EXAMINING THE "WHY" BEHIND ACCELERATED READING GROWTH OF ENGLISH
LEARNERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

With a

Major in Educational Leadership in the

Department of Graduate Education

Northwest Nazarene University

by

Brett Twiss

May 2021

Major Professor: Heidi Curtis, Ph.D.

AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT

DISSERTATION

This dissertation of Brett Twiss, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major

in Educational Leadership and titled "Examining the "Why" Behind Accelerated Reading

Growth of English Learners: A Qualitative Study," has been reviewed in final form. Permission,

as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies.

Major Professor	*Heidi Curtis* Dr. Heidi Curtis	Date	5/3/2021 | 18:52:36 MDT
Committee Members	*Dr. Arturo Gonzalez* Dr. Arturo Gonzalez	Date	5/4/2021 | 09:13:06 MDT
	Dr. Kristen Nason Dr. Kristen Nason	Date	5/4/2021 | 09:16:41 MDT
Doctoral Program Director	*Bethani Studebaker* Dr. Bethani Studebaker	Date	5/4/2021 | 10:11:08 MDT
Discipline's College Dean	*Lori Sanchez* Dr. LoriAnn Sanchez	Date	5/4/2021 | 17:24:00 MDT

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank my grandparents, Jim and Nedra Korte, for teaching me the values of hard work, commitment, and humility. From an early age I admired how hard you worked in life and you needed zero recognition. You both give so much and expect little in return, and your humility and selflessness has inspired me to be a better person.

Next, I would like to recognize my mother, Kaleen Goedhart, for helping shape who I am today. You have taught me the values of honesty, persistence, and transparency. Thank you for being the best mother a child could ask for and for always loving me unconditionally. You have helped shape me into the person I am today and thank you for your continued support throughout my life.

I would like to thank my brother, Brad Twiss, for being such a positive role model in my life. Every day I learn from you because you are such an incredible educator and coach. Thank you for inspiring everyone you work with to be their best. I always look up to you, and I am such a better educator and person because are part of my life.

Lastly, I would like to thank my committee. Thank you, Dr. Curtis, for your encouragement, feedback, and continued support over the past two years. I could not have done this without you. Thank you, Dr. Gonzalez, for your feedback, support, and knowledge. You provided such a unique perspective that helped me polish this paper. Lastly, thank you, Dr. Nason, for being a role model and someone who I have looked up to as an educator. Your love for learning, student support, and continued education, has inspired me as an educator and encouraged me to purse this degree.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family. From an early age they have instilled into me the value of hard work, humility, and kindness. Their continuous love and support have made me a better educator and person. I am lucky to have such an amazing support system that has guided me through this process.

ABSTRACT

With the vast increase of English learner populations enrolled in schools across the United States, there has been significant attention being placed on educational practices to best serve the needs of EL students. This awareness has been due to the widening proficiency gap between EL students compared to their native English-speaking peers. Current research being conducted is geared toward best practices for educators to help meet the needs of EL students instructionally. However, there is no research geared with the aim to listen to EL students who have made significant academic growth, to hear their voices, to determine factors they consider aiding in their academic success. This qualitative study investigates factors EL students identify as contributing to their academic achievement and reading growth. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted amongst EL students from four different urban and suburban school districts across the state of Idaho. Themes from these interviews found that EL students identified key factors contributing to their overall educational success. Support and guidance from their school, teachers, and family fostered a place of belonging where EL student felt confident to take risks to improve their content knowledge and proficiency in learning the English language. Exposure to reading text of choice, engaging in content with subtitles, and enrollment in classes specifically designed for EL student contributed to their achievement. Lastly, EL students identified their own internal drive to want to succeed added to their academic growth and success.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter I

Introduction

A major purpose in education is to help each student succeed and to guide them in reaching their full potential (Karathanos, 2009; Rojas & Avitia, 2007).   The challenge of meeting the diverse learning needs of students lies in the ability to provide instruction to meet the needs of all learners in the classroom (Baecher, Artigliere, Patterson, & Spatzer, 2012; Gibson, 2017; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Smiley-Blanton, 2010; Willner & Mokhtari, 2018). One group of students whose needs is underserved is the English learner (EL) population (Batt, 2008; Butler & Stevens, 2001; Cook, Boals, & Lundberg, 2011; Deussen, Hanson, & Bisht, 2017). Students who are EL speak a language other than English, and have not yet been deemed proficient in the English language (Ferlazzo & Hull Sypnieski, 2012; Singer, 2018). The term EL refers only to the student's proficiency level in the English language and does not take into account other languages the student understands, reads, writes, or speaks (Ferlazzo & Hull Sypnieski, 2012; Singer, 2018). Across the United States, the terms English Language Learner (ELL), Limited English Proficient (LEP), and English Learner (EL) are used interchangeably to address students who are not proficient and are learning the English language (Ferlazzo & Hull Sypnieski, 2012; Singer, 2018). For the purpose of consistency, the term EL will be used throughout this study to refer to a student who is on the path in becoming proficient in the English language.

Students who are EL are challenged to master both content and language standards in English, which is not their primary language (Baecher et al., 2012; Short, 2017; Smiley-Blanton, 2010). English learners are often mainstreamed in the general education classroom, and teachers struggle to meet student needs because of lack of professional development opportunities geared

to assist ELs (Deussen et al., 2017; Gibson, 2017; Grant, Bell, Yoo, Jimenez, & Frye, 2017; Molle, 2013; Roy-Campbell, 2013; Willner & Mokhtari, 2018). A combination of both teacher training and quality instruction is needed to help the EL population succeed in general content classes (Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel, & Sun-Irminger, 2006; Tilley-Lubbs & Kreye, 2013).

Due to rising EL populations in American schools, there has been a focus on closing the achievement gap to foster a successful learning experience for students (Baecher et al., 2012; Bailey & Huang, 2011; Batt, 2008; Butler & Stevens, 2001; Cook et al., 2011; Deussen et al., 2017; Grant et al., 2017; Kieffer, 2008; Lakin & Young, 2013; Lenski et al., 2006; Miley & Farmer, 2017; Molle, 2013; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Roy-Campbell, 2013; Short, 2017; Smiley-Blanton, 2010; Solari, Petscher, & Folsom, 2014; Taherbhai, Husein, & O'Malley, 2015; Willner & Monroe, 2016). The passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 became the foundation to meet the needs of ELs, and over the recent decades it has been amended to ensure school districts are best serving their students (Bailey & Huang, 2011; Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; Saunders & Marcelletti, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). These amendments are a result of the growing number of ELs schools serve, which is approaching 10% of the student population (Cook et al., 2011; Deussen, et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The graduation rate is significantly lower for EL students, approximately 20% less, compared to the average of the rest of the general population (Deussen et al., 2017; Manken, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). It is federal law that all EL students are tested to determine their English Language Proficiency (ELP), in reading, writing, speaking, and listening to give baseline data and determine growth in their learning (Taherbhai et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This data is provided to each school and is used to help inform instruction (Miley & Farmer, 2017; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Taherbhai et al.,

2015; Willner & Monroe, 2016). Each state must ensure students are receiving quality instruction and have the opportunity to become proficient in all areas tested (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) is one of the largest consortiums that provides a yearly assessment to monitor student growth (Willner & Monroe, 2016). Yearly student reports provide data to schools which indicate what students know and can do (Cook et al., 2011; Manken, 2010; Miley & Farmer, 2017; Mitchell, 2017; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Tilley-Lubbs & Kreye, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). These reports are valuable to educators because they allow for appropriate placement and periodic assessments to take place, assisting and monitoring EL students to continue growing and improving their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills (Taherbhai et al., 2015; Willner & Monroe, 2016). Since the passage of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2016, school districts have the flexibility to determine the testing instruments and data collection system to report growth (Miley & Farmer, 2017; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Willner & Monroe, 2016). Even though states have the opportunity to determine assessment instruments and data collection systems, 40 states chose to be part of the WIDA consortium and use the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 to assess student achievement, and to monitor progress in the acquisition of the English language (University of Wisconsin Center, 2018; Willner & Monroe, 2016; Wolf, Farnsworth, & Herman, 2008).

Professional development geared toward instruction and assessment to meet the needs of ELs is an important step in closing the achievement gap (Batt, 2008; Deussen et al., 2017; Gibson, 2017; Swanson, 2015; Willner & Mokhtari, 2018). Over the past decade, there has been over a 50% increase in EL students in classrooms which has identified the need for professional

development for teachers in supporting this growing number of students (Cook et al., 2011; Batt, 2008; Willner & Mokhtari, 2018). With the growing diversity in cultural backgrounds of EL students, there is a necessity to understand the customs and cultural norms to help meet their needs (Grant et al., 2017; Lenski et al., 2006). Students who are EL come to the classroom with a diverse understanding of the English language, making it difficult for teachers to meet the needs of each individual student (Deussen et al., 2017). One way to assist teachers in closing achievement gaps and meeting the diverse needs of their students is to provide professional development geared toward strengthening instruction around vocabulary development, language acquisition, as well as developing strategies in how to provide appropriate accommodations during instruction (Batt, 2008; Deussen et al., 2017; Gibson, 2017; Swanson, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Due to the rising number of students classified as EL in American schools, and the widening proficiency gap between ELs and general education students, there has been considerable attention brought to EL education (Batt, 2008; Butler & Stevens, 2001; Cook et al., 2011; Deussen et al., 2017; Lakin & Young, 2013; Lenski et al., 2006; Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; Molle, 2013; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Saunders & Marcelletti, 2012; Taherbhai et al., 2014). Even though there has been increased attention to meet the needs of students who are EL, most of the support happens in targeted intervention classes, not the general education classroom (Baecher et al., 2012; Batt, 2008; Butler, 2001; Cook et al., 2011; Grant et al., 2017; Lenski et al., 2006; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015).

Students who are EL and are mainstreamed into general education classes struggle and face challenges that hinder their success. These challenges are often due to the lack of differentiation of instruction to align with varied student ability levels, which can lead to student

disengagement (Cook et al., 2011; Lenski et al., 2006; Miley & Farmer, 2017; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Taherbhai et al., 2014; Tilley-Lubbs & Kreye, 2013). EL students are expected to be able to master the same learning targets as the rest of the general population in their non-native language (Miley & Farmer, 2017; Roy-Campbell, 2013; Solari et al., 2014; Swanson, 2015; Taherbhai et al., 2014; Zheng, Jyh-Chong, & Chin-Chung, 2017). A delay in the development of the academic language needed for EL students to be successful in general content classes can happen when instruction and assessment do not align to the student's current level of understanding, especially in an academic nature (Cook et al., 2011; Lenski et al., 2006; Miley & Farmer, 2017; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Taherbhai et al., 2014; Tilley-Lubbs & Kreye, 2013).

Student WIDA scores are used to measure student growth from one year to the next (Miley & Farmer, 2017; Taherbhai et al., 2014; Willner & Monroe, 2016). Knowing each EL students current level of performance in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in the English language can help the teacher tailor instruction to maximize student participation, to help process content, and to assist students in proving their understanding through meaningful assessments (Cook et al., 2011; Lenski et al., 2006; Miley & Farmer, 2017; Molle, 2013; Solari et al., 2014; Taherbhai et al., 2014). To ensure instructional alignment, teacher-created formative assessments need to be geared to EL standards and must have different proficiency levels aligned with state standards (Bailey & Huang, 2011; Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; Saunders & Marcelletti, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Being able to provide appropriate instruction to EL students at their language levels and to assess progress based on growth will help students access the English language while learning content (Cook et al., Kieffer, 2008; Lakin & Young, 2013; Lenski et al., 2006; Miley & Farmer, 2017; Molle, 2013; Solari et al.,

2014; Taherbhai et al., 2014). In addition to providing quality instruction for ELs, it is equally important to listen to student feedback to determine factors that contribute to growth and success in the school setting. To foster a successful learning experience for EL students, and to ensure they are prepared for life after high school, it is vital to listen to what those students deem are factors that contribute to their growth and success in acquiring English as a second language.

Background

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which became a pivotal point in civil rights legislation (Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). In the aim of fostering high standards for education across the United States, the federal grants were given to school districts to promote equal access to education by all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Over the past 50 years, the ESEA has been revised with the goal of closing the achievement gap for students (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). One of the most significant updates to the ESEA was President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, which advocated for school district transparency in reporting student progress (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Special funding was provided to school districts serving EL populations to assist with students making adequate yearly progress (AYP), with the aim of reading proficiency (U.S. Department of Education, 2007, 2016). Federal grant funding was used to assist with hiring teachers, language instruction programs, and testing of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Even though Federal dollars were given to local school districts, there were several reported issues with NCLB (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017).

Due to the struggle of acquiring a second language and learning academic content, EL students made significantly fewer gains than their native English-speaking peers during the era of NCLB (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Even though EL students faced the barriers of learning a new language, culture, and mastering academic standards, they were held accountable for the same growth rates, in the same end-of-year norm referenced exams (Bailey & Huang; Batt, 2008; Butler & Stevens, 2001; Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017). As the success rates of EL students on state mandated tests remained stagnant, there was a desire to change policy to more accurately reflect their growth and academic success (Deussen et al., 2017; Manken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017).

Criticism of NCLB opened the door for President Barack Obama's administration to advocate for reform, and as a result, the passage of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), in 2015, served to amend components of NCLB (Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Changes made in ESSA related directly to ELs, which make up 10% of the total population of American students (Cook et al. 2011, Deussen et al. 2017, Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The high school graduation rate for all students in the United States is 82.3% compared to the graduation rate of ELs which hovers around 62.6% (Department of Education, 2016). A significant change from NCLB to ESSA is the role of Local Education Agencies (LEA) and their reporting of EL achievement data (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). School districts are classified as LEA, and each school district within their respective states must report EL academic achievement in the following domains: reading, writing, speaking, and listening (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Each state has the flexibility to determine these standards for EL students and the proficiency bands that assess each standard (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S.

Department of Education, 2016). Changes made under ESSA allow states to determine their own accountability and progress monitoring system, which allows for greater flexibility to meet the needs of students at the local level (Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to craft and investigate questions based on a gap in current research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This research was based on identifying factors that contribute in accelerating the growth of EL reading proficiency as measured by WIDA's ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment. The aim of this study was to help identify factors that contribute to an authentic learning experience that will help each student acquire both the content and language skills necessary to be successful in life beyond high school (Miley & Farmer, 2017; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Taherbhai et al., 2014; Willner & Monroe, 2016). The following research questions framed this qualitative study.

1. What do students perceive as the greatest factors contributing to their accelerated reading growth as demonstrated by the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment?

2. What are the greatest obstacles faced by EL students as they learn the culture and academic setting of the English language and American education system?

3. How do EL students perceive the climate and culture of a school as an impact on their growth and academic success in the classroom?

Description of Terms

Several acronyms and interchangeable labels are used when addressing EL education; therefore, it is important to provide a clear definition of words used in this study. Distinctly defining and explaining the meaning of educational terms will clarify language used in this dissertation (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

ACCESS for ELLs 2.0. A test administered yearly to students who are learning the English language and is a tool to help monitor their progress. The assessment is given to k-12 students who are English Learners (Willner & Monroe, 2016).

English as a foreign language (EFL). Students who are learning the English language in a country where English is not the primary language (Ferlazzo & Hull Sypnieski, 2012).

English language development (ELD). Programs or instruction geared to increase the English proficiency of EL students in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Ferlazzo & Hull Sypnieski, 2012).

English learner (EL). A student who speaks a language other than English and has not yet demonstrated English language proficiency (Singer, 2018).

English language learner (ELL). A student who is a minority and has limited proficiency in the English language. The term is preferable to limited-English proficient because it highlights a positive connotation rather than a negative connotation (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

English as a second language (ESL). A program with dedicated curriculum to instruct students acquiring the English language. Instruction is typically given in English with minor use of the student's native language. Often, the curriculum helps teach English language skills relating to reading, writing, speaking, listening, and vocabulary development (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). This act was passed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 and was committed to providing federal government support for equal access to a quality education for all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This act was signed into law by President Barack Obama and is the latest reauthorization of NCLB and the ESEA. The ESSA retained several of the federal requirements of NCLB, but it does give increased flexibility in the types of assessments states may use (Aragon et al., 2016).

L1. A student native or primary language (Ferlazzo & Hull Sypnieski, 2012).

L2. The language a student is acquiring in addition to their native language (Ferlazzo & Hull Sypnieski, 2012).

Local Education Agency (LEA). A public board of education constituted within a State for administrative control, or to provide a service for public primary and secondary schools in a city, school district, county, or political subdivision of a State (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Limited English Proficiency (LEP). A student with limited English proficiency and is a national-origin-minority student (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Long-term English learner (LTEL). A student who has been in the United States for at least six years and has not been reclassified as fluent in the English language based on local criteria (Singer, 2018).

Newcomer. A student who is emerging English proficiency but is new to United States schooling (Singer, 2018).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). Law signed by president George W. Bush with the aim to improve student achievement and to change American school culture. This act reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which gives federal assistance to public schools. The NCLB act was amended by the ESSA in 2016 (Aragon et al., 2016).

State Education Agency (SEA). The State board of education or other agencies responsible for the State supervision of public primary and secondary schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA). WIDA is one of the largest consortiums that provides a yearly assessment data to monitor student growth. Yearly student reports give data to schools that demonstrate what students know and can do in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Willner & Monroe, 2016).

Significance of the Study

Being able to provide a quality education for all students to best serve their unique learning needs is important in education (Reeves, 2011). Little research has been conducted which explores factors EL students contribute to their success in acquiring the English language and American culture. Due to struggles experienced by EL students, there is a desire across the United States to close the achievement gap to help promote a successful educational experience (Gibson, 2017; Johnson & Wells, 2017; Kieffer, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Due to the lack of available research regarding EL students and factors they perceive contribute to their success, this study will provide data to the educational community to help close the achievement gap between EL and non-EL students. School districts across the United States with large concentrations of ELs could be interested in the results of this study. Being able to identify factors that are responsible for a successful learning experience for EL students can help pave the way for a successful educational experience for current and future students.

Theoretical Framework

To enhance the understanding of the underlying factors that contribute to the success of EL students in the American education system, Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model was used as a support to understand child development (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). A child's environment has a direct connection on their growth and development throughout their life (Bessman, Carr, & Grimes, 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, Onchwari, & Keengwe, 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, Ernest, & Perkins, 2018). To consider factors that contribute to student success in education, especially for students who are learning the English language, it is vital to understand how their environment impacts their development. A study by Vardanyan et al. (2018) argued external factors such as family, school, and the country where a child was born, played a significant role in their ability to acquire a second language and culture.

To clearly understand factors that contribute to the development of a child, Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model provides a framework that outlines how the different systems a child engages with impacts their development (Bessman et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan et al., 2018). Five distinct layers make up Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model and serve as concentric circles that surround the child, which is housed in the center (Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). Each circle that is further removed from the child has less of a direct impact on their development, and these five systems can overlap and dovetail with one another (Bessman et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan et al., 2018).

The system housed closest to the child is the microsystem, and this system consists of the child's family, friend group, and school (Bessman et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan et al., 2018). Since the microsystem has the most immediate effect on child development, there is a direct connection between the education a child receives and their development. The layer resting outside the microsystem is the mesosystem, which illustrates the connections between a child's microsystems (Bessman et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan et al., 2018). This could be a relationship between the child's family and their school, which may have a favorable, or adverse effect on EL student development. The layer resting outside the mesosystem is the exosystem, which has an indirect or distant connection to a child's life (Bessman et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan et al., 2018). The workplace of the child's parent or the neighborhood a child resides in can impact their overall development. The socioeconomic status where an EL student lives could impact their growth and development. The most removed layer nested outside the exosystem is the macrosystem, and this system is connected to the child's values, culture, and political influences (Bessman et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan et al., 2018). Often EL students are immigrants who come to the United States early in their lives to flee from war torn nations; even though America might not be at war, the child's early life experiences can impact their development. The final system of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model is the chronosystem, which surrounds the entire model (Bessman et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan et al., 2018). The chronosystem represents the concept of time, which indicates positive and negative

exposures to events throughout their lives. Positive growth and development can result from consistent stability in lives of EL students, but the opposite effect can happen if a child is exposed to periods of instability.

