How Do the Students Feel? Long-Term English Learners and Their Experience Under the ESL Label

Molly M. Staeheli

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HOW DO THE STUDENTS FEEL? LONG-TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS AND THEIR EXPERIENCE UNDER THE ESL LABEL

by

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DEDICATION

To my students, who deserve teachers that constantly seek new ways to master our craft. To my mom, who always knew a doctorate was in my future. Finally, to you, Dad. You may not be able to understand it now, but you have been with me every step of my twisted life journey.
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ABSTRACT

Far too many English learners in my district enter elementary school as non-native speakers, gradually developing skills only to plateau at early intermediate levels as determined by the annual proficiency exam. As these students become long-term English learners (LTEls) in junior high, the pattern of failing and retaking the test wears on them, likely exacerbated by the district-mandated curriculum for English language development (ELD) classes. Unit topics such as money matters and U.S. national monuments at advanced levels fail to tap into students’ lived experiences.

I responded to this problem of practice through mixed-methods action research, beginning with a quantitative survey to measure LTEls’ perceptions of ELD. While implementing a unit I adapted to reflect principles of multicultural education, culturally relevant pedagogy, and constructivism, I used strategic journal prompts to elicit students’ counter-stories of their experiences in ELD. Finally, a post-adaptation survey reflected how the unit influenced students’ perceptions of the class. Quantitative data revealed an improvement in students’ perceptions, and three themes appeared in the qualitative data: (a) a clearly negative perception of being in ELD and a desire to “get out,” despite (b) an overall perception of the course’s benefit, along with (c) confusion about placement policies and procedures. I conclude with a call to better understand LTEls’ perceptions and needs while being more transparent about their progress toward proficiency. The district may also consider forgoing the existing curriculum at advanced levels in favor of more culturally relevant content.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication ............................................................................................................................. iii
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................. iv
Abstract ................................................................................................................................. v
List of Tables ........................................................................................................................ viii
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................ ix
List of Abbreviations ............................................................................................................. x
Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
Chapter 2: Literature Review ............................................................................................... 17
Chapter 3: Methodology ....................................................................................................... 41
Chapter 4: Findings ................................................................................................................. 57
Chapter 5: Implications ......................................................................................................... 86
References .............................................................................................................................. 101
Appendix A: Student Invitation Letter ............................................................................... 110
Appendix B: Parental Letter to Opt Out ............................................................................. 111
Appendix C: Pre-Adaptation Survey Questions ................................................................. 113
Appendix D: ELD Adaptation 1 ........................................................................................... 117
Appendix E: Identity Unit Adaptation .................................................................................. 119
Appendix F: Week 1 Inductive Vocabulary Lesson ............................................................ 122
Appendix G: Article Notetaker and Sentence Frames .......................................................... 123
Appendix H: See, Think, Wonder Activity ......................................................................... 125
Appendix I: Says, Means, Matters Activity and Influence Pie Chart.................................126
Appendix J: Post-Adaptation Survey ..................................................................................128
Appendix K: Freewrite Journal Prompts ..........................................................................130
Appendix L: Freewrite Analysis Sample............................................................................132
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Timeline and Alignment of Data Collection Tools and Analysis Methods With Research Questions .......................................................... 42

Table 4.1 Pre-Intervention Perceptions of School vs. ELD ................................................................. 60

Table 4.2 Pre-Intervention Perceptions of ELD ............................................................................. 63

Table 4.3 Pre and Post Perceptions of ELD ..................................................................................... 76

Table 4.4 Pre and Post Perceptions of ELD Topics ......................................................................... 77

Table 4.5 Subset of Participants .................................................................................................. 79
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework .................................................................7

Figure 4.1 Average Pre-Intervention Perceptions of School vs. ELD........61

Figure 4.2 Discussion Cards From Freewrite 1 ........................................73

Figure 4.3 Average Improved Perceptions Pre and Post Intervention..........78
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRP ........................................................................................................... culturally relevant pedagogy
CRT ........................................................................................................... critical race theory
CSP ........................................................................................................... culturally sustaining pedagogy
ELA ........................................................................................................... English language arts
ELD ........................................................................................................... English language development
EL .............................................................................................................. English learner
ELPA ....................................................................................................... English Language Proficiency Assessment
ESL ........................................................................................................... English as a second language
ESOL ....................................................................................................... English to speakers of other languages
LangCrit .................................................................................................. critical language and race theory
LatCrit ..................................................................................................... Latinx critical theory
LPAC ....................................................................................................... language placement and assessment committee
LTEL ....................................................................................................... long-term English learner
ZPD .......................................................................................................... zone of proximal development
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“Teach them all. All means all!” The mantra rings loud at professional development sessions and in publications for my relatively large and diverse U.S. school district. The most recent statistics from the state’s Department of Education show 35% of K–12 students in the district are ELs, 48% are Hispanic/Latino, 14% are Pacific Islander, and 31% are White. Though most immigrant families are from Central America, this town is unique for its large population of Marshallese immigrants. Islanders have been able to find work and establish a community in this small corner of the Midwest, home to the headquarters for two of the largest meat processing companies in the country. At the junior high where I teach eighth- and ninth-grade English language arts (ELA) as well as a section of advanced English language development (ELD), 17% of our student population is from the Marshall Islands and 65% are Hispanic/Latino, creating unique opportunities and unique challenges. The district fits into the overall conservative politics of the state where legislative proposals to ban critical race theory (CRT) in schools have passed.

For newly arriving ELs in eighth grade and above with little if any English language skills, the district has a Language Center where students take content courses in a sheltered environment with other new arrivals. Teachers scaffold the content to support their emerging language skills in an English-dominant setting. After 1 year of sheltered support, these students enter mainstream classes with students of all language
backgrounds. New arrivals entering seventh grade or below are placed with native speakers and all language levels in-between, expected to acquire both language and content at the same pace as their classmates in what is essentially a submersive model of language learning (Reyes & Villone, 2008). To “exit” the ESL program, students must show proficiency on the annual state-mandated language exam plus provide two other pieces of evidence of grade-level or higher work. This evidence could be scores on other state exams, district formative assessments, or writing samples with rubrics that align to state ELA standards.

ELD is a course all newer arrivals and many long-term English learners (LTELs) must take. The district chose to purchase and train ELD teachers in the *E.L. Achieve* (n.d.) curriculum. A box for each level includes a curriculum guide, manipulatives (e.g., gameboards, talking sticks, spinners, timers, and exit slips), and other materials. Levels 1 and 2, created for Grades 5–6, share thematic units covering topics such as the weather, virtual field trips to the beach, and getting along. Though the language focus of the two levels differs and assessments expect more advanced language skills in Level 2, the topics covered in these two levels are the same. Therefore, students who talked about the weather and the beach for roughly 5 weeks of daily lessons in Level 1 talk about the weather and the beach again in Level 2. Levels 3 and 4 of *E.L. Achieve*, created for secondary grades, share themes of money and budgeting, U.S. parks and monuments, and growth mindset. Again, the differences manifest in the language expectations, not the topics. Each unit is mapped out over 4-5 weeks with daily scripted lessons that include slides, videos, and a student workbook. Those teaching the classes are trained to follow
the curriculum closely, cover the required vocabulary and language structures, and ensure students complete the prescribed formative and summative assessments.

The 2022–2023 school year was my second year teaching Level 4 of E.L. Achieve and the context of this study. Students in Level 4 may have been taking ELD for 5 or more years, often having repeated levels along the way because they had not shown progress on test scores and lack other evidence of fluency. The reality is, given that levels repeat topics and content, students could spend 3 or more years talking about the beach and weather in Levels 1 and 2 plus 3 or more years learning about national parks and monuments in Levels 3 and 4. The curriculum forces students to acquire language in artificially contextualized units from which teachers cannot deviate, leaving no room to explore and utilize students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds and engage them in culturally relevant content.

**Problem Statement**

LTELs are a unique population. Having grown up in U.S. schools and acquired solid verbal and aural language skills, they are often seen and treated as native speakers, yet they continue to have high dropout rates, low graduation rates, and low achievement on state and national tests (Olsen, 2014). Due to English-only laws and thus the subtractive nature of English language teaching, schools such as mine are not supporting native language literacy skills, thereby limiting students’ English language and literacy skills (Kibler et al., 2017; Reyes & Villone, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999). The school system labels these kids and then requires them to take what seems to be the same class over and over and spend hours taking the same test every year. It encourages assimilation, yet it fails to ensure student progress toward English proficiency, holding them in a seeming
cycle of failure. The further LTELs move into secondary school, the more achievement eludes them (Olsen, 2014). Many of these students have found “success” in their assimilation efforts, but many more have not and are disengaged in their education (Williamson et al., 2007). In some cases, they may be apathetic, defiant, or disruptive. In other cases, these students are motivated to learn, but their schooling failed to provide the support they needed to develop their language and content knowledge.

Long-standing school policies that see language and academic deficiencies in immigrant cultures promote assimilation to the hegemonic culture, erasing the cultural and educational foundation students bring with them (Darder, 2012; Valenzuela, 1999). Beyond denying students’ languages, literacies, and cultures, such policies convince students that assimilation is the only way to succeed as adults in this country (Alim & Paris, 2017; Kibler et al., 2017). In my school, as the smallest of the cultural minorities, the Marshallese community in particular struggles to maintain their language and culture because it is unique in a relatively small community tucked into a White majority with a substantial Hispanic/Latino minority. They attend schools, take the tests, and go through the programs, yet in the 2019–2020 school year, the graduation rate for Pacific Islanders in the district was 72% while the graduation rate for all students was 84%. In the end, assimilation as a means of achievement not only erases students’ own culture and language, but also too often does not lead to the equality it promises (Williamson et al., 2007). With the undeniable trend of increasingly multicultural student populations, districts must mirror that trend in their schools’ curricula and cultures. Otherwise, as long as LTELs remain under the ESL label and are forced to repeat disengaging curriculum
and take seemingly irrelevant tests, the perceived achievement gap will remain (Callahan, 2005; Plough & Garcia, 2015; Shin, 2018).

In my first year of teaching ELD 4, it was a class mostly filled with LTEls who had likely been enrolled in these courses for years prior, the students were disengaged from the assimilationist content, such as a unit called “Wonders of the United States,” in which they read and wrote about the beauty of Jewel Cave in Missouri and the historical significance of The Statute of Liberty in New York, two places they will likely never see. In addition to the U.S.-focused topics disconnected from students’ realities, the class did not seem to develop their English literacy skills. Lessons purportedly addressed reading, writing, listening, and speaking, but the overt goal of the curriculum is to develop academic listening and speaking skills. The inherent linguistic focus is not what these LTEls need the most as they approach high school.

Results from the state’s annual English language exam show, on a scale of 1–5, several of my students achieved 4s and 5s in listening and speaking while plateauing at 2s and 3s in reading and writing, labeling them “progressing.” Students who score either 1 or 2 in all four domains is considered “emerging.” To be considered “proficient” and exit the ESL distinction, students need 4s and 5s in all domains. In the spring of 2021, 8% of eighth-grade ELs in the district were “emerging,” while 6% had reached proficiency. This left 87% of the ELs in the “progressing” category, an 11% increase from the previous year. The middle level seems to be a holding ground for a clear majority of our junior-high English learners.

This study reports my effort to tackle the problem of an ELD 4 curriculum that is assimilationist, culturally irrelevant, and deficient in opportunities for student agency and
voice. I envisioned ELD 4 classes that were void of assimilationist goals. Rather than spending thousands of dollars on a boxed curriculum, I wondered, why not replace the stories of U.S. norms with students’ counter-stories, incorporating culturally relevant content and constructivist practices that allow space for student agency and voice, enabling learners to share their own experiences of pride, struggle, family, and culture?

**Theoretical Framework**

Valdés (1998) cited Pennycook (1994) to argue, “a critical practice of English-language teaching must begin by critically examining and exploring students’ knowledges, histories, and cultures in ways that are both affirming and supportive” (p. 16). Practices in second language acquisition fall very neatly into constructivist theories of learning. Using students’ prior experience and providing opportunities for social interaction enables their natural use of developing language skills to construct meaning (Kibler et al., 2017; Reyes & Vallone, 2008).

The state does not outright ban bilingual education, yet my district has not adopted a bilingual or dual-immersion program. Given the reality of this English-only context, there is also a level of politics embedded in teaching English. In such contexts, educators of ELs have no choice but to take a subtractive approach to teaching language (Reyes & Vallone, 2008). However, if they can incorporate multicultural education with constructivist practices and a lens of culturally relevant and critical pedagogies, their students can acquire language skills while gaining an understanding of the inequities that have existed in their education (Reyes & Villone, 2008). To that end, this section frames my problem of practice in Latinx critical theory (LatCrit), weaving together culturally
relevant pedagogy (CRP) and multicultural education in constructivist practices that results in student-produced counter-stories (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 *Theoretical Framework*

**Critical Pedagogy, Critical Theories, and Counter-Storytelling**

The standard narrative in education is that immigrant and other non-native English-speaking students continue to fall behind due to some individual deficiency (Crump, 2014; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), or as Gay (2018) stated, “Far too many educators attribute school failure to what students of color don’t have and can’t do” (p. 31). CRT challenges this notion by shifting the focus of the problem away from students and toward the system as a whole, interrogating the belief that public schools cannot be racist without overt racist intent (Crump, 2014). CRT acknowledges the role of race, whether overt or covert, and aims to reveal and eliminate racism and other forms of subordination (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).
Crump (2014) recognized the field of TESOL as having failed to condemn its imperialistic tradition or to incorporate CRT into its practice and introduced LangCrit, or critical language and race theory, as a means of looking at the intersectionality of racialization and language. On a similar note, LatCrit illuminates the intersectionality of race, language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). In the vein of Freire (1990), Luke and Dooley (2009) envisioned “language teaching and learning [a]s an act of political and cultural power with substantive material and social consequences and possibilities for learners and their communities” (p. 1), and critical race and LatCrit theories can catalyze those possibilities.

To confront my problem of practice and the dominant Eurocentric epistemology of deficit, I used the LatCrit method of counter-storytelling (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Hughes-Hassell, 2013; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) or testimonios (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Irizarry, 2017), critical race approaches to “telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told, including people of color, the poor, and members of the LGBTQ community” (Hughes-Hassell, 2013, p. 212). I hoped to recognize the funds of knowledge (González & Moll, 2002) students bring with them as assets to their education. By empowering students to use their voices and share their experiences in ELD classes, I sought to redirect the ELD curriculum toward a more multicultural and culturally relevant practice.

**Multicultural Education**

Rather than learning the structures and functions of a language and a culture through a scripted curriculum that narrows content around North American sites, norms,
and values while ignoring students’ own cultural and linguistic backgrounds, students
deserve an ELD curriculum that reflects and utilizes the knowledge they already bring to
the classroom. Traditional Anglocentric curriculum and culture negatively impact
students of color, who often find the culture to be alienating and even hostile, which
jeopardizes their ability to “attain the skills needed to function successfully in . . .
society” (Banks, 2014, p. 4).

Banks (2014) presented five individual yet interconnected dimensions to
multicultural education, and this study focused on four: content integration, the
knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, and equity pedagogy. These
dimensions framed my data collection and adaptation of the ELD 4 curriculum. The
dimension of content integration guided me to find texts, videos, and other materials that
reflect diverse cultures relevant to my students. To address prejudice reduction and
incorporate equity pedagogy (Figure 1.1), I relied on the lens of LatCrit theory (Delgado
Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001) by enabling students to question their
knowledge of education and their role in it, constructing meanings of prejudice and
equity in the context of their ELD classes.

**CRP and Constructivist Practice**

Teachers who implement asset pedagogies take into consideration the quality and
strengths students of diverse backgrounds bring to the classroom rather than seeing them
as students who are lacking or have a deficiency in linguistic and academic skills.
Ladson-Billings (1995) described CRP as a pedagogical framework that aims to erase
deficit mentality, instead promoting asset thinking through equality and social justice.
CRP has three main characteristics: producing high academic achievement, instilling
cultural competence, and developing students’ critical consciousness (Figure 1.1). Within
the continuum of behaviors of culturally relevant teachers, a key component especially
relevant to this study is seeing practice as an art and viewing students as having
knowledge a teacher must “mine.” In addition, a culturally relevant teacher structures
social relationships with students to foster a community where students learn
collaboratively and seek support from each other, not just the teacher. This juncture is
where constructivist approaches to language teaching enter. Culturally relevant teachers
reject the objectivist notion that language is a “neutral tool to describe the real world and
to effectively map knowledge from the minds of instructors to the minds of learners”
(Windschitl, 2011, p. 84). Instead, these teachers see learning as something students
construct themselves, taking what they already know and building new understandings
with insight gleaned from interactions with teachers and classmates.

Rather than receiving a box with a script and lock-stepping their students through
a culturally irrelevant curriculum, educators of LTELs need to be empowered to create a
culturally relevant classroom culture using key principles of constructivist learning—
such as understanding that new learning builds on students’ prior knowledge (Reyes &
Villone, 2008). A constructivist view also emphasizes learning as a process and the
teacher as the facilitator. Guiding students through social interactions conducive to
sharing stories and solving problems that are relevant and welcoming of diverse language
and cultural backgrounds would, I reasoned, result in more engaged students.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

To be engaging and relevant to secondary students who are essentially bilingual
and bicultural, having lived the majority of their lives in the United States, ELD
instructors should work harder to take on an asset mentality, incorporating students’ stories and using a constructivist approach to learning. LTELs are significant stakeholders, and their perspective of the value of their education is crucial (Olsen, 2014). Secondary students are valuable because they have been in the system long enough to understand and even be critical of that system. At the junior high level, school becomes more challenging, and the significance of grades begins to weigh on students. Their communicative English skills are developed enough for them to be able to share their thoughts and feelings about their education. Therefore, they are ready to critique the social order, question how knowledge is constructed, and verbalize how school culture and teacher practice impact their learning.

Through action research, I aimed to improve the ELD curriculum by investigating students’ perceptions of and engagement with the curriculum, attempting to answer the following research questions from the LTELs’ perspective as well as from my own observations as a teacher researcher:

1. What are LTELs’ perceptions of the standard ELD curriculum?
2. How do my students experience a curriculum intended to use culturally relevant and constructivist practices?
3. How does this adapted unit affect LTELs’ perceptions of ELD 4?
4. What do LTELs’ counter-stories reveal about their experience as language learners?

I proposed that recognizing students’ perceptions of ELD would help me understand students’ preconceived notions of the class—positive or negative—and guide my instruction so I could meet them where they were in developing a sense of value in the
class. Adapting the existing curriculum to include culturally relevant practices allowed me to witness, through assignments and journal entries, their experience with content that encouraged the incorporation of culture. Altogether, gaining a better understanding of these constructs could lead to an improved ELD curriculum that better engages LTELs and may eventually lead to more advanced levels of English language skills.

**Study Design**

Whereas traditional research values an objective stance, “action research demands some form of intervention” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 5). This study followed the action research cycle of developing and implementing a plan and then observing and reflecting on the outcome, including any new questions or problems that arose (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The study’s focus on students’ voices underscored the “emancipatory potential” of action research (Kinsler, 2010, p. 173). The research questions indicated my intention not only to examine how adapting ELD 4 impacted students’ perceived value of the class, but also to hear from students themselves, secondary LTELs in particular. According to Efron and Ravid (2013), “The meaning assigned to school experience is varied, shaped by individuals’ subjective interpretations, and influenced by their personal, cultural, and historical background” (p. 40). Therefore, I used qualitative action research methods in the form of journal entries and students’ classwork, conducive to unveiling the counter-stories of students’ experiences in ELD classes and capturing their perceptions and experiences when I incorporated adaptations based on multicultural education and CRP.

Qualitative research is inherently constructivist, “interested in understanding the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24), and therefore aligned with my aim to incorporate constructivist practices in English language
teaching. Words were my data as I examined student artifacts for evidence of the dependent variables of perceived meaning and value along with student experience in ELD classes, and how the independent variable of making adaptations to content and assessment in the curriculum impacted their perceptions and experiences in ELD 4. This approach enabled me to understand LTELs’ experiences in ELD classes, “how they interpret their experiences,” and “what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24).

