English Language Learners and Their Transition from High School to College

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological research study can be used to inform educators and policy makers working with high school graduate English language learners (ELLs) about their perceptions on what strategies and pedagogy are most beneficial in preparing ELLs with English language skills to pass the Kansas English Language Proficiency Assessment (KELPA), academically succeed in the classroom, and transition from high school to college. In this study there were four research questions: (1) What are high school ELL graduates' perceptions of the linguistic skills including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, that are currently taught in the high school they attended? (2) What are high school ELL graduates' perceptions of the strategies being used to support their transition from high school to post-secondary education? (3) What were high school ELL graduates' experiences in college when being identified as ELL for their native language not being English? And (4) What skills are needed for teachers to appropriately support ELL high school graduates during their transition to college? The qualitative analysis disclosed eight Findings. The findings described ELLs perceptions of their abilities on reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English. In addition, ELLs described their college experience once identified as ELLs. Lastly, ELLs perception of the support during transition to college. This research study is important because the ELL population is growing rapidly, and educators need to know what pedagogy and support best meet ELL needs.

Dedication

All my hard work is for each one of you. Jaziel, Haley, and Alison. I need you to reach for the stars, babies, because everything is possible. Believe in yourselves and never give up.

The biggest thank you is to my patient, unconditionally loving husband, who never stopped believing in me, pushed me to keep going, and never stopped supporting me. Thank you for all the Starbucks!

To my parents: With all the sacrifices you have made, I hope that I have made you proud. Thank you.

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Advisor's Note: This doctoral candidate successfully completed all components of the Baker University program including the dissertation with her own personal background as an English Second Language individual. The challenges she faced in speaking, reading, writing, and listening in another language are beyond what most think about. Her leadership for the growing community of Hispanic-speaking students and their families is critical to their success.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The United States has come to be known as one of the most diverse nations. Diversity has increased rapidly throughout the nation. Schools are finding it challenging to keep up with demographic changes. As demographic changes have continued to increase, one population that has steadily grown is the Latinx population, specifically people who immigrated from Mexico (Rance-Roney, 2011). Jung (2017) stated that between the years 2002-2003 and 2012-2013, Kansas became the state with the largest ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) percentage. In Kansas, between the years 2002-2003 the number of ESOL students increased from 17, 942 to 41,052 (Jung, 2017). The number of ESOL students in the Kansas City Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) experienced a 70% increase in over a 10-year period (Jung, 2017). As the Latinx population has grown, students needing extra support with English language at schools fall under the category of (English Language Learner) ELL. This growth of the ELL population has begun to affect the community in several ways. One way has been the growth of minorities being visible in the neighborhoods and schools. Besides the physical visibility of seeing more minorities, more support has been needed to fulfill the needs of ELL students in schools.

Additionally, schools face another obstacle as the number of Latinx students increases, specifically the ELL population needing ELL services. As a high school student is identified as ELL it brings the obvious challenge of learning the language, as well as other challenges include enrolling, attending, and graduating from an educational institution (Rance-Roney, 2011). It is important to be aware of several factors that affect

ELL students' decisions regarding continuing post-secondary education. Historically, educators have seen ELL students as immigrants who only pursued post-secondary education because of the need for citizenship status. Some undocumented ELL students complete a prescribed number of college education hours to be granted citizenship (Park, 2019). Individual goals and needs continue to change as do students' reasons to continue education after high school. Park (2019) found that if students have had a high-achieving educational experience in their journey with passing grades and a high GPA, then chances that these students enter college and succeed increase. Park (2019) further explained, "As such, students with a high school diploma or a foreign secondary degree may have a higher likelihood of community college course success" (p. 408). Considering the factors and challenges that ELL students face, it is important to explore the reasoning behind why some ELL students continue with their educational careers and others do not. In addition, it is important to know the key factors involved in preparing students for their educational future.

Background

School districts throughout the state of Kansas have been with an increase in the number of ELL students and are challenging teachers and staff to find ways to maximize these students' educational opportunities. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB Act) of 2001 ~~from former President George W. Bush~~ focused on developing strategies that best support ELLs during high school (Walker, 2015). ~~Then,~~ former President Barack Obama refocused the legislation post-high school preparedness and success and renamed the policy as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Hackmann et al., 2019). Staff and schools face the task of preparing all students, including ELLs, for post-secondary education. The

U.S. Department of Education focused on post-secondary education for college and the workforce as the primary focus for high school students to become successful (ESSA, 2022). The number of ELL students enrolled in colleges creates an achievement gap against the non-ELL students in college as there exists an absence of effective transitional bridges for ELL students.

