immigrants noting English as their native language.

In the questionnaire, questions 4 and 5 asked students’ perceptions of the difficulty level and importance of learning English. The results are shown in Figure 1. Sixty-eight percent of the students viewed learning English as easy for them, and 84% said doing well in learning English was important to them.
Figure 1: Perception of Students about English Language Study.

Figure 2 presents the results for the inquiry into whether students learn English in any environment apart from schools. The results indicated that 84% of students studied English outside of school, showing that English language study was not limited to the classroom. Thus, parents and other educational learning materials such as story books would be considered relevant for the study of English language in schools.

Figure 2: English Language Study at Home

With regard to the components of English that students found most challenging, the results are presented in Figure 3. Twenty-two participants noted grammar as the most difficult. Listening was noted by three respondents as the easiest. The results also indicated that the students found writing, apart from grammar, difficult.
Additional data revealed that 40 of 50 respondents received parental assistance in studying and completing English homework. Two students responded that siblings assisted them with this task, and eight students said no one helped them study English or complete their homework. Students noted listening to the English language (question 8) as the best method for them to obtain English skills. They noted that speaking the language was the hardest way for them to learn English. These results are presented in Figure 4.
The final question required students to rank four core academic areas from easiest to most difficult on a Likert scale. The Likert scale was ordered: 1 (most difficult), 2 (more difficult), 3 (easy), 4 (easiest). A summary of the result is shown in Figure 5. The results indicated that students perceived English and mathematics as the most difficult for them and social studies as the easiest. With regard to non-native Danish students, two ranked English as their most difficult class, while one ranked it as the easiest class. Full detail on the rankings is provided in Table 2 in the Appendix.

![Figure 5: Comparison of English Language to other Subjects](image)

**Teacher Surveys**

The results from the teacher questionnaire showed that 60% found lack of parental involvement as the largest obstacle to students’ English performance. In addition, 60% of teachers surveyed reported that grammar was the most difficult content area for students and that technology and cooperative learning were the most effective instructional strategies in their classrooms as indicated by Yang (2013). The Table 1 in the appendix summarizes the findings from the teacher survey.

**Interviews**

In addition to student and teacher questionnaires, interviews were conducted with a number of students and teachers. From these interviews, several common points were made regarding the performance of all students, as well as the challenges facing all students. It seems that all students benefit from teachers who have received professional training for and design curriculum around cooperative learning activities. Students commented on the need for engaging activities to keep them motivated and interested in learning English. Both teachers and students participating in the interviews noted a positive relationship between parent-teacher interaction and improved English performance.
Conclusions

Most students reported the study of English was important to them and that listening was their preferred mode of learning. Other results from both students and teachers suggested that parental support and instructional strategies employed in the classroom were also significant contributors to students’ successful English acquisition. Overall, most students felt positive about their English learning and felt that they benefited from support from their parents in studying and completing homework. Despite the positive perceptions, a majority of students ranked English as one of two most difficult subjects, the other being mathematics. Of the components of English, most students found grammar to be the most challenging for them, which finding was confirmed in the results from English teachers.

When looking at the results, there is a clear relationship between specific instructional strategies and types of instruction students felt aided them in learning the language and those they felt were less effective. They seemed to prefer listening to the English language as a means to learn, while they found learning grammar to be the most difficult aspect of becoming proficient in the English language. It seemed that the majority of students’ perceptions were reflective of Krashen’s theory that linguistics is the most difficult part of second language acquisition and that immersion and getting involved with the language were more meaningful.

A limitation in this study was the focus on one single school, which could impair overall validity and reliability. The author recommends that the scope of schools be extended to include an adequate and representative cluster of schools in Denmark. Expanded research would provide more information on the preferences and challenges facing students in the English acquisition process, and on the attitudes of teachers toward their work as English teachers. Expanded research would also provide meaningful data that would yield better results and stronger indicators of ways to enhance English acquisition for more students.
References


### Tables and Appendices

Table 1: Summaries from the Teacher Survey

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<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Years of teaching</th>
<th>Major obstacle to students’ English performance</th>
<th>Most effective instructional strategy for teachers</th>
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Table 2: Summaries about Student Survey

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Appendix 1: Student Survey Questionnaire.