Overall, numerous factors impact the growth and development of a child. Being able to identify factors that students attribute to their success in American schools, and link them to Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model, can impart valuable information to explain their success.

Overview of Research Methods

The research methods used in this study are rooted in a qualitative research design. Marshall and Rossman (2016) explained qualitative research is essential due to its interpretive, practical, and being based in the lives and experiences of people. Qualitative research is used to explore a problem and to provide a detailed understanding of the key concept being studied (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Qualitative research is often used when variables are unknown, and therefore, need to be explored (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). As a result, qualitative research was conducted to determine underlying factors that contribute to accelerated growth and success of EL student in the American school system. Ex post facto data was collected and analyzed from student WIDA scores to determine accelerated growth; this data was used to drive this qualitative research. The analysis of the qualitative data was used to address the research questions of the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013).

The baseline data was ex post facto results from the WIDA consortiums ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment. This assessment is given annually to students who are classified as EL. The data from the ACCESS 2.0 assessment measured EL student reading results from four

school districts across the state of Idaho. Raw score data of EL student participants was used to measure student growth from one school year to the next. All names were coded in the data to protect the identity of the participants of the study. Data from the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 test was used to determine the proficiency levels where the greatest amount of student growth took place over one academic year. The findings from the WIDA score data were used to identify students to take part in the qualitative study.

Students who demonstrated growth by moving at least one proficiency bands in reading were identified to be participants in the study. A growth of one proficiency bands was classified as accelerated growth for this study. Five students from four different comprehensive high schools located near refugee centers were selected to take part in the study. Data was collected by completing semi-structured interviews of twenty high school students from the four different school districts in the state of Idaho. Once the interviews were completed, the data were transcribed and coded (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The coded data were then formed into themes relating to factors that contributed to the "why" behind accelerated student growth and their success in acquiring the English language and participating in the American school system.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

Significant attention has been brought to EL education in recent years with the aim to close the achievement gap and to provide a positive and successful learning experience for both students and teachers (Baecher et al., 2012; Bailey & Huang, 2011; Batt, 2008; Cook et al., 2011; Deussen et al., 2017; Grant et al., 2017; Lakin & Young, 2013; Miley & Farmer, 2017; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Roy-Campbell, 2013;; Smiley-Blanton, 2010; Taherbhai, Husein, & O'Malley, 2015; Willner & Monroe, 2016). Under President Lyndon B. Johnson, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, laid the framework for the rights of ELs, and over the recent decades the act has been amended to ensure student needs are being met (Bailey & Huang, 2011; Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; Saunders & Marcelletti, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The necessity of the amendments is due to a rapid growth in the EL population in public schools, which now is comprised of approximately 10% of the student population (Cook et al., 2011; Deussen, et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Unfortunately, a rise in EL enrollment in schools has exposed a gap in student achievement that has transferred to 20% reduction in graduation rates of ELs compared to the rest of the general population (Deussen et al., 2017; Manken, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). To combat the deficit, Federal laws are established for all ELs to take placement tests to determine their English Language Proficiency (ELP), in writing, reading, listening, and speaking to give school districts data to calculate growth in student learning (Taherbhai et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). School districts use this data to measure growth and to help inform instruction (Miley & Farmer, 2017; Pereira & de Oliveira,

2015; Taherbhai et al., 2015; Willner & Monroe, 2016). The purpose of this data collection is to ensure quality instruction is taking place and ELs have the opportunity to acquire the English language (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Professional development targeted toward aligned instruction and assessment geared to meet the needs of ELs can be an important step in addressing the gap in student achievement (Batt, 2008; Deussen et al., 2017; Gibson, 2017; Swanson, 2015; Willner & Mokhtari, 2018). Over the past decade, there has been a 50% growth in EL students in the classroom, which has pinpointed a need for quality professional development to meet the needs of these learners (Cook et al., 2011; Batt, 2008; Willner & Mokhtari, 2018). Students from around the world are being educated in American schools, leading to an increased desire to understand cultural differences of students to better serve them and to meet their educational needs (Grant et al., 2017; Lenski et al., 2006). The different languages EL students bring to the classroom can make it difficult for teachers to meet the specific and unique needs of each student they teach (Deussen et al., 2017). Providing professional development centered on vocabulary development, language acquisition, and providing appropriate accommodations for ELs is one way to begin to meet diverse needs of students in the classroom (Batt, 2008; Deussen et al., 2017; Gibson, 2017; Swanson, 2015).

It can be challenging to meet the needs of each student in the classroom and to guide them to success, but differentiated instruction can be a way to help make that happen (Baecher et al., 2012; Gibson, 2017; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Smiley-Blanton, 2010; Willner & Mokhtari, 2018). Differentiating instruction can be difficult for educators because EL students are tasked with mastering content in their non-native language. This means students are given the daunting task of learning both academic content and the English language (Baecher et al., 2012; Batt, 2008; Butler & Stevens, 2001; Cook, Boals, & Lundberg, 2011; Deussen, Hanson, & Bisht,

2017; Short, 2017; Smiley-Blanton, 2010). Often EL students are mainstreamed into general content classes and teachers voice concern about the preparedness and professional development needed to meet the needs of these students (Deussen et al., 2017; Gibson, 2017; Grant, Bell, Yoo, Jimenez, & Frye, 2017; Molle, 2013; Roy-Campbell, 2013; Willner & Mokhtari, 2018). The combination of sound training and quality instruction can be an effective combination geared toward the success of ELs and teachers in general education classes (Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel, & Sun-Irminger, 2006; Tilley-Lubbs & Kreye, 2013).

The largest agency geared toward assessment and progress monitoring of EL student growth is the WIDA consortium (Willner & Monroe, 2016). WIDA gives annual reports to schools which outline what each EL knows and can do (Cook et al., 2011; Manken, 2010; Miley & Farmer, 2017; Mitchell, 2017; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Tilley-Lubbs & Kreye, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The data in these reports are valuable to educators because they outline the skillset of EL students and give a framework for teachers to tailor instruction and to create assessments that help facilitate growth in the reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills (Taherbhai et al., 2015; Willner & Monroe, 2016). In 2016, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed, and it allowed school districts greater flexibility to determine the instruments and data collection tools to report the growth of ELs in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Miley & Farmer, 2017; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Willner & Monroe, 2016). Even though states are given the flexibility to collect and report data, the majority of states (40 in total) have selected to be part of the WIDA and to use their ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment to measure student achievement and track growth (University of Wisconsin Center, 2018; Willner & Monroe, 2016; Wolf et al., 2008).

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory has structured research regarding child development since the 1970s (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Over time Bronfenbrenner's model has been used as a theoretical framework guiding research with a focus on how a child's environment impacts their development (Bessman et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan et al., 2018). Since 1973, Bronfenbrenner's model has evolved and morphed from an Ecological Theory to a Bioecological Theory (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The major difference between Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and his Bioecological Theory is the role of the individual (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The Bioecological Theory emphasizes the significance of understanding an individual's development within each system, and it explains how the person and their environment affect one another bidirectionally (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The fifth system, the chronosystem, was added to the Bioecological Model to highlight the change of the person and their environments over time (Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

Rosa and Tudge (2013) explained the transformation of Bronfenbrenner's model has taken shape over three phases: phase 1 (1973-1979), phase II (1980-1993), and phase III (1993-2006). The foundational stage (phase I) of Bronfenbrenner's model argued the environment a child was raised impacted their development. Bronfenbrenner argued that research during this time period was not valid because the research focused solely on participants, and the researcher, but neglected the impact the child's environment had on research. The second phase (1980-1993) of Bronfenbrenner's model expanded to include different layers or systems impacting a child's development. The significance of culture was added to the model during phase II. Phase III of the theory placed greater emphasis on the role of the person in their bio

ecosystem. This was the first time the wording "bio ecosystem" appeared, along with a visual of

the model. The framework is illustrated as concentric circles nested inside one another from the

most proximal to the most distant. This ranges from micro causes to macro causes of a person's

development. Rosa and Tudge (2013) argued the best visual of the model would also

demonstrate how each system interconnects and relates to one another. The dissertation will

refer to the theoretical framework as Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model.

There are five distinct layers or systems, which compose Urie Bronfenbrenner's

Bioecological Model (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas &

Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological

Model is composed of five concentric circles resting inside one another like nesting dolls with

the child resting at the center of the model (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al.,

2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). Each circle that is

further removed from the child has a more distant impact on the his/her growth and

development (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017;

Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). Even though each system impacts a child's life

individually, systems do overlap and connect with one another (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross,

2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al.,

2018). See fig. 1 for a visual model of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model as it applies to

EL students.

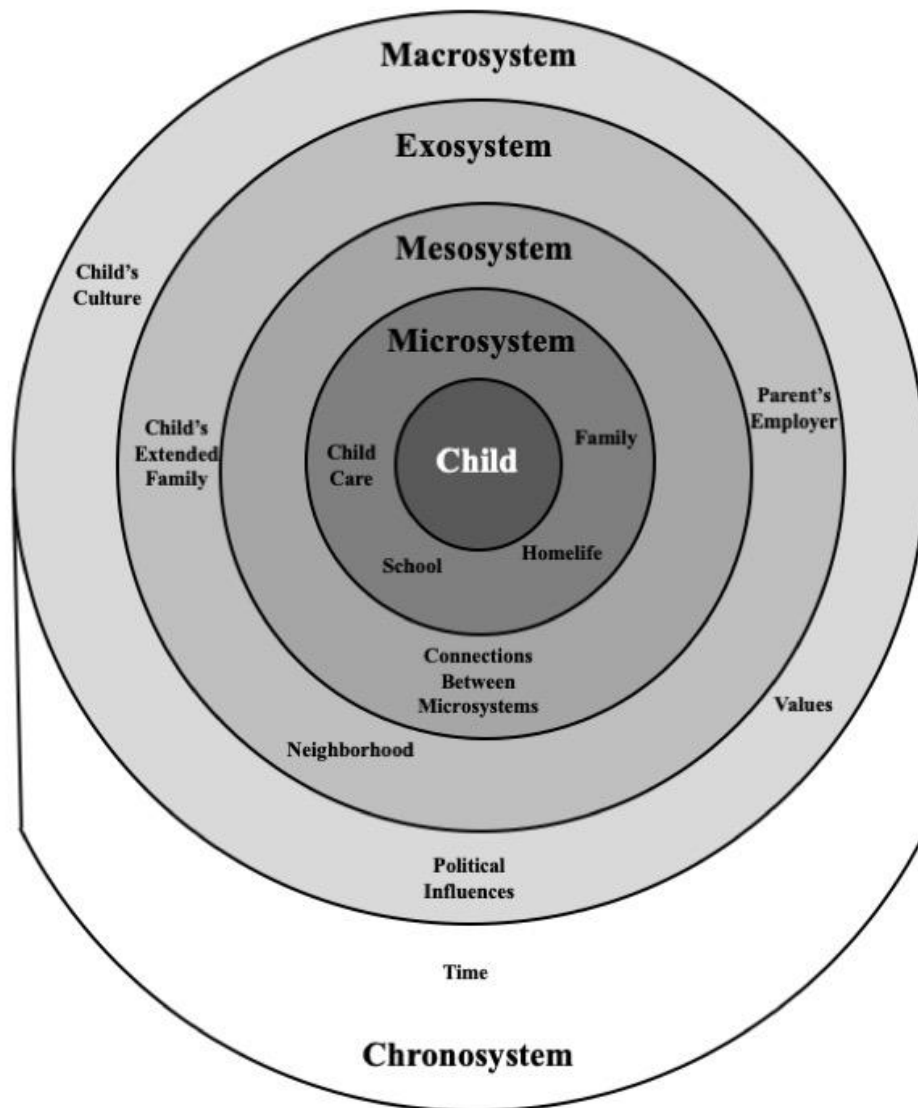**Fig. 1** Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model

The nucleus of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological model begins with the child (Bessman,

et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013;

Vardanyan, et al., 2018). The most immediate system with the closest proximity to the child is

the microsystem (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia,

2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). The microsystem consists of the child's family and homelife, their school or child care, and the peers with whom a child interacts (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). The microsystem has the greatest and most immediate impact on the child's development and therefore is located closest to the child in the model.

The layer falling outside the microsystem in Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model is the mesosystem (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). The mesosytem is about connections between each of the child's microsystems (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). A child's family and their schools could have both a positive or negative impact on their development (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). If a child has a supportive school and family life, there is a positive development for the child; however, the opposite can have adverse effects on a child's development if there is a fractured relationship between a child's school and homelife (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). Having positive relationship with each of a child's microsystem leads to a solid mesosystem (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018).

The third layer of Bronfenbrenner's model is the exosystem which describes how different systems have an indirect connection to a child's life (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). The factors in the exostystem do not directly come into contact with the child, but

impact their development (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). The workplace of a child's parent, their extended family member, or even the neighborhood where a child lives can impact his or her life and development (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). If the parent has a negative experience, that can have an indirect impact on the child because the parent's frustration is then brought into the home (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). This example explains the impact of the exosystem as well as demonstrates how each system can overlap. The scenario above also shows the connection between the child's microsystem (family) and their exosystem (parents place of employment).

The fourth layer described in Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model is the Macrosystem (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Tudge et al., 2009; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). This layer is the largest and most removed/distant from the child; therefore, it influences and is influenced by all of the other systems (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). This system refers to the child's culture, values, and political influences (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). A child born in a time period where a country was at war has an impact on their life and development (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). The child may move to a country not experiencing war, but their experience early in life can have a profound impact on their development (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017;

Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). It is important to emphasize that every cultural group might have a shared set of values. However, for any of these values to have an impact on a child's development it must be situated in one or more of the child's microsystems (Tudge et al., 2009). This means the cultures of the child's family, school, and community collectively have an impact on their development. Local, state, and federal laws also make up a child's macrosystem (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) or Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) have guidelines of what schools can and cannot do regarding education (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). These laws impact the child's life and also connects to his or her microsystem (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

The final layer of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (Chronosystem) is the most removed and encapsulates the entire model (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). The chronosystem adds the layer of time to a child's growth and development (Menken, 2010; Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). The chronosystem indicates continual changes or consistency impacts the life of a child (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). If a child experiences stability and consistency over time there can be positive growth and development, but if there are time periods of instability, a child's development can be adversely affected

(Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018).

The History and Legal Responsibility for English Learners in Education

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, became the cornerstone of civil rights legislation in the realm of education (Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The ESEA provided federal grants to states and school districts serving low-income students, equal access to education by all students, accountability of schools, and encouraged a high standard of achievement from all stakeholders (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The ESEA has been amended and updated over the past 50 years, and one of the most significant changes came under President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001 (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The legacy of NCLB was its focus on identifying achievement gaps and fostering transparency among schools across the United States in their reporting of student progress (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017, U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Since education falls under state jurisdiction, the federal government was able to encourage accountability by offering federal funding to schools (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Schools who accepted federal funds were required to meet the guidelines drafted in NCLB legislation (Bailey & Huang, 2011; Batt, 2008; Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Funding for programs to assist students who are Limited English Proficient (LEP), a subgroup of EL, falls under Title III funding of the Federal government (U.S. Department of Education, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). States who opt to use these funds must

follow specific laws under the NCLB act. The purpose of NCLB was for all students to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) to ensure they were college and career ready when graduating from high school (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. State Department of Education, 2007). With the growing number of students who are EL and are classified as LEP, there is additional assistance that is needed to ensure they receive instruction to help close the achievement gap and Federal dollars are allocated to assist with that process (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Title III funds can be used to help with language instruction programs, teacher training, and testing of students who are LEP. This use of federal funding, and new accountability under NCLB, amended and updated the ESEA of 1965 (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

According to NCLB, Local Education Agency's (LEAs), are required to use research-based teaching practices to assist students who are LEP develop the English language, expand upon existing language instruction programs, and help develop and implement school-wide programs to ensure students who are LEP receive a quality education (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The goal of Title III of NCLB is to help students who are LEP master the same academic standards that are required for a student who is proficient in the English language (U.S. Department of Education 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). LEA's are required to develop programs that ensure all students who are LEP are able to read, write, speak, and listen in the English language. Additionally, students are required to take the same end of the year test as English proficient students (Bailey & Huang, 2011; Batt, 2008; Butler & Stevens, 2001; Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017, U.S. Department of Education, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). With the reporting measures required in NCLB, criticism arose around using the same measures (Menken,

2010; Mitchell, 2017). NCLB required EL students to receive special services and support but does not require the support for students who were formerly classified as EL and are now fluent in the English language because they are deemed proficient (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017, U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Students who were deemed proficient under NCLB would often continue to struggle in the classroom and did not receive supports they needed to be successful (Saunders & Marcelletti, 2012; Mitchell, 2017). The need to further track student achievement and to continue offering support to students who are classified as proficient in the English language became a starting point to advocate for change in NCLB legislation (Manken, 2010; Saunders & Marcelletti, 2012; Mitchell, 2017).

Concerns regarding NCLB legislation passed in 2001 revolved around the issue that students who are EL and have been in the United States for more than one year are required to take the same high stakes tests as native English-speaking students (Manken, 2010; Bailey & Huang, 2011). These state tests measure both English language proficiency and academic content, which placed a disadvantage for a student whose native language was not English (Bailey & Huang, 2011; Batt, 2008; Butler & Stevens, 2001; Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017). Proficiency in the English language has an impact on the understanding of academic content, and if EL students are not proficient in the English language, their ability to access the content is obstructed (Bailey & Huang, 2011; Manken, 2010, Mitchell, 2017). End of year tests are graduation requirements for all students according to NCLB, and ELs were significantly less likely to be proficient on end of year tests, which negatively impacted graduation rates (Deussen et al., 2017; Manken, 2010).

Due to the gap in graduation rates among ELs, there is a desire to eliminate high stakes tests for English Learners and to provide end of year assessments in students' native languages

when assessing content (Mitchell, 2017; Manken, 2010). There is a need for each state to adopt

content standards for students who are EL by using the same academic language in current

content standards. Then they can craft language appropriate for EL students giving states the

flexibility to accommodate learning to meet the needs of their learners (Bailey & Huang, 2011).

The content is the same, but the wording of the standards would be appropriate for students who

are learning the English language. Giving states the flexibility to create these standards would

allow them to meet the unique needs of the learners they serve. This would allow each state to

select key standards they want EL students to master and would allow teachers to pinpoint

targeted data of how students are progressing toward mastery of those standards.

Frustration regarding equal access to education amongst disadvantaged populations,

including ELs, sparked a Dear Colleague Letter from Catherine E. Lhamon (Assistant Secretary

from the Office of Civil Rights) in 2014. The Office of Civil Rights is part of the United States

Department of Education and the purpose of a Dear Colleague letter is to draft official statements

to be sent in bulk to congressional offices. The letter explained ELs have fewer opportunities to

take accelerated classes, such as AP courses, are more likely to be instructed by inexperienced

teachers, and have barriers in accessing high quality instructional materials (U.S. Department of

Education, 2014). The purpose of The Civil Rights Act of 1965 (Title VI) is to ensure equal

access for all students in public education. The Dear Colleague Letter highlighted the need for

additional attention and support to be given to instructional programs, equal access to high

quality educators, and adequate facilities for disenfranchised student populations (U.S.

Department of Education, 2014).

Criticism of NCLB opened the door for the Obama administration to pass an update to

NCLB called Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which amended some of NCLB requirements

(Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Frustration regarding the expectations

and lack of flexibility allocated to states under NCLB led to changes under the new guidelines

for state education accountability under ESSA (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017, U.S. Department

of Education, 2007). Both NCLB and ESSA were amendments to the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act of 1964 (U.S. Department of Education, 2007; U.S. Department of Education,

2016). ELs are one of the subgroups who is impacted by these new changes under the new

ESSA (Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Approximately 10% of students

are classified as English Language Learners (Cook et al. 2011; Deussen, et al., 2017; U.S.