The place for qualitative research is clear, but I took a triangulated mixed-method approach by incorporating a pre- and post-adaptation survey of students’ perceptions of ELD classes. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained about action research, “The research design emerges over time, as one engages with the participants, and together researcher and participants decide on next steps in working toward coming up with solutions to the problem” (p. 49). My goal was to give students voice and agency through the research process, allowing space for their voices and experience in ELD to be the variables that drove the intervention.

As Chapter 3 details, the study took place during the first semester of the 2022–2023 school year in my own advanced ELD class of eighth- and ninth-grade ELs between the ages of 13 and 15. I collected and analyzed data in three phases: pre, during, and post adaptation. Prior to implementing the adapted unit, I followed the first unit of the curriculum as designed, enabling me to establish a baseline of students’ perceptions and engagement. With my district’s permission, I adapted an existing E.L. Achieve unit with the theme “Identity,” which lends itself well to the elements of CRP and multicultural education, such as including more culturally relevant content and constructivist practices.
I designed the adaptations to lead students through explorations of their own identity via
texts and other materials while incorporating academic vocabulary and language
structures, gathering data to assess the impact of my efforts.

**Positionality**

Given that action researchers are also practitioners, I undertook this study to
impact my practice, my students’ learning, and ideally, the overall school community.

For action researchers:

There is no pretense of the neutral or objective observer, but rather, from the
beginning we lay claim to the reality that we are ‘setting in action’ research to
address a local context and concerns and that we are actively involved in the
problem-solving process. (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 88)

I did not intend to be an outsider who drops in to conduct surveys or interviews and
leaves without having any connection at all with the research participants. Although, as a
White monolingual teacher, I could not consider myself an insider with my LTEL
participants, I was an insider in the sense that the participants were students in my ELD 4
class. On a continuum of positionality from outsider to insider (Herr & Anderson, 2015),
I saw myself as an insider in collaboration with insiders, the students. I endeavored to
establish solid, trusting relationships with students while supporting their autonomy in the
expression of their perceptions and counter-stories as they constructed their
understanding of what being in ELD classes means to them. I served as a trusted guide,
asking questions to lead them on their journey to reveal their perspectives.

I also considered whether their participation would feel voluntary or mandatory
(Herr & Anderson, 2015). Because students do not choose to take ELD 4, their
participation in the study may be perceived as involuntary. I wondered about their motivation—whether they would want to be involved or would I have to persuade and coax them. Anticipating some hesitation, I also suspected they may feel honored or curious to hold primary roles in such a study. At the beginning of the school year, I sought to establish trust and connections, conveying that I valued them as individuals who could each contribute to the study.

In 20 years of working with ELs and their teachers, I have been mostly ignorant of the role I likely take as the holder of knowledge. I have always considered myself to be a collaborative equal and guide to my students, but at the outset of this study, I realized the hegemonic nature of my job title and native English fluency, requiring that I constantly reflect on my own biases. As Howard (2010) argued,

Critical reflection and self-assessment and the development of cultural competence can help educators to recognize whether they consciously or subconsciously hold deficit-based notions of culturally diverse students, distorted views of low-income communities, and negative perceptions of students’ families.

(p. 114)

The journey of reflection and revelation of my own biases continued through this research and beyond, shaping my work with ELs and students from all backgrounds.

**Significance**

The phenomenon of LTEls’ moving through an education system that alienates them is not unique to the TESOL context in my school. Critical pedagogy research seeks to question social and cultural inequity in education as well as change the conditions that cause it (Pennycook, 1994). By questioning the aim and methods of ELD 4 and making it
more relevant to learners’ lives, my students and I could begin the steps toward not only progressing them through the ESL program, but also planting seeds of change in the way the district educate(s) ELs. In other words, hearing the counter-stories of these students and understanding their perceptions of ELD could help teachers and administrators see them for the assets they bring to the classroom rather than their deficits.

Critiques of EL education in public schools mostly feature border states like California and Arizona (Callahan, 2005; Owens, 2018; Shin, 2018; Valdés, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999). In addition, very few studies of ELs focus specifically on those at the secondary level who have been in U.S. public schools since early elementary. Therefore, this study can extend existing scholarly conversations by focusing on education of LTEls in a relatively isolated pocket in the middle of the country where Hispanic/Latino cultures intermingle with this unique population of Marshallese, a culture that holds its own smaller pocket under threat of being dissolved. This study put these students center stage in a unique context by embodying the practice of action inquiry with me, the teacher researcher, seeking to understand a problem of practice. It required qualitative methods on par with its constructivist, action-oriented nature and reliance on students’ stories that can open the eyes of other educators in the district and open the doors to changes in district policy and the curricular structure of ELD classes.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Growing immigrant populations pose a challenge for education, and many U.S. schools have responded by promoting assimilation to the hegemonic culture rather than adopting asset pedagogies rooted in multiculturalism (Darder, 2012; Valenzuela, 1999). As Alim and Paris (2017) argued, teaching that standardized English “and other White middle-class normed practices and ways of being alone are the keys to power” effectively means “denying the languages and other cultural practices that students of color bring to the classroom” (p. 6). Pursuing achievement through assimilation not only erases students’ own culture and language, but also seldom yields the equality it promises (Williamson et al., 2007). With the undeniable trend of increasingly multicultural student populations, district curricula and school cultures must adapt.

As explained in Chapter 1, an LTEL is a English learner who has been in U.S. public schools for 7 years, depending on varying district definitions. They may appear to have fluent speaking and listening skills but have failed to progress in their English writing and reading skills. Olsen (2014) attributed these struggles to LTELs’ habits of passivity and feelings of being invisible due to teachers’ inability to provide adequate academic support. As students move into secondary levels, these feelings wear on their confidence and lead to high dropout rates because, “having internalized a sense of failure, some LTELs no longer see themselves as belonging in school” (Olsen, 2014, p. 7). As a teacher researcher, I sought to look deeper into these students and reveal their voices and
experiences as ELs to better understand their needs and hopefully begin to pave a
pathway to their success. To address the problem of a culturally irrelevant, disengaging,
and ineffective ELD curriculum, I sought to shed light on the lived experiences of LTELs
as ELD students and better understand from their perspective what effective language
instruction could look like. My research questions therefore emphasize students’
perceptions of the value of their ELD class before and after implementing an adapted unit
framed by CRP and multicultural education. The research questions also reflect my aim
to understand students’ experiences with these practices and what their counter-stories
revealed in their own words.

This chapter presents the scholarship that guided my efforts. I discovered much of
the research for this review through the University of South Carolina’s library website,
which granted me access to ERIC, EBSCO, JSTOR, and other databases. I also mined the
reference lists of individual sources for further resources on related topics. A combination
of seminal books, articles, and other peer-reviewed resources deepened my understanding
of the concepts reflected in the literature review. In addition, dissertations on related
topics and research methods enhanced my understanding of how I might approach my
action research.

This literature review expands on my theoretical framework (Figure 1.1), moving
beyond CRT by considering its limits regarding intersectionality and demonstrating how
LatCrit theory offers an alternative view of my problem of practice, one that retains key
themes from CRT while recognizing other traits of subordination. I also address the
concept of culturally relevant education, tracing the evolution of various pedagogies,
their limits, and new ways of looking at them. I then examine dimensions of multicultural
education, showing how interwoven aspects of culturally relevant and multicultural education can inform constructivist practices for teaching ELs. Further, the chapter expands on the critical race and LatCrit method of counter-storytelling as a means to collect data from students via the stories of their own educational experiences. Finally, I establish the historical relevance of my topic along with exploring related research to highlight the forward trajectory of my study.

**Theoretical Framework**

As introduced in the previous chapter, CRT and LatCrit are the umbrella under which theories of teaching and learning can work together to inform an educational framework that demarginalizes non-White, multicultural, and multilingual students, enabling them to thrive (Figure 1.1). Focusing more specifically on the practice of teaching, in this section, I look more closely at the concepts of CRP and multicultural education, reviewing the elements to establish an ideal standard from which to assess and shape my classroom with more constructivist methods. Completing the framework, I describe the method of counter-storytelling as the means through which students could express their experiences in and opinions of the ELD curriculum.

**Critical Race and LatCrit Theories**

Public school systems in the United States have long served diverse populations. The hierarchy of power in education puts White European Americans at the top, making policy decisions that benefit their own while other races and cultures are left without a voice at the bottom of the hierarchy (Darder, 2012; Williamson et al., 2007). Educational theories abound that either fail to address race and culture or exhibit a deficit perspective, assuming students of color are in some way lacking an ability to succeed in school.
(Crump, 2014; Gay, 2018; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In contrast, scholars can use CRT to account for the role of race and racism in public education, challenging the notion that public schools cannot be racist without overt racist intent (Crump, 2014). By acknowledging the role of race, whether overt or covert, CRT can reveal and aid in eliminating subordination (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

While CRT has supported effective critiques of the supposedly race-neutral practices of public education, it can fall short in efforts to address other categories of subordination. In the field of TESOL, for example, Crump (2014) introduced LangCrit to illuminate how race, racism, and racialization intersect with language. LatCrit scholars have a similar goal of looking at the intersectionality of race, language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

LatCrit theorists recognize five elements or themes that critical race and LatCrit theories share (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). First is the centrality of race and intersectionality of other forms of subordination. While race and racism are at the center of CRT, other intersecting forms of subordination also warrant attention, such as gender, language, and immigration status. Second, both lenses challenge the dominant ideologies of meritocracy, objectivity, race neutrality, color-blindness, and other deficit frameworks that abound in traditional education theories. Next, both theories stand on a commitment to social justice. Both seek transformative social justice that empowers underrepresented groups to have a voice in their education. Fourth is the centrality of experiential knowledge, recognizing that students of color hold a well of linguistic and cultural knowledge from which teachers can draw. Finally, the
two theories promote interdisciplinary perspectives, positioning race and racism in education in both historical and contemporary contexts.

**Culturally Relevant and Multicultural Education**

Amid school desegregation in the 1960s and 70s, a movement for addressing diversity in schools known as culturally relevant education included two critical frameworks. Gay’s work on culturally responsive teaching focused on teacher practice, while Ladson-Billings introduced CRP to focus on “teacher posture and paradigm” (Aronson & Laughter, 2016, p. 163). Gay (2018) proposed several key assumptions:

1. Culture counts.
2. Conventional reform is not enough.
3. Intention without action is insufficient.
4. There is strength and vitality in cultural diversity.
5. Traditional measurement tools are symptoms rather than causes of achievement problems. (pp. 10–17)

Given these assumptions, Gay (2018) called for “a very different pedagogical paradigm . . . to improve the performance of underachieving students from various ethnic groups—one that teaches to and through their personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments” (p. 32). Gay described such culturally responsive teaching as validating, comprehensive and inclusive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, emancipatory, humanistic, and finally, normative and ethical. Further, Gay proposed four actions that are essential to implementing culturally responsive teaching. First, schools must replace deficit perspectives of marginalized communities with asset perspectives. Second, teachers must understand resistance to the
changes, so they are better prepared to implement culturally responsive teaching. Teachers also need to recognize ideologies of culture and difference as essential to human existence. The final action is that teachers must connect their content with students’ cultural context.

Ladson-Billings (1995, 2009) focused on the context of educating African American youth, wanting to see these students achieve excellence while maintaining their identity and culture. Ladson-Billings (2009) defined CRP as “empower[ing] students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 20). CRP’s overall goals are threefold, beginning with high academic achievement. Rather than continuing to pursue the question of why students of color continually underperform, Ladson-Billings proposed a focus on what factors contribute to African American students’ success—and granted that standardized tests are an unavoidable measurement of student success while suggesting other observable measures worthy of attention. Second, CRP promotes cultural competence in students of color. According to Ladson-Billings, Black students who experience academic success often seem to assimilate to the White standard, finding themselves ostracized by their Black peers. They experience academic success at the expense of their cultural integrity. The goal, then, is to support and encourage students’ cultural identities while facilitating their academic success. Finally, CRP’s third aim is to “help students to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476). When teachers have done the work to recognize societal inequities, they can help students recognize and question the social dynamics of their own communities.
To operationalize a theory of CRP, Ladson-Billings (1995, 2009) identified three general propositions of culturally relevant teachers. Examining their self-conceptions surfaced their belief in students’ capabilities and their sense of themselves as contributing members of the community. They saw their instructional practice as an art that was unpredictable and evolving. Another proposition of CRP is the teacher’s social relations in the classroom. The teachers Ladson-Billings observed had strong connections with all students and supported a collaborative community of learning. Lastly, Ladson-Billings proposed that teachers who practice CRP have dynamic and critical views of knowledge. They have a passion for teaching, implementing scaffolds and assessments that nourish a wide range of skills.

Building on CRP, Banks (2014, 2016) recognized the faults of assimilationist ideologies while noting that pure cultural pluralism is not realistic. As a result, Banks proposed multicultural education, a model with five distinct yet interconnected dimensions (Figure 1.1), to support schools’ need to recognize students’ unique cultural characteristics while helping students understand a common culture. An empowering school culture and social structure result from examining labeling and grouping practices in academic and extracurricular contexts along with interactions among teachers, students, and administrators across ethnic lines. Because this dimension involves the entire school and requires broad commitment, it goes beyond the framework of my study, but the remaining four dimensions can apply to any classroom. For example, teachers can achieve multicultural education via content integration with texts and other resources from a variety of cultures and groups. This dimension may seem obvious and simple,
especially in ELA and social studies classes, but it is not limited to these subjects. More importantly, content integration by itself does not constitute multicultural education.

The *knowledge construction process*, a third dimension, deals with implicit assumptions, perspectives, and biases in education. Teachers must understand how they have constructed race, ethnicity, language, and social class if they are to assist students in investigating and understanding how implicit cultural assumptions shape their own constructions of knowledge. Banks (2016) gave this dimension the most attention because “the kind of knowledge that teachers examine, and master will have a powerful influence on the teaching methods they create” (p. 4). It has implications for the other four dimensions, determining the teacher’s implementation of content, equity, and understanding prejudice—and by extension, school culture. If teachers are going to integrate diverse materials that critique understandings of race and equality, the teachers and their students need to understand equality and how their existing constructs of it have been shaped.

Building on this dimension, the integration of *prejudice reduction* asks teachers and students to shift their attitudes toward race, which cannot happen until they understand the roots of those attitudes. Finally, *equity pedagogy* describes differentiated instruction that uses a variety of styles and methods to ensure academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Cross-cutting groups are crucial to fostering this notion of equity, giving students from different backgrounds the opportunity to create their own common culture based on something entirely different, weakening existing boundaries (Banks, 2016). Cooperative learning also plays a role, diminishing competition and ensuring students have shared goals.
Constructivism and LTELs

Constructivism, a theory of learning that modernized education and shaped teachers’ perceptions of their students and practice, serves as a natural byproduct of CRP and multicultural education. *Cognitive* and *social constructivism* are two different modes of constructivist learning, with the former focusing on how the individual constructs meaning and the latter giving attention to the social context in which one learns. Stressing how the two perspectives are not mutually exclusive, Windschitl (2002) stated, “some scholars have proposed a useful synthesis of cognitive and social constructivist perspectives, claiming that knowledge is personally constructed and socially mediated” (p. 137). Both lenses recognize students’ backgrounds as central to their learning. To cognitive constructivists, people make sense of new knowledge by connecting to prior knowledge while in a state of equilibrium. As Reyes and Villone (2008) explained, “we all have existing schema which represent our knowledge structures . . . when we are presented with new information, we assimilate it into our existing schema” (p. 33). Disequilibrium happens when the added information is at odds with existing knowledge, hindering learners’ ability to construct new knowledge. The focus is on the individual and how they process new input from resources and other individuals to add to and adapt their existing understanding of the world (Reyes & Villone, 2008; Windschitl, 2002).

In contrast to cognitive constructivism’s focus on the individual, social constructivism emphasizes the context of learning, drawing from Vygotskian views of how language and social mediation impact learning (Reyes & Villone, 2008; Windschitl, 2002). Vygotsky conceptualized the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) as the area between what a student knows and what they can learn, and it is also where
disequilibrium leads to learning. With scaffolds, including social interaction between student and teacher and among students themselves, learners can actively negotiate meaning until new schemas form and learning takes place. The ZPD requires that the teacher find the fine line between input that is too easy and does not require struggle and input that is too difficult to support with appropriate scaffolds.

Within the socially constructed use of language, ELs can acquire English skills, but the process depends on students’ prior knowledge, which includes their native languages and cultures. Stressing the importance of native language support in second language acquisition, Reyes and Villone (2008) declared, “To disallow students their native language becomes an issue of equity and hegemony in the school environment” (p. 34). Instead, the authors proposed four guiding principles for a constructivist classroom. First and foremost is that new learning builds on prior knowledge. Hence, teachers must respect students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds as the foundation of the knowledge they bring with them, ideally using it to shape curriculum and instruction. The second principle is that learning is mediated through social interaction, which serves as an integral scaffold to support student learning. Dialogue is a means through which ELs acquire language as they share and discuss their own connections to the curriculum content, so purposeful planning is necessary for choreographing social interactions and cooperation among students. The third principle emphasizes problem-solving as a part of learning. Struggle is necessary in constructing new meaning, and with appropriate support, students can negotiate meaning through critical thinking and cooperative learning. Finally, learning is a process that requires input, disequilibrium,
accommodation, and finding equilibrium through social construction of the new input. The process continues as students acquire language and construct meaning.

Even when teacher training strives to develop educators skilled at student-centered and constructivist learning, teachers may struggle to break away from traditional teacher-centered and often didactic practices. Windschitl (2002) addressed four dilemmas related to implementing constructivist practices, beginning with conceptual dilemmas, teachers’ struggle to grasp the “philosophical, psychological, and epistemological underpinnings of constructivism” (p. 132). In other words, teachers who are cognitively stuck in more traditional views see themselves as the center of instruction and struggle to give students any control. Second, pedagogical dilemmas include the challenges of designing and implementing constructivist learning experiences. Teachers must purposefully plan lessons that provide opportunities for students to navigate the ZPD and construct meaning. A third dilemma involves the culture of the classroom and restructuring the student–teacher relationship. Considering students’ own cultural backgrounds to build a new classroom culture requires teachers to question their assumptions of learning and social interactions with and among students. Finally, political dilemmas can occur when stakeholders outside the classroom resist and question the change in authority. Despite genuine efforts to adopt truly constructivist practices, many teachers face these dilemmas.

Counter-Storytelling

The critical race and LatCrit methodology of using counter-stories (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) or testimonios (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Irizarry, 2011) can shift the hegemonic narrative
away from majoritarian stories rooted in White privilege by revealing traditionally ignored experiences and voices. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) identified three general forms of counter-stories: personal stories, or autobiographical accounts of a person’s own experience of racism or sexism; biographical counter-stories that contextualize experiences of people of color within U.S. institutions; and composite stories that draw from the other forms to create characters placed within historical, social, and political contexts. Counter-stories serve two important purposes: they (a) challenge the narratives from dominant perspectives of privilege and (b) can create an inclusive school setting (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Solórzano and Yosso acknowledged that if counter-stories only accomplish the first aim, they can inadvertently reinforce those stories. Instead, counter-stories need to include a wide range of contexts, intersectional relationships, and firsthand experiences to completely counter the majoritarian ideology.

The composite form of counter-storytelling facilitates studies of transformational resistance, which Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) defined as resistance to injustice and racism that does not further implicate the resisters but rather illustrates a critique of inequality and oppression and seeks change and social justice. They used the context of the Chicano and Chicana student protests that occurred at UCLA in 1993 to create a composite counter-story between a professor and a Chicana undergraduate student. The story illustrates the student’s need to negotiate the meaning of her feelings toward the protests and the injustices that caused it as well as the intersectionality of her race, immigration status, and gender. Such counter-stories can shed new light on historical events by revealing a side the majoritarian view has ignored.
Narratives of LTELs and immigrants in general from the perspective of a predominantly White teacher population, when told and retold, perpetuate cultural stereotypes and alienate multicultural and multilingual student populations. As a methodology, counter-storytelling can enable students to share their education experiences. Whether yielding stories of racism and exclusion or equity and inclusion, counter-storytelling gives students an opportunity to shift the majoritarian narrative.