Student Survey

1. Are your parents from Denmark?
   _____ yes   _____ no   _____ Only 1 is

2. Which of this is your mother tongue?
   _____ Danish   _____ English   _____ other (state)

3. Which language is major form of communication at home?
   _____ Danish   _____ English   _____ other (state)

4. Would you say that English is easy or difficult for you?
   _____ Easy   _____ difficult

5. Is doing well in English important to you?
   _____ yes   _____ no

6. Do you study English outside of school?
   _____ yes   _____ no

7. Which aspect of English do you consider difficult?
   _____ Grammar   _____ Writing   _____ Reading   _____ Listening

8. How do you learn the English language best?
   _____ Listening   _____ Writing   _____ Reading   _____ Speaking

9. Who helps you study and complete English school work?
   _____ my parents   _____ brothers/sisters   _____ no one

10. Do you use any extra materials which improve your English (e.g. English story books, English movies, English computer games, etc.)
    _____ yes   _____ no

11. Which of the following subjects is most difficult for you? Rank on the scale from 1 (most difficult); 2 (more difficult); 3 (easy); 4 (most easy).
    _____ English   _____ Mathematics   _____ Science   _____ Social Studies
Appendix 2. Teacher Survey Questionnaire

Teacher Survey

1. How long have you been an English teacher?
   - 0 - 1 year
   - 2 – 5 years
   - more than 5 years

2. What is your educational background?
   - Teacher Training College
   - Bachelor
   - Master

3. Rank the following three criteria based on the impact that you think they have on your students’ academic performance.
   - language
   - parents’ education
   - socioeconomic status

4. Rank the following activities from most effective (1) to least effective (3) as an instructional strategy used in your classroom.
   - computers
   - independent work
   - cooperative learning

5. What do you think is the biggest challenge that you face as an English educator?
   - language barriers
   - lack of parental support
   - insufficient resources

6. Based on your students and their performance, rank the following content area in order from 1 (hardest); 2 (second hardest); 3 (easier); 4 (easiest).
   - Reading
   - Listening
   - Grammar
   - Writing

7. Do you think that the use of English language by your students at Home can improve their performance in English?
   - Yes
   - No

8. Have you noticed any difference in academic performance of Danish and non-Danish students in your assessment of English?
   - Yes
   - No

9. Which of them do better in your assessment?
   - Danish
   - Non Danish

Citation
Author’s Biography

Charity Mensah is currently a communication and education consultant for (CETADGHANA) www.cetadghana.com. She has worked as an English instructor at Skødstrup Skole and a communication specialist for both local and international firms in Ghana. Notable among them are Anglo Gold Ashanti (an international mining company) and africanpractice (UK communication consultancy firm). In her professional practice, she has consulted for high profile companies such as Google Ghana, Dow Chemical, Western Union and Rockefeller Foundation. Charity’s areas of expertise are in ESL teaching, educational policy, research, communication strategies, and media relations. She holds a Master in Education from American College of Education and a Bachelor in English and Political Science from the University of Ghana Legon.

Acknowledgements

I thank Dr. Rita Deyoe-Chiullán, for helpful comments and the other TexELT reviewers and editors for their support and careful editing of my paper. Also, I thank Dr. Katrina Landa for supervising my work at the American College of Education. Especially, I thank the English teachers and students of Skødstrup School, Aarhus, Denmark, for participating in the survey.

Citation

Six Good Books for 2015

by

Rita Deyoe-Chiullán, Ph.D., TexELT Editor
Adjunct Professor, Texas Woman’s University and American College of Education

Key Words: SIOP criticism, text complexity, content and analytical practices for ELLs, vocabulary development, scaffolds for reading and writing.

While authoring an online graduate level applied linguistics course for teachers preparing to become better qualified to meet the needs of English language learners, I reviewed a whole bookshelf filled with new books and felt I had earned a second doctorate. However, of all the books, research articles, and other research, these six books stood out as ones you should want to read this year.


The title pretty much sums up my feelings about how a fixed set of ideas have been oversold and underexamined for several years now as the “one best” and often, only way to approach sheltered instruction. Personally, I may not agree with every criticism leveled and the sample unit does not impress me quite as much as the examples in another of these new books, but this needed to be said and the short book (106 pages) is worth your time to read.


Short of reading everything offered on the Text Project website www.textproject.org and following Elfrieda Hiebert’s Text Project @freddyreads tweets on Twitter, if you only have time for one new book on this topic, this one is my choice to provide focus and guidance. An educator with many years of experience teaching language and reading can avoid some embarrassment in professional conversations by learning more about authors’ purposes, text structures, details in narrative vs. details in non-narrative texts, the importance of connective language, and how main ideas are constructed. Aspects of the book praised by other reviewers and that I also noted include these: “robust illustrations of how to teach...examples of informational texts...examples of student work...interactive templates...conversational tone...an accessible read...a study guide for teacher reading groups or advanced undergraduate or graduate students” (excerpted from the back cover of the book).


A lot of what you see in the popular press and a lot of the politicians’ scripted sound bites this year will be frankly false, when not maliciously misleading. Alliteration aside, this book is a better update with regard to how our nation continues to change and the implications for what we need...
to do to educate a multicultural globalized nation. Skimming a few chapter headings is instructional: Old versus Young: Cultural Generation Gaps--Hispanics Fan Out--Asians: The Newest Minority Surge--The Great Migration of Blacks-In Reverse--Multiracial Marriages--Race and Politics: Expanding the Battleground...There is plenty of food for thought in our demographics!