Department of Education, 2016). This is the same goal under the former guidelines of NCLB,

but the accountability of the states is different (Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education,

2016).

The ESSA mandates that each EL standard must have different proficiency levels and are

aligned with state standards (Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This is

similar to former requirements under NCLB (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of

Education, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The U.S. Department of Education

(2016) stated these proficiency standards and tier of progression could be determined by each

individual state. In addition, states can determine if teachers are qualified to teach ELs (Mitchell,

2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). There are several changes regarding the data LEA

report the State Education Agencies (SEAs). The U.S. Department of Education (2016)

mandates that LEAs report their Title III programs and their activities, the number and

percentage of ELs who are making progress toward English language proficiency, the number of

ELs who are deemed proficient, the number and percentage of formerly classified EL students

who have met state academic content standards, and the number of student who are not deemed

proficient after receiving EL support for more than five years. In the end, states are required to monitor their progress, similar to NCLB (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). However, the major difference is the flexibility in crafting standards and proficiency bands for EL students (Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Even though the enactment of ESSA is recent, there has been both praise and criticism of the new legislation (Mitchell, 2017; Taherbhai et al., 2015). Under the ESSA, each state has the flexibility to determine their own accountability systems to measure and progress monitor EL students and to determine when they are classified proficient in the English language (U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Mitchell, 2017). When taking high stakes tests, states are encouraged to offer these tests in students' native languages if possible (Mitchell, 2017 & Taherbhai et al., 2015). Under NCLB, states were to give the test in English, which often was difficult for EL students to demonstrate their mastery of content standards (Menken, 2010). Even though there are perks to the changes under ESSA, there are several setbacks under the new law (Mitchell, 2017). Approximately 30 states only use one benchmark test to determine if students are deemed proficient in the English language (Mitchell, 2017). One new change under ESSA is that schools must track the progress of students for four years who exit EL programs in order to identify any gaps in former EL student learning compared to their English proficient peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Mitchell, 2017).

Collecting and Reporting EL Growth Data (WIDA Consortium)

The WIDA consortium is the largest organization in the United States that offers states and local school districts access to resources centered on profession development, language standards, and assessment for multilingual learners (WIDA, 2019a). The Wisconsin Department

of Education started the WIDA group when they received and Enhanced Assessment Grant in 2003 (WIDA, 2019a). Over the next few years, WIDA developed English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards, which were the framework for the ACCESS for ELLs assessment to determine EL proficiency in the English language (WIDA, 2019a). Currently, WIDA is housed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and serves 40 states, territories, and federal agencies (WIDA, 2019a). The ACCESS for ELLs assessment is an online or paper test available to students K-12 and monitors the English proficiency of EL students in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, on an annual basis (WIDA, 2019a, WIDA, 2019b).

At the conclusion of each school year, school districts receive proficiency level scores that align to six WIDA ELP levels (WIDA, 2019b). These six levels give school districts and educators diagnostic information to best understand their EL student's ability at acquiring the English language. Below are WIDA (2019b) descriptions of the six proficiency bands and their alignment to EL student ability levels:

- **Level 1: Entering**: knows and uses minimal social language and minimal academic language with visual and graphic support.

- **Level 2: Emerging**: knows and uses some English and general academic language with visual and graphic support.

- **Level 3: Developing**: knows and uses social English and some specific academic language with visual and graphic support.

- **Level 4: Expanding:** knows and uses social English and some technical academic language.

- **Level 5: Bridging**: knows and uses social and academic language working with grade level material.

- **Level 6: Reaching:** knows and uses social and academic language at the highest level measured by this test.

These six proficiency levels allow educators to tailor instruction to meet the diverse needs of EL students in their classrooms.

The ultimate goal is for students to progress through each proficiency level where they would eventually achieve level 6 (reaching), meaning the student is proficient in acquiring the English language (Cook et al., 2011; WIDA, 2019b). The WIDA consortium defines ELP when EL student proficiency becomes less related to academic achievement (Cook et al., 2011). This means they are both proficient in understanding the language and the content of the class where the knowledge is being assessed. As an additional support, WIDA gives school districts "can-do" indicators matching each student's proficiency level (Cook et al., 2011; Periera & de Oliveria, 2015; WIDA, 2019b). These "can-do" descriptors inform teachers what students can do in the English language with support in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The goal is to progress students to reach a level of 4-5 in each category because it indicates students are able to use the English language in academic settings (Periera & de Oliveria, 2015; WIDA, 2019b).

The WIDA ACCESS FOR ELLs 2.0 Assessment's purpose is to help educators and schools progress monitor student growth. The tests allows each school district to make informed decisions on how to best serve the needs of the EL student population (WIDA, 2019b). Even though the WIDA scale ends at a level 6 (reaching), meaning a student has met exit criteria, each individual state has the opportunity to determine their own cut scores to determine when a student has met their exit criteria. Exit criteria is used to inform schools that the student is proficient in the English language. The purpose of the WIDA test is to inform schools what students can do in the English language regarding reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The

intent of the assessment does not paint the whole picture of EL student success. The WIDA

ACCESS FOR ELLs 2.0 Assessment is used as a progress monitoring tool and should not be the

only measure to determine if ELs are successful students (Miley & Farmer, 2017).

Impact of School Climate and Culture

There has been a recent focus in education on the impact of school climate and culture on

the academic success of students (Delgado, Ettekal, Simpkins, & Schaefer, 2016; Olsen, Preston,

Algozzine, Algozzine, & Cusumano, 2018; Orzea & Cocorada, 2017; Sheras & Bradshaw,

2016). Even though there has been attention centered on the impact school climate has on

academic success, there is not a universal definition of school climate (Sheras & Bradshaw,

2016). Olsen et al. (2018) defined school climate as having shared beliefs, values, and attitudes

reflecting character and the quality of a school. In contrast, Wang and Degol (2016), deemed the

following components make up a successful school climate: academics, community, safety, and

the instructional environment. Since a common definition of school climate does not exist, it is

essential for individual schools to be able to define what they value as components of their

school climate, and to measure and monitor the success of their school climates (Olsen et al.,

2018).

Recent research points specific attention to how income and demographics impact

student success in the classroom (Hopson, Schiller, & Lawson, 2014; Ruiz, McMahon & Jason,

2018). Often students who attend schools in higher income areas report higher academic

achievement scores than students who attend schools in low income areas (Hopson et al., Ruiz et

al., 2018). All children, regardless of their poverty level, deserve a quality education (Ruiz et al.,

2018). Studies conducted by Hopson et al. (2014) and Ruiz et al. (2018) found students who

reported a positive school climate also experienced an increase in their academic achievement.

Being educated in a safe and supportive climate resulted in higher grades than students who were from low socioeconomic neighborhoods and had not received support (Hopson et al., 2014; Ruiz et al., 2018). A positive school climate is one way to break through barriers and can be a key contributor to a successful learning experience for students (Ruiz et al., 2018).

Growth and Reading Ability for Academic Success

Being able to read, comprehend, and extract meaning from written language is essential in the academic success of all students (Mancilla-Martinez, Kieffer, Biancarosa, Christodoulou, & Snow, 2011). Reading comprehension is especially important for EL students because growth in their reading trajectory over their span in K-12 education is significantly lower compared to their native English speaking peers (Farnia, & Geva, 2013; Maarouf, 2019; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011; Phillips Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts, Mohammed, & Vaughn, 2010; Ruiz de Castilla, 2018; Taub, Sivo, & Puyana, 2017). Students who are acquiring English as a second language have significant reading deficits compared to their native English speaking classmates (Farnia, & Geva, 2013; Maarouf, 2019; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011; Phillips Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts et al., 2010; Ruiz de Castilla, 2018; Taub et al., 2017). These gaps in learning and reading comprehension are alarming because of the rapid growth of EL students enrolled in schools across the United States (Cook et al. 2011; Deussen, et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Maarouf (2019) explained the delay in the reading growth of EL students has a direct correlation to increased dropout rates compared to students who are proficient in the English language. In addition, socioeconomic status (SES) has a significant impact on EL students and their reading growth (Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts et al., 2010). English learners who have a low SES are significantly less likely to improve reading

comprehension, putting them further behind both native English speakers and their peers who are learning the English language (Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts et al., 2010). There is a need to identify factors that can contribute to closing the achievement gap in reading between students acquiring the English language and those who are native English speakers (Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Maarouf, 2019; Roberts et al., 2010).

In elementary school EL students fall immediately behind in reading compared to students who are native English speakers (Farnia, & Geva, 2013; Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts et al., 2010; Ruiz de Castilla, 2018; Taub et al., 2017). English learners do increase in reading comprehension as they progress across grade levels; however, this growth is not as significant compared to students who are native English speakers (Farnia, & Geva, 2013; Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts et al., 2010). As students reach the end of elementary school their growth rate plateaus and becomes stagnant, which puts EL students at an extreme disadvantage as they enter their middle school education (Farnia, & Geva, 2013; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011).

The same stagnation typically follows EL students as they transition to their middle school education (Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Maarouf, 2019; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011). Mancilla-Martinez et al. (2011) and Galloway and Uccelli (2019) explained this continued low-trajectory of reading comprehension is increasingly alarming at the middle school level because students are expected to read and understand more challenging texts. Mancilla-Martinez et al. (2011) indicated "Students' ability to access grade-level material is limited by a slowing growth curve and a developmental plateau in skill development, such that their skills are stymied at inadequately low levels, preventing them from catching up with their peers" (p. 350). Limitations to several studies indicate the need for further research to identify ways to close this

reading gap, especially for delayed students about to enter high school (Phillips Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts, Mohammed, & Vaughn, 2010).

Even though there have been setbacks and challenges in closing the reading gap for EL students there have been gains in bilingual or dual-language programs where students receive instruction in both their native language and in English (Ruiz de Castilla, 2018; Taub et al., 2017). A study conducted by Taub et al. (2017) compared two groups of students learning a second language in a dual-language program. One group of students were English speakers learning Spanish and the second group was composed of Spanish speaking students learning English. The same district approved reading curriculum was used with both groups of students and they took both their pretest and post-test in their non-native language. Both groups made significant gains; however, 96% of Spanish speaking students scored higher on the post test than the English-speaking group (Taub et al., 2017). Elementary school students who are learning a second language have shown bilingual education, or dual-language programs have contributed to a growth in reading comprehension (Ruiz de Castilla, 2018; Taub et al., 2017).

Conclusion

Being able to foster a learning environment best suited for EL student success has been a challenge for American schools. The past decade has shown a dramatic influx in EL students attending American schools, and a widening achievement gap between EL and non-EL students. Since 1965 there have been several waves of federal legislation passed to assist public schools in closing the achievement gap of disadvantaged student populations (Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. State Department of Education, 2007). It is not an easy task for schools to assist EL students in their attempt to acquire the English language and American culture (Cook et al., 2011; Manken, 2010; Miley & Farmer, 2017; Mitchell, 2017; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015;

Tilley-Lubbs & Kreye, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Being able to read and comprehend the vocabulary of the English language is essential in the success of EL students (Farnia, & Geva, 2013; Maarouf, 2019; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011; Phillips Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts et al., 2010). Unfortunately, EL students are falling far behind their native English-speaking classmates in reading comprehension, and there has been limited research conducted to help close the achievement gap. This gap has become increasingly larger as students progress through each grade level, and continue to high school (Farnia, & Geva, 2013; Maarouf, 2019; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011; Phillips Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts et al., 2010; Ruiz de Castilla, 2018; Taub et al., 2017). Even though there has been some early success with bilingual and dual-language programs, these traditionally only assist elementary-aged students (Ruiz de Castilla, 2018; Taub et al., 2017).

To assist with instruction, progress monitoring, and summative data collection the WIDA consortium has provided school with manageable tools to assist ELs on their path to ELP. These tools help educators understand exactly what each unique EL student can do in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, allowing educators to differentiate instruction to meet their students' needs (Cook et al., 2011; WIDA, 2019b). The ultimate goal is for students to reach a level 6 (reaching), which proves they are deemed proficient in acquiring the English language (Periera & de Oliveria, 2015; WIDA, 2019b).

To help educators, Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory has become a support in guiding the understanding of factors that contribute the growth and development of EL students (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). This theoretical framework helps serve as a guide to

understand the vast connections of systems that impact the development of a child, which hopefully assists in identifying supports individual students need to be successful. In addition to supporting American schools, Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory becomes a lens to assess current research relating to EL students.

There is a gap in literature that does not address growth and success from the perspective of the students. There is abundant research detailing the need to close the achievement gap between EL and non-EL students, and some research outlining possible solutions, but few studies have been conducted from the student perspective. To better address the needs of EL students, and to ensure they can become contributing members of society, it is important for educators to listen to their voices and implement changes that can help a larger body of EL students.

Chapter III

Design and Methodology

Introduction

Creswell and Guetterman (2019) detailed key components in setting-up research design

and methodology for a successful study. These components include determining an appropriate

research design, identifying participants, collecting data necessary, detailing analytical methods

used in the research, and outlining limitations and recommendations for future research

(Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This chapter is broken into the following components: an

explanation of the research design, a description of the participants, an overview of the collection

of data, and the analytical methods used to interpret the data. A review of literature in the

previous chapter helped provide a framework for this research study by highlighting a synthesis

of current research, aligning pertinent literature, and theories associated to ELs and their path to

become fluent in acquiring the English language.

The review of literature highlighted several factors that contributed to the ability of ELs

to acquire a second language, these factors included: legal responsibility of educating ELs,

collecting and reporting growth data, impact of positive school climate and culture, and how

reading abilities are indicators for student success. Prior research has found the categories

reported above had an impact on the ability for ELs to reach proficiency in acquiring a second

language (Delgado et al., 2016; Taherbhai et al. 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2016;

Willner & Monroe, 2016). Reviewing literature supported the connection of Bronfenbrenner's

Bioecological Model as a theoretical framework to ground this research. The positive impact of

educators, school policy, and culture of the student are integral in shaping the academic success

of EL students (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). There are studies that connect Bronfenbrenner's

Bioecological Model to ELs and their success in acquiring a second language, which indicates there are multiple factors that contribute to a successful learning experience for EL students (Bessman et al., 2013; Onchwari, et al., 2008). Both quantitative and qualitative studies cite components Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model as impacting child development, but there are few studies that link the child's perspective and factors they deem contribute to their growth and development (Bessman et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan et al., 2018). Since this investigation is looking at the student's perspective, a qualitative approach was selected as an appropriate research method where Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model served as a ballast to see factors contributing to EL student success. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore factors contributing to the accelerated reading growth of EL students. Qualitative research will provide the opportunity for participants to give detail about their educational experiences and how these factors contribute to their success (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The purpose of this dissertation study was to determine the factors that led to the accelerated reading growth of second language acquisition for EL students. The following research questions were investigated and framed the study:

1. What do students perceive as the greatest factors contributing to their accelerated reading growth as demonstrated by the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment?

2. What are the greatest obstacles faced by EL students as they learn the culture and academic setting of the English language and American education system?

3. How do EL students perceive the climate and culture of a school as an impact on their growth and academic success in the classroom?

Research Design

This research design for this qualitative interview study was guided by research of Creswell and Guetterman (2019), Marshall and Rossman (2016), and Maxwell (2013). However, the structure of the research design for this study was directed by the five components of Maxwell's (2013) Interactive Model of Research Design. The nucleus of sound research design is guided by the studies research questions (Maxwell, 2013). These questions were purposefully crafted to shed light on areas that are not known and to build a better understanding and connections between the research questions. The research questions are framed by four other components which include: goals, the conceptual framework/literature review, research methods, and validity (Maxwell, 2013).

Goals. The purpose of the goals of the study are to communicate the purpose, need, and significance of the why the research needs to take place (Maxwell, 2013). The goals of the study were highlighted in chapter 1 and limitations connected to these goals are highlighted in chapter 5 of the dissertation.

Conceptual Framework. The conceptual framework is emphasized in chapter 2 of this study. This section outlines research, theories, beliefs, and findings of experts relating to the research topic (Maxwell, 2013). The conceptual framework helps make connections between the participants, the setting, and issues relating to the topic (Maxwell, 2013). The purpose of the conceptual framework is to ground the study to previous relevant research, and to explain the theoretical framework that guides the study (Maxwell, 2013). The conceptual framework connects to both the goals, and the research questions of the study.

Methods. Maxwell (2013) explained research methods outlines the process of conducting the study. There are four parts aligned to research methods: 1) the relationship with

the studies participants, 2) the selection of the setting, participants of the study, sampling, and data collection, 3) collecting data to address the research questions, 4) the analysis of the data that is collected (Maxwell, 2013). The research methods are connected to the goals of the study, conceptual framework, and the research questions.

Validity. Allows for the researcher to use the data to support or challenge their research questions (Maxwell, 2013). This allows for triangulation to limit threats to validity, and to communicate with readers potential problems, and how these problems will be addressed (Maxwell, 2013). This strengthens the researcher's argument, and helps ensure the results are believable (Maxwell, 2013). Validity is connected to the goals of the research, conceptual framework, research methods, and research questions of the study.

The research design of this investigation was centered on Maxwell's (2013) Model for Qualitative Research. Qualitative data collected was to address the questions guiding the research. Data was transcribed, coded, with the aim to develop themes to address the research questions of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013).

Data was used to determine where the greatest reading growth took place across the WIDA consortiums CAN DO descriptors for the different levels of English language proficiency. Ex post facto data was examined from the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment of four different school districts in the state of Idaho to determine the rate of growth among their high school (grades 9-12) EL student population. The analysis of the data was used to determine specific students who made substantial growth in reading scores from the 2018-2019 school year to the 2019-2020 school year. A sample of students from each participating school who made gains of at least one proficiency level engaged in the qualitative investigation.

The qualitative investigation used semi-structured focus group interviews where students

identified factors that led to their academic success. Additional follow-up one-on-one interviews were conducted after the completion of focus group interviews to allow each participant to share their personal story that highlighted their journey and experience in the American educational system. Data from student focus group, and individual follow-up interviews, were transcribed and coded to determine themes that gave the narrative of the success of EL students in the classroom (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016).

Participants

Both the individuals and the school sites connected to the study were selected based on purposeful sampling (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Purposeful qualitative sampling allows for the selection of participants and school sites to best understand a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The benefit of purposeful sampling is the researcher has the ability to select participants and the settings that best relate to the topic being studied (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). There are several sampling strategies that align to purposeful sampling, and since the sample was determined before data was collected homogeneous sampling was appropriate for this study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Homogeneous sampling allows the researcher to analyze and describe a subgroup of participants or sites in great depth. The purpose of this research study was to determine factors EL students indicate that contributed to their success in the classroom. Therefore, successful EL students were selected to take part in the study.

Four comprehensive high schools housed within four different school districts in the state of Idaho were selected to participate in the study because of their growing EL population. Each school district was located in an urban region within the state of Idaho and were located near one of Idaho's refugee resettlement agencies. The table below highlights the percent of ELs in each

school district compared to the average percent of ELs in the state of Idaho. The table also allows

for a comparison of ELs in Idaho compared to the United States.

Table 1

Comparison of the Percent of English Learners (ELs): Idaho Compared to the United States

United States	Idaho	Idaho District A	Idaho District B	Idaho District C	Idaho District D
9.6	5.4	9.2	4.0	11.0	8.9

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency Universe Survey," 2016-2017, and 2018-2019.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2017), the average percent of students

classified as ELs in the United States is 9.6. In contrast, Idaho has a much lower average

percentage of EL students overall, of 5.4, which is over four points below the national average.