The school's role ~~and process~~ when ELL students are enrolled in college is important to consider. To maximize a student's learning experience, the school staff first determines the home language. When the home language is not English, students are tested and based on their scores, ~~and~~ may be identified as ELL (Walker, 2015). When a student is identified as an ELL, the student is provided with extra academic support ~~needed in~~ from the language department. Therefore, as ELL high school graduates, they should be confident with language acquisition to consider pursuing post-secondary education (Walker, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

When ELL students immigrate to the United States from other countries, there are many challenges to be faced. Academic English is needed to pass the state assessments and some ELLs struggle with that (Reyes, 2016). "Latinidad has always been associated with a degree of expendability, that is, the scene of nature/ deficiency/ illegality, deserving of sustained subjugation" argued Márquez because "historically, those of Mexican-descent have had to contend with a history of deficit and inferiority discourses" Reyes, 2016, p. 339). As the focus increases for Hispanics to pass state assessments such as Kansas English Language Proficiency Assessment (KELPA) ELL students as they are seen as "deficient and a threat to those in power who aspired to high test scores ESSA

came into" (Reyes, 2016, p. 340). Educators, ELLs and school districts all faced challenges. When ESSA came into play signed by former President Obama, ESSA it required schools to make yearly progress in increasing test scores Title I funding (Darrow, 2016). Title I funding has put added pressure on teachers because states are allowed to evaluate teachers based on student achievement and use federal funds for that purpose (Darrow, 2016). The dilemma is that schools are sometimes challenged when their student achievement number does not grow.

In support of the growing ELL population, Darrow (2016) stated the ESSA included the recommendation of "a smart and balanced approach to testing" where students in the classroom are being tested less frequently and the results of the state assessments are being used to make decisions on instruction and how to differentiate the instruction based on the student's needs and abilities (p. 398). Darrow (2016) communicated that "ESSA has the potential to provide children, particularly those in low-income schools, with the expert teaching and rich, integrated curriculum they deserve" (p. 41). The focus on students with disabilities and held schools accountable for how well they were academically performing within the general curriculum was increased by ESSA (Darrow, 2016). This law, while controversial due to its accountability provisions it is the "primary federal law that authorizes federal spending to support K-12 schooling, and represents the nation's commitment to equal education opportunity for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, English proficiency, or income" (Darrow, 2016, p.41).

Purpose of the Study

This research study is important because the ELL population is growing rapidly, and educators need to know what pedagogy and support can best meet ELL needs.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore ELL high school graduates' perceptions of the support and strategies used in the English language skills being taught and the transition from high school to college. The first purpose of this study was to explore ELL high school graduates' perceptions of their confidence in learning to read, write, listen, and speak English taught in high school. The second purpose of this study was to explore the ELL graduates' perceptions of the strategies used to support ELL high school graduates through their transition to post-secondary education. The researcher explored the ELLs' high school graduates' experiences in college on how they were treated when being identified as ELL. The last purpose for this study was to obtain information about what skills and strategies are needed for teachers to appropriately support ELL high school graduates during their transition to college.

Significance of the Study

This research study can be of value to policymakers and school leaders throughout the nation as the ELL population is continuing to rapidly increase. As these numbers are on the rise, policymakers are pressured to adjust their school districts' pedagogy to best meet the needs of their ELL population while addressing, not only the English language, but also subject material. The decisions that policymakers make are vital to all students' futures as they finish high school and make the decision to further pursue their education or enter the workforce. The results from this study could help school districts close the achievement gap by better supporting ELL students based on what strategies the ELL participants believed made a positive impact in their educational

lives. Many school districts are struggling with ELL students' not continuing their education after high school because of lack of fluency in the English language. The results could focus on how poor English language reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills affect many students not feeling prepared to pursue post-secondary education, while also identifying programs and strategies that can be implemented by schools to remedy the problem.

Delimitations

The delimitations considered for this study were that only students who had attended all four years of high school in the U.S. continuously were eligible to participate in the interviews. Along with being in high school for four years, another delimitation was that these students must have been living in the United States for a minimum of eight years. Another delimitation was that all the students interviewed were Latinx, born in a Latin American country, currently living in the United States, and had begun their school experience in a different country.

Assumptions

For this study, there was the assumption that the students would be honest in their interviewing responses. It was assumed that these students' answers came from their own experiences and not anyone else's. The students interviewed were all living in Kansas and the assumption was made that all participants completed their work in high school and strived to use their English language skills frequently.

Research Questions

Four questions were developed to guide the study. They are as follows: The four questions are geared to high school ELL graduates and each question is focused on a

certain perception of the ELL student. These questions attempt to collect responses to better support ELL students during their transition from high school to college.

RQ1

What are high school ELL graduates' perceptions of the linguistic skills including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, that are currently taught in the high school they attended?

RQ2

What are high school ELL graduates' perceptions of the strategies being used to support their transition from high school to post-secondary education?

RQ3

What are high school ELL graduates' experiences in college when being identified as ELL for their native language not being English?

RQ4

What skills are needed for teachers to appropriately support ELL high school graduates during their transition to college?

Definition of Terms

English as a Second Language (ESL). Jung (2017) defined ESOL as a student who is not proficient in English. ESL/ESOL used as synonyms ~~(Jung, 2017).~~

English for Speakers of Other Languages (**ESOL).** This is a term referred to any non-English speaker not proficient in English as it is determined by the English language proficiency assessment that is within a student age of 3-21 (Jung, 2017).