Reviewers quoted on the back cover praise this book as “...easy to understand...worth every minute....thoughtful descriptions of content and language integration...complex theories..made accessible...vignettes...in a concise book. (Ohkee Lee)...a must-read...concrete examples allow educators to reevaluate and quickly shift their practice...a game changer... (Angélica Infante-Green)” and my copy has so many sticky notes hanging off the pages that it flutters in the breeze. Some of the vignettes are from a well-known school in Fort Worth where some of our members teach!


Following on their 2013 publication of _Word Nerds: Teaching All Students to Learn and Love Vocabulary_ for teachers of younger students, this new book comes to enliven teaching that all-important grid upon which knowledge and learning are built. Not every idea in this book is brand-new; there’s an adapted Frayer model format in the Appendices, but the book sparkles with middle school energy and inventiveness. Another author whose work I like praised it on the back cover: “I started reading Vocabularians and could not put it down! Filled with resources, tools, strategies, student samples, assessments, and examples of their interdisciplinary planning...--Janet Allen, author of _Tools for Teaching Academic Vocabulary_ (2014).”


Like his previous book that has been a favorite of mine for several years, _Adventures in Graphica: Using Comics and Graphic Novels to Teach Comprehension_, 2-6 (2008), this book just flows with clarity and practical how-to like melted butter on pancakes. And it sinks in pretty well too. From finding and maintaining your focus, to practicing flexibility in planning and delivering instruction, to giving constructive feedback, to finally monitoring to ensure that students are always working at optimal levels of responsibility, the book walks you along the path to better learning while avoiding common pitfalls. I credit Thompson’s lucid presentation of how to make complexity more manageable for fueling my massive overhaul and updating of my undergraduate syllabi and websites. Over time, the layers of mandated re-formatting and boiler-plating* had created a gothic structure that I found hard to reduce to usability for the text and Twitter generation of students (and professors). Thank you, Teacher Terry!

*Citation

Publications Coordinator/TexELT Editor and TexELT Reviewer’s Biography

Dr. Rita Deyoe-Chiullán has taught bilingual students of all ages in the U.S. and Colombia for over forty-five years. Currently she teaches undergraduate courses at Texas Woman’s University and graduate online courses for the American College of Education. Her scholarly efforts focus on preparing qualified bilingual and ESL teachers.

Her most interesting professional challenge this past year has been authoring a new online graduate course in Applied Linguistics for the Masters in Teaching English Learners for the American College of Education.

Dr. Deyoe-Chiullán’s most exciting recent project has been developing and editing this peer-reviewed online journal, Texas English Language Teaching (TexELT), under the sponsorship of the TexTESOL V Board, where she serves as Publications Coordinator.

Publications Copy Coordinator/TexELT Copy Editor and TexELT Reviewer’s Biography

Dr. Jeyasharee Venkatesan has taught English as a second language and college composition in the U.S. and India for several years. She has taught in many local colleges such as Texas Wesleyan, Texas Christian University, Tarrant County College, and Northlake College. Currently, she is a Professor of ESL at Collin College.

Dr. Venkatesan continues to faithfully contribute her excellent copy editing skills as the TexTESOL V Board’s Publications Copy Coordinator. Fortunately, she also agreed to serve as a reviewer for TexELT in addition to providing her copy editing skills at various levels of the publication process.
More recently she taught ESOL credit courses in all skills areas to adults at two local community colleges, with a focus on the skills of writing/grammar and worked part-time as a Writing Tutor at the Richland College Writing Center. Again this year, Margaret has dedicated many hours reading manuscripts, suggesting revisions to make the messages clearer and patiently re-reading after revisions were made to be sure the next draft was more effective.

TexELT Primary Content Reviewer and Content Editor’s Biography

Margaret Redus has been a member of TexTESOL V for many years. Within TexTESOL V, she served as Treasurer and later Membership Officer. She holds a B.A in elementary education with a minor in English and an M.L.A with a specialization in bilingual education. She began her career in education with 6 ½ years teaching primary grades in Dallas ISD.

More recently she taught ESOL credit courses in all skills areas to adults at two local community colleges, with a focus on the skills of writing/grammar and worked part-time as a Writing Tutor at the Richland College Writing Center. Again this year, Margaret has dedicated many hours reading manuscripts, suggesting revisions to make the messages clearer and patiently re-reading after revisions were made to be sure the next draft was more effective.

TexELT Content Reviewer and Content and Format Editor’s Biography

Dr. Alana (Lana) Sloan has been a professional educator for more than 30 years, serving 22 years in K-12 and 9 years in higher education. She is also an award-winning journalist and received a Living Legend Award from the Dallas Press Club in 2013 for her lifetime contributions as a reporter-editor for the Dallas Times Herald and a freelance writer.