Idaho has several small, rural, school districts across the state, so being below the national

average can be expected. Urban and suburban school districts in Idaho tend to mirror the national

averages. Four school districts participated in this study and were classified as Idaho school

district A, district B, district C, and district D. According to the U.S. Department of Education

(2019), Idaho school district A has an average of 9.2 percent of ELs compared to the national

average of 9.6 percent. Idaho school district D has an average of EL students of 8.9 percent,

which is slightly below the national average of 9.6 percent. Idaho school district C has an EL

student population average of 11 percent, which is above the national average of 9.6. The only

school district that participated in the study that was significantly below the national average is

Idaho school district B, which has an EL student population average of 4 percent. Even though

this school district does not parallel national averages, it does provide great insight because it is

close to the overall state average of 5.4 percent. All four school districts that took part in this

study reflected national EL averages as well as the average of EL student populations across the state of Idaho.

The state of Idaho adopted the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment to measure the progress of EL student growth, which meant each school that took part in the study used the same instrument to measure student success. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) recommended the researcher gain permission from school leadership to conduct research at each school site. Before data was collected, superintendents and principals of participating schools were emailed inviting them to participate in the study and to seek out the protocol to conduct research in their school district (see appendix A). If school leadership did not respond to the email, a follow-up phone call was initiated to discuss the research proposal and to determine if the school and district would be part of the study (see appendix B). Each school district that took part in the study had their own Internal Review Board (IRB) to ensure any research that took place within their individual school district was safe for their students. The researcher completed the necessary paperwork and completed the IRB protocol for each school district. Once the IRB process was completed, a face-to-face, phone conversation, or virtual meeting took place with the district's superintendent, building principal, and the researcher to address any question about the study. Once the school's superintendent and building principal granted permission to proceed, the researcher asked the superintendent to give permission to conduct the study within their school district (see appendix C).

School districts taking part of the study were able to provide the researcher with ex post facto results from the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment from the 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 school year. The data given to the researcher included the following: the student's country of origin, native language, grade level, gender, and WIDA proficiency scores. Student

participants selected to participate in the qualitative study were ELs ranging from 9th to 12th grade who made the growth of at least one reading level in one academic school year. Analyzing the ex post facto data provided by the school districts, three to six students were selected from each of the four school sites, with a total of 17 participants taking part in the study. During the fall of the 2020-2021 school year the researcher asked each school district for a list of students who had grown at least one proficiency band in reading according to the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs Assessment 2.0. In addition to reading growth data, the researcher obtained information relating to each of the qualifying student's native language, number of years receiving education in the United States, and the nation where the student resided before immigrating to the United States (if applicable). Using data provided by each school district, a balance of male and female participants, and a mix of native languages and countries of origin was selected to provide a diverse sample for the study. Three to six students from each of the four school sites engaged in semi-structured focus group interviews. In total four interviews were conducted, one per school district, consisting of three to six students per interview. The tables below highlight data collected by each school district before the completion of the semi-structured interviews.

Table 2

District A: Participant Data

Student	Gender	Native Country	Classified Refugee	WIDA Reading Data 2018-2019	WIDA Reading Data 2019-2020
Participant 1	Male	Mexico	No	3.0	5.6
Participant 2	Male	Botswana	Yes	2.7	4.7
Participant 3	Male	Columbia	Yes	2.9	3.9
Participant 4	Male	Uganda	Yes	4.4	6.0

This data was provided by School District A. This was used to help identify qualifying participants for this study.

Table 3

District B: Participant Data

Student	Gender	Native Country	Classified Refugee	WIDA Reading Data 2018-2019	WIDA Reading Data 2019-2020
Participant 5	Male	Egypt	Yes	1.7	2.7
Participant 6	Female	Colombia	Yes	1.9	5.4
Participant 7	Female	Myanmar (Burma)	Yes	3.4	5.8
Participant 8	Male	Uganda	Yes	1.8	2.9

This data was provided by School District B. This was used to help identify qualifying participants for this study.

Table 4

District C: Participant Data

Student	Gender	Native Country	Classified Refugee	WIDA Reading Data 2018-2019	WIDA Reading Data 2019-2020
Participant 9	Male	Mexico	No	3.7	5.4
Participant 10	Male	Mexico	No	4.7	5.9
Participant 11	Female	United States	No	2.2	3.5

This data was provided by School District C. This was used to help identify qualifying participants for this study.

Table 5

District D: Participant Data

Student	Gender	Native Country	Classified Refugee	WIDA Reading Data 2018-2019	WIDA Reading Data 2019-2020
Participant 12	Female	Afghanistan	Yes	3.2	4.6
Participant 13	Female	Uganda	Yes	3.4	4.7
Participant 14	Female	Sudan	Yes	1.9	3.5
Participant 15	Female	Eritrea	Yes	1.9	2.9
Participant 16	Male	Tanzania	Yes	1.8	2.8
Participant 17	Male	Tanzania	Yes	1.9	3.4

This data was provided by School District D. This was used to help identify qualifying participants for this study.

Tables 2-4 (above) display data relating to the different participants who took part in the study. To ensure a diverse sample of participants specific attention was made to best have an equal divide of male and female students, as well as, have different native languages and countries around the world be represented. Of the 17 participants who engaged in focus group interviews, ten were male, and seven were female. In addition, the home countries of student participants spanned across Africa, South East Asia, the Middle East, North America, Central America, and South America. Participant reading growth data, according to the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Assessment, showed a diverse range. Growth along each WIDA proficiency band (1-6) was represented by at least one participant in the study. Students who engaged in interviews showed growth from a level 1 (entering) to a level 6 (reaching). This meant participants with a diverse range of reading abilities were represented in the focus group interview data. Every student selected to participate in the interviews met the growth minimum of one proficiency band from the 2018-2019 to 2019-2020 academic year in reading, and some students exceeded the minimum growth requirement by recording a growth of 3.5 levels. Of the 17 participants, 13 were classified as refugees (76%). The four students (24%) who took part in the study who were not classified as refugees immigrated to Idaho from Mexico. The diverse sample of student participants helped reflect the diversity of ELs across the United States and in Idaho. The participants who qualified for this study makeup a small percentage of the overall EL population of the four sites who participated in the research. It is common for EL students to show some growth over one calendar year, and it is not atypical for some EL students to make slight to no academic gains. The four school districts who participated in this study have an average of EL population of 8.3%. The 17 students who made accelerated reading growth and participated in the study reflected a small percent of the overall EL student population across the

four schools who participated in this research.

Following the focus group interviews, individual one-on-one interviews were conducted, with willing participants, to share information that was more comfortable in a smaller setting. In total, seven individual one-on-one interviews were conducted after the completion of the focus group interviews. Parental informed consent and student assent was granted before the participants took part in the research study (see appendix D and appendix E). To ensure each family was fully informed about the study parental informed consent was given to each family in both English and their native spoken language, if requested. If a follow-up phone conversation was needed to communicate with families, an interpreter who spoke the native language of the families joined the phone conversation. This ensured that all components of the study were clear to each family and questions could fully be addressed if necessary. In total, four families requested both the parental informed consent and student assent forms in Spanish (see appendix F and appendix G) and three families requested a Spanish speaking interpreter to clearly understand the scope of the study.

Data Collection

The purpose of data collection for this study was created to investigate factors EL students indicated as responsible for their growth and success in the classroom. Approval to conduct the study was granted by the IRB's of the participating school districts. Data collected for the study was comprised of semi-structured focus group interviews and follow-up one-on-one interviews. In qualitative research, data is often collected in the form of interviews, so the researcher did not limit the views of the participants (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013). The WIDA consortiums ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment data from the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years were given by participating schools as a screener to begin the qualitative

study. Data was collected from student participants that ranged from 9th-12th grade from all four

school districts that took part in the study. This data was used to identify the participants to take

part in the research study. Data given by each school district was put into a table to identify

which students made reading growth of at least one proficiency bands from one school year to

the next.

Once participants for the study were identified, further research was rooted in qualitative

data. Students who made the growth of at least one proficiency level in reading on the WIDA

framework, from one school year to the next, were selected to take part in qualitative research.

Semi-structured focus group interviews were selected as the format to conduct qualitative

research because this allowed for participants to freely and openly share their stories and

experiences (see appendix H). The semi-structured interviews were used to determine factors

that contributed to the accelerated growth of second language acquisition of EL students. Once

the researcher received signed parental consent and assent (see appendices D-G) of each

participant the semi-structured interviews began. To increase the comfort of participants, an EL

specialist, or an educator who the students felt comfortable with, was present for the interviews.

This allowed students to feel comfortable to communicate their ideas freely. Seventeen students

were interviewed, three to six students from four school districts with a large percent of EL

students who took part in the study. Focus group interviews were conducted, which meant the

researcher recorded answers from three to six participants at each school site (Creswell &

Guetterman, 2019). Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to one hour in duration. Semi-

structured focus group interviews took place remotely using video conferencing technology. The

researcher conducted the interviews remotely and students were able to log onto a video

conferencing platform used by their school district. Google Meet, Microsoft TEAMs, and Zoom

were the three video conferencing tools used to complete the both the semi-structured focus group interviews as well as the one-on-one follow-up interviews.

After the conclusion of each focus group interview member checking was utilized. Since participants were minors, member checking happened directly after the conclusion of the interview as the conversation was fresh on the minds of the participants. A Google document was created, and the successes and challenges students identified while learning the English language were noted in a t-chart (see appendix I). Student were able to see the key points taken from the focus group interview and verify if their voice was communicated clearly. If there was data missing students had the opportunity to add additional information or modify their responses if necessary. Those adjustments were made to the interview scripts.

The researcher assured each participant a pseudonym would be given as a protection to their identity. In addition, the researcher assured each participant in the study that all information would be confidential and would be locked in a filing cabinet and digital copies would be password protected on a computer.

Creswell and Guetterman (2019) recommended researchers complete pilot interviews to assist in refining or adjusting research questions, distinguish researcher bias, and troubleshoot problems that could arise in future interviews. Four student participants who took part in the pilot research were high school EL students who grew at least one proficiency level in reading using the WIDA framework as a guideline. Students selected to participate in the pilot group met the same criteria and parameters set to guide the formal research investigation. Participants who took part in the pilot interviews attended the same school where the researcher is employed. Since the purpose of the pilot test was to refine research questions and to allow the researcher to practice the semi structured focus group and individual follow-up interview formats there was no

conflict of interest. The pilot interview was audio recorded to ensure the researcher was familiar and able to effectively use the audio device. The recording from the pilot interview was not transcribed or used in the actual findings of the research.

The conclusion of the pilot study allowed for the researcher to make small adjustment to the wording of the interview questions based on participant feedback. Even though there were minor adjustments made to the interview protocol, it proved the instruments were well designed and participants were able to comprehend the questions. The pilot allowed for the researcher to validate the necessary time allotted for each interview and assisted in clarifying participant understanding of the research questions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Analytical Methods

To analyze qualitative data, student interviews were recorded, transcribed, read multiple times, coded, and collapsed into themes addressing factors leading to student academic success from the EL student perspective. Saldaña (2016) explained a code in qualitative research is often a word or phrase assigned to represent data. Interviews are sources of data in qualitative research (Saldaña, 2016). Being able to code data involves synthesizing data to organize or group information into smaller categories because they share characteristics (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). Once smaller categories are created, they can be collapsed and developed into themes used to address the research questions of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). Coding data is a vital step between collecting the data and then explaining the meaning of the data that has been collected (Saldaña, 2016). Analysis of data collected from student interviews was done manually using inductive (conclusions based off of observations), and In Vivio (codes coming directly from the participant) coding. A table was created to organize information and transcripts from the semi-

structured interviews were broken apart to produce codes. These codes were then categorized and subcategorized if necessary. Each interview transcript was read another time and compared to one another until common themes emerged.

Limitations

Due to the diverse range of cultures represented by students who took part in the study, the ability for each student to feel open and honest with the researcher was a limitation. The customs, culture, and values of nations around the world are often different than those experienced in the United States. Therefore, the ability for the researcher to fully grasp the each of the student's perspective was a limitation. A second limitation of the study was the restricted grade levels of participants that took part in the study. The study's aim was at the high school level, and data from primary grade levels were not used or explored in the study. Typically, younger students in primary grade levels experience greater academic growth than secondary students. Secondary students make smaller academic gains, therefore being able to gather a robust sample of students was a challenge. The sample size is an additional limitation to this study. In total, seventeen participants contributed to the findings of this study. A larger sample size, covering multiple states, with a more diverse group of participants could lead to a more detailed analysis. Since the study took place solely in the state of Idaho, a robust sample could more accurately match the general population.

The novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) served as a limitation to the study. Each school district that took part in the study did not have students attending their schools full time, in-person, five days a week. The four school districts that took part in the study educated students fully online, or in a hybrid format where students came to school in person two days a week, and then received education remotely three days a week at home. Being able to gain parental consent

became a challenge because the researcher was not able to speak with both the student and their parents in person. In addition, the process of collecting signed parental consent forms from a distance was a challenge. These barriers impacted the total student sample of the research study.

The ability to measure the whole academic ability of ELs was a limitation to the study. The WIDA ACCESS FOR ELLs 2.0 Assessment's purpose is give insight to educators about the English language abilities of students. The test is designed to measure what students can do in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (WIDA, 2019a; WIDA, 2019b). The intent of the test is to measure the growth of each student and does not give the big picture of student success. It is possible for students to be successful and to show little progress on the WIDA assessment. Test scores from the WIDA ACCESS FOR ELLs 2.0 should not be the only measure used to determine if ELs are successful. For the purpose of this study the WIDA ACCESS FOR ELLs 2.0 Assessment was used solely to identify the participants of the study.

The final limitation to this study is the bias of the researcher. Being invested in a study can be both an asset and detriment. Being able to recognize one's own bias, connection, and relationship with the research topic is an important step in reducing bias. However, when the researcher is unaware of their own bias it can skew the analysis and findings of the research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). As the researcher of this study the connection to teaching EL students should be considered when evaluating the study.

The researcher has spent the last ten years as a teacher in the state of Idaho, with a concentration of EL students in the past six years. During that time period the researcher connected with, and had success in, assisting ELs grow and succeed in the classroom. Even though the results from the study are reported from the student perspective, not the teacher's perspective, unintentional bias could have an impact on the findings of the research.

Chapter IV

Results

Introduction

The ability to provide a quality education to meet the unique needs of all students is essential to ensure each learner has a quality learning experience (Reeves, 2011). Over the past few decades there has been increased attention to close the achievement gap between EL and non-EL students to help guarantee an equitable education for all students (Gibson, 2017; Johnson & Wells, 2017; Kieffer, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). However, limited research has been conducted that has utilized the feedback directly from ELs to help improve their overall education. Furthermore, no research has been conducted that has directly interacted with ELs who have made significant reading gains in one academic year to determine the "why" behind their accelerated success.

Chapter four highlights the data gathered from the completion of high school EL student interviews and focus groups that align with the questions of the study. Data derived from four focus groups and seven individual follow-up interviews comprised of 17 ELs who made growth of at least one WIDA proficiency band in reading, was used to guide the study. The results were obtained by the analysis of over 120 pages of transcript data where codes were collapsed into categories and then into three themes which address the research questions of this study (see figure 2). To ensure the anonymity of each participant, responses from each student are symbolized with P (for participant) and a number that corresponds to each student described in the coded data and represented in data tables (see tables 2-5) in chapter three. For example, if data from a direct quote from student participant 6 of district B was used to support the results

targeting a specific research question it would be displayed as (P6). The research questions

framing this qualitative research study were:

1. What do students perceive as the greatest factors contributing to their accelerated reading

    growth as demonstrated by the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment?

2. What are the greatest obstacles faced by EL students as they learn the culture and

    academic setting of the English language and American education system?

3. How do EL students perceive the climate and culture of a school as an impact on their

    growth and academic success in the classroom?

Figure 2 (below) illustrates three themes that were derived from semi-structured interview data

to address the research questions of this study. The figure is comprised of three circles

demonstrating themes students identified as contributing to their overall success. The data is

represented in overlapping circles to indicate a combination of all three components are essential

to the overall success of EL students.

Figure 2

Themes from Interview Data
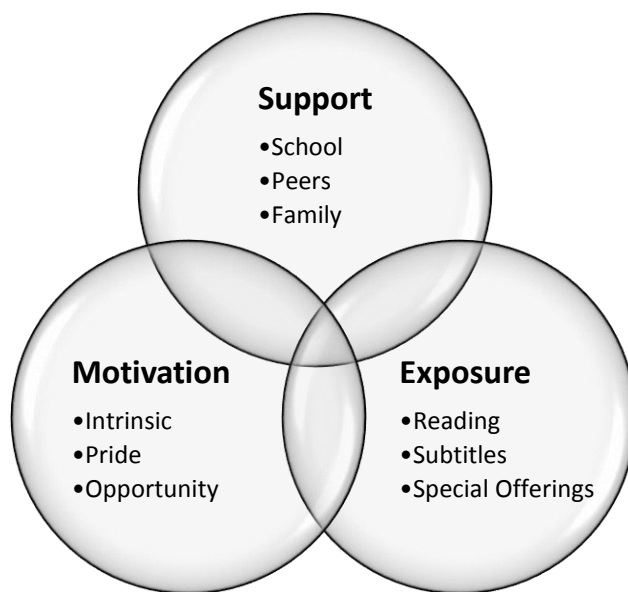
Factors Students Identified as Contributing to their Overall Success. This figure addresses themes that target all three research questions of the study.

Research Question #1

The ability to read and extract meaning from text is vital for the success of all students, especially ELs (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011). Unfortunately, the ability for ELs to read and comprehend text is significantly lower compared to their non-EL classmates, which leads to reading deficits for ELs as they progress from each grade level (Farnia, & Geva, 2013; Maarouf, 2019; Phillips Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts et al., 2010; Ruiz de Castilla, 2018; Taub et al., 2017). The ability to read and comprehend the English language is important for the success of ELs in all academic classes and these gaps in reading are alarming due to the rapid growth of the EL students enrolled in schools across the United States (Cook et al. 2011; Deussen, et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Due to the growth of ELs being educated in American schools as well as the importance of being able to read English the following research question was posed:

What do students perceive as the greatest factors that contributed to their accelerated reading growth as demonstrated by the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment?

Student participants who grew at least one proficiency band in reading according to the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment were able to shed light on factors that they identified as contributing to their success. Their descriptions fell into two themes: the first was the exposure to reading and speaking in English which was not their native language, and second, being motivated to learn English.

Overwhelmingly students identified constant exposure and reading text in English, especially books or information where students had choice, as the greatest factor to helping comprehend and learn the English language. Participant 1 noted,

I feel like sometimes the tricks for me was, like, reading small novels and books because in class, if we read a book or if we read, you know, an article or something, it would be, like chapters and stuff. And like, reading small novels and like short stories and stuff helped me a lot with that.

Choice in reading ranged from small readings students found engaging as well as informational text students found interesting. Participant 4 commented,

I've been reading a lot of articles on Google. And I've become like a really fast reader and I'm really impressed by that because I don't know, maybe, I wasn't that much interested in reading book[s] other than just learning English. But then … I started reading a lot of article[s], political articles, and I just, you know, it becomes a habit. Every morning I'm just, like there will be a pop-up email about an article, then I just read it. And that kind of helped me, just my vocabulary and reading quick and I kind of like that.

Participant 4 further explained when referencing articles on Google the sources being read were from the New York Times, CNN, and other outlets like Fox News. He mentioned that often these articles had embedded videos that related to the content but chose to read only the text to improve his vocabulary. Like participant 4, other students mentioned a significant factor to increasing their reading abilities was gradual exposure to more difficult texts over time. Participant 11, who received her entire K-12 education in the United States, explained choice and a gradual increase in text complexity aided in increasing her vocabulary and ability to read. "We also had these marks in library where we could go harder and harder in books and that's what kind of helped me too, and re-reading the word[s] and pronouncing them right." Overall,

constant exposure to English and having choice in what students read were key factors in aiding in reading growth.

A second contributing factor relating to the overall exposure to the English language and connecting to EL student reading growth was the power subtitles had on reading growth. Of the 17 students who participated in the study, over 50% (9 participants) identified viewing media with subtitles assisted in their ability to learn and read the English language. Participant 6 explained,

> I think the best way to learn English is reading and watching movies … with subtitles…
> It's better because when we watch a movie that we don't know … what they are saying, I
> think we don't learn much. I think we need something to our language to connect those
> words and know what did that mean.