**Historical Perspective**

To further establish a solid foundation for this study, I revisited the early days of multicultural education and how it has evolved into a clearly defined philosophy that applies to various contexts with the goal of more culturally relevant—and culturally sustaining—education. The progress of constructivist learning theories also has a place in explaining language acquisition and application in multicultural contexts.

**Multicultural and Culturally Relevant Education**

The idea of multicultural education can be traced back to the late 19th century, when Jane Addams established the Hull House social settlement in 1889 and sought to connect the classroom to the cultures of those living in the community (Dieser, 2005; Flinders & Thornton, 2017). Arguably promoting an asset ideology, Addams saw the need not only for students to maintain their culture in their education, but also for their families to be involved in that same education, urging,

> Give these children a chance to utilize the historic and industrial material which they see about them, and they will begin to have a sense of ease in America, a first consciousness of being at home. I believe if these people are welcomed upon the basis of the resources which they represent and the contributions which they
bring, it may come to pass that these schools which deal with immigrants will find that they have a wealth of cultural and industrial material which will make the schools in other neighborhoods positively envious. (Addams 1908/2017, p. 57)

Addams (1920/2016) also believed that policy change should come from the individual at a grassroots level, which Paulo Freire (1997, 1998) promoted in the 20th century, opposing curricula that simply transmitted information to learners like a banking transaction. With the goal of creating authentic dialogue between the instructor and the learner to empower the learner, Freire adopted a three-stage methodology. First, teachers should understand the feelings of the community through listening. Second, teachers should enact a problem-posing method to lead participatory dialogue about community issues. Finally, the group can determine necessary action toward the positive change they envision (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988).

James Banks (2014) moved forward with the notion of equity pedagogy as central to multicultural education, critiquing the existing cultural deprivation paradigm that students from low-income households do not perform well in school due to cultural poverty. Within that paradigm, educators aim to fill those gaps with behaviorist methodologies targeting the student rather than the culture of the school. In a cultural difference paradigm, on the other hand, schools are to blame for disparate achievement, as they “frequently ignore or try to alienate [students] from their cultures and rarely use teaching strategies that are consistent with their lifestyles” (Banks, 2014, p. 78). Instead, schools should respect and reflect students’ cultures.

To that end, as I have explained, Gay (2018) and Ladson-Billings (1995, 2009) introduced frameworks for recognizing the classroom as a place for social justice and
change. Together, they represent two strands of culturally relevant education: teaching and pedagogy. Both scholars recognized that teachers need to value what students bring to the classroom, seeing their cultures as assets rather than deficits while stimulating critical perspectives of society, thereby striving for an emancipatory effect. They saw teachers as ever evolving to meet students’ changing needs.

Indeed, culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) is a more recent evolution of these models. Alim and Paris (2017) recognized the prior scholars’ efforts to break the chain of deficit thinking and pave the way to legitimizing the cultures, languages, and literacy of marginalized students. However, Alim and Paris (2017) claimed that their predecessors did not fully achieve their goals and thus introduced CSP, which “explicitly calls for schooling to be a site for sustaining the cultural way of being of communities of color” (p. 5). Because the future of education is multiethnic and multilingual, Alim and Paris argued that contemporary pedagogies must stop seeing culture as fixed and instead recognize how young people embody culture, language, and literacy in ways that are shifting and dynamic, with the past and present merging in community-dependent ways.

Seeing students as the source of learning has a clear historical foundation, yet Banks (2014) emphasized the need for total school reform to view diversity as an asset that can enhance instruction rather than a deficit that results in low achievement. Banks’s clear definition of multicultural education provided a framework applicable in a wide range of contexts in need of reform. Likewise, CSP and other theories of critical pedagogy (Alim & Paris, 2017; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009) can continue to highlight students’ diverse backgrounds as assets to learning and teachers’ responsibility not only to acknowledge those assets, but also to sustain and preserve them.
Constructivism

Piaget is considered the father of constructivism (Reyes & Villone, 2008), believing that knowledge was neither an external thing to be acquired, nor inert and waiting to be discovered, but “invented and reinvented as the child develops and interacts with the world” (Driscoll, 2005, p. 191). However, Dewey and Vygotsky are credited with modernizing the learning theory (Popkewitz, 1998). Dewey (1929) believed that “The only true education comes through the stimulation of the child’s powers by the demands of [their] social situation” (p. 291). Dewey saw a child’s psychological processes as foundational but noted children’s social nature was also significant, believing the two could not be separated (Wadlington, 2013). Consequently, Dewey asserted that a child’s home life should be incorporated into and should even shape their school experience, enabling them to connect past experiences to new ones and construct new meaning and knowledge.

Constructivism as developed by Piaget was grounded in psychology and sociology rather than a theory of teaching, proposing that children learned in accordance with their stage of development (Casbergue, 2013; Driscoll, 2005; Windschitl, 2002). Learning, then, is rooted in individual experiences, and the learner constructs knowledge by merging their existing schema with the outside world (Windschitl, 2002). Social constructivism deviated by suggesting that learning cannot exist without language; in other words, “learning occurs through interactions with others and with objects in the environment” (Casbergue, 2013, p. 126). In this vein, Vygotsky (1986) believed thoughts and thus learning cannot exist without language—nor be understood without a symbiotic relationship with language. Therefore, social constructivism has major implications for
teaching language learners. Learning is a social process that relies on language to communicate thought and construct meaning in social contexts and interactions. In other words, “it is through the process of socially constructing content knowledge that ELs also learn language” (Reyes & Villone, 2008, p. 33).

**Related Research**

Studies of culturally responsive teaching and ELs fall into two categories. First are studies that center educators or the school climate itself. They showcase a change toward asset mentality when educators are aware of their own practice and their own school environment. Other studies center students, suggesting change results from giving students of color and ELs in particular a voice to share their stories and their perceptions about their education.

**Schools and Educators as Subjects**

Ladson-Billings (1995), in a groundbreaking study, used qualitative methods to interview and observe teachers whom parents and administrators had identified as exemplary teachers of African American students. The four-phase study started with ethnographic interviews that documented the teachers’ background, teaching experience and curricular philosophies, classroom procedures, and parent involvement. The second phase, which lasted nearly 2 years, involved unscheduled observations of the teachers in action, using field notes and audio tapes to collect data. The third stage involved selectively videotaping aspects of teachers’ practices that clearly demonstrated their style, anticipating the fourth phase, when teachers came together to watch their lessons and analyze their practice. Across the phases, Ladson-Billings identified three aspects of CRP. First, the teachers conceptualized themselves and their students in a manner that
positioned them to pull knowledge out of their students. They saw their work as an art that allowed them to give back to the community. Second, the teachers established social relations with students that were equitable and reciprocal. They developed a collaborative community of learners that called for mutual responsibility. Finally, the teachers consistently displayed critical views of knowledge, recognizing it is shared and constructed and that their scaffolding could make knowledge accessible to students.

To incorporate CRP into mathematics and other STEM subjects, Brown et al. (2018) examined the impact of a year-long professional development initiative on teachers’ perspectives and practices. In addition to culturally responsive education, the program emphasized cognitive apprenticeship teaching strategies, a gradual release of responsibility approach to lesson planning that positions students as apprentices to provide practice and coaching. The researchers interviewed teachers about their perceptions of cultural responsiveness in knowledge and application and then taught a model for designing lesson plans. Next, they observed the teachers’ lessons and videotaped for post-training analysis using a qualitative method called event mapping. In the pre-training interviews, teachers displayed an understanding of culturally relevant teaching but struggled to explain specific techniques. After the training, participants showed clear application of culturally relevant approaches and the use of cognitive apprenticeship while teaching STEM content.

In another study of teacher training, Plough and Garcia (2015) looked for correlations between effective professional development of English language teachers and student learning. The longitudinal study relied on interviews, surveys, workshops, and state standardized English language test scores. The facilitators took a heuristic
approach to professional learning by outlining three phases. In the first phase, they assessed the school culture by interviewing school leaders to reveal the belief system behind teaching ELs and the challenges, serving as a starting point for measuring a change in their practice and unveiling the teachers’ attitudes toward ELs and their expectations. They echoed Gay’s (2018) view of the achievement gap as a symptom rather than a problem. In the second stage, rather than taking a workshop approach, Plough and Garcia (2015) collaborated with departments to discuss academic needs. The third stage allowed for instructional intervention using the first two stages as a foundation. A follow-up survey revealed that the heuristic approach to teacher training resulted in the desired effect of teachers’ implementing the targeted interventions. However, the researchers declined to draw conclusions about whole-school reform for ELs due to the complexities of public schools.

Digging into teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions and practices offers great insight, yet these studies are limited because they exclude the voices of students in regard to their educational experience. A more holistic picture of multicultural education practice and school climate and culture requires research with students as the focus.

**Students as Subjects**

Irizarry (2007) asked, “What are some of the teaching practices and aspects of teacher identity that Latino students in this study identified as culturally responsive?” (p. 21). Daily observations of a semester-long high school history class made up of Puerto Rican and African American students along with interviews gave Irizarry a better sense of students’ perspectives. Students reported aspects of community connection, language, and the integration of music as culturally responsive practices they observed, allowing
the teacher to better connect to the students’ own backgrounds. Though the researcher admitted that determining whether the teacher adjusted to meet the students’ needs was difficult, the teacher did allow students to negotiate and socially construct the classroom culture. Irizarry had identified the teacher as being culturally connected through his experience and involvement in the students’ community. A hybrid identity can develop when different ethnicities and cultures negotiate identities within a common context.

Irizarry (2017) later described a study as part of a larger project that involved students’ learning about and practicing action research in support of two goals: to critique the educational experiences of Latinx students and establish research-based guidelines for preservice and in-service teachers working with Latinx students. Students became more comfortable and confident in their research skills, having control over both the course content and delivery and embracing their multilingual skills as key to their learning. In a school context where students were punished for using their native language, the participants found a safe space for their linguistic abilities in this project. They explored the history of Latinx involvement in the civil rights movement and made the history of their culture the content of the course. Moreover, creating their own course empowered them to challenge and attempt to transform the oppressive nature of the broader school culture, as reported in the full account of their action research projects (Irizarry, 2011).

By applying counter-storytelling to a preschool literacy class, Kim (2019) encouraged students to look at a situation from alternate perspectives and question dominant perspectives. The researcher looked at preschool teachers who encouraged students to tell alternative versions of traditional fairy tales. For example, students drew pictures of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs that depicted the evil queen as remorseful
and wanting to make amends with Snow White. With *The Three Little Pigs*, children discussed what might have caused the wolf to be so bad and then told counter-stories from the wolf’s point of view. Kim concluded that effectively implementing counter-storytelling in literacy requires teacher-provided scaffolds that allow students to fully engage in the learning, including a learning environment that welcomes diverse ideas and perspectives and allows for a sense of adventure.

Gómez (2012) recognized the link between social constructivism and English language teaching and sought to use socio-constructivist methods to build students’ intercultural communicative competence by facilitating student discussions of literature. The study included four different constructivist approaches. The *inquiry-based approach* provided guided questions that students could read and answer independently before discussing their answers and constructing further meaning with their classmates. This scaffold allowed ELs time to think and construct meaning in the target language before being asked to publicly produce language. The *dialogic approach* built on inquiry in that it required students to negotiate meaning of the text and language through student-centered class discussions, viewing language and literature as one and enabling students to communicatively build meaning of both. Gómez also implemented the *transactional approach*, which required teachers and students to accept multiple interpretations of a text, to build intercultural communicative competence. A transaction between the students and the text enabled connections to their own lived experiences. The transactional approach viewed “the study of literature as a means of contributing to the humanization of individuals and to answering questions concerning human behavior and human circumstances” (p. 55). Finally, Gómez highlighted the *content-based approach*,
which allowed teachers to cover content and language, constructing two kinds of
knowledge simultaneously.

The absence of LTEls in literature is worth noting here, as few studies look
specifically at ELs at the secondary level who have attended public schools since early
elementary school (Kim & García, 2014; Menken et al., 2012; Olsen, 2014).
Acknowledging that studies of LTEls tend to feature school-wide interventions and
teacher perceptions, Kim and García (2014) focused on LTEls’ firsthand perspectives. In
individual semi-structured interviews with 13 secondary ELs who had been in the United
States for at least 7 years without achieving English language proficiency, they asked the
students about their experiences with English language services. Comparing the interview
data with students’ academic and assessment scores, they found most participants no
longer saw themselves as ELs, knowing they had not received ESL services for several
years. In addition, contrary to earlier work on LTEls (Olsen, 2010), all the students in
Kim and Garcia’s (2014) study demonstrated motivation to learn and succeed, suggesting
the problem was not the students’ disposition but rather a system that failed to provide
sufficient literacy support, incorporating students’ native language and challenging them
to achieve to their full potential.

Menken et al. (2012) interviewed 29 LTEls students in New York City in addition
to analyzing documents of their academic performance and also found that, for many of
these students, the school system failed to provide consistent and adequate language
support. They were either transnational students who moved back and forth between the
United States and their families’ home countries or students who shifted among various
versions of bilingual education, ESL support, and mainstream learning. The researchers
attributed students’ low performance in school and thus their failure to exit the ESL label to these inconsistencies. From this standpoint, Kibler et al. (2017) argued that the LTEL label as defined by Olsen (2010) and the state of California is manufactured and perpetuates a deficit outlook. Advocating a shift from the underachieving student to students’ interactions with teachers and peers in the classroom, Kibler et al. observed sixth-grade content classes throughout one academic year, noting whether such interactions were task-focused and who initiated. To underscore their claim that the LTEL label “obscures more than it elucidates” these students’ academic strengths and needs (p. 741), Kibler et al. (2017) argued that students’ experiences characterize “diversity rather than uniformity” (p. 759). In other words, the LTEL label is inadequate in defining the wide range of factors impacting these students’ education.

In this study, I do not dispute the value of the LTEL label. Though it represents a category of students, I do not claim that students falling into this category are equal in their needs and experiences. On the contrary, I seek to recognize each student’s unique experiences and begin to peel away at the effectiveness of one academic support: their ELD class.

Much of the research involving multicultural education and CRP has assessed changing teacher perceptions and teaching practice in response to diverse student populations (Brown et al., 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Plough & Garcia, 2015). While Ladson-Billings (1995) singled out current practices by enlisting exemplary teachers as participants, Irizarry (2007, 2017) interacted with students to find out what they recognized as best practices, yet both scholars recognized the positive impact on students’ learning experience. By focusing on students, I also hoped to provide more
evidence of that impact, illustrating the benefits of starting with the students’ voice when trying to impact culturally responsive change in the classroom.

Chapter Summary

Research shows a long history of deficit perspectives and resistance to social justice policy changes in education. Fortunately, researchers have clearly defined and established theories and frameworks that criticize White hegemony in education. They consider not only students’ cultural backgrounds, but also the intersectionality of language, race, gender, immigrant status, and sexual orientation and can apply to a wide range of educational contexts and student populations. To adequately implement these lenses, educators need a full understanding of what culture is and how to move their own biases toward asset perspectives. Only then can they move their content and practice beyond the surface culture of their students and into the practice of fully involving students, embracing their experiences and knowledge to enhance and shape the curriculum and impact the overall school climate.

Recent studies primarily reflect educators’ perspectives, focusing on their notions of school climate and student culture. The implementation of teacher training shows some levels of change toward culturally responsive pedagogy, but resistance persists. Studies that focus on students and listen to their voices show the impact asset pedagogies can have on student engagement and achievement. Likewise, I sought to put social constructivist notions of learning into practice to tap into LTELs’ funds of knowledge by listening to their experiences in education and involving them in the structuring of a multicultural curriculum that highlights their culture and knowledge. The next chapter describes the plan for achieving this aim.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

By investigating ELD students’ perceptions of the existing ELD 4 curriculum and their experience with an instructional adaptation designed to improve those perspectives by incorporating CRP and multicultural education in the form of agentic, constructivist practices, I hoped to facilitate LTELs’ counter-stories of school’s asymmetrical power structure. Giving students a platform in their upper-level ELD class could be a step in the direction of impacting their teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions and possibly lead to schoolwide cultural change. Such a shift would be consistent with the emancipatory roots of action research (Kinsler, 2010), as I discuss in Chapter 5.

This chapter outlines a three-phase approach to mixed-methods action research embedded in my own practice (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Table 3.1 illustrates the Fall 2022 timeline that guided my collection of data from surveys and student artifacts as I implemented and assessed an adapted curriculum. These activities corresponded with the following research questions:

1. What are LTEls’ perceptions of the standard ELD curriculum?
2. How do my students experience a curriculum intended to use culturally relevant and constructivist practices?
3. How does this adapted unit affect LTEl perceptions of ELD 4?
4. What do LTEls’ counter-stories reveal about their experience as English learners?
Table 3.1 *Timeline and Alignment of Data Collection Tools and Analysis Methods With Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research phase</th>
<th>Data collection tool(s)</th>
<th>Data analysis method(s)</th>
<th>Research question(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Pre-Adaptation</td>
<td>• Quantitative survey</td>
<td>• Use survey results to determine journal prompts</td>
<td>1: perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September–October</td>
<td>• Qualitative artifacts: journal entries</td>
<td>• Use entries to drive future prompts</td>
<td>4: counter-stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 During Adaptation</td>
<td>• Qualitative artifacts: assignments and journal entries</td>
<td>• Engage in constant comparison of emerging themes</td>
<td>2: experience with adapted unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October–November</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify evidence of students’ expression of identity and personal connections to content</td>
<td>4: counter-stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Post-Adaptation</td>
<td>• Quantitative survey</td>
<td>• Compare pre- and post-adaptation survey results</td>
<td>3: change in perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Setting and Participants

This study took place during the Fall 2022 semester at a junior high school in a large district in the Midwest. Early in the school year, I obtained permission from the university’s Institutional Review Board and the district to conduct research in my ELD class. I used purposeful sampling (Efron & Ravid, 2013), working with my own ELD 4 students—a convenience sample of a typical group of advanced ESL students. Across two sections of ELD 4, there were 24 students total, 14 in eighth grade and 10 in ninth grade. Of the 24, nine (37%) spoke a first language from the Pacific Islands and 15 (63%) spoke Spanish. The definition of LTEL as someone who has been in the U.S. school system for 7 or more years fit 20 (83%) of my ELD 4 students. The remaining four students had been in U.S. schools for 3–5 years. The value of LTELs’ perspectives was central to this study, but students who had been in the system less time also had potential to contribute nuanced insight. The age and language levels of these students were appropriate for this study because the prospective participants possessed the language skills to engage in constructivist practice and share their counter-stories while being mature enough to reflect upon and question their academic experiences.

All students in the class received an invitation letter that outlined the phases of the study and how it would impact them in the class and emphasized confidentiality (Appendix A). Of the 24 students, 16 agreed to participate, all of whom received a parental letter providing the opportunity to opt out (Appendix B). No guardians chose to opt their students out of the study, resulting in a sample of 16 participants. I emphasized the voluntary nature of the study and periodically reminded students they could withdraw at any time. No student chose to withdraw during the collection of data.
Of the 16 participants, seven (44%) were ninth graders and nine (56%) were eighth graders. When asked about the language(s) they speak at home, six (37%) said they spoke a Pacific Island language and/or English at home while 10 (63%) reported speaking Spanish and/or English at home. Additionally, 12 (75%) said they had been in the United States for 5 or more years while the remaining four (25%) had been in U.S. schools for 4 or fewer years.

**Unit Adaptation Procedure**

As a teacher who has been in and out of public schools for over 20 years, I realized I inadvertently regressed to what Charest (2019) referred to as the “colonial logic” (p. 25) of assessment, classroom management, and content delivery. As I began my action research journey, my own construct of research reflected my training related to data-driven instruction. I had become “the teacher who internalizes a scientific rationality and perpetuates colonial thinking and practices in order to improve their teaching” (Charest, 2019, p. 25). With the emancipatory nature of action research in mind, resolving to shed a critical light on the education of ELs in my school, I wanted to ask questions that elicited students’ notions of the structures of testing and placement of ELs in ELD classes. Critical action research was suited to that aim, yet I did not realize the role my colonial mind would play in the implementation and analysis of my research.