Currently, Dr. Sloan is the vice president of curriculum development and assessment at American College of Education, an online institution serving students nationwide and globally.

In 1981, after pursuing an undergraduate degree for 13 years in her spare time, Dr. Sloan completed a Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education at the University of North Texas and fulfilled a lifelong dream of becoming a teacher. She served 22 years in the Dallas Independent School District, where she also combined her experience in journalism and education as a curriculum developer.

In 2003, Dr. Sloan founded Wordsmiths Publishing Company and Educational Consultants, Inc. Through Wordsmiths, Dr. Sloan joined American College of Education as a creator of the college’s original curriculum. Inspired by her colleagues at American College of Education, she has since earned a Master’s Degree and a Doctorate in Educational Administration at Texas A&M University-Commerce.
Technology Coordinator’s Biography

Rod Segovia is currently the Title I District Translator for Grand Prairie ISD. Recently, he has had the opportunity to take part in delivering Dual Language staff development to the Lower Kuskokwim School District in Bethel, Alaska, and each time walked away with a deeper awareness and appreciation of the importance of heritage language maintenance.

Prior to being a translator, he worked for Grand Prairie ISD as a Dual Language Strategist and Instructional Technology Facilitator. Before that, he taught for 9 years in Plano ISD in Bilingual 3rd and 4th grades and was a Bilingual Literacy Specialist for K-5. He has a total of 17 years of experience in education.

Rod holds a B.A. in Spanish with a minor in Music from the University of Texas at Arlington and is currently working on a Master’s in Educational Administration.

Higher Education/Adult Education Representative and Content Reviewer’s Biography

Leslie A. Brinkerhoff, Jr. oversees the Continuing Education Program of ESL for Mountain View College in Dallas, Texas. He teaches credit classes for upper level writing courses for the ESOL program there as well.

Prior to working at Mountain View College, he worked in several countries of Africa, particularly francophone, as a literacy consultant assisting local communities in the development of literacy programs fitted to local cultures, languages in use, and other environmental factors.

He graduated with a Master's degree in Linguistics from the University of Texas in Arlington and a Bachelor's in French from Houghton College in New York State. He is fluent in French and has an intermediate ability to communicate in Spanish.
PAST PRESIDENT/LIAISON Elizabeth Ostrow Smith is the former Director of Global Education and English to Speakers of Other Languages at The Hockaday School.

PRESIDENT Dr. Marco Shappeck is an Assistant Professor of Teacher Education at the University of North Texas-Dallas, where he teaches Applied Linguistics and applications of sociolinguistic research in the teaching of English and Spanish as a second or foreign language.

PRESIDENT-ELECT Tuyet Huynh is the Dean of Instruction at the World Language Academy at William B. Travis, PK-6, in Grand Prairie ISD.

SECRETARY Dr. Amie Sarker is an Associate Professor of Literacy Education at the University of Dallas.

TREASURER Yuliya Summers is a second language teacher educator and a researcher. She teaches pedagogy courses to pre service teachers at the University of North Texas.

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE Jayson Hammett is a World Languages Instructional Specialist for the Arlington Independent School District.

MEMBERSHIP REPRESENTATIVE Katy Lake is currently a Library Assistant at The Hockaday School in Dallas, where she works with a diverse group of students from the USA and around the world.

SECONDARY EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVE Terri Watson serves as the ESL Instructional Specialist for the Eagle Mountain-Saginaw I.S.D.

HIGHER EDUCATION/ADULT EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVE Les Brinkerhoff oversees the Continuing Education Program of ESL for Mountain View College in Dallas, Texas, and teaches credit classes for upper level writing courses in ESOL.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVE Magdalena R. García is the Assistant Principal at Crockett Early Education School in Grand Prairie ISD.

ADVOCACY REPRESENTATIVE Liz Martin served as a bilingual teacher, a bilingual specialist, and then became the Bilingual/ ESL Program Director. She retired in December 2011 after 33 years in Grand Prairie ISD.

MEMBER AT LARGE REPRESENTATIVE Thomas Finley is the Adult Services Manager for the Frisco Public Library.

TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR Rod Segovia is currently a Title I District Translator for Grand Prairie ISD and was previously a Dual Language Strategist and Instructional Technology Facilitator.

PUBLICATIONS COORDINATOR Dr. Rita Deyoe-Chiullán teaches courses for bilingual and ESL teachers as an Adjunct Professor at Texas Woman’s University and at the American College of Education.

PUBLICATIONS COPY COORDINATOR Dr. Jeyasharee Venkatesan is a professor of ESL at Collin College.
Save the Date!

November 7, 2015

Time

8:00 – 4:00

Location

Arlington ISD Professional Development Center

Link for Registration

http://www.textesolv.org