English Language Learner (ELL). According to Walker (2015), an ELL is an individual who is continuing to actively learn English and whose first language is one

other than English. An ELL is also a national-origin-minority student who is not proficient or is limited to the English language according to an English language proficiency assessment.

English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA). Bond (2020) described the assessment as a "statewide, standardized criteria for reclassifying ELs across all districts" (p.2).

Kansas English Language Proficiency Assessment (KELPA). According to Jung (2017), this test is the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st century in the state of Kansas.

Kansas State Department of Education (**KSDE).** In the state of Kansas, the K-12 educational system is overseen by KSDE (Jung, 2017).

Limited English Proficient (LEP). Students who are not fluent in English are classified as LEP. This classification provides them the right to receive ELL services until they can demonstrate their English is at a proficient level (Walker, 2015).

Translanguaging. Freeman and Freeman. (2021) explained that translanguaging is communicating and not focusing on the language. An example of allowing translanguaging to be used in the classroom would be to have two Spanish-speaking students working together and switching back and forth between English and Spanish.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 contained a historical background on how policies affect the schools in our nation. In addition, it explains how schools have responded to provide support to the rapid increase of ELL students, and it provides a statement of the existing problems. The purpose of the study along with the assumptions and delimitations were included.

Common terms used within the ELL department and education setting were included and defined following the research questions. Chapter 2 provides a literature review, which begins with an investigation of how the nation has responded to the increase in the number of ELLs in public schools focusing specifically on the policies and strategies that are placed to support ELL students academically. The authors cited in the literature review also paid close attention to the support that ELL students receive as they transfer from high school to post-secondary education. Chapter 3 provides the methods, which include research design, setting, sampling procedures, instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis, and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and study limitations. Chapter 4 presents the results of the analysis of the interview data. Chapter 5 offers a study summary, which includes an overview of the problem, purpose statement, and research questions, a review of the methodology, major findings, findings related to the literature section, and a conclusions section that is made of three subsections: implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature and is expressed in several themes. The focus is on the public-school educational system and its support for ELLs. The first section provides a window into how historically the ELLs and how educators are being held accountable and self-efficacy is playing a role in students' educational growth. The second section provides specific details about the nations' laws, NCLB and ESSA, and describes how these laws have affected. The third section discusses the achievement gaps ELLs face with assessments, identifying students as ELLs, inequities, the requirements of standardized language proficiency tests, and various levels of ELLs. The next section focuses on how the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) is responding to the state's growing number of ELLs. KSDE, like all other educational agencies in the nation, is holding teachers accountable which has become a controversial topic for many educators and forcing schools to come up with creative ways to go around the policy. For example, through teacher training, KELPA, and curriculum benchmarks, schools have found ways to eliminate challenging students that decrease their funding, teacher accountability, and how teachers' hope can make a difference and how holding teachers accountable can be a controversial topic. The last section provides detail on being culturally responsive, having self-efficacy, challenges ELLs face during assessments such as word problems, bad connotations when being identified as an ELL, how some schools have found ways to try to eliminate ELLs, and accommodation changes that have changed over the years. Also explored are teacher tips such as avoiding misconceptions, teacher goal setting, community relationships and understanding the reason behind

students' arrival to the U.S., relationship building, and teacher collaboration between disciplines, translanguaging, dual-language programs, and uses of phonics. Additional themes were analyzed in this study where school's knocking down barriers, creating a safe environment, and the importance of teacher representation are investigated. Finally, the topics of racial bias, achievement gaps due to the challenges faced in their native countries, suggestions for success in college, how dropouts affect society, and how teachers are not feeling prepared even with the additional ESOL endorsements are explored.

Historical Context of ELLs in Our Nation's Public Schools

Historically in the United States, minorities have been faced with challenges. Thompson (2018) described in his dissertation, *Perceptions, and Experiences of English Language Learners, Parents of English Language Learners, and High School Teachers in the General Education Classroom,* that bilingual education became a negative and fearful immigrant experience in 1892 with the Americanization movement. Thompson (2018) described in his dissertation that *Unguarded Gates,* which was written by Thomas Bailey Aldrich, created fear toward immigrants when he referred to them as "alien[s]" (p. 9). Thompson (2018) explained that it became known as the Americanization movement which led to the restriction of the "language of education in public schools to English" because people feared immigrants (p. 10).