Herr and Anderson (2015) recommended doing action research “in collaboration with others who have a stake in the problem under investigation” (p. 4), which was precisely my intention. I took the existing ELD curriculum and the practice of placing students into that curriculum and questioned it, putting my students’ voices in the center of the study. This inquiry required an intervention, taking steps toward a “spiral of action
cycles” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 5) by collecting preliminary data to inform an intervention with material and practices that reflected dimensions of multicultural education (Banks, 2016) and the goals of CRP (Figure 1.1).

As Table 3.1 illustrates, this study’s three separate phases, spanning from September to December, incorporated three different data collection tools: pre- and post-adaptation surveys, student journal entries, and various assignments from the adapted identity unit. In the early fall, I followed the established “Pathways to Success” unit from *E.L. Achieve*, providing the context for collecting data to answer Research Question 1 while building a trusting relationship with the students. In October, I sought a baseline understanding of the perceived value of ELD and students’ experience with the curriculum before adaptations. I achieved this aim through freewrite journal prompts and the first administration of the survey (Appendix C). I split the pre-adaptation survey into three sections, administered over 3 days, to ensure students did not feel overwhelmed or bored by answering nearly 60 questions in one sitting.

Phase 2 encompassed the first intervention in early November. To address the multicultural education dimension of *content integration*, I adapted the summative assessment of the first *E.L. Achieve* unit, “Pathways to Success” (Appendix D). The original assignment instructed students to “Choose a theme and topic” and “construct a zine” as a demonstration of their learning. To engender more explicit connections to students’ experiences, I presented several examples of success as evident in existing community organizations that reflect their cultures and interests. In the fall of 2021, I reached out to four local organizations—one that addressed problems and supported those in the Marshallese community, one that gave voice to Latinx youth through theater,
one that provided opportunities to teens of all backgrounds, and the highly successful coach of the high school soccer team. A select group of my ELD students at the time generated questions and interviewed leaders of these organizations about the problems they saw in the community, their definitions of success, and how they felt they achieved success. The rest of the students watched the video-recorded interviews in small groups, taking notes and discussing the successes they saw in these organizations.

In addition to this student-created content that integrated elements of their community, cultures, backgrounds, and interests, I adapted a lesson from *Learning for Justice* about the topic of representation (Singh, 2018), aligned with the “Pathways to Success” unit. It included a video story of a teenager’s discovery of a famous Sikh athlete—his first awareness of an international athlete who shared his cultural identity (Knepper, n.d.). Building from these video-based tasks, I asked students to select either one of the organizations or an individual they felt represented them and create a slide deck displaying their habits of success using language structures and vocabulary from the unit. While I utilized more engaging and culturally relevant content to present the assignment to the students, the language requirements of the assignment remained the same, ensuring a focus on the CRP goal of students’ academic achievement—in this case, demonstration of language acquisition.

After the “Pathways to Success” unit assessment, I deviated from the expected sequence of the “Money Matters” unit in favor of a supplemental *E.L. Achieve* unit called “Determining and Identity” that the district typically reserves for the end of the academic year. The topic of identity relates more noticeably to CRP and multicultural education and therefore was the foundation of my adaptation (Appendix E). The first aspect of
identity the unit addressed was students’ academic identity, which immediately signaled the unit’s cultural irrelevance. Instead, I searched a variety of sources for content with themes I felt would resonate directly with my students’ cultural identities. *Newsela*, an online source of nonfiction texts on a wide range of topics, featured a series of articles on cultural identity, and knowing how my LTELs experience starkly different home and school cultures, I chose one by Patel (2019) on bicultural identity.

Prior to reading the text, to engage students in the topic and provide adequate comprehension support, I implemented two activities grounded in constructivist practice: one to expose them to challenging vocabulary in the text and one to introduce them to the topic of identity. The existing *E.L. Achieve* unit included a vocabulary table with definitions and different forms of words. Rather than giving students a completed table, I presented each word in context-rich sentences, along with a set of definitions, and invited students to discuss the context clues with a partner and choose the best definition. Students then co-constructed the table with the correct definitions (Appendix F). On subsequent days, I exposed students to different forms of each word in context so they could accurately complete the vocabulary table.

To connect students to the content, I utilized material from the University of Michigan’s Office of Inclusive Teaching (2023), including a personal identity wheel I modeled for them with aspects of my own identity. I invited them to complete the same steps independently to ensure the chance for self-reflection before sharing potentially personal information with others. Though we were well into the school year, the dynamics among students were such that they could be extremely shy in front of their peers. I had trusting connections with most students individually, but they were very
hesitant to open up to each other. As a result, I did not implement the full interactive components of the lesson. Identity is a very personal topic, and I discovered that many adolescents are uncomfortable exposing parts of their identities to their peers.

Turning to the text, I began by reading and annotating the article with the students, modeling use of an adapted note-taker handout (Appendix G) that asked students to highlight the narrator and her daughter’s contrasting perspectives on their bicultural identities. Students continued to read with their small groups in literature circles, taking turns reading, summarizing, and discussing what contrasting details to include in their graphic organizer. The more independent yet peer-supported reading practice affirmed students’ ZPD, “the distance between the actual developmental level . . . and the level of potential development as determined through . . . collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Reyes & Villone, 2008, p. 9). After reading, I reviewed sentence structures of contrast using transition words, coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, and students wrote sentences about the differences between how the narrator and her daughter did or did not claim their bicultural identity outside of the home. The handout also provided students with sentence stems for expressing their feelings about claiming their multiculturalism in school and at home.

The next section of the unit moved from students’ multicultural identities to assumptions, reflecting on our assumptions of others and moving to the assumptions we felt people made of us. In an activity called “See, Think, Wonder” (Appendix H), I showed students pictures, asking them to complete three steps for each one. The first step was simple: to list the things they saw, without judgment or inferencing. Second, students used sentence frames I provided to infer what they thought was happening based on what
they saw. They worked together to discuss their assumptions and the source of those assumptions. The final step was for students to write questions regarding what they wondered about the image. The images included one of a homeless White man, another of a disabled White child, and a third of an African American man from the waist up, giving rise to a discussion about stereotypes. Students completed a subsequent freewrite and discussed their experience with people making assumptions about them.

The final segment of the unit focused on a text from the original *E.L. Achieve* unit about the impact of family and peers on one’s identity. We followed the same approach as with the first text: inductively learning new vocabulary, reading and annotating in small groups, and engaging in post-reading discussion and writing activities. Presented with claims in the text (e.g., kids who misbehave have bad grades, kids are often influenced by friends to act in unhealthy ways, and parents’ intervention in their children’s friendships is good), students selected a statement with which they either strongly agreed or strongly disagreed and completed a “Says, Means, Matters” writing activity (Appendix I). They cited the text, paraphrased the quote, and explained their opinion along with a rationale. Lastly, reflecting on how people in their life influence their identities, they created a representative pie chart and completed a freewrite to explain the percentage of their identities impacted by adults, friends, and themselves.

The final unit assignment (Appendix E) consisted of two parts. We began by reviewing what we had covered, discussing specific aspects of their identities they revealed to others and aspects they kept to themselves. Using the notion of an iceberg presented in a mini-lesson by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL Education, 2021), students reflected on the aspects above the water line and visible to anyone who saw
them, such as clothing and physical appearance. Then, they listed things at the surface of the water that people might be able to guess by looking at them but could not know for sure, such as race, gender, and age. Finally, I asked them to list aspects below the water line, invisible to anyone who did not know them well, such as nationality, language, and interests. Using disposable masks on hand from COVID-19, along with magazines, scissors, and glue, students created masks to represent their outer selves that they let people see on one side and their inner selves that they keep more hidden on the other side. For the final part of this assessment, a slide deck guided students to use the unit language and vocabulary to write about their identities and explain their masks. I also created a rubric and a model with criteria for content and language.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

As stated in earlier chapters, the three data collection tools I used throughout the three-phase study included surveys, journal entries, and adapted assignments students completed during the identity unit. This section elaborates on my rationale for the creation and use of each tool as connected to my research questions. In the first iterations of designing this study, I sought to collect observational data on student engagement in the existing scripted curriculum for comparison with their engagement in the adapted identity unit. As I elaborate in Chapter 5, observing engagement did not go as planned, so I opted for closer examination of student artifact data from the identity unit.

**Survey Data Collection and Analysis**

Early in the fall semester, prior to any intervention, and later in the fall, post-intervention, I measured students’ perceptions regarding their experience in ELD through a Google Form survey designed to answer Research Questions 1 and 2 (Appendix C).
Quantitative data proved useful not only for understanding students’ feelings on a basic level, but also seeing whether those feelings change with the inclusion of culturally relevant texts and assessments. The 56-item survey, guided by Efron and Ravid’s (2013) advice and Johnson’s (2009) study of middle school students’ engagement in mathematics, was simple yet lengthy. To avoid students’ tendency to lose endurance with anything that takes longer than 10 or 15 minutes, I broke the survey into three sections, administering a different section each day over 3 days. The first part included demographic information as well as questions that asked students to self-assess their language skills and express their learning styles. Part 2 is where students expressed their perceptions of school in general and of ELD specifically. Finally, Part 3 invited students to express their feelings about ELD specifically, its topics and value to their learning. Students were able to answer privately and personally, as I assured them of confidentiality. Because I suspected my students had never been asked about or considered their own opinions about their education, surveying them before the intervention was exploratory and guided future data collection and analysis.

Clear instructions ensured students answered the questions as intended. For instance, Likert-scale items, tied to statements aligned with the goals of CRP and the dimensions of multicultural education (Figure 1.1), enabled me to determine to what degree students’ perceptions were positive or negative. As one example, to address the CRP goal of academic achievement, students rated their abilities in the four language skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English. Moreover, I measured the multicultural education dimension of an equity pedagogy with students’ rating the extent to which they agreed with statements such as, “In school, I feel people accept me for who
I am,” and “I feel all students are treated equally.” Completion of this survey began to open students’ minds to reflecting on and questioning their ELD experiences.

Conducting a pilot test of the survey would have been valuable, but given the limited timeline, I showed it to colleagues who had taught the curriculum and invited their feedback. Using a Google Form facilitated transferring the raw data to a spreadsheet. From there, I converted the data to bar graphs to show students’ varied perceptions of ELD classes and used a table to display arithmetic means for individual questions, allowing me to determine where on the scale most students fell. Analysis of the pre-intervention responses provided some information and guidance on how to shape the adaptation. After the adaptation, to answer Research Question 3, I administered the post-adaptation survey (Appendix J), repeating sections of the pre-adaptation survey that targeted students’ perceptions of ELD for comparative responses, which gave me a general sense of whether the adaptation changed students’ perceptions of ELD.

**Journal Entry Data Collection and Analysis**

From the pre-intervention stage and continuing through the second phase, I utilized freewrite journals as a data source to answer Research Questions 1, 2, and 4. Fernández (2002) listed four benefits storytelling offers students of color. First, it allows students to reflect on their lived experience. I wanted my students to view their education with hindsight, allowing them to see and interpret things in a way they may not have otherwise. Also, storytelling makes students’ stories public, out there for others to know and understand. Third, “storytelling or counter-storytelling also subverts the dominant story or the reality that is socially constructed by Whites” (Fernández, 2002, p. 48). Finally, by telling their stories, students of color can feel more empowered, knowing their
experiences are being heard. Therefore, this independent qualitative data collection method gave students an opportunity to use their own words to talk about their experiences with the ELD curriculum.

Writing prompts at times elaborated on quantitative questions from the survey, served as reflections on classroom practices, and gave students a way to express their feelings about topics discussed in class (Appendix K). For example, there were questions about students’ ideas of what culture is and how they felt they could express their cultures in school, providing qualitative data that helped me get to know the students and answer Research Questions 1 and 4. Because they were often hesitant to speak openly in class, I found students were willing to be more honest in this private interaction that only I would read. It also allowed students who tended to be quieter to speak their mind when other more vocal students often consumed the energy of the room. At the same time, the journals allowed all students to go into more depth about their experiences and perceptions, using their own words to express their thoughts and feelings.

One early journal prompt from the pre-intervention phase generated a great deal of interesting data that I felt warranted follow-up. I asked students what being an English learner meant and why they thought they were in the ELD class. Their answers varied greatly, so to delve more deeply into what they thought of the different answers, I created 10 different cards with such statements from their entries as “Being an English learner is going to waste my time,” “I heard a lot of people talk negative about it. Some people thinks that the people that are in ELD are dumb,” and, “My teacher sees me as an English learner because I am not from America. Some teachers think I’m an English learner based on how I look.” I allowed students to read and discuss these cards in groups,
listening to their discussions, taking notes, and inviting them to write their thoughts on cards they felt strongly about.

Personal artifacts are “naturally occurring data . . . that do not require extra time or special arrangements to collect” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 123). Because journals are a part of my classroom instruction and procedures from the beginning of the school year, I was able to collect these artifacts at least once a week in the pre-intervention phase and twice a week during the intervention without being obtrusive. Most students were familiar with the expectations for length and warmed up to the idea of writing with endurance—5 minutes or more—and not simply answering a prompt with one-sentence answers. Though they are still language learners with the need to develop and hone their English skills, as more advanced English learners and LTELs, they had enough language proficiency to elaborate on a thought. Of course, not all students had the will or confidence to produce substantial amounts of text, but the confidentiality of the journals gave them comfort in being honest with their words.

Indeed, the journals were also the vehicle for students’ counter-stories. As a CRT and LatCrit research method, counter-storytelling can set aside the historically dominant narratives from Eurocentric values that see non-native English speakers through a deficit lens (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). If the Eurocentric system—generally White teachers and administrators—hears students’ counter-stories, an asset perspective can emerge and proliferate. Journal entries allowed students to tell counter-stories that evolved out of prompts, giving them a chance to write about their experiences in ELD classes. I asked about their sense of agency in their language development, their identity as English learners, their sense of whether the
school recognized their cultures and languages, and whether they found course content relevant to their education.

To analyze the pre-intervention journal entries, I used emerging categories (Efron & Ravid, 2013), allowing me to see what topics and themes came up in students’ writing independently. I was able to identify patterns and create a concept map from the early entries that helped me make sense of students’ perceptions of the ELD curriculum. The map, in turn, guided my analysis of the journal entries during and after the intervention.

**Assignment Data Collection and Analysis**

To facilitate triangulation of data, I initially intended to conduct observations of students as they worked through the ELD curriculum as it exists and then again through the implementation of the adapted unit. Because “surveys and questionnaires lack the richness of personal interviews and direct observation” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 109), my perspective as the teacher could have been valuable. However, taking observation notes that were comprehensive and useful proved challenging. I found myself writing incomplete and disjointed notes that did not follow any protocol to measure engagement. Therefore, rather than using observation notes as a third data collection tool, I decided to expand my use of student artifacts by closely examining the rich trove of data students produced for the assignments I adapted and created for the identity unit.

Supplementing the journal entries, student artifacts from the adapted assessments for the “Pathways to Success” unit enabled me to answer Research Question 2, as did two assignments from the identity unit. The first invited students to use target language structures and vocabulary to compare themselves with two people they read about in the first text of the identity unit (Appendix G). The second was the “See, Think, Wonder”
activity that stepped students through a process for checking their assumptions and prejudices (Appendix H). To analyze the data from these sources, I simply read each individual’s submissions and pulled quotes that reflected dimensions of multicultural education and CRP to illustrate alignment with my theoretical framework. I expand on my process with illustrative examples in Chapter 4.

**Chapter Summary**

My plan to enter ELD students’ minds and attempt to understand how they perceived the value of the class and their experiences as ELs was ambitious yet necessary, given the shortcomings of the existing ELD curriculum. As this chapter indicated, I made a concerted attempt to incorporate elements of CRP and dimensions of multicultural education to better support students in their development of English language skills. I proposed a systematic plan to collect quantitative and qualitative data through pre- and post-adaptation surveys, journal entries, and adapted assignments to gain a picture of the curriculum from the point of view of the students I intended to serve. This triangulation reflects my effort to demonstrate process validity (Herr & Anderson, 2015), or the assurance that the information gleaned from this study comes from varying sources and perspectives. I also aspired to achieve catalytic validity (Herr & Anderson, 2015), ultimately shifting the thinking of all stakeholders regarding the aims and scope of ELD curriculum so we may one day witness more LTEs shedding the ESL label.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results and findings from quantitative and qualitative data collected throughout the three-phase study. I begin by discussing the quantitative data collected with the pre-intervention survey that asked students about their experiences with school in general and with their ELD class to address Research Question 1. To address the remaining research questions, I shift to the qualitative data collected before and during the intervention, including journal entries and assignments that showed how students experienced a curriculum adapted with culturally relevant and constructivist practices and how those adaptations impacted their perceptions of ELD 4.

The qualitative data also illuminate what students’ counter-stories reveal about their experience as ELs and sense of agency in their education. I present the data in two ways. First, to answer Research Question 2, I identify evidence of the theoretical framework that guided my instruction, connecting relevant data to the dimensions of multicultural education and the goals of CRP. I then explore Research Questions 3 and 4 by explaining three themes that enabled me to uncover students’ counter-stories and reveal their true reflections on the purpose of ELD, why they are in the class, and their work through the culturally relevant adaptations. The chapter concludes with a closer examination of select students’ counter-stories based on the three main themes revealed in one freewrite journal entry in particular as well as a class discussion: (a) a clearly negative perception of being in ELD and a desire to “get out,” despite (b) an overall
perception that they benefit from the class, along with (c) confusion about placement policies and procedures. For the purpose of triangulation in answering Research Question 3, I also share the results of the post-adaptation survey and interpret whether the more culturally relevant unit impacted students’ perceptions of ELD.

**Pre-Intervention Survey Results**

In October, I administered the initial survey through Google Forms (Appendix C) and determined the mean score for each Likert-scale item. Aside from the demographic information reported in Chapter 3, yes–no and Likert-scale questions pertained to my first research question regarding LTELs’ perceptions of being ELs, being in ELD, and the standard curriculum. I broke the survey into three parts, administered on consecutive days. Part 1 and 3 yielded 14 student responses, while Part 2 yielded responses from 15 of the 16 total participants. The percentages in the discussion of each part reflect the specific response rate for that section, as opposed to the total number of participants. I chose to repeat some questions, such as “If you had the choice, would you stay in ELD?” This item directly aligned with my first research question, and I wanted to see if students answered consistently, which they did. A majority of the students answered “No” each time: 79% (n = 11) on Part 1, 87% (n = 13) on Part 2, and 71% (n = 10) on Part 3.

**Survey Part 1**

Aside from seeking general demographic information and whether students would stay in ELD if given the choice, the first section asked participants to rank their English skills related to listening, speaking, reading, and writing on a four-point Likert scale from Very Weak to Very Strong. While 93% and 100% of students ranked themselves Strong or Very Strong in speaking and listening respectively, 79% and 86% rated themselves
Strong or Very Strong in reading and writing respectively. Confirming my assessment of the curriculum’s impact as presented in Chapter 1, these results show students generally perceive themselves as stronger in oral and aural skills than in reading and writing.

Some items in Part 1 did not directly address my research questions but enabled me to learn more about students. For example, I asked them to rate their preferences on different learning styles such as learning new information by reading, working alone, or with a partner. Students far preferred working with a partner ($M = 3.71$) over learning by reading ($M = 2.93$), which may reflect low perceptions of their reading skills. As an open-ended question, I asked students what they needed from me as a teacher. Several addressed specific language skills with which they needed help, while others made general comments about helping and supporting their work. Two other questions asked them to share their favorite and least favorite aspects of school. Responses to the former included lunch, gym, being with friends, and playing sports. Answers about their least favorite parts of school included “when classes are long and boring,” “rules because they don’t make sense,” and “everything.” Finally, I asked students what their plans were for after high school. While $36\%$ ($n = 5$) did not know yet, $58\%$ ($n = 8$) wanted to attend college, and $7\%$ ($n = 1$) wanted to get a job instead of going to college.