Students identified using subtitles could be helpful in two different ways. First, as mentioned above, participant 6 explained watching a movie in English and having subtitles in their native language was impactful in learning the English language. This then helped increase their vocabulary that could then transfer to the ability to read the English language. Second, subtitles were impactful by connecting words spoken in English and then seeing the word visually on the screen. Several participants explained on their free time, at home, when they watched movies or television in English they put on subtitles, or closed captioning, to connect spoken and written words. Participant 13 explained that "reading books and watching movies with subtitles … when I came new, I like[ed] watching PBS Kids, it's fun and then they have subtitles … its like a kids show TV, but it's really good. It helps you." Student participants placed value on the ability to hear the English language and connect the context of what was being spoken to their native

language using subtitles or linking spoken words in English to the written English language as improving their reading abilities.

The final component linked to the theme of exposure to the English language, was special class offerings that were dedicated to students who were classified as EL. All 17 student participants identified having a dedicated class for ELs as a major contributor to learning and reading the English language. These classes were identified by students as study skills classes, newcomer classes, bridge classes, or EL classes. Even though these classes often were assigned different names, the goal of the classes were to provide additional supports and scaffolds with the aim of helping EL students to become successful in their general content classes. One hundred percent of student participants indicated that these classes had a significant impact on their ability to learn and show growth in their reading abilities. In these classes the amount of English each student knew varied from knowing little to no English, to students almost being proficient in the English language. Regardless of the student's exposure to English, these special class offerings allowed for teachers to tailor instruction to help meet the needs of each student. Participant 8 came to the United States in high school being able to speak little English, and he explained the process that helped build a foundation to improve his reading abilities.

> They'll start by [introducing] three words. Let me say, like, cat … I try to pronounce it super well, first we started about knowing the ABCs … Second, they'll write the full word, like full words like cat, dog, stuff like that. So after that, they'll make into a long sentence, like I love cat. I love dog. So to know how it work[s] and read one word by its own, and that's why I improved my reading and helped me improve my reading level.

Participant 8 explained the ability of receiving individual time and attention offered by dedicated EL classes aided in his ability to learn and read the English language. Participant 12 echoed

similar sentiments as participant 8. She explained in her EL class period, the ability to use flash cards and link words with pictures helped increase her vocabulary.

Students identified tailored instruction as important in being able to read the English language, but student participants indicated the most significant benefit of these special class offerings was the comfort they provided. Students felt they were able to express themselves and connect with other students who shared a common language and/or culture. These dedicated classes for EL students provided a safety net where student had confidence to push outside their comfort zone, and to take on new challenges that assisted with their ability to learn and read English. Participant 4 shared his experience by stating,

> Some of the students there had spoke my language, which was kind of like a good thing. I kind of like created friend[s] with them and we became really good friends because we understand each other. And the teachers were really welcoming, they were there when you needed help and you just need to ask for help and they will be there. And I kind of like that because I didn't feel, I was the one student who didn't like answering because I just kind of feel like I might say the wrong thing because I didn't know the language. So I just kind of stayed quiet, but the teacher would come and just kind of insist if I need help and I would talk to them privately.

The combination of individualized instruction coupled with the comport and support special EL class offerings helped boost students reading abilities.

The second theme that emerged from student semi-structured interviews was the individual motivation of the student. This motivation to want to learn to read the English language stemmed an intrinsic drive to want to learn, to show a sense of pride for their accomplishments, or to open doors for new opportunities for their futures.

Student participants identified their work ethic and intrinsic motivation as factors that led to their success. Participant 3 explained how hard work led to him being a successful student. Even though he does not address reading specifically, and inference can be made from his response that would apply to his growth in reading.

I'm successful because I work really hard. So when I want something, I work hard for it and everything. And with school, when I have a test or something, then I study and I do all things that I'm supposed to do to be able to get a good grade on it… I think for everything I want, it's mostly I work hard for it.

Participant 5 shared a similar story as participant 3 where he embodied a sense of pride of wanting to improve his reading abilities. His drive to learn to read came from within, where he describes an interaction with a friend and how he was individually motivated to want to read.

I want to improve and prove to other people I can do it. Because even one of my friends was telling me that, "because you don't like to read, you're not going to be able to read anything." I was like no, if I want to read, I will read. But it doesn't mean I don't like to read, I'm not going to read, you know. So, yea, just to prove to myself and to people that I can do it.

Thirteen of the participants (approximately 80%) in the study were classified as refugees. Most explained a contrast of their educational experience from their home countries versus the education they received in the United States. The opportunity to receive an American education provided motivation to preserve and to work hard, which connected to their drive to want to learn to read. Participant 2 explained,

I think what I've been able to do well is push myself. I feel like when I was growing up, I

didn't really do that as much. And now that you're living in a place where there's people

who can motivate you around much more, so you feel like oh yea, I can really do this.

A vast majority, over 80%, of participants referenced they worked hard and that was why they

were successful readers. This motivation to want to learn coupled with continuous exposure to

reading materials became a recipe for accelerated reading growth of EL students. Data collected

for the following question addressed obstacles EL students faced when adapting to a new

language and culture.

Research Question #2

Learning a new language is an incredible challenge. English learners not only are tasked

with learning a new language, often they are tasked with embracing a new culture and education

system that is different from their own. The process learning the English language, adapting to a

new culture, and navigating a different education system is a major struggle for English learners

(Bailey & Huang; Batt, 2008; Butler & Stevens, 2001; Menken, 2010; Mitchell, 2017).

Qualitative semi-structured interview data was analyzed to address the second research question

of this study, which was:

What are the greatest obstacles faced by EL students as they learn the culture and

academic setting of the English language and American education system?

Common factors participants of this study found as major obstacles they faced as they adjusted

to American culture, English language, and a new education system were:

- Not being able to communicate/express themselves because of language barriers

- Overwhelming workload from their classes

- Embracing new teaching methods and the pace of instruction

- Finding and making new friends and feeling judged by their peers

Even though students identified several challenges they faced as they navigated a new educational system, all 17 participants expressed overwhelming support from their school, peers, and family helped them overcome these obstacles. Support was a major theme deduced by student interview data as a key contribution to their overall success. To address research question #2, data regarding obstacles students faced when adopting a new learning environment will be highlighted as well as what supports students received to overcome these obstacles.

Student participants identified an initial lack of understanding of the English language as a major barrier to their success. Participant 13 explained the difficulty of being asked to write in English when she had a primary understanding of the language. Furthermore, when there is confusion, the ability to express the need for clarification or assistance is difficult. "Something challenging for me was learning English because at first, I didn't understand what people around me were saying. And if I would understand, like, I wanted to talk, I wanted to say something back, but I couldn't form the words." (P12). That lack of a foundation of the English language is difficult for students to both grasp the content of their classes as well as express their individual needs to help seek clarity during the learning process. Due to this language barrier participants of the study also explained the lack of English language proficiency led to significant workload.

Participant 9 explained in some of his classes the workload was intense due to the length of the assignment and the process of breaking it down into his native language first so he could understand the material and then to translate the work back into English. "We would like have big school projects and then there would be like a textbook we had to read, but it was in English, so I wouldn't understand what they were saying. So, I had to use a phone to translate all the stuff and then write it in Spanish and then translate to English and write it down." In addition to

learning English and the increase workload students faced, several participants explained teaching methods were difficult to adjust to from their prior learning environments.

Since 80% of students who participated in this study are classified as refugees, their prior learning experiences and culture were vastly different than the education they received in the United States. When students were mainstreamed into general content classes, there were gaps in their learning. Student participants explained the difficulty in making this adjustment. Participant 4 explained when he came to the United States math was more complex than the education he received in Africa. He stated, "I didn't know what was going on. But I had to adapt with it, and I will say, it was not easy. But we got through it." Participant 2 explained even beyond having learning gaps, embracing a new culture was a challenge.

> One thing that made me nervous was, you know how like, since I'm moving from another country to another country where our schools are different, and education is different. I was wondering how like being able to adapt to the culture because you are moving from a different culture. And then this other new culture where you have to kind of adapt and learn new things about school.

Participant 2 went on to clarify a big difference was the native language spoken at home and being expected to speak English at school. He inferred there was a challenge in embracing both cultures. The ability for students to balance their native culture and embrace American culture was identified as being difficult.

The final barrier identified by students was being able to make friends or to not feel judged by native English-speaking students. Participant 7 shared a heart-felt example of her experience adapting to America's education system.

I just really didn't know about it because no one really showed that they cared about that stuff. So, I would be in classes with kids who grew up here and stuff. So, like, it was actually really challenging for me because I didn't know English either. And I was just, I just spoke my native language and stuff and I didn't have a friend, I just had, like, let's say just, you know, the people, the kids and they kind of knew each other already. And I was just the one that would always be left out. And especially when we'd have to read something or speak, it was really embarrassing and hard for me because they would stare and I wouldn't know anything.

The most common obstacle faced by the participants of this study was being asked to read or speak in front of their classmates. Students expressed discomfort and would feel embarrassed speak in English in front of their native-English speaking peers. Even though students did highlight several obstacles they faced when embracing the American education system, they did explain these challenges were early in their transition to the new learning experience. The overwhelming support from their school, classmates, and family helped overcome these obstacles. Support is the final theme that was derived from student interview data which has a direct connection to research question #3 of this study.

Research Question #3

Recent research has placed an emphasis on the impact of school climate and culture on the academic success of students (Delgado, Ettekal, Simpkins, & Schaefer, 2016; Olsen, Preston, Algozzine, Algozzine, & Cusumano, 2018; Orzea & Cocorada, 2017; Sheras & Bradshaw, 2016). If a supportive school climate and culture is beneficial for all learners, an assumption can be made that it would also be impactful for the EL student population. Since ELs are often embracing a new language, culture, and school system, an increased emphasis was placed on the

impact school climate and culture had on their success in the classroom. Research question #3 was posed to investigate this question.

> How do EL students perceive the climate and culture of a school as an impact on their
>
> growth and academic success in the classroom?

Analysis of qualitative interview data let to the determination that students identified support of their school, peers, and family as the most impactful contribution to their success in school.

Of the 17 participants who engaged in semi-structured interviews, 100% percent identified their school community as being a support to their overall academic success. All 17 participants explained a teacher or school faculty member had an impact on their success as a student. Kindness and feeling welcome were words that were echoed by the participants of the study. Participant 2 shared his experience the first day he stepped foot in an American classroom,

> So the day I started school, I actually went and visited the school and got to see some of
>
> my classmates and teachers. And I met the teacher and principal and all the staff
>
> members, so that kind of felt helpful for me and gave me a little confidence going into the
>
> year, like, looking forward, I'm going to have a good year.

Participant 3 explained a similar experience on his first day of school in the United States and highlighted how teachers were welcoming and increased his comfort level as he transitioned to a new learning experience.

> At first, I was really scared and everything because I didn't know anything. But then, my
>
> teacher, she was really nice and everything. And she always came to [me] and she's
>
> [said] like, oh, if you need any help with anything, just come to me and I will help you
>
> with anything or whatever. And then I had another teacher, she was really nice with me

too. And she made me go meet new friends and stuff like that and meet other teachers

and, yea, I felt welcome.

Approximately 70% (12 of the 17 participants) specifically emphasized the ability to ask for individual help as contributing to their success.

Participant 8 was able to describe the difficulty of learning English and how that was a barrier to effectively communicate his needs. He was able to explain how his teachers, especially Mrs. Smith, was able to anticipate his needs and encouraged him to ask questions.

My English wasn't that good, but even though sometimes I'll be using some sign languages, like you know, not to talk but to use some hand design. Teachers were still understanding, I was like, wow. Especially Mrs. Smith, I feel that she was reading everything I'm saying in my mind, everything I am thinking of. Because even if class, the thing that encouraged me a lot in Mrs. Smith class because she will ask us, like, if you can ask one question, what would it be? And I'm like, how is Mrs. Smith asking this type of question, like, it's what it is in my mind right now. And then we'll say, she will tell us to be honest, to say what we want to say, not to be scared of anything like how to talk. And it helped me a lot.

Being able to learn in a school climate where students were comfortable to ask questions, be vulnerable, and to feel safe contributed to their overall success. In this study multiple students came from countries where, unfortunately, their educational experiences were not safe or supportive. Of the 17 participants, five referenced they received a prior education in their home country that was strict, unsupportive, and often violent. Participant 12 shared an experience she had as a young student.

> I remember I was in class one day and I did my work, so I was good, … and I remember another girl didn't do her work and the teacher got so mad and she took a ruler and she literally hit that girl so hard the ruler broke on her. It was so heartbreaking, so I got so scared and I made sure to do all my work.

Participant 8 shared a similar experience where he experienced violence when being educated in his home country.

> And the class, the teacher would beat us, like they think getting beaten it's the way … they will get students' attention … the teacher will work us like a slave, like, sometimes they take us to their homes and we will do their job for them – clean their house, get water for them, enough water for the day.

Even though a few students referenced physical violence, most students who came from an unsupportive school climate mostly referenced the most significant barrier to their success was the fear of asking for help.

> No one asked questions at all because we're all, like, scared and we're not used to like raising our hands and ask questions because the teacher never asked the class, "do you have any questions?" The teacher would just teach you and then just give you homework and just go. And then the students are scared to ask questions. If you ask question and the teacher would just say like, "You should know this, why are you, like, you didn't know that". They will not tell you the answer, they will think you are dumb if you ask a question. That's why no one raised their hands or anything.

The stark contrast between the school climate and culture students experienced from their home countries compared to the United States was vastly different for most students who participated in the study. Teachers and instructional staff from the United States were key contributors aiding

in student success, however, participants indicated their classmates also contributed to a positive school climate and culture.

The second component of the theme of support that was derived from student interview data was the impact peer interaction had on the success of student participants. Participant 7 explained how positive student connections can contribute to a successful educational experience.

For me, the people that I surround myself with, like my friends, they give me a positive energy and they always support me and stuff and always help me in classes and assignments I need help in and they really motivate me to do better because we sometimes always talk about school and how we can be more successful and what we want our future to be.

Participant 17 explained how engaging in extracurricular school activities helped improve his ability to speak English. "I think for me, actually it's sports. Sports helped me a lot. You know, I play soccer, but if you don't know English in sports, you talk. And it's very good talking to my teammates, so I try a lot hard[er] to communicate with them." He later stated having a community to connect with his peers helped contribute to his overall success as a student. When asking Participant 4 why he was such a successful student his immediate answer was his peers. He explained how positive interactions with his friends help build confidence in himself, which then translated into the ability to continue to work hard in the classroom. "My friends were keeping telling me, "Man, you're smart. I can tell. If I haven't looked at you", like, they would tell me that I'm smart. I'm like, "You're sure?" They're like, "Yea, you are, trust me." Lastly, participants of the study explained the significance of friendships during the first year of entering American schools because of a limited ability to speak English. Participant 5 stated, "And a lot

of my friends, you know, [were] trying to help me. Especially for my first year because I did not speak word[s] for my first year. And my friends were helping me everywhere."

Data from all 17 participants emphasized the climate and culture of their school significantly contributed to a successful learning experience. This support ranged from educational staff to their classmates. A supportive learning environment increased student comfort level, allowed for the ability to ask questions, and to take appropriate risks, which translated to the academic success of students.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the findings from semi-structured focus group interviews as well and individual one-on-one follow-up interviews. In total, 17 high school EL student participants engaged in this research study. Each student made significant growth in reading (increased at least one proficiency band) according to the WIDA ACCESS FOR ELLs 2.0 Assessment from the 2018-2019 to 2019-2020 school year. The results were focused on the student perspective regarding factors they felt aided to their reading growth, challenges they faced adjusting to the American education system, and the impact the climate and culture of a school had on their overall success. Themes from an analysis of qualitative interview data concluded a combination of a positive support system, exposure to the English language, and student motivation to learn were contributors to their overall success in the classroom.

Chapter V

Discussion

Introduction

With the growth of EL populations in American schools, researchers have examined ways to close the achievement gap between EL and non-EL students (Baecher et al., 2012; Bailey & Huang, 2011; Cook et al., 2011; Deussen et al., 2017; Grant et al., 2017; Kieffer, 2008; Miley & Farmer, 2017; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Roy-Campbell, 2013; Short, 2017; Willner & Monroe, 2016). Even though there has been increased attention regarding improving the educational experience for EL students, there is still significant barriers EL students face compared to the rest of the general population (Deussen et al., 2017; Manken, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This research study investigated the factors EL students identified as significant contributions to their overall success in the American school system.

The purpose of this study was to listen to the voices of students who made significant growth in reading according to the WIDA ACCESS FOR ELLs 2.0 Assessment to determine factors that led to their overall success. Chapter V explores the implications of this study in relationship to the following research questions:

1. What do students perceive as the greatest factors contributing to their accelerated reading growth as demonstrated by the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment?

2. What are the greatest obstacles faced by EL students as they learn the culture and academic setting of the English language and American education system?

3. How do EL students perceive the climate and culture of a school as an impact on their growth and academic success in the classroom?

The discussion in this chapter is centered around data used to address these research questions and will be used to inform school districts across the United States. Hearing from students who showed significant growth in reading in one academic year where they indicate reasons why they were successful should be of interest of district leadership from schools across the United States, especially those from the Pacific Northwest. As EL enrollment in public schools is increasing, research that sheds light on factors that contribute to EL student success could assist in crafting guidelines and professional development for educators to help meet the needs of their students. School administration, educators, and EL students will benefit from the research questions that address factors that lead to a successful educational experience for EL students.

Summary of Results

A qualitative research design was conducted to best address the research questions of this study. Semi-structured qualitative focus group interviews, in addition individual follow-up one-on-one interviews, allowed for each participant to provide detailed and in-depth responses that targeted the research questions of this study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Due to careful and purposeful selection, participants were able to describe factors that led to their success in reading growth, barriers they faced during the learning process, and the impact of school climate and culture on the overall achievement through open-ended interview questions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Participants who took part in the study were high schoolers (grades 9-12) from four different urban or suburban school districts in Idaho whose grew at least one proficiency band from the 2018-2019 to 2019-2020 school year, according to the WIDA ACCESS FOR ELLs 2.0 Assessment.

Several themes emerged from participant interview data. Interview transcripts were read, re-read, coded, categorized, and then collapsed into three main themes, which were supported by minor themes. A visual representation of the major and minor themes of this research study are illustrated in (Figure 2) as three overlapping circles indicating that a combination of all three themes together contributed to the overall academic success of EL students. The first theme that emerged focused on student identified supports such as their school, family, and classmates had on their successful educational experience. The second theme highlighted exposure to specific content, instructional strategies, or course offerings that had an impact on student success. The third theme was motivation, where students emphasized the impact their intrinsic motivation, sense of pride of receiving an American education, and showing appreciation for the opportunity to be able to learn and be successful. Each major theme and its supporting minor themes will be expanded on below with the experiences of student participants, current research, and Bronfenbrenner Bioecological Framework, which explains the impact a child's environment has on his or her development.

Theme One: Support

Students who participated in this study were able to clearly explain the supports they received that had an impact on their overall success. They were able to explain the positive role their school played in their academic achievement. Especially emphasizing the impact teachers had on their growth and learning. Next, students explained how relationships and support from their classmates impacted their learning, academic, and social achievements. Lastly, students explained the role family support had on their positive educational experience.

School: Support of administration, teachers, and instructional staff. All 17 participants of the study addressed the connection between a positive school climate and their

academic achievement. Participants emphasized a teacher or school faculty member had a direct impact on their academic success. A culture that fostered kindness and feeling welcome were common connections vocalized by the participants of the study. A positive school climate is effective in breaking through barriers and can be a key contributor to a successful learning experience for students (Ruiz et al., 2018). Fostering a learning environment where students are free to take risks is important; however, equally important is the ability for each teacher to know the individual needs of each student in their classroom. Participants of the study explained teachers who made the greatest impact on their learning were patient and knew their individualized needs. Participant 2 was able to shed light on the how each student had unique learning needs and how his teachers were able to meet these needs.