That was the response that the nation placed on immigrants historically, but the response is drastically different now. One significant difference from 20 years ago is how the states' education agencies prepare teachers for English learners. Montecillo et al., (2021) talked about Galguera's (2011) research study in which it was focused on the

hands-on pedagogy that shifted teaching practices from “English learners” to “language use for academic purposes” to focus more on the academic setting and English vocabulary (Galguera, 2011, p. 85). Montecillo et al., (2021) stated that Galguera’s study emphasized the importance of empowering teachers working with ELL students. Montecillo (2021) said,

> All teachers must have the ‘knowledge, skills and inclination’ to teach English learners. Consistent with this, Galguera asserts that teachers must have pedagogical language knowledge and skills to teach the growing number of English learners in [U.S.] schools. Including English Learners, in-state teaching standards for all teachers may be one way to ensure at least minimal preparation. (p. 5)

Another difference from the nation’s history is that under ESSA, policies were created to secure an equitable education for English learners (Montecillo et al., 2021). In addition to policies put in place by the federal government, there are also institutional implementations such as teacher specialization in which colleges offer specialized licenses or programs that focus on educating ELLs. These specializations provide teachers with a depth of knowledge and skills to teach ELLs beyond what is expected of mainstream teachers. English Language Development (ELD) teachers “must understand the connections between first and second language teaching and learning and have the pedagogical expertise to implement an ELD curriculum that supports the development of the English language” (Montecillo et al., 2021, p.7).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act legislation was created during the administration of former President Bush and was enacted in 2002. In the year of 2015,

ESSA was signed by President Obama in response to requests made by educators and families who wanted an improved law that would prepare all students for their college or career transitions (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). ESSA "builds on key areas of progress in recent years, made possible by the efforts of educators, communities, parents, and students across the country" (U.S. Department of Education, 2022, p. 1). The ESSA government website stated the importance of having all students who are taught in the United States be educated and prepared through high academic standards to successfully transition from high school to colleges and/or careers (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). In this section, strategies currently being used under ESSA are analyzed and evaluated for their efficacy.

ESSA was created to provide an education for all students and prepare them for college and career. One flaw with this strategy is that research indicated that many educators feel the urge to lower their curriculum or expectations because they assume ELL students are not knowledgeable or ready for such material and, therefore, they provide less rigorous work than to their peers (Torff & Murphy, 2020). A teacher's self-efficacy can directly affect their student's educational growth. "Since teacher self-efficacy is defined as a teacher's belief in their ability to accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context, teachers with lower self-efficacy have been found to deliver less effort in overcoming challenges and to yield lower instruction quality" (Shi et al., 2021, p.1).

In other words, school districts by their nature often change and evolve and any change usually leads to a debatable topic. The NCLB, written and enacted in 2001, attempted to hold schools accountable for the education received by all students including ESOL students. NCLB was created to have a "high expectation that all ESOL students

seek to reduce the outcome gap between ESOL and non-ESOL groups and continue progress to reach proficiency in English language arts and mathematics" (Jung, 2017, p. 16). Walker (2015) described Title III of NCLB as "a part of the legislation enacted to ensure LEP students, including immigrant children and youth, develop English proficiency and meet the same academic content and achievement standards that other children are expected to meet" (pp. 10-11). NCLB was initiated during former President George W. Bush's Administration in 2001, but then the ESSA was enacted during former President Barack Obama's tenure which focused on students graduating high school, college, and career-ready regardless of income, race, ethnicity, language background, or disability status (Hackmann et al, 2019).

ESSA was focused on closing the achievement gap for all disadvantaged groups of students including ELLs. Attention has been directed toward having ESOL students perform at a proficient level in reading, writing, speaking, and listening to be successful instead of just teaching them English (Jung, 2017). In 2020, ESOL expenditures in Kansas totaled approximately 21.1 million dollars (Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit, 2020). In Kansas, ESL and ESOL programs are funded by the state but must meet certain requirements to continue to receive funding (Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit, 2020). The first requirement is to identify the student's home language to classify the student as an ELL student. The student must then take the KELPA test and score at a determined level to be considered proficient. If the student is classified as an ELL and scores under the proficient level, the district receives one more year of funding and directly impacts the ELL students (Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit, 2020). One way that ELL students are impacted is by being provided various ESOL programs when

identified as a qualified ELL candidate through the Kansas English Language Proficiency Assessment (KELPA) (Jung, 2017). This is one of the reasons why historically ELLs have been considered an expensive or challenging group of students. Many American school districts enroll their ELLs into classes by classifying them by their age instead of their knowledge from their school experience or their English speaking and comprehension ability (Thompson, 2018). On occasion, students from other countries arrive not having any content knowledge, but due to how the school system functions, the school places them in classes that they may not have the prerequisites for, which affects their chances of success (Thompson, 2018).

In the past, some suggestions for academic preparation during high school for students include dual programs and college courses to earn student college credit, slow transition into mainstream classes, collaboration between the content areas and ESL teachers, and having the same elevated expectations for all students (Baecher, 2002). Some strategies and pedagogies have been more student-focused while keeping the student accountable during the NCLB, on the other hand, during ESSA the accountability part is more teacher and school focused. When ESSA was introduced, the strategies and pedagogies were changed to holding the districts and educators accountable and growing the educator. In the past, with NCLB in place, the program Reading First was a major focus for educators and their students. However, ESSA cannot recognize that input from educators is valuable because they are directly educating the students and, therefore, school districts supporting teachers with all the tools and trusting that they will care for each student's needs will only benefit the children as they learn (Dennis, 2016). Dennis (2016) offered that "ESSA encourages the use of formative assessments" to help

educators decide what and how to teach it to the students based on the student's individual needs (p. 398). The districts are held accountable to provide professional development that is balanced to better teach and support students individually by providing educators with examples of how the instruction should look for educators, guide students into additional practice, and alter the scope and sequence of a student's newly learned skill before continuing with the next skill or lesson (Dennis, 2016).