The last question from Part 1 was an initial attempt to tap into students’ counter-stories while gaining insight related to Research Question 1: “Why do you think you are in ELD class?” Students answered with short, one-sentence responses, yet some distinct themes emerged. First, this question captured students’ sense that ELD is intended to improve their speaking and pronunciation skills. Despite ranking their listening and speaking skills higher than their writing skills, LTELs and traditional ELs offered
alternative self-assessments here with statements such as “Because I don’t know how to speak fluent English” and “I can’t really pronounce some words in English.” In addition, I saw multiple references to their “score” and the state-mandated annual English language proficiency assessment (ELPA). As I discuss later in the chapter, the test’s major role in students’ experience as ELs in ELD also surfaced in their journals and class discussion.

**Survey Part 2**

The 13 questions in Part 2 further illuminated students’ perceptions of their ELD class, again with Research Question 1 in mind. To glean any contrast between students’ perceptions of ELD and of school in general, I asked participants to rank their feelings in response to the statements from both vantage points. Table 4.1 shows the mean scores for these items on the scale of 1 to 4.

Table 4.1 *Pre-Intervention Perceptions of School vs. ELD*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 2 item</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>ELD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I always give my best effort.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy working with my classmates.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn better when I work alone.</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am excited to be here.</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am excited for it to end.</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy when what we are learning is challenging.</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am embarrassed to make mistakes in front of my classmates.</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel supported by my teachers.</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel supported by my peers.</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel people accept me for who I am.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that students are treated equally.</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable telling teachers when students are not treated fairly.</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To identify the starkest contrasts, I compared the difference in means between the corresponding school and ELD items, noticing that students rated seven items similarly across contexts, resulting in minimal difference (< .3). The other five items yielded differences of .36 and greater, as illustrated in Figure 4.1. Participants reported more enjoyment in ELD when learning is challenging and feeling less embarrassed to make mistakes, yet they also expressed a stronger preference for working alone as compared to their broader school experiences. I interpreted this combination of responses as a sign that, though they see ELD as a safe space to take risks, reinforced by their stronger sense of equal treatment in ELD, they do not feel comfortable with their peers’ witnessing those mistakes. ELD tends to be a mix of select students from different grades who might not know each other well. Therefore, they are more likely to have friends in their grade-level content class with whom they want to work.

![Figure 4.1 Average Pre-Intervention Perceptions of School vs. ELD](image)

Two items asked only about ELD, and one asked only about school in general. To touch on the language focus of ELD, students rated the following statements about ELD:

I enjoy taking risks and trying new vocabulary and sentence structures, and I am
confident my English is improving. All but one student, or 93% \((n = 14)\), either agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoy taking risks, while all but two, or 87% \((n = 13)\), said the same about their confidence in their improvement. Regarding school in general, students showed less confidence in their answers to the statement about their English language abilities, with 67% \((n = 10)\) saying they agree or strongly agree. One of the primary goals of the ELD course is for students to develop language they can apply to their content classes. Therefore, these answers show room for improvement in terms of the expected outcome of the class.

**Survey Part 3**

Part 3 of the survey asked students to agree or disagree on a four-point Likert scale with statements that focused specifically on ELD and its curriculum. Table 4.2 shows the mean score for each statement. Aside from indicating students’ belief that the topics covered in ELD are important to their lives and that the class helps them with their language skills, the results show an overall negative feeling about the class. Considering that over 70% of students wished they did not have to take ELD, these results are not surprising. However, that they did not feel a desire for ELD to be more connected to their own cultures is interesting, given my motivation for this study. As my analysis of subsequent data will clarify, students enjoyed the identity unit and better understanding themselves, but connecting the curriculum to their cultures did not come up as a priority. Another interesting contrast is that their interest in the standard ELD topics was markedly lower than their sense of the topics’ importance. I often get the sense that students feel the content they learn in school is important simply because we are teaching it, as if they feel an obligation to recognize the content’s importance, regardless of personal interest.
Table 4.2 Pre-Intervention Perceptions of ELD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 3 item</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel the topics we learn about in ELD (habits of success, money, national parks) are interesting.</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the topics we learn about in ELD (habits of success, money, national parks) are important for my life.</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to use the vocabulary and language from my ELD class in my other classes.</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish ELD topics were more connected to my culture and other parts of my life.</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I can share my culture in ELD class.</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel a sense of community in my ELD class.</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELD is a beneficial and necessary class.</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELD is dull and boring.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELD is just as important as any other subject.</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel ELD helps me develop my English language skills.</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A final open-ended question in Part 3 of the survey asked students to complete the sentence, “ELD would be better if _.” Most answers included comments such as “weren’t boring” or “were more exciting.” Another common theme revealed students’ wish for ELD to have less work and more breaks or “free time.” Echoing the quantitative data showing students’ aversion to remaining in ELD, one student simply reported ELD would be better if they were “out of it.” The *E.L. Achieve* curriculum is carefully scripted, and teachers are trained to follow it with fidelity, leaving little room to make the class more engaging and relevant. My participants’ desire for it to be less boring and more exciting is reflective of these constraints. At the same time, my participants, like their fellow teenagers, tend to have apathy toward anything that involves schoolwork, hence the responses expressing a wish for more free time in ELD.
A very different answer came from one student who wrote that ELD would be better if, “they can tell [her] when [she’s] going to get out of ELD and [her] progress.” I discuss this answer more in depth later in this chapter when I highlight specific students, but the desire for transparency in their progress through ELD is worth noting here as well. This evidence of the students’ awareness of their lack of agency in their education was a first step toward answering Research Question 4.

**Pre- and Mid-Intervention Qualitative Data**

I collected students’ journal entries to assess, in their own words, their perceptions and experiences of being ELs and students in ELD. Consistent with the aim of all four research questions, I sought evidence of what LTEls’ counter-stories reveal about their perceptions of the class and their experience with a new unit intended to be culturally relevant. Between October and the end of December, students responded to 11 freewrite prompts in their digital journals (Appendix K). I created some prompts to probe students’ responses on the pre-intervention survey. For example, the open-ended question, “Why do you think you are in ELD,” reappeared as an early journal prompt in October. Of the 11 prompts, eight yielded entries that either answered my research questions directly or were relevant to students’ feelings about the class and their expression of how they and others saw themselves inside and outside of school. I created a document for each prompt and, from their digital journal slide decks, I copied and pasted each participating student’s entry into a table. This process allowed me to begin coding each entry, as demonstrated in Appendix L. In addition to these artifacts, two summative assessments that I adapted and two assignments from the identity unit yielded useful data.
This section is organized to illustrate connections between data and the theoretical framework presented in Figure 1.1, specifically weaving together the dimensions of multicultural education and the goals of CRP. I start by addressing the dimension of content integration and the goal of academic achievement to show how students reacted to the new curriculum. I then demonstrate how the adapted curriculum addressed the dimension of prejudice reduction and the goal of cultural competence. Finally, a single journal entry and follow-up discussion and journal prompt moved students toward a new understanding of knowledge construction and development of critical consciousness.

**Content Integration and Academic Achievement**

Developing content that integrated a variety of cultures and opportunities for students to share and express aspects of their own cultures while at the same time maintaining high academic standards of language development was a principal goal of adapting the identity unit (Banks, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995). The adapted summative assessment for the “Pathways to Success” unit was the first opportunity for students to dig into their identities. They selected a person or a local organization that resonated with them and created a slide deck describing the successes of and their own connection to that person or organization (Appendix D). As a result of discussing the successes of someone they felt represented them, students expressed self-understanding. When writing about a successful coach at the high school, one student wrote, “Coach B. was resourceful enough to find ways to make a strong team and especially leadership. This is something that I’m dealing with because I am someone who helps my team get back up on their feet.” Another student wrote about her favorite pop star, stating, “I feel like Lisa represents me because I am also a dancer and a basketball player that works hard and
never gives up. I can also spend a lot of time practicing and working on things. This is diligence.” Many other students wrote about family members whom they emulated out of pride. One student cited her immigrant mother’s perseverance, characteristic of “someone who keeps trying even when people think is over and they can’t do it,” as beneficial in her own life. She understood her mother “was frustrated that she doesn’t have enough money to pay bills rent and buy food,” yet added, “Something that I learned about [my mom] is that I should never give up and always work hard to get what you want.”

When a freewrite prompt asked students to reflect on the identity unit and share what they learned, many students wrote about how important the topic was to them, specifically about how often people hide parts of their identities they do not want others to see. One eighth-grade boy wrote, “My favorite part of this is that I never talk about what other don’t see on me like I love to cook and that my family is more important than anything.” Similarly, a ninth-grade girl shared, “I find out that I hide a lot of things from people and that I change a lot since I start growing. I think different and act different.” She added, “I learned that identity is not everything about how you look. It is how you think and how you are with your family.”

Students also realized the importance of understanding and valuing their own identities to feel better about themselves. An eighth grader said, “I learned that I am not myself most of the time and that people mimic people because they feel insecure.” One ninth-grade male student wrote, “I didn’t realize identity was that important,” sharing, “This unit is perfect for me because it’s something we should be appreciating.” Overall, being able to look into and better understand what makes up their own identities had a positive impact on students.
Every unit in ELD 4 emphasizes vocabulary and proper usage of words in different forms. It also has target sentence structures for language such as comparing and contrasting or giving advice while aiming for mastery in the nuances of verb tenses. Each assignment or assessment required students to use the target language. In their reflections on the first E.L. Achieve unit, “Pathways to Success,” students wrote a lot about how it developed their writing, speaking, and especially vocabulary skills. One student shared, “Something that I’m proud [of] is that I learned how to use the words. I know the meaning and I think I did good in this lesson.” Another wrote, “The important thing I learned during this unit was how to write sentences and give more evidence and all the cool sentence starters gave me ideas on how to write a good paragraph.” Though the adapted summative assessment deviated from the prescribed assessment in content, it reinforced the target vocabulary and sentence structures E.L. Achieve established, supporting students’ acquisition of the target language.

I designed all adaptations and assessments to maintain high academic standards for language development. While the adapted identity unit also incorporated new vocabulary and sentence structures, students’ reflections on this unit did not highlight their language development as directly as their reflections on “Pathways to Success.” One student wrote of the adapted identity unit, “I like everything about it because it was fun and challenging and new,” and another wrote, “my English got better.” In contrast to these positive but nonspecific responses, another student declared, “I don’t think [the identity unit] should be kept in ELD because it doesn’t really improve my English language skills.” No other students mentioned language development specifically as a strength or weakness of the unit.
Regarding the final assessments for the identity unit (Appendix E), though students enjoyed making masks and expressing their inner and outer selves, their writing did not show the same level of language skill as the previous summative assessment. As a company, *E.L. Achieve* has invested time and manpower into piloting and streamlining the language focus of their units to a level I was unable to match on my first attempt. I reflect more on my limitations in Chapter 5.

**Prejudice Reduction and Cultural Competence**

To reduce prejudice and build students’ cultural competence, I designed this study and the adapted unit in a way that would maintain students’ cultural integrity while offering opportunities to accept and learn more about the cultures of others. In the first article students read in the identity unit, a mother shared her story of hiding her bicultural identity from her friends as a child. She then wrote about how different her daughter was, proudly sharing her food and culture with her friends decades later. As a way to practice the language of compare and contrast and use new vocabulary, an assignment invited students to compare or contrast their own feeling about sharing their culture at school with either the mother or the daughter (Appendix G). My students revealed their cultural competence as each one expressed pride in their cultures and how they would never hide them. Representative examples include “While the narrator always spoke English and didn’t claim her Indian language, I proudly [speak my language] everywhere,” and “I show off to people how we celebrate in my culture while the narrator hid it from people.”

One freewrite prompt during the identity unit asked students where and how they felt their cultures were represented in school. Several showed signs of prejudice reduction and cultural competence in their words, reflecting our school’s diversity. Latinx students,
especially Mexicans, were clear that their culture is in the school and the community through language and food. One Salvadorian student said, “Some people have friends that have the same culture as me and [we] teach things about [our] cultures.” Marshallese students saw their culture reflected in their friends and language spoken in school and in church outside of school. No students, however, said they saw their culture represented outside of their friend groups. There was no mention of their cultures’ being reflected in their classes or in the building as a whole, something I discuss further in Chapter 5.

The goal of the “See, Think, Wonder” activity was to bring awareness to assumptions students had of people who might differ from them (Appendix H). I showed them a picture of a homeless man and of a young boy in a wheelchair. In the first step, they simply wrote an objective list of what they saw. For the homeless man, their observations included things like a cardboard sign, trees and cars in a park, and a beard on his face, while the young boy produced lists that included a smile, a wheelchair, seatbelt, and trees. Next, students wrote assumptions based on what they saw, using the target subordinating clause structures I provided. Sentences for the homeless man included “Seeing him holding a ripped cardboard box with letters written on it made me believe that he needs help” and “I think the guy is struggling to find a job because he’s out in the park with a sign.” The next step required students to let go of their assumptions and inquire about the individuals in the pictures and their circumstances. Questions included “I wonder what happened to his family” and “I want to ask why he is out of his home.” Questions for the boy included “I wonder how his parents think about it” and “I wonder if he could walk a little without his wheelchair.” The goal of this activity was to make students aware of their assumptions and how those assumptions are often
inaccurate. Questioning their assumptions opened their eyes to a reality that may not be obvious, pushing them to check their own prejudice.

During subsequent reflection on the unit in their journals, students showed signs of prejudice reduction. One wrote, “I think something we should do would be try to connect ourselves or other people family or friends with what we talked about [in this unit].” Another shared, “I was able to show people that I’m a Mexican kid and I was not afraid. I learned that people have different traditions and that other people were different from others.”

**Knowledge Construction and Critical Consciousness**

Regarding the dimension of knowledge construction, Banks (2016) stated, “The transformative curriculum changes the basic assumptions of the curriculum and enables students to view concepts, issues, themes, and problems from diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives” (p. 10). Similarly, CRP equips students with the critical consciousness to critique aspects of their education they have been conditioned to accept as normal (Ladson-Billings, 1995). During one freewrite, along with a follow-up discussion and subsequent freewrite, students made steps toward seeing ELD through this critical lens.

**October 4 Freewrite**

The first freewrite prompt relevant to this study directly echoed a pre-intervention survey item: Why do you think you are in ELD class? Students’ responses on the Google Form revealed their beliefs that they need to develop their English skills and a recognition of the need to achieve a test score, but I wanted a better understanding of how they made sense of being an EL and in ELD. Specifically, the journal prompt stated,
What does being an English learner mean? How long have you been an English learner? When do you believe you will no longer be considered an English learner? Do you believe that your teachers see you as an English learner? Who else sees you as an English learner?

Positive comments emphasized how ELD can develop their language skills. One ninth grader, a first-time ELD student, stated, “It’s just a class that can help you develop on learning basic skills and more. There is no negativity about ELD. The main purpose of ELD is for you to develop.” An eighth grader who has taken all levels of ELD since her arrival in the district stated, “This class is going to help me to be better in English.”

Others either expressed their own negative feelings about ELD or the negative perspective others have of the class while at the same time trying to dispel this image of the course. An eighth-grade student stated, “ELD is just a class that students need to learn. It’s not for dumb people. I heard a lot of people talk negative about it.” As displayed in the survey data, many overtly talked of how they wanted out of ELD for good. A ninth grader who ranked his own listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills as “Very Strong,” stated, “Being an English learner is going to waste my time to my other classes on my high school grades. I should be out there doing my algebra, reading, physical science, and also paying attention to basketball.” Other students echoed his sentiment, saying, “I don’t like to be in ELD . . . [I want to] have better classes,” “I won’t have to take it ever again,” and “I would like to get out.” Even when students conceded ELD had been good for their language development, some expressed being done with it. One eighth grader stated, “I feel like I am ready to get out of ELD. I can live without ELD. It [was] funny to be in ELD, but I don’t feel like that anymore.”
Another theme expressed in this particular set of entries was students’ self-confidence in their language skills and their perceptions of others’ opinions of their skills. An overwhelming number of comments conveyed students’ beliefs that their language skills had improved. Comments like “I will pass the ELPA this year because I know what I am good at” and “I think I have grown a lot. I think I am better speaking the English language than when I started practicing” show students’ sense of having grown in their language skills. These comments reveal signs of students’ agency, manifest in their commitment to proving they are no longer ELs and can get out of ELD.

Other comments suggest students’ sense that their teachers still saw them as ELs, which they interpreted as the reason they were in ELD. One ninth grader stated,

I feel like my teacher thinks I’m getting better, but I think I’m in here because they have seen that I need a little bit of more work on my English and how I write, but I feel I’m getting there and I feel like I have gotten better threw all the years I have been in ELD.

Another ninth grader stated,

My teacher sees me as an English language learner because I am not from America. Some teachers thinks I’m an English learner based on how I look because I am an islander, and nothing can change the way I look even if something happens.

An eighth grader felt that others did not believe in his skills. He stated, “People think I can’t speak English when I can. I understand everything. The only person who I think can see that I can pass [the ELPA] is me and my advisory teacher.” This freewrite allowed
students to shift the assumption of ELD and being an EL, taking them closer to constructing their own understanding of what the class and label mean to them.

**Follow-up Discussion and Freewrite**

In alignment with Research Question 4, many of these comments scratched the surface of students’ counter-stories about their experiences as ELs. Therefore, to dig deeper into students’ thoughts on specific statements from this freewrite, I created a follow-up activity in December, toward the end of the identity unit, by pulling 10 student comments from this set of entries, which I presented to small groups as a stack of cards (Figure 4.2). I selected statements that fit into the general themes stated earlier in this chapter: (a) the overall negative feeling of being in ELD and students’ desire to “get out,” in contrast to (b) the perceived benefit of being in ELD, yet contextualized by (c) their sense of confusion about placement policies and procedures that emphasize the weight of standardized test scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Teachers know I am good on my English. My teachers believe in me, so I believe in myself.</th>
<th>2. Being an English learner is going to waste my time.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Being an English Learner is great because we’re still learning things that we don’t know.</td>
<td>4. ELD is just a class that students need to learn. It’s not for dumb people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I heard a lot of people talk negatively about it. Some people think that the people that are in ELD are dumb.</td>
<td>6. I think I have grown a lot. I think I am better at speaking the English language than when I started practicing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. This is my first time in ELD, and it just came out of nowhere. I was confused why I am in ELD.</td>
<td>8. I feel kind dumb for being in ELD and I just don’t like it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My teacher sees me as an English learner because I am not from America. Some teachers think I’m an English learner based on how I look.</td>
<td>10. I know that being in this class is going to help me to be better in English.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2 *Discussion Cards From Freewrite 1*
I instructed each group to read all 10 cards and select three they felt strongly about, either agreeing or disagreeing with the statement. The statements that attracted the most discussion were Statement 4, “ELD is just a class that students need to learn. It’s not for dumb people,” and Statement 10, “I know that being in this class is going to help me to be better in English.” While listening to their discussions, I asked specifically about Statement 4 and why the general thought among other students in the school is that ELD is for dumb people. I observed overwhelming agreement that inability to pass the ELPA suggests to peers that they are dumb. Not only did this outcome reaffirm that students are sensitive to the view of ELD as a class for dumb people, but it also put front and center the power the ELPA seems to have over their experience as ELs. When I asked students to expand on their thoughts in a new freewrite, comments included “They think [ELD] is for people that don’t know English or is not really smart to pass the ELPA test, but that’s not true” and “People judge kids in ELD that they are dumb for still being in ELD and still haven’t passed the test.”

While the discussion in class focused on the ELPA and its impact on students’ status and placement in ELD, journal entry responses to the discussion cards also reinforced that, even though others see being in ELD as a sign of inferiority, my students themselves overwhelmingly expressed positive feelings about being in ELD. Several disagreed with Statement 8, “I feel kind of dumb for being in ELD and I just don’t like it,” countering, “I disagree because this class is great,” “We do learn great things stuff we don’t know yet and stuff we need a little bit more help on,” and, “I don’t feel dumb in ELD because it helps us grow and learn more and I kinda like it.” These views, which contrast with the pre-intervention survey data, may have resulted from the adapted
identity unit, though I cannot be certain. Data collected during the post-intervention phase of the study shed more light on these perceptions.