> What they [teachers] really do is they, … see … every student has a different way of learning things. So, then they could have kind of put in perspective it makes it easier for you and your brain to kind of like process it and think about it and stuff.

Participant 12 shared a similar experience and emphasized the significance of both differentiated instruction and the patience of her teachers.

> The way they just, like, explained things to me. The way they just talked, like, they never got, I don't know how to say it. They never got frustrated when you asked something twice, you know, if you didn't understand something. They would just explain it again and again, many times.

It is clear students who participated in this study valued the patience of their teachers and appreciated the time they dedicated to meet the needs of each student in their classroom. This allows students to be vulnerable, and to ask questions to deepen their understanding.

Teachers being able to foster a positive classroom environment where students feel free to take risks and ask questions is important, especially for EL students. It is difficult for EL students to learn both class content and English, which is their non-native language (Baecher et al., 2012; Short, 2017; Smiley-Blanton, 2010). Great teachers can foster a learning environment that is both challenging, consistent, and shows an understanding for the unique learning needs of each student in their classroom. Participant 7 was able to demonstrate how effective teachers can balance rigor in the classroom, while meeting the learning needs of students in their classroom.

> I feel like even though I'm an EL student, I don't want to be treated differently in class. I want to be treated the same, but like, you know, and when they, some teachers would call me out and be like, just treat me different, treat me like, let's say pity me because I'm an EL student and that really didn't help. But what really did help was when they treated me [the] same, but still knew that I can learn better by going slow and other stuff like that.

It can be difficult for teachers to balance differentiated instruction and hold high expectations for all students. However, when done well, EL students have an opportunity to thrive in the classroom. This allows for further learning to take place because EL students feel comfortable to approach teachers to ask questions to extend their learning. Participant 2 explained how being in a class with a supportive teacher allowed for him to break out of his comfort zone and ask questions to deepen his understanding, and make connections with concepts in his classes.

> Growing up, I was a shy kid, I wouldn't ask for help. I would just sit there and just kind of try to figure it out. Being able to ask questions makes it easier because then you're able to find ways of how to solve an equation, how to get from this point to another point with the teachers help.

General education teachers often struggle when EL students are mainstreamed into their classrooms (Deussen et al., 2017; Gibson, 2017; Grant, Bell, Yoo, Jimenez, & Frye, 2017; Molle, 2013; Roy-Campbell, 2013; Willner & Mokhtari, 2018). It is apparent teachers need additional supports or professional development opportunities to help meet the needs of EL students. It is vital because all students (especially ELs) can thrive when they receive an education from schools that fosters a learning environment where all students feel they have a place of belonging.

Peers: Positive relationships with classmates. Student interactions with their classmates are also linked to the climate and culture of a school. Olsen et al. (2018) and Wang and Degol (2016) explained positive and safe school climates as having shared values and beliefs by everyone who is part of this environment. Participants of the study emphasized their classmates had a significant contribution to the climate of their school. In addition, participants described positive relationships with their classmates had a meaningful impact on a successful learning experience. Building these positive peer relationships is often difficult for EL students because of language barriers. Participant 17 shared his story of his first day of attending an American school. His words emphasize the difficulty for EL students to reach out to their classmates to build these friendships. He explained,

> [The] first day in school, that was kind of crazy, though. First day of school, I was the quietest person in class. Nervous because I couldn't speak and I started getting used to it like in five day, having the same class all the time and same people, so we started getting along … So when I get home, [I], just started thinking, like, I need to start getting friends, new friends.

His words show how language barriers can hinder the ability for EL student to reach out to their native English-speaking classmates. Participant 17 later mentioned he was able to foster friendships with the classmates he was intimidated by and was able to connect with them during his first month of school. It is clear he was able to attend a school with a positive environment where both EL and native-English speaking students were able to embrace each other's cultures, and built strong relationships that lasted beyond the school day. These peer connections also contribute to the ability for EL students to learn the English. Participant 4 stated relationships with his classmates assisted with his ability to read and speak the English language.

> Alright, so I came [to the United States] about five years ago. And I was actually new to English, I didn't know anything. So, when I went in the class and everyone was speaking English, but I had some friend who spoke English so they kind of helped me translate things. And so, I didn't, every time I hang out with friends and I didn't just like being the one who don't [speak English], I can hear what they're saying, and that kind of just kind of got lower by self, you see. So, then I went home and start reading a lot of books and watching a lot of movies and see the translation down there. And yea, that's how I kind of start, you know, devoting my time learning English.

The opportunity for EL students to interact with their peers helps with the ability to access content, and becomes a motivator for EL students to work on learning the English language outside the school setting. It is unlikely the majority of ELs would take the initiative to better their understanding of the English language on their own, without a supportive learning environment.

Family: Connection and motivation for student success. Family support proved to be a contributing factor in assisting EL student both acquire the English language and to adjust to the

American education system for many participants. Over 75% (n=13) of participants referenced a family member as having a direct impact on their academic achievement. This additional support was a compliment to what EL students were learning in the classroom. This continued exposure to English was helpful, especially in the summer, when school was not in session. During the interview participant 9 was asked why he was a successful student. He mentioned the time he dedicated to learning English and the support from his mother.

> We put in the time for it, you know. Like I remember in summer, when I first got here, my first year, my mom would make me read books in English so I could learn better. And then watch TV too, in English, so I could just understand, try to understand what they were saying.

Having additional support, beyond the classroom, is essential for EL students build their proficiency with the English language. It is not uncommon for entire families who move to the United States to work together to learn how to read and speak English. Participant 7 explained how as a family they worked together to improve their English.

> In the beginning, my parents struggled with English the same as me and reading wasn't very good. They would always, but like, they started learning before me, I guess, to help. Like I remember my dad, he would always help me, and my grandparents, they would always try to learn English. They would go to school too, you know. And they would, after that, when I was struggling, they would try to help me and stuff. And I saw how hard they had to try, so it motivated me to try to learn English without them sometimes, to help them.

Current research explains the struggles and the difficult adjustments students face as they are integrated into the American education system (Deussen et al., 2017; Gibson, 2017; Grant, Bell,

Yoo, Jimenez, & Frye, 2017; Molle, 2013; Roy-Campbell, 2013; Willner & Mokhtari, 2018).

However, one way EL students can overcome these obstacles is to be immersed in supportive

environments. This solution is the most effective when EL students receive supports from their

school, classmates, and their family.

A supportive school, peer, and family environment has a direct connection to

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological model. This framework has guided research since the 1970s

with a focus on how a child's environment impacts their development (Bessman et al., 2013;

Cross, 2017; Onchwari et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan et

al., 2018). The Bioecological Theory highlights the importance of understanding an individual's

development within each system, and it explains the child (student) and their environment affects

one another bidirectionally (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The major theme of support, and the minor

themes of school, peers, and family have a direct connection to Bronfenbrenner's model. The

inner most system (microsystem) has the greatest impact on the development of a child and

consists of their friend groups, family, and school. Participants of the study emphasized the

impact their school, classmates, and their family had on their success in learning the English

language. This has a direct connection to Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological model, therefore,

grounding participants' responses with well-known research. In addition, the second system that

is part of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological model is a student's mesosytem, which explains the

connections between each of the child's microsystems (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017;

Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018).

This means when a student's family, school, and peers all play a supporting role, it has a positive

impact on the overall development of a child. Participants of this study clearly explained the

supportive interaction of their microsystems had an impact on their growth and development.

Theme Two: Exposure

Participants were able to explain the impact exposure to instructional supports had on their growth and achievement as a student. The process of continual reading of instructional materials both of choice and required by instructors assisted with students reading growth. Being able to view and read content with subtitles assisted in the reading growth of students. Lastly, being able to take special course offerings where class time was dedicated solely for EL students contributed to their growth and academic achievement.

Reading: Choice assists with English language growth. Reading comprehension is especially important for EL students due to the fact as students advance to secondary grade levels the proficiency gap in reading widens between EL students and native-English speaking students (Farnia, & Geva, 2013; Maarouf, 2019; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011; Phillips Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts, Mohammed, & Vaughn, 2010; Ruiz de Castilla, 2018; Taub, Sivo, & Puyana, 2017). This delay in progress means EL students have major reading deficits when compared to their native English-speaking classmates (Farnia, & Geva, 2013; Maarouf, 2019; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011; Phillips Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts et al., 2010; Ruiz de Castilla, 2018; Taub et al., 2017). Due to the significant increase in the enrollment of EL students across the United States, these deficits have become extremely disturbing (Cook et al. 2011; Deussen, et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Even more alarming is the fact that a delay or deficits in reading growth for EL student have a direct impact on the rising dropout rates for EL students compared to native-English speakers (Maarouf, 2019). As EL student exit primary grade levels, their reading growth begins to plateau and becomes stagnant.

This growth flatline puts EL students at a disadvantage as they enter secondary grade levels (Farnia, & Geva, 2013; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011).

English learners who participated in the study emphasized the significance of continual reading as having a major effect on their ability to read, comprehend, and extract meaning from the English language. This exposure to reading often was done in their general content classes, but participants emphasized the ability to read books of their choice had the greatest impact on their success in learning the English language and assisted in their overall reading comprehension. This addresses the gap being reported in current research, where EL students show delays in reading comprehension compared to their native English-speaking classmates. Increased reading exposure helps boost the reading comprehension of EL students. Supplemental reading EL students engage with ranges from informational text (news articles and social media posts), as well as novel and fictional information they found interesting. Participant 5 explained how social media served as a platform to deliver content in English, which in return assisted in his overall reading abilities.

> You know, what helped me trying to improve in reading is just the social media and talking with friends, like chats and stuff. And reading through Instagram or Facebook, you know… Because there is some news, like following these kinds of pages, there is some news in English, you will read it, go through it, you know. That's what I do. But yea, and that's helped me.

In the same interview participant 6 expanded on the words spoken by participant 5 by emphasizing how reading information she found interesting benefitted her reading abilities.

> Yeah, right what participant 5 said. I think social media or something like that, or movies, or all of those things, is good for improve[ment], for English because we like those, we

like to read those things. For example, we don't like reading, right? And then if we have

to, I think we will not learn so much. But if it's something that we like, I think that's

…much better.

Interview data from participants acknowledged reading short novels or books they found

interesting improved their reading abilities. Participant 2 explained the ability to check books

out at school that indicated specific reading levels was a benefit. "I remember in elementary

school when they had those books that had reading levels on it. So, then I would just kind of read

those types of books and kind of build on from that." This allowed for the opportunity to

challenge himself to reading more complex texts and allowed for choice in the books he wanted

to read. Participant 3 echoed the words of participant 2 by stating, "yea, books too. A lot of

books and because I think I, yea, I read a lot of English books and everything. And sometimes I

read books with my mom, but yea, I think books in total." It is evident EL students indicated

choice in what they read led to their improvement in learning the English language. Allowing

students choice in what they read is attainable in all secondary classes. For courses such as

social studies and science, teacher could allow EL student access informational text that align

with the standards being assessed for that specific unit of instruction. English language arts

classes have the opportunity offer different novels or books that connect with the learning targets

supporting their units of instruction. Being able to allow EL student choice in the text they read

is one step in improving their reading comprehension.

Subtitles: Visually connecting English to student's native languages. Over 50% of the

participants (n=9) identified the ability to read and learn the English language was enhanced

when using subtitles while watching media. Participants explained use of subtitles or

translations were beneficial in two different ways. First, was the ability to connect words spoken

in English with the word projected in the subtitle. Second, was having words spoken in English being translated in the student's native language. The nine participants who specifically mentioned the impact subtitles had on their ability to learn and read English mentioned the benefit of connecting spoken and written English. Participant 17 stated plainly, "for me, I usually watch movie[s] and use subtitle[s]. They speak at the same time and I read on the bottom." Subtitles are often available for most content that is stream or presented in classrooms. An easy accommodation for teachers to make would be to use the closed captioning when showing media in the classroom. This is a win/win because it is easy access for teachers to adapt into their lessons, and it enhances the learning experience for EL students.

Participants of the study explained the impact Google translate had on their ability to learn the English language. Participants mentioned the ability to hear or see English and then connect the word to their native language was powerful and assisted in deepening their understanding. Participant 5 shared a story of how his EL teacher was able to technology to provide translations to students in real time.

> One of the EL teachers has a remote that shows the, you know, like he speak[s] English and when he speak[s], the translation goes, it comes on the board…He speak[s] in English and the, like he put it from English to Spanish or from English to Arabic. It's just when he speak[s] English, the translation goes on the board. Which is Arabic or Spanish or any other language.

Participant 14 shared a similar experience how Google translate was used in their science class to connect English with their native language.

> What helped me was my Science teacher, so terms, he would put a Google translate to me. So, whenever I don't understand a word, he will translate it in Arabic so I can

understand. [It] also then translates the papers, so then [it] puts [it] in English so I can

read, and like, understand. But if I don't understand, though, I can ask for help.

Both experiences demonstrate the positive impact connecting English to the student's native

language, and how that assists them with learning both content and the English language. When

teachers can both build a classroom environment where students feel safe to be vulnerable and to

ask questions, coupled with technology, and instructional tools to enhance learning, it is a win

for EL students.

Special Offerings: The power of the EL classroom. Connecting to the positive impact

teachers had on EL students' academic successes, 70% (n=12) of participants directly mentioned

teachers dedicating one-on-one individual time as significant to their overall academic success as

a student. Being able to approach teachers individually before, during, or after class allowed for

participants to ask specific questions to help with clarity, or to receive extra assistance.

Participants mentioned how many of their teachers embraced a classroom culture that ensured all

students felt welcome and safe to ask questions to enhance their learning; however, many

participants mentioned the positive impact their EL teachers, and their dedicated EL class, had

on their academic experience.

Being able to connect with students who share a similar language or culture is important

to help provide a foundation to build upon is important, especially for students who are

newcomers to the United States. Participant 14 explained how a dedicated EL class is helpful for

both the students and the EL teacher.

So, they put us in a different class, so like, they would teach a class of students so that [it]

actually makes it more comfortable for you to learn stuff with them. So, if you don't

understand it, like, someone else who understands your language can translate to you

what the teacher said. So, every time, if I don't understand, the teacher asks that student

what I was saying so the student tells the teacher about it.

This reciprocal relationship where classmates can communicate with one another, and students

who are more proficient in English can inform the teacher of specific student questions,

especially if the students initial English speaking, and reading capabilities are low, is a

significant benefit. Participants explained the connections, and comfort, the dedicated EL class

provided both when students were first enrolled in American schools, and even throughout their

high school career. Participant 7 started her educational experience in the United States in

elementary school, where she did not receive support in a specific EL class. However, as she

transitioned to different schools, she was able to take an EL class in high school. Her words

clearly explain the benefits of being enrolled in a special EL class.

I remember that I didn't have EL classes when I came to the United States as a really

young student. I would just take normal classes with no understanding that there could be

like EL teachers that could help me and stuff. I just really didn't know about it because

no one really showed that they cared about that stuff. So, I would be in classes with kids

who grew up here and stuff. So, like, it was actually really challenging for me because I

didn't know English either. And I was just, I just spoke my native [language]… I was just

the one that would always be left out. And especially when we'd have to read something

or speak, it was really embarrassing and hard for me because they would stare and I

wouldn't know anything. But then going into high school and middle school, it got really

much better … So, after I got into EL and stuff, everything got very comfortable for me.

It is evident EL class offerings build a foundation for students to acquire the English language,

which in return, allows students to take mainstreamed general education classes. Students who

had English speaking and reading abilities to be successful in general education classes explained they still wanted to be enrolled in these EL classes. This was because participants expressed, they wanted individual support, and they had built great relationships with their EL teachers.

Participants voiced the impact their teachers had on their academic success, but of all their teachers who made a positive impact, most participants expressed how their EL teacher was the most important. Participant 7 expressed their EL teacher, Mrs. Smith, was their biggest support. "She's a big person in my life that has helped me in so many things. She really encourages me to do better and pushed me a lot." Participant 4 expressed a similar appreciation for his EL teacher, Mrs. Jones.

> I was the one student who didn't like answering [questions] because I just kind of feel like I might say the wrong thing because I didn't know the language. So, I just kind of stayed quiet, but the teacher would come and just kind of insist if I need help and I would talk to [her] privately. And that, I kind of liked that. And yea, and I just love the teachers and if you know Mrs. Jones, she was my favorite.

Dedicated EL classes allow for EL teachers to make specific connections with their students, instill trust, and tailor instruction to support the needs of the students in their classrooms. As a result, this builds confidence in ELs and allows them to be successful in the classes they take outside of their EL class.

The exposure of being able to read text of choice, the use of subtitles to make connections between English and students native language, and enrolling in special class offerings connect to the students' microsystem of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological model. These supports are offered by schools, which is part of the student's microsystem. The microsystem

has the greatest, and most immediate impact on the child's development, so these positive exposures can have a significant bearing on the growth and development of EL students.

Theme Three: Motivation

Student who are identified as EL experience significant delays in reading comprehension compared to native-English speaking students (Farnia, & Geva, 2013; Maarouf, 2019; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011; Phillips Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts, Mohammed, & Vaughn, 2010; Ruiz de Castilla, 2018; Taub, Sivo, & Puyana, 2017). Limitations noted in several studies regarding EL reading growth and achievement indicate the need for further research to help close the achievement gap, especially for students who are acquiring the English language at the high school level (Phillips Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts, Mohammed, & Vaughn, 2010). Interview data gathered by the participants of the study can help shed light on this gap, where they identified their own motivation to want to learn as being a key contributor their reading growth. The major theme of motivation was broken into three smaller minor themes, which include: an intrinsic drive of EL students working hard due to their desire to want to learn, a sense of pride highlighting their accomplishments, and the desire to open doors for new opportunities for their futures.

Intrinsic Motivation: Having a strong work-ethic. The motivation and desire of EL students to learn, stemmed from their own intrinsic motivation, and work ethic. Participants of this study when asked why they are a successful student, the overwhelming majority, referenced their work ethic. They had the motivation within themselves to overcome the challenges they faced, and put in extra work, to ensure they were successful. This drive was not given to students by their teachers, it was something they already had inside themselves. The extra push

was a critical factor successful EL students possessed that contributed to their reading abilities, and overall success in the classroom. Participant 3 stated his ability to study and to push himself to achieve his goals contributed to his academic achievement.

> I think I'm successful because I work really hard. So, when I want something, I work hard for it and everything. And with school, when I have a test or something, then I study, and I do all the things that I'm supposed to do to be able to get a good grade on it. And everything, like with anything I want to do and everything, then I work hard on it and, yea. I just, I think for everything I want, it's mostly I work hard for it and everything.

He went on to make the connection how success in the short term can lead a bright future. "I do all these things to be able to get good grades…to be able to make it to the next level and everything, like to [attend] college, and then after college do something that I really love." Having a clear vision and being intrinsically motivated to reach goals is difficult to teach. Participant 5 echoed a similar statement to the one given by participant 3. He recapped a conversation he recently had with one of his friends.

> One of my friends was telling me that, "Because you don't like to read, you're not going to be able to read anything." I was like, no, if I want to read, I will read. But it doesn't mean I don't like to read, I'm not going to read, you know. So, yea, just to prove to myself and to people that I can do it.

Learning a new language is difficult, so the ability to work through obstacles is vital to success. Participants of this study were able indicate the significance of not giving up and to work hard to be successful in the present and well into their futures. Participant 2 shared words of encouragement regarding success.

One thing I was thinking … if you have put enough effort into [hard] work, then you would be more successful than you think. But if you don't, you kind of think of like, you feel bummed out and stuff. So, I kind of think working hard, you know, it pays off at the end, it definitely does.