Proficiency Assessment Challenges and ELLs Identification Categories

This section focuses on the assessments and the challenges that come with being an ELL. There is no doubt that school district leaders and state legislatures have been faced with many choices and challenges to support the growing academic needs of the ELL student population in high schools and as graduates transition into college. Although, the first problem that arises is that "access without support is not opportunity" (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008, p. 50). ELL students can have post-secondary options after high school to further their success. Although for many students a higher education experience can be a challenge; therefore, it is important to provide students with the needed support to be successful (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008).

Hackmann et al. (2019) went into detail about how there exists pervasive inequities in U.S public education and discovers through Dowd and Bensimon's study (2015) that there are policies that give the idea of being an equal opportunity for all but "may disadvantage underserved students, reproducing inequities between White and minoritized racial and ethnic groups" (p. 6). Hackmann et al. (2019) also pointed out that equity-mindedness puts guilt on the minority group for the inequities that they face by repeating the same cultural values and norms. In other words, when similar situations

occur like inequities, the blame is put on their own culture or their norm. Hackmann (2019) described that the minority group begins to believe that things would be different if only they had been from a different minority group.

ESSA played a huge role in the number of assessments students had to take. The roles and strategies teachers used as they taught in their classrooms to obtain information on the ELL students' growth or loss and hold schools accountable for their student's education were affected by the ESSA (Estrada-Burt, 2022). Under ESSA, "States are required to establish statewide, standardized criteria for reclassifying ELLs across all districts. This requirement has caused some states to remove control of the selection and calibration of reclassification criteria from local districts" (Bond, 2020, p. 2). In addition, this law created more confusion through lack of clarity of how English language proficiency can be measured. It is unclear if proficiency can be measured by only an English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) or if locally recorded measures can also be included (Bond, 2020). To better understand the expectations of ESSA, the ELL student was to receive "access to specialized English language support services at public schools after first taking a state's English language proficiency exam" (Walker, 2015, pp. 7-8). This assessment is utilized to identify the student as a minority student and classify their native language as their home language.

To understand how students sometimes get misplaced in classes or services provided by the schools, the various levels of proficiency in English are defined. There are several levels a student can be identified as, and one proficiency level is the fully (or fluent) English proficient which is self-explanatory and states that an ELL student is English proficient for school and does not need English language services (Walker,

2015). A term that has several definitions is first language, primary language, or home language category which “could refer to the first language learned, the stronger language, the native language, and or the language most frequently used” (Walker, 2015, p. 8). Another category is the heritage of the learner which the “ELLs consider to be their native, home, or ancestral language” (Walker, 2015, p. 9). The category that is most used is language minority student because many students “come from homes in which a language other than English is spoken” and typically includes students such as the “ELLs, bilingual, or redesignated fluent English proficient” (Walker, 2015, p. 9).

Regardless of what category ELL students are in, they need to know that multilingual ability is an asset. Equally important is that educators know that there are distinct groups of ELLs, one being the long-term English language learners (LTELLs) (Walker, 2015). The most common ELL is known as the short-term ELL. A short-term ELL is described as having recently arrived in the United States and needing instruction to learn the English language and early literacy skills. LTELLs comprise 40% of the secondary ELL population, according to Walker (2015). Walker (2015) described that LTELLs do not acquire English and language skills at the rate expected and do not perform well on standardized academic achievement tests (Walker, 2015). The LTELLs are divided into three subgroups and each group plays a key role in how rapidly they acquire information and how much direct instruction they require (Walker, 2015). The LTELLs are identified as living in the United States for 7 or more years but have not passed the English proficiency test (Walker, 2015). The first group consists of students attending school in the U.S. inconsistently, causing them to be educated by various programs and services. The second group includes students who have received education

from both home and countries immigrated to as they have moved back and forth between them. The third group identifies students who received instruction that did not match their needs (Walker, 2015).

Teacher Training, KELPA, and School Response

This section focuses on how teacher accountability plays a key role with ESSA, the different benchmarks, how schools have responded to the policy changes and rapid change in student demographics, and the controversy of holding teachers accountable. The ELPA measures and focuses on the sections of reading, writing, speaking, and listening of those students whose first language is not English (Walker, 2015). Programs such as ESL focus on teaching ESL students the techniques and methodologies, and special curricula that will address the skills needed to help them succeed in the classroom and on the ELPA (Walker, 2015). The ESL program skills that are taught include "listening, speaking, reading, writing, study skills, content vocabulary, and cultural orientation" (Walker, 2015, p. 20).