**Post-Intervention Survey Results**

To address Research Question 3, how the culturally relevant and multicultural practices in the instructional adaptation impacted students’ perceptions of ELD, I gave students a post-intervention survey (Appendix J) later in December that mirrored several of the Likert-scale questions from the pre-intervention survey (Appendix C). An abbreviated version of the initial survey, it repeated the demographic questions along with 21 Likert-scale questions. Because it was shorter than the pre-intervention version, students completed this survey in one sitting. All 16 students were present to complete this survey.

When asked whether they would stay in ELD if they had a choice, a 69% majority (n = 11) answered “No.” Table 4.3 shows pre- and post-intervention mean scores for 14 additional items. Though most of the pre and post mean scores are extremely close, some showed a difference of .3 or more, revealing more positive feelings about ELD after the identity unit. For example, the mean score of “In ELD class, I learn better when I work alone” decreased, suggesting the identity unit made students feel more comfortable working with each other in ELD. Despite remaining in the “Disagree” category, mean scores for “In ELD I am excited to be here” increased from the pre to post surveys. Students also demonstrated stronger agreement with statements describing teacher support, acceptance, and “feel[ing] comfortable telling teachers when students are treated fairly.” Overall, data show the identity unit’s positive impact on students’ comfort with me and each other.
Table 4.3 Pre and Post Perceptions of ELD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>$M$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always give my best effort.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn better when I work alone.</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am excited to be here.</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am excited for it to end.</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know that my English is improving.</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy when what we are learning is challenging.</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am embarrassed to make mistakes in front of my classmates.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel supported by my teacher.</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel supported by my peers.</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy taking risks and trying the new vocabulary and sentence structures.</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel people accept me for who I am.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that all students are treated equally.</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable telling teachers when students are not treated fairly.</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident my English is improving.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next section of the post-intervention survey featured seven statements that addressed students’ perceptions of ELD content. Table 4.4 presents the results in response to statements about ELD topics in general and specific to the new unit on identity. Again, on average, most of the post-intervention answers in this category were extremely close to the pre-intervention answers, aside from a few noticeable differences. Students found the identity unit slightly more interesting with a .21 difference in mean scores. At this point in the semester, the only standard ELD unit the students had experienced was the “Pathways to Success” unit; therefore, it was the only comparison they had to the identity unit. Nevertheless, the identity unit had a positive impact on
students’ overall feeling about ELD as evident in the shift in mean score from 3.0 to 2.53 in response to the statement, “ELD is dull and boring,” the largest change across all the comparable survey items.

Table 4.4 *Pre and Post Perceptions of ELD Topics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre: I feel the topics we learn about in ELD (habits of success, money, national parks) are important for my life.</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post: I feel studying my own identity is important for my life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre: I feel the topics we learn about in ELD (habits of success, money, national parks) are interesting.</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post: I think learning about my identity is interesting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to use the vocabulary and language from ELD in my other classes.</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish ELD topics were more connected to my culture and other parts of my life.</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELD is a beneficial and necessary class.</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELD is dull and boring.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELD is as important as any other subject.</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking across Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 to assess the impact of my adaptation, I examined the difference in mean scores in response to all items spanning the pre and post surveys. I noticed a range of zero to .47, with most items yielding a difference of .2 or less. Seven items showed a difference of .31 or higher. As Figure 4.3 illustrates, these seven items with the largest differences reflect more positive feelings about ELD after the identity unit. Students showed a stronger sense of belonging, expressing less interest in working alone. Further, they demonstrated a stronger sense of feeling accepted and supported by classmates and the teacher.
Conversely, I detected a surprising post-adaptation decline for some items related to language development: “In ELD class, I know my English is improving,” “I enjoy taking risks and trying the new vocabulary and sentence structures,” and “I try to use the vocabulary and language from ELD in my other classes.” This downward shift occurred despite my reliance on constructivist methods of learning and practicing vocabulary and grammar structures. Perhaps students perceived the identity unit as less academic because it was more personal. This outcome also reinforced my earlier reflection that although my unit incorporated vocabulary and target sentence structures, it lacked the high-quality graphics and workbook of the *E.L. Achieve* units. This contrast could explain students’ varying perceptions of their language development. Finally, as the pre-intervention survey highlighted, connecting ELD topics to students’ cultures was not a priority for participants, even less so post-intervention. This pattern supports the absence of a desire to incorporate culture into the curriculum that appeared in the qualitative data.

* I feel the topics we learn about in ELD are interesting vs. I think learning about my identity is interesting.

**Figure 4.3 Average Improved Perceptions Pre and Post Intervention**
In Their Own Words

For CRT and LatCrit scholars, “storytelling, giving voice, or naming one’s own reality [are] key elements of legal scholarship and important tools for achieving racial emancipation” (Fernández, 2002, p. 48). Therefore, putting names to some of these stories, creating a more complete narrative of my students and their lived experiences, is important to me. To look more closely at the qualitative data I collected from students’ journals, this section uses students’ own words to illustrate the three main themes found in the October 4 freewrite and follow-up: (a) the overall negative feeling of being in ELD and students’ desire to “get out,” in contrast to (b) the perceived benefit of being in ELD, yet contextualized by (c) their sense of confusion about placement policies and procedures that emphasize the weight of standardized test scores.

Table 4.5 presents a subset of participants whose words illustrate these themes. I chose these six students because they represent the overall demographics of the students in my ELD class: a combination of eighth and ninth graders, Spanish and Marshallese speakers, and both LTELs and ELs who arrived in the United States more recently. These students also stood out to me because of their elaborate answers to the freewrite prompts and their ability to tell eloquent stories of their experiences and perceptions.

Table 4.5 Subset of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>First language</th>
<th>Years in U.S. schools*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Marshallese</td>
<td>8+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Marshallese</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>8+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmin</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Marshallese</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Including the 2022–2023 school year when the study occurred
Negative Perceptions of ELD

As stated earlier, the vast majority of students in my ELD class expressed negative feelings about ELD in response to the pre-intervention survey and in their first freewrite during the scope of this study. Victor and Wendy, both ninth graders, made their negative feelings about ELD apparent from the beginning. Having been in U.S. schools since third grade, Victor has taken all levels of ELD during his academic career. With a history of behavior problems and having spent several days in in-school suspension due to conflicts with teachers, Victor often demonstrated defiance toward the system and ELD. In October, when students did their initial freewrite, a class discussion on the topic of ELD had Victor asking, “What does ELD stand for anyway? English language discrimination?” His language skills are strong, and he is very aware of the importance of school and how he is now earning credits toward graduation. For the October 4 freewrite, he is the student who wrote, “Being an English learner is going to waste my time to my other classes on my high school grades. I should be out here doing my work on algebra, reading, physical science, and also paying attention to basketball.” Despite his history of defiance and desire to exit ELD, Victor puts his full effort into assessments, suggesting an aim to prove he no longer needs ELD.

Wendy echoed these negative feelings about ELD early in the year, although, unlike Victor, she was only in her third year of studying in U.S. schools. She is hardworking and, though she has an accent and continues to make common grammatical errors in speaking and writing, she has shown progress each year on her ELPA scores. In many ways, her skills are close to the levels of her LTEL classmates. I expected students like Wendy, who have not been exposed to academic English as long as LTELs, to accept
their need for the support of ELD; however, she expressed her desire to “have better classes” by stating, “I don’t really like to be in ELD.” As a ninth grader, like Victor, she recognizes the importance of her high school years (i.e., the need to earn credits) and is done taking a class that her peers think is for dumb people.

Karla and Emma, despite being eighth graders who are not yet earning high school credit, also expressed their negative feelings toward ELD early in the school year. Another LTEL, Karla was born in the United States and speaks English as fluently as any native speaker. Expressing her frustration during a class discussion about ELD, Karla asked, “Who decided this anyway? I was born here!” I told her that when she entered kindergarten, her parents were asked what language was spoken at home, and because it was not English, she was and continues to be labeled an EL until she passes the ELPA. When discussing assumptions during an activity in the identity unit, Karla told the class a story of a previous ELD teacher she felt was racist toward the students. She explained how the teacher yelled at students and told them that, because they were Mexican, they were not very smart. Upon telling a counselor about this experience, Karla said the counselor did not believe her because everyone assumed ELD teachers could not be racist. Karla is a strong student and is clearly not afraid of speaking her mind. She is still in ELD because her ELPA scores have remained stagnant over the past few years. I believe she finally sees the reality of the ELPA and why she is in ELD and is ready to take control and change that circumstance for herself.

This year is Emma’s third in ELD, and for the first freewrite, she wrote, “I have being in ELD 2 years and I would like to get out of ELD at the end of this year and not have it next year.” Like Wendy, she maintains an accent and makes some simple
grammatical errors but works hard and is committed to improving her English skills. This
effort is apparent in her gradual improvement on the ELPA each year she has taken it.
She, too, believes her hard work is paying off and that this year she may achieve the
required ELPA scores to leave ELD class. Thus, these excerpts echo previously discussed
data, underscoring students’ fervent desire to no longer have to take ELD.

Perceived Benefits of ELD

To contrast this desire to no longer be in ELD, many of the students expressed the
benefits of the class, wanting to clarify their peers’ misperception that ELD is for “dumb
people.” Though Joseph, a ninth grader, has been in U.S. schools for more than 8 years,
he had only been in our district for a year at the outset of this study and was in his first
year in ELD. In his October freewrite, he stressed the value of ELD: “There is really no
problem being in ELD it’s just a class that can help you develop on learning basic skills
and more. There is no negativity about ELD. It’s just a class at the end of the day.” In
October, even Wendy said, “I know that being in this class is going to help me be better
in English.” In the January discussion, after the identity unit, both Joseph and Wendy
chose to expand on these statements. Wendy wrote, “You learn a lot from ELD to put in
your other classes and improve language.” Joseph reiterated, “It’s really not for dumb
people and people are just gonna assume it is for dumb people because they don’t have
enough info based on ELD class.” Victor, who vehemently expressed his desire to be
done with ELD, stated, “I am going to prove that being in this class had really helped me,
but it shouldn’t be shown on my schedule.”

Jasmin is unique in that she came to U.S. schools only 2 years ago with advanced
language skills, and this is her first year in ELD. She was one student who, in response to
the pre-intervention survey, answered “yes” to the question, “If you had a choice, would you stay in ELD class,” revealing her mostly positive views of ELD. In her October freewrite about being an EL, Jasmin wrote, “Being a English Language Learner is great because we’re still learning things that we don’t know.” Aware that her peers view ELD as being a class for dumb people, she shared, “I really don’t mind. I am okay with it because we’re learning.” Likewise, Emma sees ELD as “the opportunity to learn.” The contrasting views here are revealing. Though they no longer want to be in ELD and want to dispel the notion that it is for dumb people, these students truly see value in the class.

**Institutional Influence on ELD Placement**

In freewrites and class discussions, several students expressed confusion as to why they remained in ELD. As expressed earlier, Karla did not understand how someone like her who was born in the United States and has been speaking English her whole life could be considered an EL. Neither Joseph, an LTEL new to the district, nor Jasmin, a short-term EL, were in ELD last year, and they could not understand why they were suddenly in the class this year. Joseph stated, “This is my first time in ELD and it just came out of nowhere,” and Jasmin shared, “I didn’t have ELD last year and I was confused why I am in ELD [now].” When the pre-intervention survey asked, “What do you need me to do as your teacher to help you do your best work,” Wendy expressed her agency by seeking her status as an English learner: “Tell me if I’m going good with ELD and if I’m going to pass.” She recognized the institutional power of the decision and desired transparency about her progress.

I also clearly sensed that the students feel the ELPA’s weight over their status as ELs and placement in ELD. Arguably, since the implementation of No Child Left
Behind, the goals of education have one foot deeply buried in achievement as defined by standardized test results. According to Gaches (2018), “a common theme . . . is that all teachers will focus their efforts on their student charges attaining appropriate mandated test scores indicative of attainment of uniform standards through standardized curriculum and pedagogy” (p. 646). Students’ responses to journal prompts and in-class discussions clearly indicate they have been trained to believe the same. The test decides the classes they take and likely affects their perceptions and experiences.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter chronologically reviewed the quantitative and qualitative data collected before, during, and after I implemented an adapted unit on identity. The pre-intervention survey revealed students’ overall dislike of ELD, while surfacing a distinction between their perceptions of the class and school in general, demonstrating more favor for ELD than for other aspects of school. Qualitative data demonstrated how the adapted unit connected to my theoretical framework as intended, as students’ freewrites, assessments, and other assignments reflected dimensions of multicultural education and CRP. The post-intervention survey also captured students’ positive perceptions of the identity unit, though participants did not seem to see it as being language focused. They also demonstrated a limited desire for ELD to contain topics more closely connected to their cultures. They saw the unit as more interesting but did not believe it to be as important as the traditional topics covered in ELD.

Finally, this chapter shared the counter-stories of six students in particular who wrote very honestly about their feelings of being in ELD, allowing for a closer examination of knowledge construction and critical competence, further supporting the
three themes: (a) the overall negative feeling of being in ELD and their desire to “get out,” in contrast to (b) the perceived benefit of being in ELD yet contextualized by (c) their sense of confusion about placement policies and procedures that emphasize the weight of standardized test scores. From here, I move to discussing how these findings answer the four research questions reiterated throughout, their limitations, and their implications for future practice and research.
CHAPTER 5
IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this mixed methods action research case study was twofold. First, I used a quantitative survey to measure students’ perceptions of my advanced ELD class. I went deeper into students’ experiences using freewrite journals that encouraged using their own words to explore what being an English learner in ELD means. Far too many ELs in my district enter the system in early elementary school as non-native speakers, progressing through grades and developing English language skills only to plateau at early intermediate levels as determined by the annual ELPA. This stagnation has them taking and retaking an ELD class intended to advance their skills but failing to do so. As these students become long-term English learners in junior high, the pattern of failing and retaking the test wears on them and their motivation for ELD and its benefits wanes.

My district, like others in the state with an influx of non-native English speakers, relies on the curriculum produced and sold by *E.L. Achieve* as a language development tool. With unit topics such as money matters and U.S. national parks and monuments, the curriculum maintains a neutral, assimilationist tone and fails to tap into students’ lived experiences. Viewing this boxed ELD curriculum as assimilationist, disengaging, and culturally irrelevant, I suspected it was adding to students’ sense of failure.

To address this problem of practice, I designed this action research study guided by the following questions:

1. What are LTELs’ perceptions of the standard ELD curriculum?
2. How do my students experience a curriculum intended to use culturally relevant and constructivist practices?

3. How does this adapted unit affect LTEL perceptions of ELD 4?

4. What do LTELs’ counter-stories reveal about their experience as English learners?

Administering a pre-intervention survey yielded quantitative answers to Research Question 1. Before implementing an adapted unit on identity, I assigned journal prompts that asked students to express in their own words their experience as ELs and why they thought they were taking ELD, resulting in data that began to answer Research Question 4. The adapted identity unit wove together dimensions of multicultural education and goals of CRP, yielding data through assignments and journals that helped answer the second, third, and fourth research questions. Finally, a post-intervention survey enabled me to determine whether a more culturally relevant unit impacted students’ perceptions of and experiences with ELD.

Quantitative results showed an overall negative perception of ELD, though students generally perceived ELD more positively than they did school as a whole. Qualitative data revealed students experiencing aspects of multicultural education and CRP while exposing their counter-stories of being ELs in ELD. These counter-stories exhibited three primary themes: (a) a clearly negative perception of being in ELD and a desire to “get out,” despite (b) an overall perception that they benefit from the class, along with (c) confusion about placement policies and procedures. Finally, post-adaptation quantitative and qualitative data showed an overwhelmingly positive experience with the identity unit, connecting again to multicultural education and CRP.
Surprisingly, though, students did not exhibit a need or even desire for their culture to be integrated into classroom content.

This chapter further discusses the findings by highlighting this study’s relevance to existing literature, limitations of the intervention, and implications for future practice. I also reflect on the limitations of the methodology as I propose next steps to further research and better understand LTELs’ struggle to achieve English proficiency.

**Relevance to Literature**

This section explores what participants’ counter-stories revealed and implications of these findings. Incorporating culture into academic content, though widely touted by researchers, was not something my students saw as important, and here I explore the possible reasons. I also look at what research says about the impact standardized testing has on students juxtaposed with the experiences of my LTEL students who were raised in a test-heavy system.

**Integration of Culture**

From the pre-intervention inquiry into students’ perceptions of ELD and being labeled ELs through the intervention and after, this study touched on and data expressed dimensions of Banks’s (2016) multicultural education and Ladson-Billings’ (1995) CRP frameworks. While the dimension of equity pedagogy and constructivist practices more directly connect to my methodology in Chapter 3, the remaining dimensions were apparent in the results. Students clearly took to the integration of identity and saw benefits to exploring who they are and the image they project to others. They discovered aspects of themselves that they never had before and used their target language to do so.
Sánchez and Honeyford (2021) encouraged teachers to adopt a community literacy stance to “make visible how students . . . come to learn and know in environments—acknowledging the social, material, and semiotic resources and networks that contribute to learning” (p. 11). In other words, not only acknowledging, but truly incorporating the context of where my students’ understanding originates—in their communities—will allow them to break free from assimilation and move toward examining global inequities. While the scope of this study did not allow me to fully explore and immerse my students in content of their communities, the identity unit was able to scratch the surface. According to post-intervention data, students considered the topic of identity slightly more interesting—and more important—than the standard ELD unit topics. Middle school is a time when students are constructing their independence, and their identities are at the forefront of their minds. As the challenge of engaging them in their studies grows, embedding target language into flat and irrelevant topics further hinders their progress.

Asset pedagogies seek to integrate students’ cultures into the curriculum (Darder, 2012; Valenzuela, 1999). While the identity unit accomplished this aim in many ways, cultural integration was not something students indicated as a highlight of the unit, nor did their survey answers reflect the importance of including culture in classroom content. Before the identity unit, they showed disagreement toward the notion of connecting ELD topics to their culture and other parts of their life. Their disagreement with that statement only grew when the unit ended. Identity was perceived as being important, but culture was not. While they did not hesitate to write about how they were proud to share and display their cultures in school, they did not see a place for culture in the content of their
classes. Schools use assimilation to show students “the narrow margins of how well they fit in and perform the sanctioned expectations of doing school” (Sánchez & Honeyford, 2021, p. 11), and students’ disinterest in incorporating culture into their education may be a sign that assimilation is working. As mentioned in Chapter 4, cultural deprivation and the traditions of Eurocentric school structure and subject matter have successfully convinced students that culture is not academic—that it takes away from the boring but probably important subjects that appear on tests.

**Impact of the Test**

As expressed in my theoretical framework and methodology, “CRT and LatCrit identify storytelling, giving voice, or naming one’s own reality as key elements of legal scholarship and important tools for achieving racial emancipation” (Fernández, 2002, p. 48). In this study, the method of counter-storytelling in the form of students’ journals opened the door to students’ critical consciousness. In two journal entries and a class discussion, students had the chance to question what being an English learner means and why they were placed in ELD. Their responses echoed two of three interconnected “layers” Mackinney (2017) discovered when exploring identities of Spanish-speaking middle schoolers in an English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) program similar to ELD. Mackinney’s discussion of the ESOL identity label “as institutional practice” closely reflected my students’ confusion regarding their placement in ELD. It had nothing to do with them and everything to do with an arbitrary, systemic practice many teachers, let alone students, do not even understand. Test scores, timing, and the mood of an administrator determine student placement, and students have little say in or even awareness of the decision-making process.
Additionally, as my students were adamant that ELD is not for dumb people, Mackinney’s (2017) students were clear that their ESOL identity label was “an inadequate measure of intellect” (p. 280). In both circumstances, the class carries a stigma that anyone taking it must be dumb because they could not pass a test. Each year, to motivate students to do their best on the ELPA, my school sends the message, “If you pass the ELPA you won’t have to take ELD anymore.” The looming power of the test is then twofold: First, students see the test as the main determinant of their placement in ELD. Second, the result of not passing the test leads to the sense that their English is bad and they are “dumber” than those who do pass it. As students face the closed door of English proficiency, the ELPA and ELD are seen as necessary evils that should unlock that door but instead keep them from exiting.