The gap in current literature regarding EL education is the impact their own motivation to learn has on their academic achievement. Participants of this student clearly indicated their internal drive to succeed played a significant role in their achievement.

Pride: Strong family bonds. A second sub-theme relating to motivation was the emphasis EL students placed on being determined to succeed was to assist their families and to make them proud. Participants recognized the hard work and sacrifice their families made to give them the opportunity to attend an American school. The impact family has on the education of EL students directly connects to the microsystem of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological model. Research confirms a supportive family environment positively impacts the development of a child (Bessman, et al., 2013; Cross, 2017; Onchwari, et al., 2008; Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Vardanyan, et al., 2018). EL students were motivated to learn and be successful to ensure their families' investment in their future paid off. Participant 2 discussed how his mother's work ethic inspired him to work hard, and as a result, motivated him to inspire his younger siblings. "She's a hard worker and she works a lot, which is kind of like an example to me and my siblings. So kind of me also working hard kind of shows to my younger siblings that if you put effort into it, you know, you guys will be more successful in life than you think you are." Strong family bonds provided motivation for EL students to work hard in their classes to achieve solid grades. Participant 1 shared a similar story as participant 2, but he was the younger sibling who was on the receiving end of being inspired by the work ethic of his older brother.

"For me, what I have told about this putting a lot of effort is pretty much my big brother. Know the fact that he pretty much [has] been successful, that he pushed really hard, [and] got straight A's. So, knowing from him, I can do it as well." In addition to being inspired by the hard work for their families, participants emphasize the need to help their families by learning English. Participant 17 explained,

> Yea, on my side, my dad and my mom, they don't know English. So, I have to be the one to start learning and stuff. Sometimes, [at our] apartment, we need to get an interpreter... So, it was kind of tough to get somebody who knows English and knows my language to interpret for them. So, I was like, it's not going to be every day they going to help us, so I'm going to need to step up then that's what I'm doing. And now I'm the interpreter for the family.

Often the motivation to learn the English language comes out of a necessity. However, given the support of students' families, the process of learning how to speak and read the English language is attainable. Having a strong support system impacts the success for all students, especially those who are embracing and learning a new language and culture.

Opportunity: Giving back. The emphasis of EL students to give back to their families was referenced by most participants, especially the 76% (n=13), who came to the United States due to turmoil in their home countries. Participant 4 described how his motivation to succeed changed when he came to America.

> I mean, I didn't used to be a hard worker, I think, in Africa. It was all about just trying to not disappoint your parents and all that because they were paying for your school, so you really have to work hard. And that became a habit. But when you come in America, it's a different, you have to adapt and you have to work hard for everything because we're

different. I have to help my family in Africa, so I really have to be the one to be

successful so I can help those, my family in Africa, to also come here. So, I'll provide

them a stable life, so that kind of just like a motivation for you to work hard. Just to help

your family.

Being given the opportunity to live in the United States and receive an American education was

highlighted by participants. In addition, being able to take advantage of this opportunity and to

give back inspired student success. When asking Participant 17 what drives him to be successful

was being a role model for his younger siblings, which in return would allow them to seek

opportunities to benefit their futures. He explained,

For me, first of all, it's family, it's all of them. So, I have to be the, I was their firstborn,

first person in the house, so I have to be the kid to start everything. I have to show my

brothers and sisters that are coming that they have to follow my footstep[s].

It is not uncommon to read articles that pick apart or are critical of the public-school system in

the Unites States. It is refreshing to hear the perspective of EL students and how they value the

American education system. Given the opportunity to receive an education was a major

motivator that contributed to the academic achievement of the participants of this study.

Conclusions

The questions explored in this qualitative study were:

1. What do students perceive as the greatest factors contributing to their accelerated

   reading growth as demonstrated by the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment?

2. What are the greatest obstacles faced by EL students as they learn the culture and

   academic setting of the English language and American education system?

3. How do EL students perceive the climate and culture of a school as an impact on their growth and academic success in the classroom?

Four semi-structured focus group interviews, and seven follow-up on-on-one interviews, were conducted with EL students from urban and suburban school districts in the state of Idaho, who grew at least on proficiency level in reading on the WIDA ACCESS FOR ELLs 2.0 Assessment. The purpose of the interviews was to determine factors EL students determined contributed to their growth in reading. Current research indicates ELs have significant reading deficits compared to their native English speaking classmates (Farnia, & Geva, 2013; Maarouf, 2019; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011; Phillips Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Rambo-Hernandez, & McCoach, 2015; Roberts et al., 2010; Ruiz de Castilla, 2018; Taub et al., 2017). Moreover, these reading gaps grow as EL student progress to secondary grade levels because the level of text complexity increases (Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Maarouf, 2019; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011). Since participants of this study are high school ELs (grades 9-12), who made significant gains in reading, their voice is important because they are addressing the problem stated in current research.

Students identified several factors that contributed to their accelerated reading growth. Research confirms the ability to read, comprehend, and obtain meaning from written language is vital in the academic success of all students (Mancilla-Martinez, Kieffer, Biancarosa, Christodoulou, & Snow, 2011). The opportunity to read text of their choice, interacting with media that has subtitles, having a dedicated EL class, and receiving instruction from an EL teacher, all influence the reading growth of EL students. Choice allows for students to engage in content they found fascinating, which allows for additional exposure to reading information written in the English language. Participants enjoyed reading both informational text and

fictional information, which can align with any course or content being taught in public schools. Informational text participants chose to read outside the school day was often accessed through social media. Often these social media posts highlighted news covering what was happening around the world, and events occurring domestically within the United States. These posts typically would include video footage as well as the transcript of the materials being covered. To improve their reading abilities students chose to read the transcript or new article, rather than watch the video. Participants identified reading short pieces of fiction, small books, or novels, of their choice also contributed to their reading abilities. The type of information students selected to read did not matter, however, successful students took the initiative to read beyond the school day. This additional practice increased their expose to the English language, which as a result accelerated their reading growth. To enhance the learning experience for EL students, general education teachers should allow choice when students are assigned readings outlined in their units of instruction. The ability for students to select materials they want to read increases their motivation to learn, which allows for continued repetition and exposure to the English language.

When viewing media, student acknowledged the benefit of matching spoken English to the written language. These connections assist with word recognition and helps build the vocabulary of EL students. Most videos being streamed in American classrooms can add closed captioning, so this is an easy adjustment all educators can make to enhance the educational experience for EL students. Equally as significant is the ability to translate content provided in English to the student's native language. Participants explained the value of being able to translate class content from English to their native language to complete their work. Then the additional repetition of taking their responses from their native language back to English assisted with their ability to access both the content and English language. This fosters connections and

assists EL student extract the meaning of written language. Google translate is free, and can be an effective tool that allows EL students translate content from English to their native language.

Classes offerings that are dedicated to EL students offer great comfort, and have a significant impact on their reading abilities. There is not a universal definition of school climate and culture, therefore it is essential for individual schools to be able to define and embody what they value (Olsen et al., 2018). Participants of this research study explained the EL classroom, which is comprised of EL students and educators, serves as a place of belonging where they can take the necessary risks to improve their reading abilities. These dedicated classes allowed for individualized instruction to meet the unique learning needs of each student. EL teachers know the abilities of each student in their classroom. They can appropriately differentiate instruction to meet their unique learning needs of each student in their classroom. This tailored instruction helps foster reading growth because the text being read is appropriate for each specific student. In addition, it allows for friendships to form where EL students feel comfortable and safe to ask questions, and seek support to improve their reading abilities. Learning a new language, embracing a new culture, and being educated in a new learning environment is a challenge. Participants explained having a dedicated class where they felt empowered to take risks impacted their overall reading abilities. Creating dedicated classes for EL students, which are instructed by an EL educator, is essential helping students improve their reading comprehension.

The ability for EL students to read, especially those students who have little to no exposure to the English language, is difficult. Research indicates a need to identify factors that can contribute to closing the achievement gap in reading between students acquiring the English language and those who are native English speakers (Galloway, & Uccelli, 2019; Maarouf, 2019; Roberts et al., 2010). Participants of this student were selected due to their accelerated growth in

reading. Each participant had the intrinsic motivation to learn, took pride in their learning, and cherished the opportunity to share their successes with their families. This drive to work hard and refusal to quit had a direct impact on their reading growth. Participants stated they worked hard, got good grades because they studied, sought out assistance when they needed help, and were overall successful students. They did indicate how their work ethic allowed them to persevere when learning was difficult, which as a result helped them with their reading abilities. This successful sample of EL students had the grit, and drive to preserve when learning was a challenge.

Beyond being self-motivated to be successful readers, participants identified the pride they took in their accomplishments contributed to their reading growth. Learning can be contagious, and when EL students experience growth and success it increases their motivation to learn. Being able to tap into this motivation and match it with strong reading instruction and supports helps contribute to accelerated reading growth.

The opportunity to receive an American education and support from their families contributed to this work ethic. Participants explained being able to be a role model to younger siblings, or to give back to their family was a significant motivator to their success in the classroom. This extra motivation is a piece of the puzzle relating to student reading abilities because EL students refused to quit when being faced with challenging content. Student motivation is a factor that can help close the achievement gap mentioned in current research. Instructional supports and a supportive learning environment can serve as a foundation to help foster this work ethic. The combination EL student exposure to instructional supports coupled with a motivation to learn has a direct connection to Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model. It shows the students microsystem (school and classmates) have an immediate impact on their

growth and development. Positive relationships within each of the student's microsystems contributed to a successful learning experience.

English learners face many obstacles as they begin to adjust to a new culture, and academic setting. Common factors participants of this study found as major obstacles they faced as they adjusted to American culture, English language, and a new education system were:

- Not being able to communicate/express themselves because of language barriers

- Overwhelming workload from their classes

- Embracing new teaching methods and the pace of instruction

- Finding and making new friends and feeling judged by their peers

Research of Wang and Degol (2016) explained academics, community, safety, and the instructional environment are components of successful school climate. Even though there is a definition of a successful school climate, the ability of schools to meet this definition is difficult. Students identified several challenges they faced as they navigated a new educational system, all 17 participants expressed overwhelming support from their school, and peers helped them overcome these obstacles. Support was a major theme deduced by student interview data as a key contribution to their overall success.

The support from teachers allowed for EL student to ask questions, seek clarification, and receive tailored instruction to meet their unique learning needs. Students felt empowered to be vulnerable and to ask for help if they needed assistance. This can be difficult, especially if prior educational experiences viewed asking for help as a sign of weakness. The ability for teachers to foster a supportive learning environment where EL students can take risks is imperative to help them overcome any obstacles they face as they adjust to the American education system. In addition, the ability to make new friendship and foster positive peer relationships helped

eliminate barriers EL students faced. Participants stated being connected with their classmates (both ELs and their native English-speaking peers) aided in overcoming challenges they faced as they embraced the American education system. These friendships ranged from academic support and guidance in the classroom, to engaging in extracurricular activities offered by their schools. These peer relationships offered additional supports to overcome any challenges EL students faced. To ease the transition EL students make as they enroll in American schools, it is essential school leadership, educators, and students make a conscious effort build a positive relationship with their EL students. A positive school climate and culture is vital to the academic success for EL students. This supportive learning environment will empower EL student to ask great questions, seek additional help, and take appropriate risks as they learn both class content and the English language.

Recommendations for Further Research

It is essential to continue to listen to student input to guide the decision-making process. With rising EL populations across the United States, it is important to continue to study factors that contribute to an overall successful learning experience (Baecher et al., 2012; Bailey & Huang, 2011; Deussen et al., 2017; Grant et al., 2017; Lakin & Young, 2013; Lenski et al., 2006; Willner & Monroe, 2016). This research investigated the perspective of successful EL students, therefore, the voice of EL students who are not making substantial gains was not part of this study. It is recommended for future research to listen to the voice of EL students who have shown stagnation in their reading growth. In addition, those who plan to conduct future research should use Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory as a theoretical framework (see figure 1) as a guide for further study. Using the theoretical framework, literature review, research methods, and results from this study as a ballast, the suggestions below are recommended.

Future researchers should expand their data collection beyond the state of Idaho. Even though the process to collect data used purposeful sampling to include high school participants from urban and suburban school districts, ELs encompasses 10% of the student population in the United States (Cook et al., 2011; Deussen, et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). In addition, due to the small population of the state of Idaho, rural school districts were not included as part of this research. Being able to span data collection among multiple states including rural areas would be recommend for further research.

The addition of the teacher voice could empower future research. This study solely emphasized the student perspective, which provided meaningful data. The addition of teacher qualitative interviews could allow for their voices and experiences to be heard. Being able to use both student and teacher interview data to address the research questions of the study could help add an additional and meaningful perspective.

It is recommended for future researchers to consider including quantitative analysis of student achievement scores to determine where across the WIDA framework the greatest growth took place. The vast majority, 40 states, use the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 test to assess student achievement, and to monitor progress; therefore this instrument would be an effective tool to use for future research (University of Wisconsin Center, 2018; Willner & Monroe, 2016; Wolf, Farnsworth, & Herman, 2008). While the purpose of this study was to select student who made significant reading growth from any proficiency level, the ability to determine where the greatest growth took place could enhance the qualitative research.

Implications for Professional Practice

English learners comprise 10% of the overall student population in American schools, and this percentage has been increasing over the past 20 years (Cook et al., 2011; Deussen, et al.,

2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The results from this research study will assist any secondary school that serves a population of English learners that reflect the national average. Listening the voice of EL students, especially students who have demonstrated academic success, can be powerful to support professional development efforts being offered in the school or district. Students can accurately convey what is working and what is not working within the educational system in which they are enrolled. This allows for each school district to meet the specific learning needs of the EL student populations they serve. Once these needs are identified it is essential continued professional development regarding EL education is ongoing. Unfortunately, great ideas are shared for a short period of time and then it is quickly forgotten. To ensure the longevity of sound teaching practices it is vital school leadership and educators work together to meet the needs of EL students.

English learners are challenged to grasp both content and language standards in English, which is not their primary language (Baecher et al., 2012; Short, 2017; Smiley-Blanton, 2010). In addition, EL students are often mainstreamed in the general education classroom, and teachers struggle to meet student needs (Deussen et al., 2017; Gibson, 2017; Grant, Bell, Yoo, Jimenez, & Frye, 2017; Molle, 2013; Roy-Campbell, 2013; Willner & Mokhtari, 2018). Teachers are aware of the struggle EL students face, and want to provide the best learning experience possible for their students. It could be effective to clearly identify students who are ready to be mainstreamed into general content classes. Often EL students need specific classes dedicated to learning the English language before they are exposed to complex concepts, especially at the high school level. Appropriate placement of EL students in general education classes can help address this problem.

There are schools across the United States that offer dual-language, or bilingual education programs, and research has shown these programs contribute to growth in reading comprehension for EL students (Ruiz de Castilla, 2018; Taub et al., 2017). Typically, these classes or programs are conducted at primary grade levels. Being able to replicate a similar system at the secondary level could be difficult. Participants of this study consistently acknowledged the assistance from both their EL and general education teachers were crucial to their overall success in the classroom. An appropriate solution to address reading gaps at secondary grade levels could be to use the expertise of both EL and core content teachers through a team-teaching model. This would allow EL teachers and general content teachers to collaborate and deliver instruction together. This could permit for the exchange of language and culture of EL students, and students who are native-English speakers.

References

Aragon, S., Griffith, M., Wixom, M. A., Woods, J., Workman, E., & Education Commission of the States. (2016). Essa: Quick guides on top issues. *Education Commission of the States*. Retrieved from: https://search.ebscohost.com

Baecher, L., Artigliere, M., Patterson, D. K., & Spatzer, A. (2012). Differentiated instruction for English language learners as "variations on a theme". *Middle School Journal*, *43*(3), 14-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2012.11461807

Bailey, A. L., & Huang, B. H. (2011). Do current English language development/proficiency standards reflect the English needed for success in school? *Language Testing*, *28*(3), 343–365. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532211404187

Batt, E. G. (2008). Teachers' perceptions of ELL education: Potential solutions to overcome the greatest challenges. *Multicultural Education, 15*(3), 39–43. Retrieved from https://search.ebscohost.com

Bessman, L., Carr, R., & Grimes, L. E. (2013). A gift for the gifted: School counselor advocacy for representation of Latino students in gifted education. *Georgia School Counselors Association Journal, 20*(1), 1-7. Retrieved from https://search.ebscohost.com

Butler, F. A., & Stevens, R. (2001). Standardized assessment of the content knowledge of English language learners K–12: Current trends and old dilemmas. *Language Testing, 18*(4), 409–427. https://doi.org /10.1191/026553201682430111

Cook, H. G., Boals, T., & Lundberg, T. (2011). What can we reasonably expect? *Phi Delta Kappan, 93*(3), 66–69. https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171109300316

Creswell, J.W., & Guetterman, T.C. (2019). *Educational research: Planning, conducting,*

    and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research. New York, New York:

    Pearson Education, Inc.

Cross, W. E. (2017). Ecological factors in human development. *Child Development, 88*(3), 767-

    769. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12784

Delgado, M., Ettekal, A., Simpkins, S., & Schaefer, D. (2016). How do my friends matter?

    Examining Latino adolescents' friendships, school belonging, and academic

    achievement. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 45*(6), 1110–1125.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-015-0341-x

Deussen, T., Hanson, H., & Bisht, B. (2017). Are two commonly used early warning

    indicators accurate predictors of dropout for English learner students? Evidence

    from six districts in Washington state. *Regional Educational Laboratory*

Farnia, F., & Geva, E. (2013). Growth and predictors of change in English language learners'

    reading comprehension. Journal of Research in Reading, 36(4), 389–421.

Ferlazzo, L., & Hull Sypnieski, K. (2012). *The esl/ell teacher's survival guide: Ready-to-use*

    strategies, tools, and activities for teaching all levels. San Francisco, California: Jossey-

    Bass.

Gibson, C. (2017). Bridging English language learner achievement gaps through

    effective vocabulary development strategies. *English Language Teaching 9*(9),

    134-138. http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n9p134

Grant, L., Bell, A. B., Yoo, M., Jimenez, C., & Frye, B. (2017). Professional development

    for educators to promote literacy development of English learners: Valuing home

connections. *Reading Horizons (Online), 56*(4), 1-47. Retrieved from https://search.

proquest.com

Hopson, L. M., Schiller, K. S., & Lawson, H. A. (2014). Exploring linkages between school

climate, behavioral norms, social supports, and academic success. *Social Work*

Research, 38(4), 197–209. https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svu017

Johnson, T., & Wells, L. (2017). English language learner teacher effectiveness and the common

core. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 25*(23), 1-22.

http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v25.2395

Karathanos, K. (2009). Exploring US mainstream teachers' perspectives on use of the native

language in instruction with English language learner students. *International Journal of*

Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 12(6), 615–633.

https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050802372760

Kieffer, M. J. (2008). Catching up or falling behind? Initial English proficiency,

concentrated poverty, and the reading growth of language minority learners in the

United States. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 100*(4), 851–868.

https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.100.4.851

Lakin, J. M., & Young, J. W. (2013). Evaluating growth for ELL students: Implications for

accountability policies. *Educational Measurement: Issues & Practice, 32*(3), 11–26.

https://doi.org/10.1111/emip.12012

Lenski, S. D., Ehlers-Zavala, F., Daniel, M. C., & Sun-Irminger, X. (2006). Assessing English-

language learners in mainstream classrooms. *Reading Teacher, 60*(1), 24–34.

https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.60.1.3

Maarouf, S. A. (2019). Supporting academic growth of English language learners: Integrating reading into stem curriculum. *World Journal of Education, 9*(4), 83–96.