Teacher training and courses provided by districts make educators and community members question whether districts have the appropriate training for educators to teach an ELL population. If teachers are still experiencing a lack of confidence after having completed courses or training offered through the district, then there is still something missing to help complete an ELL's educational journey. If districts are asking for teachers to complete such programs but the results are not positive, then it might have something to do with the students. Thompson (2018) described that having ELL students attempt to pass exams in English is an obstacle for ELLs and has caused them to receive lower scores than native English speakers, even after having accommodations

(Thompson, 2018). This achievement gap is one of the root causes why there are ELL dropouts, and it is also a reason ESSA might have helped educators keep track of where the students are (Thompson, 2018). ESSA has helped to create a universal screening tool that helps identify a grade-level benchmark and helps schools predict outcomes (Estrada-Burt, 2022). These benchmarks are helpful when used effectively by schools and teachers because they help students and educators understand students' needs and provide the student with the ability to measure and compare their needs with other students from the same grade level and from different districts within the nation.

One of the adjustments that teachers have had to make due to the rapid change in student demographics is that teachers were needing to be trained to teach ESOL in their subject matter more effectively (Jung, 2017). However, the number of teachers becoming ESOL trained has not kept pace with this rapid growth of ELL students (Jung, 2017). According to Jung, KCKPS district has created a quick fix to the problem because the district focused on hiring and training teachers with an ESOL endorsement. Jung (2017) stated that he considers the application of the federal mandates a quick fix because the assessment outcomes have not proven to help students pass these assessments or to pursue their post-secondary education. Federal mandates are demonstrating that ESOLs continue to lag behind non-ESOL students, specifically between 20-30 points in reading assessments (Jung, 2017). NCLB required students who spoke a different language other than English to have teachers who had completed ESOL endorsement so the students could benefit from their teacher's knowledge and skills learned. KSDE has had a growing student body of ESOL's, but the number of teachers endorsed in ESOL has not increased as fast (Jung, 2017). The rapid change in student demographics has some districts

struggling to train teachers and administrators to satisfy the needs of ELL students (Thompson, 2018). In addition, teachers who have received the experience or necessary coursework claim to still not feel adequately prepared to meet the social and emotional needs of ELLs (Thompson, 2018).

The authors Colombo et al., (2013) of "Hopefulness for Teachers of ELLs in the Era of NCLB" stated that it was positive to have educators and the educational system be held accountable for the education of ELLs. The definition, however, and how the NCLB Act operate when it comes to keeping accountability and teacher quality are not specific (Colombo et al., 2013). One of the controversial topics described is the definition of "highly qualified" as it "neglects the specific preparation needed for teaching ELLs, including pedagogical expertise and dispositions, such as critical hope for positive student outcomes" (Colombo et al., 2013, p. 81). Teachers play the most important part in this entire process of creating positive student outcomes especially if educators "view the children we teach as if they were our own, which includes a willingness to bear witness and share in students' suffering that stems from inequity" (Colombo et al., 2013, p. 81). While teachers can willingly view students as their own and create positive student outcomes, there is also a downside when teachers are not sufficiently prepared or supported to teach ELL students and then are held accountable for standardized tests because "either of these factors—lack of appropriate teacher preparation or inappropriate accountability measures—could easily diminish any teacher's hope for achieving successful educational outcomes with ELLs, and many teachers of ELLs experience these factors daily" (Colombo et al., 2013, p. 81). Therefore, it is no surprise that when an

educator loses hope for their students' achievements, it then creates lower expectations for students and it decreases the positive student outcomes (Colombo et al., 2013).

The U.S. Department of Education government website specifies that an educator should be a highly qualified teacher and meet certain requirements that were amended by the NCLB (U.S Department of Education, 2022). The controversy is that many teachers are not qualified to teach ELL or lack being prepared and knowledgeable (Thompson, 2018). In addition, despite all the efforts to make teacher quality one of the main focuses of education improvement, "the majority of ELLs continue to be taught by unqualified teachers" (Harper & de Jong, 2009, p. 140). Across the nation, the number of ELLs continues to change; for example, about twenty years ago there were "only 29% of California who had more than three ELLs in their classrooms were certified in ESL or bilingual education" according to Gándara et al. (2003) (Harper & de Jong, 2009, p.140). Across the nation some states provided the number of professional hours that prepared them to educate the ELL student population. "And in a survey of seven U.S. states, fewer than 8% of the teachers working with ELLs reported eight or more hours of professional development specifically related to ELLs" (Harper & de Jong, 2009, p.140). The educational system, at a national and local level, seems to continue to fail the ELL student population as the educational system ignores the importance of teacher preparation and the need for bilingual educators (Harper & de Jong, 2009). Teacher preparation should not only focus on what is being taught in the classroom but should also include being knowledgeable culturally and linguistically. "ELLs are being left behind in classes with teachers who fail to acknowledge their linguistic and cultural differences or address their academic strengths and needs" (Harper & de Jong, 2009, p.