Unless an ELD teacher takes the time to show them, students never see their scores on the test. They could go their whole academic careers without ever knowing their progress on the test, assuming that if they are not in ELD anymore, they must have passed, but that is not always the case. Instead, students’ placement in ELD is often arbitrary. When asked who decides whether they are in ELD, the only answer I could give was that it could be down to one person who says yes or no based on a variety of factors—test scores, grades, scheduling, a teacher who knows you decides, or an administrator who does not know you decides. There is often no logical explanation, and you as the student may never know how it was decided.

In an editorial about teacher education, Gaches (2018) described teacher candidates’ harsh reality of being “expected to simultaneously demonstrate attainment of neoliberally determined standards by themselves and their students while also
incorporating and building upon the multiple literacies and funds of knowledge of their students” (p. 646). While teachers—and arguably students, to their own surprise—seek culturally relevant, multicultural content and practices, the neoliberal testing culture governs teaching. It is a culture of meritocracy, competition, and standardization that teachers and students have accepted as normal and ideal. At best, good teaching is “refining and reflecting upon one’s practice in order to teach (i.e., deliver content) more effectively and efficiently within the given system” (Charest, 2019, p. 26). The test holds students’ fate, and the boxed curriculum is the system’s solution to give teachers and the consequence to give students.

At the advanced levels of ELD when students are expected to have acquired the necessary skills to pass the ELPA, the class is pitched to them almost as a punishment for not passing, automatically putting the class in a negative light. Further, when many students inevitably do not pass the ELPA, all they are left with is a feeling of failure and an implication that they are not as smart as those who did pass it; therefore, they are stuck in ELD. Looking at the successes and limitations of this study’s intervention can provide insight into what the system can do to reframe and rebrand ELD and the ELPA for LTEIs, providing more transparency and engaging content.

Limitations of the Intervention and Implications for Practice

As I planned the identity unit adaptation, I was very cognizant of prior conversations I had with my district’s ESL office. Before their final approval of my study, they were adamant about maintaining the integrity of the E.L. Achieve unit content, which made me cautious not to deviate too much. Mirroring the materials in the original E.L. Achieve unit on identity, I created vocabulary lists and corresponding slides.
However, the materials I created could not compare with the formally published color notebook the company produces for each student. Sentence frames, vocabulary, and target language structures litter these notebooks intended to be language supports for students, which more often become a crutch. I provided some of these features, but I did not want students to feel restricted to the target language or forced to use vocabulary that might not fit their expression of thoughts and feelings inherent in the personal topic of identity. Therefore, while I provided and taught new language throughout the adapted unit, I did not enforce strict usage requirements. As a result, some students saw the identity unit as not developing their language skills as much as the traditional units had.

This perception was especially evident in the identity unit summative assessment. Students created masks depicting their inner and outer selves and did not have a language component. The activity was simply a means of artistic expression that engaged many but not all students. The summative assessment did require students to create a slide deck that used target language of citing a text they read in their reciprocal reading groups, but it seemed contrived. I would like instead to provide multiple texts about culture and identity and have reading groups select a text of interest, allowing them to cite texts with which they feel more of a personal connection.

This academic year, in lieu of the identity unit for the advanced ELD classes, the district is implementing a new E.L. Achieve unit on academic writing with the intent of strengthening students’ writing skills in preparation for the spring testing season. This leaves little if any time to repeat the identity unit, I am afraid. Regardless of district ELD decisions, they may be open to further exploration of adapting ELD content for LTEILs. As was made clear, though students did not recognize the linguistic elements of the
adapted identity unit, their overall feeling of ELD did improve with the identity unit as evident in their increased disagreement with the statement, “ELD is dull and boring” and other indicators in the quantitative and qualitative data discussed in Chapter 4. They may not have found the incorporation of culture to be important, but they did find the personal aspect of the identity unit to be interesting, a shift that may prove beneficial to students’ language development if incorporated with clear target language.

In addition, the data clearly showed a disconnect between students’ desire to be in ELD and the benefits they perceived in the class. They did not want to be there, but they did believe the class taught them valuable skills. Future action research cycles can go further in exploring students’ interests and incorporating different content topics that connect more with their lived experience. The value of such connections may be imperceptible to them at present yet connecting their lived experience to their science and history classes, incorporating their community knowledge with current events and language, might take steps toward rebranding advanced ELD classes. If the curriculum can show students that their community and culture are relevant to academic knowledge, maybe a redesigned class can resolve the disconnect between wanting to be there and knowing its benefits.

One final suggestion for the district, schools, and teachers is providing transparency in the institutional practice and procedures of testing and placement. Every year, when the results are available, schools need to take the time to show students the scores on their prior ELPA test, both where they improved and where they need further work. They then need to know how their ELD class is geared to developing their language and improving their performance. If they can clearly see the direct connection
between ELD and their content classes, they may be more encouraged to transfer the language from ELD to history, math, and science. The state requires that each student has a language placement and assessment committee (LPAC), a select group of educators who monitor a student’s linguistic progress each year and make future recommendations. This policy implies a group of educators who provide individualized support to ELs; in reality, the LPAC’s role is abstract and often elusive. Despite having taught ELs in the district for 6 years, I have never served on any formal committee of colleagues to discuss individual students’ language progress. The sheer number of ELs in the district notwithstanding, I recommend launching formal LPACs for LTELs in the district, looking at test scores, academic engagement, and family support through the eyes of multiple stakeholders, including the students themselves. This way, students and families might feel less helpless about their placement in ELD and more motivated to take agency in their language acquisition. With transparency, students and their families can see the big picture and the reasoning behind placement, advancement, and content. They will have agency in their education and therefore have more motivation for success.

**Limitations of Methodology and Future Research Aims**

Ideally, in any study implementing a survey, there would be time to conduct a pilot that allows the researcher to collect data from the instrument and assess whether it is yielding the desired result. In Part 2 of the survey, I did not mirror all the statements from the attitudes about school in general and attitudes about ELD. My thoughts at the time were that I wanted to know if students were confident of their English skills in their content classes but did not need the same information for ELD. Upon reflection, I realize contrasting students’ confidence across the two realms of their school day would have
been worthwhile. In addition, given that students did not show a desire for their cultures to be integrated into their learning, asking more questions to explore this feeling would have been valuable. I could have defined culture more closely, asking students if they felt the language, music, food, and other aspects of their own cultures had a place in the classroom. Scholars have criticized the subtractive nature of English education (Reyes & Vallone, 2008), and I wonder if students would see it in the same light.

One final limitation of the quantitative data collection was the fact that not all students were present to take all sections of the survey, slightly impacting the validity of the analysis. Attendance is a school-wide issue, and one student in particular was absent 2–3 days each week. To help students catch up with the course content, I opted not to have them complete any missed survey sections. However, no more than two students missed a given section, so I still believe the data is representative of the class as a whole.

Initially, I sought to observe student engagement with the standard ELD curriculum and compare that measure to their engagement during the adapted identity unit. Using an observation tool I designed, I hoped to recognize instances when students were more or less engaged in the lesson. Unfortunately, I did not do an adequate job of diligently taking notes during lessons. Additionally, because I had another class immediately following ELD, I never had time to write notes down in adequate proximity to completing the lesson. This outcome left me feeling as though my observation notes failed to give me a detailed picture of student engagement. A better understanding of how to measure engagement, a stronger observation tool, and some practice would have done a lot to solve this issue.
If time had allowed, conducting focus groups with select students before and after the adapted unit could have added a depth of perspective to journal entries. While the private nature of journal writing allowed students to feel freer to write what was on their minds without judgment from peers, it also left data limited to their existing mental constructs of what criticizing the system means. The one discussion I had in response to the October 4th journal entry was social constructivism in practice, where students listened to others’ perceptions and built on their own critical understanding of being an EL and ELD.

The timing of the unit earlier in the year after only one standard unit of E.L. Achieve left students with only a small sense of what the boxed curriculum had in store for them throughout the year. The first unit, titled “Pathways to Success,” connects to students in that it presents three teens from diverse backgrounds who are models of success. Though the unit does not give students opportunities to connect directly to the topic, the material is somewhat relatable to middle schoolers, unlike later units that feature young adults balancing budgets and reading about U.S. monuments. Though I would argue that any unit on identity should occur early in the school year, my timeline may have impacted the results of the study because in the fall, ELD 4 was still new and the irrelevancy of the topics was not real yet. By the end of the year, the drag of student disengagement was palpable. If I were to have students complete the pre-intervention survey again in the winter or spring, I feel as though the earlier sense that ELD had value may reveal less positive results.

This study focused specifically on LTELs and those in the advanced levels of language acquisition because I wanted to see if the repeated cycle of failing the test and
taking ELD had a prolonged effect on their perceptions of the class. Additionally, a majority of my students expressed interest in attending college. I urge the district to expand this inquiry longitudinally and/or to upper elementary and secondary ELD students in Levels 2 and 3 to see where the negative perceptions of the class begin and if the desire for continuing education sustains. I also recommend investigating whether new arrivals to the country see the class differently than LTELs. If there is a discrepancy between perceptions of LTELs and newer arrivals at the secondary level, the district might consider taking a different approach to ELD for LTELs. Rather than using *E.L. Achieve* units with LTELs, developing a district ELD curriculum geared specifically toward these students who feel stuck may be worthwhile. Building from my recommendations for practice, future studies could pilot topics like identity and current events connected to students’ lived experiences to see if they better engage students while exposing them to more academic language. Constructivist practices such as reciprocal teaching and understanding vocabulary through context would promote student agency and possibly reduce the learned helplessness I often see in my students who lack confidence, as evident in their dependency on sentence frames and other models from *E.L. Achieve*.

In tandem with such inquiry into student perceptions, incorporating more quantitative data analysis through students’ ELPA test scores would also add an interesting dimension. Finding a pattern in the point at which LTELs’ language skills start to plateau might inform a more targeted intervention. We could also take a longitudinal look at ELPA scores of LTLs that span 6 or more years and compare their progress to that of traditional ELs who arrived in late elementary grades and worked
through ELD 4 to examine similarities and differences in the trajectory of their scores. If LTELs plateau and traditional ELs progress steadily to proficiency, we might be able to give focused attention to LTELs before that plateau occurs. Again, the district could call for more active LPACs at the higher levels and attempt to tailor language supports to the needs of each student and LTELs in particular.

Finally, future research should also look into the perceptions ELD and content teachers have of the LTELs in their classrooms. When asked to compare their perceptions of school in general and ELD specifically, students showed slightly more disagreement with the statements, “I feel supported by teachers,” and “I feel that students are treated equally,” when asked about school in general. In other words, students saw their content and other elective teachers as being less supportive. Understanding teacher perceptions of LTELs can guide teacher training. School- and district-wide, we could do a much better job of not only acknowledging and accepting students and their families into education, but also integrating their cultures and communities into course content. Better understanding where teachers are in their perceptions of students can help administrators meet them where they are and guide teachers to being more inclusive and culturally relevant in their own practice.

**Conclusion**

In my district, LTELs are a significant population that often does not get the focused attention they need being native-like speakers of English who failed to develop grade-level literacy skills. Too often, my colleagues see these students from a deficit perspective, blaming the absence of English and reading at home for their stagnant language skills. In this study, I hoped to shift the deficit away from the students by
shedding light on who they are and exposing their lived experience as ELs taking a language development class that may or may not be serving them as intended. The data clarified my students in ELD 4 did not want to be in the class any longer, yet they also recognized the class is there to support them. With this information, we as educators might see the system and the way we support LTELs as holding the deficit. We must take charge and tap into students’ desire to develop their language and build their confidence in their language skills by presenting language to them in a way that is interesting and shows them the value of their cultural identities through the content of their classes. We have succeeded in assimilating them. Now we must succeed in helping them find academic success. Future action research cycles that gather more data on perceptions of students at all grade levels and ELD classes can help the district identify where and why students plateau in their language development. Further inquiry can also help us to develop curricula that better connect language to students’ cultures and the content of their other classes. Schools are failing these kids, not the other way around. The onus to change is on the system that strives to “teach them all.”
REFERENCES


(Reprinted from *Journal of proceedings and addresses*, pp. 99–102, 1908, National Education Association)


https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315582066


https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800107


https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2017.1342716


https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2012.665822


https://californianstogether.org/?s=Olsen+2010#reparable_harm


https://www.jstor.org/stable/44805974


APPENDIX A

STUDENT INVITATION LETTER

Dear Student,

This year in ELD 4 I want to learn more about you and your experiences in ELD class. You are special in that you have been in U.S. schools for most of your lives, making you bilingual and bicultural, and I want to give you a chance to use your language skills to share stories about your experiences in school and ELD specifically. You are not required to participate in these activities, and you can decide at any time that you do not want to participate.

I will start by asking you to answer a few questions on a Google Form. Your answers will be confidential, meaning no one other than I will know which answers are yours. Your freewrite journal will also tell me a lot about your experiences and feelings toward ELD. During the year, we will do some activities in class that will try to connect what we do in ELD to your own cultures and the community around you. During this time, I will be observing and taking some notes on your engagement in the class and activities. All of these activities will be normal parts of our class, so it will not require any more time from you.

In no way are you required to be a part of this study. If you choose, I can exclude you from the data I collect through surveys and observations at any time.

Please sign below if you agree for me to use some of your ELD classwork for my study.

Thank you!

Ms. Staeheli

_____________________________  _____________________  ___________
Student’s name                  Student’s signature             Date
APPENDIX B

PARENTAL LETTER TO OPT OUT

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I’m Ms. Staeheli, your student’s English language development (ELD) teacher at [Redacted] Junior. I am also an Ed.D. candidate in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina. As a part of the requirements for my degree, I would like for your student to participate in my dissertation study on student culture and engagement.

The purpose of my study is to better understand student engagement in ELD class. The more engaged they are in class, the better they will be able to improve their language skills and overall academic achievement. I will be asking students questions about their engagement in class and comparing engagement before and after incorporating cooperative learning strategies.

If you allow your child to participate, your child will engage in classroom activities that do not go outside normal classroom time and practices. The study will include the following classroom activities:

1. A short survey will ask your student about their experiences, their feelings about the subject, and whether or not they feel their language and culture are recognized in the class.
2. During class this semester, I will adapt the existing curriculum slightly to include activities that connect students’ own experiences to their learning.
3. I will observe group work and take notes on student engagement.
4. I will repeat the survey after the adaptation to see if students’ perceptions about their class and engagement changed in any way.

All information will be kept confidential. Your child’s name will not be published. I do not anticipate any risks, and there will be benefits of your student engaging in critical reflection on their own learning, satisfaction of helping to improve the class, practicing writing skills on survey responses and journal entries, and bringing your students’ background knowledge and experience into the class. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identity of your child will never be revealed. There are no costs associated with participating in this study.

Taking part in the study is your decision. Your child does not have to be in this study if you do not want them to participate. Your child may also quit being in the study at any
time or decide not to answer any question they are not comfortable answering. Participation or non-participation does not affect your child’s grades in any way.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at the school by calling (###)-###-#### or by email at mstaeheli@XXX.org. My faculty advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Currin, can be reached at (803) 777-2136. If you have any questions about your child’s rights as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at the University of South Carolina at (803) 777-7095.

Thank you for your consideration. Because this study is incorporated into routine class activities and all student participation is confidential, no further action is needed unless you decide you don’t want your students’ participation to be included in any final reports or publications of the research. If you would NOT like for your child to be included, please check the box below, sign, date, and return this letter.

Thank you for your time.

Molly M. Staeheli
mstaeheli@XXX.org

Please do NOT include my child in data collection for this study.

Signed _________________________________________ Date _______________
APPENDIX C

PRE-ADAPTATION SURVEY QUESTIONS

Part 1

I. Demographics

First Name  Last Name  Did you take ELD last year?  YES  NO

Answer each of the following questions to the best of your knowledge.

1. What grade are you in right now?
   A. 8
   B. 9

2. How long have you been a student at XXX Junior High?
   A. This is my first year.
   B. This is my second year.

3. What language(s) do you speak at home?

4. What grade did you start school in the US?

5. What grade did you start school in this district?

6. Try to remember which ELD classes you have taken. Check all that apply.
   • ELD 1
   • ELD 2
   • ELD 3
   • This is my second time in ELD 4

7. Why do you think you are in an ELD class?

8. If you had a choice, would you stay in ELD classes? Why or why not?

II. Personal Learning

Answer the following questions on a scale from 1 to 4 with 1 = very weak and 4 = very strong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>1 Very Weak</th>
<th>2 Weak</th>
<th>3 Strong</th>
<th>4 Very Strong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. At what level would you rate your English-speaking skills?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. At what level would you rate your English listening skills?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. At what level would you rate your English writing skills?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. At what level would you rate your English reading skills?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To what extent does each activity help your learning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Disagree</th>
<th>3 Agree</th>
<th>4 Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. I read new information.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I listen to a teacher as they tell the whole class the information.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
15. Someone shows me how to do something.

16. I look at pictures or other visuals to understand the information.

17. I work with a partner or a group to figure out new information.

18. What do you need me to do as your teacher to help you do your best work?

19. What is your favorite thing about school? Why?

20. What is your least favorite thing about school? Why?

21. What do you want to do when you finish high school?
   A. I want to go to college
   B. I want to get a job instead of going to college.
   C. I want to get a job and go to college.
   D. I don’t know yet.

Part II

First Name    Last Name
1. What grade are you in?
3. What language(s) do you speak at home?
8. If you had a choice, would you stay in ELD classes? Why or why not?

III. Attitudes About School
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Disagree</th>
<th>3 Agree</th>
<th>4 Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In school, I…</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Always give my best effort.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Enjoy working with my classmates.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Learn better when I work alone.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Am excited to be here.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Am excited for it to end.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Enjoy when what we are learning is challenging.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28. Am embarrassed to make mistakes in front of my classmates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Feel supported by my teachers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Feel supported by my peers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. Am confident about my English language abilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. Feel people accept me for who I am.</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Feel that all students are treated equally.</td>
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<tr>
<td>34. Feel comfortable telling teachers when I feel students are not treated fairly.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## IV. Attitudes About ELD

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Disagree</th>
<th>3 Agree</th>
<th>4 Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35. Always give my best effort.</td>
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<tr>
<td>36. Enjoy working with my groupmates to practice the language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>37. Learn better when I work alone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>38. Am excited to be there.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>39. Am excited for it to end.</td>
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<tr>
<td>40. Know that my English is improving.</td>
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<tr>
<td>41. Enjoy when what we are learning is challenging.</td>
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<tr>
<td>42. Am embarrassed to make mistakes in front of my classmates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>43. Feel supported by my teachers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>44. Feel supported by my peers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>45. Enjoy taking risks and trying the new vocabulary and sentence structures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>46. Feel people accept me for who I am.</td>
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<tr>
<td>47. Feel that all students are treated equally.</td>
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<tr>
<td>48. Feel comfortable telling teachers when I feel students are not treated fairly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>49. Confident my English is improving.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Part III

First Name    Last Name

1. What grade are you in?
2. What language(s) do you speak at home?
3. If you had a choice, would you stay in ELD classes? Why or why not?