Mancilla-Martinez, J., Kieffer, M. J., Biancarosa, G., Christodoulou, J. A., & Snow, C. E. (2011). Investigating English reading comprehension growth in adolescent language minority learners: Some insights from the simple view. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 24*(3), 339–354. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-009-9215-5

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Maxwell, J.A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Menken, K. (2010). NCLB and English language learners: Challenges and consequences. *Theory Into Practice, 49*(2), 121–128. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841003626619

Miley, S. K., & Farmer, A. (2017). English language proficiency and content assessment performance: A comparison of English learners and native English speakers achievement. *English Language Teaching, 10*(9), 198–207. http://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v10n9p198

Mitchell, C. (2017). ESSA's impact unclear for English-learners. *Education Week, 36*(16), 34. Retrieved from http://search.ebscohost.com

Molle, D. (2013). The pitfalls of focusing on instructional strategies in professional development for teachers of English learners. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *40*(1), 101-124.

Olsen, J., Preston, A. I., Algozzine, B., Algozzine, K., & Cusumano, D. (2018). A review and

    analysis of selected school climate measures. *Clearing House, 91*(2), 47–58.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2017.1385999

Onchwari, G., Onchwari, J., & Keengwe, J. (2008). Teaching the immigrant child: Application

    of child development theories. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 36*(3), 267–273.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-008-0269-9

Orzea, I. E., & Cocorada, E. (2017). School size and location and their relationships with climate

    and students' performances. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov. Series VII:*

    Social Sciences. Law, 10(59), 239–248. Retrieved from https://search.ebscohost.com

Pereira, N., & de Oliveira, L.,C. (2015). Meeting the linguistic needs of high-potential English

    language learners what teachers need to know. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 47*(4),

    208-215. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com

Phillips Galloway, E., & Uccelli, P. (2019). Examining developmental relations between core

    academic language skills and reading comprehension for English learners and their peers.

    Journal of Educational Psychology, 111(1), 15–31. https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000276

Rambo-Hernandez, K. E., & McCoach, D. B. (2015). High-achieving and average students'

    reading growth: Contrasting school and summer trajectories. *The Journal of Educational*

    Research, 108(2), 112–129. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2013.850398

Reeves, A. (2011). *Where great teaching begins: Planning for student thinking and learning*.

    Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD.

Roberts, G., Mohammed, S. S., & Vaughn, S. (2010). Reading achievement across three

    language groups: Growth estimates for overall reading and reading subskills obtained

with the early childhood longitudinal survey. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 102*(3),

668–686. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018983

Rojas, E. D., & Avitia, M. J. (2017). System approach to pedagogical discourse: CLD

learners. *Psychology in the Schools, 54*(10), 1267–1278.

https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22080

Rosa, E. M., & Tudge, J. (2013). Urie bronfenbrenner's theory of human development: Its

evolution from ecology to bioecology. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 5*(4), 243–

258. https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12022

Roy-Campbell, Z. (2013). Who educates teacher educators about English language

learners? *Reading Horizons, 52*(3), 255-280. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com

Ruiz de Castilla, V., Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest (ED), National Center for

Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (ED), & Southwest Educational

Development Laboratory. (2018). Teacher certification and academic growth among

English learner students in the houston independent school district. *Regional Educational

Laboratory Southwest*, 1-16.

Ruiz, L. D., McMahon, S. D., & Jason, L. A. (2018). The role of neighborhood context and

school climate in school- level academic achievement. *American Journal of Community

Psychology, 61*(3), 296–309. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12234

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks,

California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Saunders, W. M., & Marcelletti, D. J. (2012). The gap that can't go away the catch-22 of

reclassification in monitoring the progress of English learners. *Educational Evaluation

and Policy Analysis, 35*(2), 139-156. https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373712461849

Sheras, P. L., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2016). Fostering policies that enhance positive school

    environment. *Theory Into Practice, 55*(2), 129–135.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2016.1156990

Short, D. J. (2017). How to integrate content and language learning effectively for

    English language learners. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and*

    Technology Education, 13(7b), 4237-4260.

    https://doi.org/10.12973/eurasia.2017.00806a

Singer, T.W. (2018). *El excellence every day: The flip-to-guide for differentiating*

    academic literacy. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin.

Smiley-Blanton, R. (2010). *Instructional practices that promote reading proficiency for*

    English language learners in grades 3 and 5. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from

    ProQuest Dissertations & Thesis Global. (Order No. 3419138)

Solari, E. J., Petscher, Y., & Folsom, J. S. (2014). Differentiating literacy growth of ELL

    students with LD from other high-risk subgroups and general education peers:

    Evidence from grades 3–10. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 47*(4), 329–348.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/0022219412463435

Swanson, H. L. (2015). Growth in working memory and inhibition predicts literacy in English

    language learners: A cross-sectional and longitudinal study. *Memory, 23*(5), 748–773.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/09658211.2014.927504

Taherbhai, H., Seo, D., & O'Malley, K. (2014). Formative information using student growth

    percentiles for the quantification of English language learners' progress in language

    acquisition. *Applied Measurement in Education, 27*(3), 196–213.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/08957347.2014.905784

Taub, G. E., Sivo, S. A., & Puyana, O. E. (2017). Group differences between English and

    Spanish speakers' reading fluency growth in bilingual immersion education. *School*

    Psychology Forum, 11(2), 45–51.

Tilley-Lubbs, G. A., & Kreye, B. C. (2013). Collaboration for authentic preservice teacher

    experiences: mathematics and English as a second language. *International Journal*

    of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 25(3), 316–323. Retrieved from

    https://search.ebscohost.com

Tudge, J., Mokrova, I., Hatfield, B., & Karnik, R. (2009), Uses and misuses of bronfenbrenner's

    bioecological theory of human development. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 1*(1),

    198-210. doi:10.1111/j.1756-2589.2009.00026.x

U.S. Department of Education. (2007). *Part I: Non-regulatory guidance on implementation*

    of title III state formula grant program. Retrieved from

    https://www2.ed.gov/programs/sfgp/nrgcomp.html

U.S. Department of Education. (2014). *Dear colleague letter: Resource Comparability*

    (Office for Civil Rights). Washington, DC: Catherine E. Lhamon.

U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Non-regulatory guidance: English learners and title*

    III of the elementary and secondary education act (esea), as amended by the every

    student succeeds act (essa). Retrieved from

    https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essatitleiiiguidenglishlearners92016.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2018). *Developing programs for English language learners:*

    Glossary. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ell/glossary.html

Vardanyan, S., Ernest, J. M., & Perkins, F. (2018). Cultural influence and language acquisition of a Syrian immigrant girl in Alabama. *International Journal of Early Childhood Education and Care, 7*(1), 42–51. Retrieved from https://search.ebscohost.com

Wang, M.-T., & Degol, J. L. (2016). School climate: A review of the construct, measurement, and impact on student outcomes. *Educational Psychology Review, 28*(2), 315–352. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-015-9319-1

WIDA. (2019). Access for ells scores and reports. Retrieved from https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/access/scores-reports

WIDA. (2019). Mission and history. Retrieved from https://wida.wisc.edu/about/mission-history

Willner, L. S., & Mokhtari, K. (2018). Improving meaningful use of accommodations by multilingual learners. *Reading Teacher, 71*(4), 431–439. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1637

Willner, L. S., & Monroe, M. (2016). The WIDA accessibility and accommodations framework: considerations influencing the framework's development. *University of Wisconsin*. Retrieved from https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/WIDA-Accessibility- Accommodations-Framework.pdf

Wolf, M. K., & Faulkner-Bond, M. (2016). Validating English language proficiency assessment uses for English learners: Academic language proficiency and content assessment performance. Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, 35(2), 6–18. Retrieved from https://search.ebscohost.com

Wolf, M. K., Farnsworth, T., & Herman, J. (2008). Validity issues in assessing English

    language Learners' language proficiency. *Educational Assessment, 13*(2/3), 80–107.

    https://doi.org./10.1080/10627190802394222

Zheng, C., Jyh-Chong L., & Chin-Chung, T. (2017). Validating an instrument for EFL

    learners' sources of self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy and the relation to

    English proficiency. *The Asia - Pacific Education Researcher, 26*(6), 329-340.

    doi:10.1007/s40299-017-0352-3

Appendix A

Email to Participating School Districts

Dear Superintendent/Principal,

My name is Brett Twiss and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Graduate Education at Northwest Nazarene University. I am reaching out today to request your permission to conduct a research study within the _____ School District. The purpose of this study is to identify factors that contribute to accelerated reading growth of high school English learner (EL) students. The research will consist of a qualitative study where a small group of students who make accelerated reading growth will help determine factors from their perspective that helped contribute to their growth. If your school district has its own IRB process, I will ensure I complete the appropriate steps to be able to conduct my study within your district.

Thank you for your consideration,

Brett Twiss
Doctoral Student
Northwest Nazarene University

Appendix B

Phone Call Script to Participating School Districts

Dear Superintendent/Principal,

My name is Brett Twiss and I am following up on a previous email I sent regarding being able to request your permission to conduct a research study within the _____ School District.

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Graduate Education at Northwest Nazarene University. The purpose of this study is to identify factors that contribute to accelerated reading growth of high school English learner (EL) students. The research will consist of a qualitative study where a small group of students who make accelerated reading growth will help determine factors from their perspective that helped contribute to their growth. If your school district has its own IRB process, I will ensure I complete the appropriate steps to be able to conduct my study within your district.

Thank you for your consideration,

Brett Twiss

Appendix C

Site Permission Letters

Date

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: IRB Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mr. Brett Twiss

Dear IRB Members:

This letter is to inform the IRB that Administration at _____ has
reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, intervention,
assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and
purpose of the study. Mr. Twiss has permission to conduct his research in the district of and with
students and staff of the _____. The authorization dates for this research are July 2020 to
April 2021.

Respectfully,

_____
Superintendent

Date

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: IRB Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mr. Brett Twiss

Dear IRB Members:

This letter is to inform the IRB that Administration at _____ has
reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, intervention,
assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and
purpose of the study. Mr. Twiss has permission to conduct his research in the district of and with
students and staff of the _____. The authorization dates for this research are July 2020 to
April 2021.

Respectfully,

_____
Superintendent

Date

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: IRB Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mr. Brett Twiss

Dear IRB Members:

This letter is to inform the IRB that Administration at _____ has
reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, intervention,
assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and
purpose of the study. Mr. Twiss has permission to conduct his research in the district of and with
students and staff of the _____. The authorization dates for this research are July 2020 to
April 2021.

Respectfully,

_____
Superintendent

Date

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: IRB Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mr. Brett Twiss

Dear IRB Members:

This letter is to inform the IRB that Administration at _____ has
reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, intervention,
assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and
purpose of the study. Mr. Twiss has permission to conduct his research in the district of and with
students and staff of the _____. The authorization dates for this research are July 2020 to
April 2021.

Respectfully,

_____
Superintendent

Appendix D

Parental Consent Letter

Date

Dear High School Families,

This year, I have the opportunity to conduct a research study with your child and his/her classmates as a part of my graduate program at Northwest Nazarene University. The study has been reviewed by the Research Review Committee at Northwest Nazarene University and has been successfully approved.

The benefits that may result from the research are understanding from an English learners perspective what factors contribute to their overall success in the classroom.

The procedures are as follows:

- The research project will take place over a period of two months. During that time, Mr. Twiss will meet with students who have shown a growth of one proficiency WiDA levels and will conduct interviews with students to determine factors contributing to their growth.

- Data will be collected in the form of surveys, interviews, and WiDA assessment scores from 2019 and 2020.

- Participation will involve a combination of these data collection instruments and techniques.

- Students will also be asked to complete a short multiple-choice questionnaire with a comment section to provide feedback on their experiences as well as participate in an interview that highlighted factors that contributed to their classroom success.

- Student test score data from January 2018 – May 2020 may be used as a comparison.

I anticipate that there is minimal risk involved for your child's learning over the course of the study. Surveys and interviews will be given individually or in small groups.

Your child's participation in this project is completely voluntary. In addition to your permission, your child will also be asked if he or she would like to take part in this project. Any child may stop taking part at any time. The choice to participate or not will not impact your child's grades or status at school.

All information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly secure and will not become a part of your child's school record. The results of this study may be used for a research paper and presentation.
Pseudonyms or codes will be substituted for the names of children and the
school. This helps protect confidentiality.

In the space at the bottom of this letter, please indicate whether you do or do not want your child to participate in this project. The second copy is to keep for your records. If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me either by mail, e-mail, or telephone. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

The results of my research will be available after August 1, 2021. If you would like to have a copy of the results of my research or have any questions, please contact me at ████████ or my advisor, Heidi Curtis at ███████████

Sincerely,

Brett Twiss

Brett Twiss
Northwest Nazarene University
███████████

....

I have read this form. I understand that nothing negative will happen if I do not let my child participate. I know that I can stop his/her participation at any time. I voluntarily agree to let my child participate in this study as follows:

YES _____ may participate in this study.

NO _____ may NOT participate in this study.

Child's printed name: _____

Parent/Guardian printed name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E

Student Assent Letter

ASSENT FORM

EXAMINING THE "WHY" BEHIND ACCELERATED READING GROWTH OF
ENGLISH LEARNERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

You are invited to be in a research study being done by *Brett Twiss* from Northwest Nazarene University. You are invited because you were identified as making accelerated reading growth on the WIDA Access for ELL's 2.0 assessment.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview with other classmates who have made accelerated reading growth. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes in length. The purpose of the interview questions is to determine reasons that contributed to your growth in reading.

Your family will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or pseudonym (fake name) will be used instead of your name.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable while you are in the study, please tell Brett Twiss. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

You can ask Brett Twiss questions any time about anything in this study.   You can also ask your parent any questions you might have about this study.

Signing this paper means that you have read this, or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

_____   _____
Signature Participant Agreeing to be in the Study   Date

_____   _____
Brett Twiss, Person Obtaining Informed Assent   Date

Appendix F

Parental Consent Form (Spanish)

Carta de consentimiento de los padres

Fecha

Estimadas familias,

Este año, tengo la oportunidad de conducir un estudio de investigación con su hijo/hija y sus compañeros de clase como parte de mi programa de posgrado en Northwest Nazarene University. El estudio ha sido revisado por el Comité de Investigaciones de la Northwest Nazarene University y ha sido aprobado con éxito.

Los beneficios que pueden resultar de la investigación son la comprensión de los estudiantes de inglés perspective qué factores contribuyen a su éxito general en el clase.

Los procedimientos son los siguientes:

- El proyecto de investigación se desarrollará durante un periodo de uno meses. Durante ese tiempo, el Sr. Twiss se reunió con los estudiantes que han mostrado un crecimiento de un nivel de competencia en WiDA y realizará entrevistas con los estudiantes para determinar los factores que contribuyen a su crecimiento.

- Los datos se recopilaran en forma de encuestas, entrevistas y puntajes de evaluación de WiDA de 2019 y 2020.

- La participación implicará una combinación de estos instrumentos y técnicas de recopilación de datos.

- También se les pedirá a los estudiantes que participen en una entrevista que destacó los factores que contribuyeron a su éxito en la clase.

- Los datos de los puntajes de las pruebas de los estudiantes de enero de 2018 a mayo de 2020 se pueden usar como comparación.

Anticipó que hay un riesgo mínimo para el aprendizaje de su hijo durante el curso del estudio. Las entrevistas se darán de forma individual o en pequeños grupos.

La participación de su hijo en este proyecto es completamente voluntaria. Además de su permiso, también se le preguntará a su hijo si le gustaría participar en este proyecto. Cualquier niño puede dejar de participar en cualquier momento. La elección de participar o no no afectará las calificaciones o el estado de su hijo en la escuela.

Toda la información que se obtenga durante este proyecto de investigación se mantendrá estrictamente segura y no se convertirá en parte del expediente escolar de su hijo. Los resultados de este estudio pueden utilizarse para un trabajo de investigación y una presentación. Los nombres de los niños y de la escuela se sustituirán por seudónimos o códigos. Esto ayuda a proteger la confidencialidad.

En el espacio al final de esta carta, indique si desea o no que su hijo participe en este proyecto. La segunda copia es para sus registros. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre este proyecto de investigación, no dude en ponerse en contacto conmigo por correo, correo electrónico o teléfono. Guarde una copia de este formulario para sus registros.

Los resultados de mi investigación estarán disponibles después del 1 de agosto de 2021. Si desea tener una copia de los resultados de mi investigación o tiene alguna pregunta, comuníquese conmigo al ██████████ o con mi asesora, Heidi Curtis, en ██████████.

Sinceramente,

Brett Twiss
Northwest Nazarene University
██████████

··

He leído este forma. Al escribir mi nombre, entiendo que no pasará nada negativo si

lo hago no dejar que mi hijo participe. Sé que puedo detener su participación en

cualquier momento. Yo voluntariamente estoy de acuerdo en que mi hijo participe en

este estudio de la siguiente

manera:

SI

Escriba su nombre aquí

Puede participar en este estudio

    O

NO

Escriba aquí el nombre de su estudiante (si no desea que participe):

No puede participar en este estudio.

Nombre del Padre de Familia / Guardian

(Escribir sus nombres significa que da permiso para que su estudiante participe

en este estudio)

Fecha

Appendix G

Student Assent Letter (Spanish)

FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO

EXAMINANDO EL "POR QUÉ" DETRÁS DEL CRECIMIENTO ACELERADO DE LA LECTURA DE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE INGLÉS: UN ESTUDIO CUALITATIVO

Está invitado a participar en un estudio de investigación realizado por Brett Twiss de Northwest Nazarene University. Está invitado porque se identificó que estaba haciendo un crecimiento acelerado en lectura en la evaluación 2.0 de WIDA Access for ELL.

Si acepta participar en el estudio, se le pedirá que participe en una entrevista con otros compañeros de clase que hayan tenido un crecimiento acelerado en lectura. La entrevista tendrá una duración aproximada de 45 a 60 minutos. El propósito de las preguntas de la entrevista es determinar las razones que contribuyeron a su crecimiento en lectura.

Su familia sabrá que está en el estudio. Si alguien más recibe información sobre usted, no sabrá su nombre. Se utilizará un número o seudónimo (nombre falso) en lugar de su nombre.

Si algo le hace sentir incómodo mientras está en el estudio, dígaselo a Brett Twiss. Si decide en algún momento que no desea finalizar el estudio, puede detenerlo cuando lo desee.

Puede hacerle preguntas a Brett Twiss en cualquier momento sobre cualquier tema de este estudio. También puedes hacerles a tus padres cualquier pregunta que tengas sobre este estudio.

Firmar este documento significa que lo ha leído, o que se lo han leído, y que desea participar en el estudio. Si no desea participar en el estudio, no firme el papel. Participar en el estudio depende de usted y nadie se molestara si no firma este documento o incluso si cambia de opinión más adelante. Usted acepta que le han informado sobre este estudio y por qué se está realizando y qué debe hacer.

_____   _____

Firma del participante que acepta estar en el estudio   Fecha

_____   _____

Brett Twiss, Persona que obtiene el consentimiento informado   Fecha

Appendix H

Interview Protocol
Semi-Structured Focus Groups

EXAMINING THE "WHY" BEHIND ACCELERATED READING GROWTH OF ENGLISH
LEARNERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

1. To get started let us get to know one another. Can you tell me who you are, what school(s) you attend, and how long you have been educated in the United States?
2. What was your education like before coming to the United States (if new to the United States)
3. As a new student did you feel welcomed at your school? Please describe several ways your school helped you feel welcome. If you did not feel welcomed, please describe ways you would have liked to be supported.
4. As a new student what were challenges you faced? If so, can you please describe these challenges?
    a. Culture
    b. Learning English
    c. Navigating School
5. In what ways could the challenges you faced be addressed to make your educational experience better?
6. What factors do you feel contributed to your overall academic success? This is success in all your classes.
7. Do you feel your school has supported you in learning the English language? Can you explain why or why not?
8. Has a teacher, school member, community member, or anyone else at your school assisted you in becoming successful? If so, what did they do to help you be successful?
9. Why do you feel you were able to grow faster in reading the English language compared to your other classmates?
10. What factors contributed to your reading growth?
11. What are the expectations of education at your home? Are you parents involved in your education?
12. Is there anything else you would like to share with me that you feel has contributed to your academic success?

Appendix I

Member Checking (T-Chart)

Successes   Challenges