140). One important note that Vintan and Gallagher (2019) mentioned is that “educators who are culturally reflective in their practice use language-conscious teaching, which occurs when teachers are cognizant of students’ language proficiencies and can understand the linguistic challenges they face in the classroom” (p. 70). Yol and Yoon (2020) added that they believe that teachers and classrooms should prepare learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Teacher Strategies and Tips

This section focuses on what strategies and tips teachers should use to help support ELL students through challenges and how to support ELLs to be successful in high school and transition to college. An effective educator is qualified by meeting ESSA requirements; however, an educator can obtain all the requirements required and still not be effective due to the teacher's self-efficacy, lack of district preparation, and more. Another vital piece to being an effective teacher is to be culturally responsive, stated Shi et al. (2021). It is important to note how self-efficacy plays a vital role in the teaching process and the student’s learning process (Shi et al., 2021). According to Shi et al., researchers discovered how educators who have low self-efficacy have a lower belief in their students’ motivation, are more likely to ignore the students’ diverse backgrounds, and are less likely to use teaching methods for all students and utilize strict classroom punishments to force students to study (Shi et al., 2021). On the opposite end of the teaching spectrum, “teachers with higher self-efficacy regularly use students’ cultural experience, prior learned knowledge and individual learning preferences can act as a conduit to facilitate the teaching and learning process” (Shi et al., 2021, p. 2).

In the past, NCLB was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was passed under President George W. Bush in 2001 (Menken, 2010). While having similar intentions, ESEA contained different approaches to teaching the language and curriculum material to ELL students. For example, the ESEA concentrated more on providing language support services for ELLs at schools (Menken, 2010). When comparing NCLB and ESEA, the standardized tests provided by ESSA help determine the student's graduation status, grade-level promotion, or program placement. Menken argued that the results of the ELL student assessments should not be used as conclusive information because the assessments are in English, and many ELL students have only been at school for a year and still don't have command of the English language (Menken, 2010). One example of the ELPA is the reading comprehension passages in which ELLs are expected to be able to identify the 2,000 most frequent word families in English (Menken, 2010, p. 122).

In the same manner, an ELL who takes the Math A Regents exam must read through word problems in English and then try to solve the problem, which leads the students to multiple difficulties because typically many students have not mastered the English language and yet are being asked to demonstrate their knowledge on a math problem (Menken, 2010). The Math A Regents exam is an assessment that all students, ELL or not, must take in New York that assesses Science, Math, English and Social Studies (Menken, 2010). A student's geographic location may also affect their understanding of a term; for example, pop and soda in different geographic regions use different terms, but an ELL student might not understand that both words are synonyms (Menken, 2010). It is no wonder that ELLs, compared to their native English speakers,

tend to fall behind an average of 20-50 percentage points on English Language Arts state assessments and other subject tests (Menken, 2010). Even though the ELPA might make it difficult for an ELL to score high, when teachers use the data from the assessments effectively, they become better educators as they are more culturally responsive. “The use of effective assessment measures is essential to helping teachers be adaptive and responsive to student needs” (Estrada-Burt, 2022, p. 5). For example, curriculum-based measures, which is a measurement the educator can see the level at which a student is scoring against his grade level and helps identify what curriculum standard has not been met and needs to be retaught (Estrada-Burt, 2022). These measures are vital for teachers as they use them as a guide to measure their students' academic success to meet federal mandates which are intended to meet and support the needs of each child. As these measures are set in place, each child’s needs are evaluated and supported. A student's outcome on the assessment tests should be visible but sometimes the results are not a reflection of what they have learned because of external reasons such as the student not performing his or her best due to sickness, stress, etc. For example, a teacher should be able to identify the needs of ELL students to support them to pass the English Language proficiency exam while teaching to the standards. Unfortunately, each school district chooses what needs to be measured and what assessment can be used, and this confuses students’ identification status when transferring from one district to another (Estrada-Burt, 2022). It is also important to include that through ESSA, states are being held accountable, but are also being given the flexibility to create their own goals and decide how to measure students’ progress, which includes College and Career Readiness (CCR) components and school quality indicators, to keep their school systems accountable

(Hackmann et al, 2019). For a student to be categorized as language proficient, Walker (2015) stated that the student demonstrates

> Control over the use of language, including expressive and receptive language skills in the areas of phonology, syntax, vocabulary, and semantics and the areas of pragmatics, or language use within various domains or social circumstances. Proficiency is judged independently and does not imply lack of proficiency in another language. (Walker, 2015, p. 10)

Reyes and Domina (2019) stated that ELLs are acquiring English proficiency and when they reach proficiency level, the schools let go of the assessments used and do not capture the ELL's academic skills because the assessments contain a baseline of fluency in English that ELLs have not learned (Reyes & Domina, 2019).