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Disagree</th>
<th>3 Agree</th>
<th>4 Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50. I feel the topics we learn about in ELD (money, national parks and monuments, growth mindset) are important for my life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>51. I think the topics (money, national parks and monuments, growth mindset) in ELD are interesting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>52. I try to use the vocabulary and language from my ELD class in my other classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>53. I wish ELD topics were more connected to my culture and other parts of my life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>54. I can share my culture in ELD class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>55. I feel a sense of community in my ELD class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>56. ELD is a beneficial and necessary class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>57. ELD is dull and boring.</td>
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<tr>
<td>58. ELD is just as important as any other subject.</td>
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<tr>
<td>59. I feel ELD helps me develop my English language skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>60. ELD would be better if</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

ELD ADAPTATION 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>A specific thing about “the box” that isn’t working</th>
<th>Why it’s not working</th>
<th>A specific change that might improve or mitigate that thing</th>
<th>Rationale for the proposed change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pathways to Success</td>
<td>There is little opportunity for students to share stories from their own cultures and lived experiences of struggle and success. The current summative unit assessment requires students to “choose a theme and a topic” without giving them anything concrete from which to pull.</td>
<td>Without clear content to grab onto, students have no context with which to demonstrate their mastery of the target language. ELD curriculum provides topics that may lead to assimilation (definitions of success, national monuments, going to college), but few if any that connect directly to students’ cultures and lived experiences.</td>
<td>The summative assessment for this unit will be a writing assignment that will go through the writing process, giving students topics of community organizations that are grounded in the students’ communities and native cultures. It will provide them the opportunity to connect these organizations to their own definitions of success.</td>
<td>Culturally relevant pedagogy seeks to “mine” knowledge out of students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). It also encourages collaboration, providing opportunity for students to construct meaning with their classmates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pathways to Success Final Project

You will watch videos of interviews with different community organizations in [our state]. You will also watch a video about someone who admires an athlete that represents him. You will select at least one organization or person that you feel demonstrates the strong habits of success we have been discussing this unit. You then will create Google Slides with the following:

I. One slide that summarizes one of the organizations or a person, including:
   a. Three habits or traits of that organization/person and how they demonstrate them
   b. A summary of their success—their definition of success, or things they have done that are successful.

II. One slide that compares or contrasts two different organizations/people showing what is similar and different about them OR One slide that connects your chosen organization/person with yourself. How can you take their advice and apply their habits to your own life?

III. One slide that gives advice to teens who recognize a problem and want to do something to fix it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objectives &amp; DOK Level Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content Objective:</strong> The students will create a zine that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. describes the goals of two community organizations, their goals, and what makes them successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gives advice to someone struggling in their community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DOK Level 3 – Short-Term Strategic Thinking</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are selecting two organizations and synthesizing information on those two organizations to complete a short-term writing task. They will examine the organizations, discuss what makes them successful, and justify what makes them successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Objective:</strong> The students will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Use target vocabulary in their different word forms (parts of speech) used in the text and added on their own to define success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Use sentence structures including—giving advice, comparative phrases, phrases to cite data, phrases to analyze.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Show fluency to develop context structures of their own that add their own voice and venture outside those learned within this unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DOK Level 3 – Strategic Thinking</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students select the language structures—vocabulary forms and sentence structures—that will most effectively complete the task of describing an organization and what makes it successful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX E

**IDENTITY UNIT ADAPTATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Process Using Constructivist Practices</th>
<th>Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Goal:  Students will understand the social and personal identities by reading a text and discussing examples of the two in order to better understand what makes up their own personal and social identities.</td>
<td>Content  Introduce and apply key concept of identity and aspects of identity including culture, gender, and others  Develop and connect aspects of identity to background knowledge  Make personal connections to author of the text  Language  Introduce new vocabulary  Practice language of compare and contrast  Read analytically</td>
<td>Reading  Inductive introduction to vocabulary  Negotiate meaning and usage of vocabulary and word forms with partners  Introduce reciprocal reading: annotating and discussing text  Writing  Negotiate meaning and usage of compare and contrast structures in response to reading  Freewrite responses to prompts connected to the reading  Listening/Speaking  AB partners discuss vocabulary and practice target language structures  Small groups discuss reading</td>
<td>Personal Identity Wheel  Vocabulary word forms chart using text vocabulary words  Chunked article  Article notetaker  Sentence frames  Freewrite journals  Reciprocal reading bookmarks  Student workbook/handouts  Dry erase boards and markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text:  Article “Celebrate Bicultural Identity” (Patel, 2019)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Process Using Constructivist Practices</th>
<th>Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Goal:  Students will understand assumptions by looking at images and discussing what they see, infer what they think is happening, and question what they see in order to discuss origins of assumptions.</td>
<td>Content  Introduce concept of assumptions  Discuss assumptions and where they come from  Question students’ own assumptions  Language  Language of cause and effect to express assumptions based on inferences  Language of questioning to explore assumptions</td>
<td>Writing  Negotiating meaning to select vocabulary of what they see  Language of compare and contrast to explain and defend inferences  Language of questioning to express their wondering  Freewrite about assumptions  Listening/Speaking  AB partners discuss vocabulary and defend their inferences  Small groups discuss assumptions and where they come from</td>
<td>See, Think, Wonder document  “Snack Attack” video  Slides with images  Freewrite journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text:  Images</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Week 3

Learning Goal: Students will understand how others influence their identities by reading and annotating a text in order to discuss and determine what influences their own identities.

Text: Article “A Teens Friends are a Powerful Influence” from E.L. Achieve unit on identity

Content
- Introduce concepts of positive and negative peer influence, conformity
- Make personal connections to text
- Determine percentage of their identity is influences by parents, peers, and selves.

Language
- Interact with new vocabulary
- Practice language of cause and effect
- Practice language of agree and disagree to support a claim and cite a text
- Read analytically

Reading
- Study synonym families
- Understand word connotation
- Practice reciprocal reading: annotating and discussing text

Writing
- Practice cause and effect structures collaboratively
- Use language or agree and disagree to support a claim and cite a text
- Freewrite responses to prompts

Listening/Speaking
- AB partners discuss vocabulary and practice target language structures
- Small groups discuss reading
- Vocabulary word form and connotation charts
- Chunked article
- Freewrite journals
- Pie Chart
- “Says, Means, Matters” handout

Final Unit Assignment Rubric and Requirements

Learning Goal: Students will demonstrate their understanding of identity by reviewing articles and using vocabulary words and target sentence structures to write short paragraphs about their opinions and identities.

Mask (20 points)
- Has one side that shows symbols/words that represent their Inner Self (10 points)
- Has one side that shows symbols/words that represent their Outer Self (10 points)

Written Slides (40 points)
1. Has an introduction slide that includes
   - Definition of identity
   - What types of things make up identity
   - What aspects of identity are most important to you
2. Cites an article and gives an explanation of why you agree or disagree with it (Says, Means, Matters)
3. Has a slide with a picture of your mask’s “Outer Self” side and an explanation
   - Describe your choice of images and words (2–3 sentences)
   - Describe an experience or event (2–3 sentences)
4. Has a slide with a picture of your mask’s “Inner Self” side and an explanation
   - Use a contrast sentence that illustrated a clear difference between your “Outer Self” and “Inner Self”
- Describe your choice of images and words (2–3 sentences)
- Describe an experience or event (2–3 sentences)

**Language and Sentence Structures (20 points)**
- Use multiple vocabulary words (4–6) throughout your writing.
- Use correct capitalization, spelling, and punctuation throughout your writing.

### Slide Instructions and Sentence Frames
(You must use at least 1 frame from each box on the appropriate slide)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slide #</th>
<th>Sentence Frames</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Slide #1</strong></td>
<td>Introduce identity and the key factors of your identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition of identity</strong></td>
<td>According to __, the word identity means “_. “</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- __ defines identity as __.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What types of things make up identity?</strong></td>
<td>Identity can include __.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The elements of a person’s identity could be __.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- __, __, __, and __, are just some aspects of identity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Slide #2**
Show how you agree or disagree with one of the articles we read.
Use the **Says, Means, Matters** sentence frames to show how you agree or disagree with one of the articles we have read.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slide #3</th>
<th>Explain the Outer Self of your mask. Tell a story of your experience.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Describe your choice of images and words focusing on one if you wish.</strong></td>
<td>My choice of __ for my outer self shows/illustrates __.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ___ represent my outer self because __.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Describe an experience or event (2–3 sentences)</strong></td>
<td>At first, I __</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I remember when __.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I considered myself __.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I believed that __.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Later, I __.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Slide #4**
Explain the Inner Self of your mask. Tell a story of your experience.

| **Use a contrast sentence that illustrated a clear difference between your “Outer Self” and “Inner Self”** | While my outer self is __, my inner self is __. |
| - My outer self is __. In contrast, my inner self is __. | |
| **Describe your choice of images and words.** | My choice of __ for my outer self shows/illustrates __. |
| - ___ represent my outer self because __. | |

**Describe an experience or event (2–3 sentences)**
- At first, I __ |
- I remember one time when __. |
- I considered myself __. |
- I believed that __. |
- Later, I __.
## APPENDIX F

### WEEK 1 INDUCTIVE VOCABULARY LESSON

### Word Forms Chart: Determining an Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Meaning</th>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To show or represent</td>
<td>signal</td>
<td>signify</td>
<td>signature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>muddle</td>
<td>muddled</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>immersión</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>immersed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bicultural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>claim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acknowledgement</td>
<td>acknowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Directions:
Read each sentence. Use context clues to select the best definition for the underlined word.

“What’s that red dot on your mother’s head?”
“The red dot is a bindi — it **signifies** she’s married.”

- a. Hides
- b. Confuses
- c. Shows
APPENDIX G
ARTICLE NOTETAKER AND SENTENCE FRAMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Narrator, Rudri Patel as a child (hides or claims)</th>
<th>Her Daughter (visible or hidden)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region (where they live)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture - Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture - Food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture - Clothing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture - Holidays &amp; music</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The narrator _____________, but her daughter ______________.

- The narrator didn’t want to bring her food to school, **but** her daughter **does**.
- The daughter **wanted to show her identity**, **yet** the narrator **did not**.

1. 
2. 

While the narrator __________, her daughter __________.

Even though the narrator __________, her daughter __________.

- **While** the narrator **wanted to hide her Indian culture**, her daughter **proudly claims it**.
- The daughter **proudly claims her Indian culture while** the narrator **wanted to hide it**.

1. 
2. 

__________. **On the other hand, In contrast**____

- The narrator didn’t tell her friends about her trips to India. **On the other hand**, her daughter tells her friends about her traditions.

1. 
2. 

Now, use the sentence structures to compare yourself and either the narrator or her daughter. Do you claim your culture to your friends outside your home, or do you try to hide it? What about your family. Do they claim their culture outside of the home?
Use **but** or **yet**

Use **while** or **even though**

Use **On the other hand** or **In contrast**
APPENDIX H

SEE, THINK, WONDER ACTIVITY

Name: __________________________ Hour: ____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEE</th>
<th>THINK</th>
<th>WONDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What do you see?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What do you think is going on?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What does it make you wonder?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List the things you see in the picture. Use words.

Write a few **sentences** about what you think the tone is in this picture.

Ask a few **questions** that you have about the picture.

- I think the tone is ___ because _____.
- Seeing __ led me to
  think/believe/consider the tone is ___.
- It looks like __ is the tone because ___.
- Who ________?
- What ________?
- When ________?
- Where ________?
- Why ________?
- How ________?

This image is one of three students saw and discussed.
APPENDIX I

SAYS, MEANS, MATTERS ACTIVITY AND INFLUENCE PIE CHART

Says, Means, Matters

Select a Golden Line from the text. That means a line or a sentence that you feel is powerful, has a strong meaning, or maybe you connect to it in some way.

- First, cite the author and write the quote below.
- Then, in your own words, explain what the quote says. This is a paraphrase (saying the same thing but using different words).
- Finally, explain why it is important to know this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does it SAY?</th>
<th>What does it MEAN?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The authors (Last names)</td>
<td>“”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state share</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why does it MATTER?

This ________ is ________ because it shows ________.
- quote important
- passage significant
- excerpt noteworthy

WRITE HERE

Says (Copy the exact words from the article)


Means (Explain in your own words what this quote means)


Matters (Explain why this quote is important)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influencer</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Adult</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX J

POST-ADAPTATION SURVEY

I. Demographics
Answer each of the following questions to the best of your knowledge.
1. What grade are you in right now?
   a. 8
   b. 9
2. What language(s) do you speak at home? _____________________________
3. What grade did you start school in the US? __________________________
4. What grade did you start school in Springdale? _______________________
5. If you can remember, how many years have you been in an ELD class? ________
6. If you had a choice, would you stay in ELD classes? Why or why not?

II. Attitudes About ELD
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements In ELD class, I…</th>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Disagree</th>
<th>3 Agree</th>
<th>4 Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. I always give my best effort.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Enjoy working with my groupmates to practice the language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Learn better when I work alone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Am excited to be there.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Am excited for it to end.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Know that my English is improving.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Enjoy when what we are learning is challenging.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Feel supported by my teachers and peers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Enjoy taking risks and trying the new vocabulary and sentence structures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Feel people accept me for who I am.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Feel that all students are treated equally.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Feel comfortable telling teachers when I feel students are not treated fairly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 Disagree</th>
<th>3 Agree</th>
<th>4 Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. I feel that learning the topic of identity is important for my life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I think topic of identity is interesting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I wish ELD topics were more connected to my culture and other parts of my life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. ELD is a worthwhile and necessary class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. ELD is dull and boring.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. ELD is as important as any other subject.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I feel ELD helps me develop my English language skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Students responded to the following prompts, eight of which yielded data for my study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **October 4, 2022**         | • What does being an English learner mean?  
            | How long have you been an English learner? When do you believe you will no longer be considered an English learner?  
            | Do you believe that your teachers see you as an English learner? Who sees you as an English learner?  |
| **October 6, 2022**         | • What does it mean to “represent?”  
            | • Do a quick Google Search for quotes and images to see what you find.  
            | • Who do you represent? What represent you?  |
| **October 20, 2022**        | Do you agree or disagree with this statement: “**ELD would be better if people respected each other**.”  
            | • What do people do that is disrespectful in this class?  
            | • Is the disrespect toward the teacher or other students? Explain.  
            | • What does respectful behavior look like? Explain.  |
| **October 28, 2022**        | • Which organization was most interesting to you? Explain why it was interesting.  
            | • In what way can you connect your own life/experiences to these organizations? Explain your answer.  
            | • Do you see another problem in the community that these organizations don’t address?  |
| **November 1, 2022**        | • What do you think is the most important thing that you have learned?  
            | • How can you use this in other parts of your life?  
            | • What was the most difficult?  
            | • What are you most proud of?  |
| **November 9, 2022**        | • Is your culture acknowledged in school by other people? If yes, how and where is it acknowledged. If no, what culture(s) are acknowledged in school?  
            | • Where is your culture acknowledged outside of school?  |
| **November 14, 2022**       | • What aspects of your identity chart do you claim to other people?  
<pre><code>        | • What aspect of your identity chart do only you see?  |
</code></pre>
<p>| <strong>December 1, 2022</strong>        | • When have you been positively influenced by a friend or peer?  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 28, 2022</td>
<td>• When has a friend or peer been positively influenced by you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What assumptions to people make about you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Why do you think they assume that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How does it make you feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 12, 2022 (Follow-up to October 4 Freewrite)</td>
<td>• Look at and read the cards on the table in front of you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pick three that you connect with OR strongly disagree with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sit in a group with others that chose the same card.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Talk about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Write about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 14, 2022</td>
<td>• What was your favorite part of the identity unit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What did you learn about your identity in this unit that you didn’t realize or know before?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What would you change about the Identity Unit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Is this unit something we should keep in ELD? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Date: October 4, 2022

Question: What does being an English learner mean? How long have you been an English language learner? When do you believe you will no longer be considered an English learner? Do you believe that your teachers see you as an English learner? Who sees you as an English learner?

Coding:
- Positive Perceptions of ELD
- Negative Perceptions of ELD
- Negative Discourse about ELD
- Placement Policies and procedures - Confusion

S: Sense of Self Confidence (+or -)
O: Others’ beliefs about me ( + or -)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student 1</th>
<th>I’ve been an English learner for 6 years and I would consider that being an English learner helped me a lot throughout these last 6 years. All my teachers know I am good on my English and that I shouldn’t be a English learner anymore. Being an English learner is going to waste my time to my other classes on my high school grades. I should be out here doing my work on algebra, work read, physical science, and also paying attention to basketball. I am going to prove that being in this class, had really helped me but it shouldn’t be shown on my schedule. Well my family sees me as an English learner because of how I’m fluent in Marshallese.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>I think English Language Learner are those people that needs to learn more things, I’ve been in English Language Learner for almost 2 years. I believe that one day I won’t be English Language Learn. Being English Language Learner is kind of easy and hard sometimes. I know that some people knows that I am in a ELD because of how I pronounce things. Being a English Language Learner is great, because we’re still learning things that we don’t know. I think that the reason why people are in ELD, their grades are bad and there’s might be something that they don’t know. ELD is just a class that students needs to learn, it’s not for dumb people. I didn’t have ELD last year and I was confused why am I in ELD but I really don’t mind I am okay with it, because we’re learning. I heard a lot of people talk negative about it, some people thinks that the people that are in ELD are dumb. I really don’t mind being in a ELD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>For me being an English learner means that I have the opportunity to learn all the English language. I have been in ELD 2 years and I would like to get out of ELD at the end of this year and not have it next year. ELD hasn’t being easy at the beginning it was really hard now is not as hard as it was before I think I have grow a lot I think I am better speaking the English language than when I started practicing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>There is really no problem being in ELD it’s just a class that can help you develop on learning based skills and more there is no negativity about ELD it’s just a class at the end of the day This if my first time in ELD and it just came out of nowhere and I had no problem with it cause I knew it had it and it just feels easy for me all I gotta do is work hard and stay on task and i’ll get the work done but sometimes i’m distracted and I start messing around and get off task really the main purpose of ELD is for you to develop it’s not a class for dumb people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>I don’t really remember when I stared to learn English I just know that I have gotten really good at my English and that I will pass the ELPA this year because I know what I am good at and all my teacher are suppose that I am in ELD so I want to show them that this year when I take the ELPA I will pass and I won’t have to take it ever again. My teachers believe in me so I believe in myself I know that things will happen and that I have good grades and that I will end this year on a good note.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 6</td>
<td>I have been 3 years in ELD I believe that this is my last year in ELD I want that this been my last year because I feel ready to leave ELD and have other classes. I believe that some of my teacher see me as an English language learner because sometimes I forget how to say thing and it’s kinda complicated but now that I been practicing more my English is better I don’t really like to be in ELD but I know that been in this class is going to help me to be better in English, I want to practice more my English so this year can be my last year in ELD and in high school have better classes. I feel I’m ready to leave ELD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 7</td>
<td>I have been in ELD since 6th grade, I believe that I will no longer be in ELD after this school year. I think my teachers see me as an English language learner, I think my family members see me as an English language learner as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 8</td>
<td>I have been 4 years in English language learner and I think when I get to sophomore or junior year I will no longer be in English language learners. Teacher think I have to take English learner because sometimes it difficult for me to answer to something or write so that why teachers want me to learn more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 9</td>
<td>I think I am not a language learner right now I feel like my teacher thinks I’m getting better but I think I’m in here because they have seen that I need a little bit of more work on my English and how I write but I feel like I’m getting there and I feel like I have gotten better then threw all the years I have been in ELD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 10</td>
<td>I have English language for 3 years 6th, 7th, 8th, I don’t feel like a English language learned next year I am not going to be in ELD any more I learn new thing in this past 3 years but I feel like I am ready to get out off ELD I can live with out ELD. It funny to be in ELD but I don’t feel like that any more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 11</td>
<td>I’ve been in ELD since my schedule changed because people think I can’t speak English when I can. I believe that I can get out of ELD after the semester because I understand everything. The only person who I think can see that I can pass is me and my advisory teacher. The people who sees me as an ELD student are my friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 12</td>
<td>For me, English learning means that you’re trying to learn more English and you try to get better with English because English is a very hard language there’s a lot of words that you still may not know or understand because barely even people uses them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 13</td>
<td>English Language learner to me it means for me to learn words and know how to say them and pronouns them. I’ve been an English learner for about 3 or 4 years and it’s getting better each time. I believe maybe when I am a Junior or Sophomore is when I’m gonna be a learner. My teacher sees me as an English language learner because I am not from America. Some teachers thinks I am an English learner based on how I look because I am an islander and nothing can change the way I look even if something happens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 14</td>
<td>I don’t see myself as a English languish learner cuz I feel like I know enough to get me through life and I feel kind dumb for it and I just don’t like it. It’s boring and I sleep a lot and I want classes that are fun and that I want to learn so I don’t fell like I am a learner and I want to have fun and I just don’t like to learn alot of things that I fell are just making my life harder and just adding to that stress and I want a place that I feel like I am a having fun but not all people can have fun right and I am a teen and I want fun to be my life styl you know.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>