Besides the challenges with the types of support ELLs receive from schools, another challenge that ELL students of Mexican-descent have had to face is "a history of deficit and inferiority discourses" (Reyes, 2016, p. 339). Reyes (2016) described how one school negatively responded to the pressure from the NCLB and began "targeting and removing specific students seen as testing liabilities—through unwarranted suspensions, purposeful and continuous exemptions of English language learners or Hispanic-surnamed students from test days, or reclassification to special education" (p. 338). Many of the students targeted were from Bowie High School were asked to drop out, obtain their GED, or were demoted or promoted (Reyes, 2016). With an increase in demand of minorities in a student population, schools administrators are faced with the challenge of preparing educators, but administrators are also facing their own challenge. "In working with English language learners, administrators admit that this student sub-population,

most of which in U.S. schools is Latino, presents a liability on high-stakes tests" (Reyes, 2016, p. 340). The label of language being a problem creates a stigma for the identity of students who are tested "making them more vulnerable to becoming victims of a dehumanization and disposability process" (Reyes, 2016, p. 340). Reyes (2016) suggested that for dehumanizing policies and practices directed at the young Latino students and communities to get deconstructed, future educators should "practice humanizing philosophies in their teaching of border youth" (pp. 340). Reyes (2016) added that the solution for students who are marginalized and disenfranchised is to "integrate them into the structure of oppression but to transform that structure so that they can become 'beings for themselves'" (pp. 343).

As Eyolfson (2016) provided data to support the effectiveness of their district's model, it is vital to also look at how standardized tests impact ELLs' learning and adaptation to being prepared for college. An assessment can be seen as a disadvantage immediately because an ELL student is quickly assessed to be identified as an ELL (Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). Testing students is viewed negatively because teachers worry about students' learning curve not increasing and reflect poorly on the teachers.

The downfall of the ELPA assessment data is that the results determine the outcome of their school's overall performance evaluation, and it persuades schools to stay focused on the skills and subject areas that are being tested (Harper & de Jong, 2009). One of the teachers who participated in the Harper and de Jong (2009) study complained about how the assessments they provided her students have them sound out and decode words, but she questioned if her students comprehend what they are reading. In addition, another concern that comes with the assessments is that English Language

Proficiency tests will determine when ELLs can exit the ELL status without using any classroom performance or any state test results (Mitchell, 2017). Some positive things about tracking student learning through assessments are that teachers will be able to "determine whether they are performing academically on par with their never-EL peers or whether achievement gaps remain" (Mitchell, 2017, p. 25). In addition, data from these assessments will also help evaluate the effectiveness of ELL services and any policy placed by districts and states on what they believe is the right amount of time and what strategies ELLs need (Mitchell, 2017).

Every state and school district wants to believe that they know what strategies and accommodations are best suited for ELL needs. Willner and Mokhtari (2018) described in an article titled "Improving Meaningful Use of Accommodations by Multilingual Learners," how accommodations have drastically changed to better serve ELL students. The authors described the first adjustments as the first wave in which assessments were utilizing accommodations created for students with disabilities for ELL students (Willner & Mokhtari, 2018). ESSA focuses more on the additional licenses and courses teachers need to better support ELL students instead of focusing on the strategies used for ELL students. The second wave was described as the action taken after the NCLB of 2002 and the change that resulted in supporting instruction, accommodation guidelines, and support of the needs of each ELL student such as reading the directions in their native language and being in a separate room (Willner & Mokhtari, 2018). The last wave moved toward a more technology focus and used a universal learning design (Willner & Mokhtari, 2018). These strategies were created to help educate the ELL student, but some educators felt

the need to leave the profession because of the many requirements and added certifications that educators were asked to obtain.

Other strategies to help ELL students be successful in college were described in Lee's (2018) investigation and were included in "The Reading Teacher Journal" (2018) where language teachers' challenges consisted of teaching ELL students' evidence-based writing skills. Lee pointed out some of the research findings and practices that he found to help educate ELLs on this skill. The practices include creating a visual context, simplifying complex writing, creating writing lessons that build up to a concept or skill, modeling writing skills, and using writing templates, sentence frames, and other linguistic support systems (Lee, 2018).

Being an educator comes with its challenging times; however, it is important for teachers to not stop believing in their ELL students. When ELL teachers lack belief in their ELL students it can affect the academic and rigorous capacity provided to the student (Torff & Murphy, 2020). Some suggestions that Torff and Murphy (2020) provided are that teachers should differentiate between academic and linguistic demands in the curriculum and provide rigorous instruction for both. Teachers should complete reflections to find out if their actions or biases are rooted in racial bias (Torff & Murphy, 2020). An educator, along with the state and federal government, must work to create a successful plan for English learner students. As the plan is being created the longevity of it should also be taken into consideration. "We want to make sure we stick with something that will support students and not just be a complex calculation that no one will understand and then basically ignore" (Mitchell, 2017, p. 26). One goal that should be considered when creating such a plan to better support ELLs is to have a better system

to identify when students need additional English support and when they no longer need it. Even the decision to remove a support service could negatively affect a student's success if it is taken away too soon. "When reclassification occurs too early, English learners can find themselves struggling without the support services they need. If the process happens too late, students may be restricted from taking higher-level courses that would prepare them for college" (Mitchell, 2017, p. 26).

Therefore, while historically teacher input has not been included, a teacher's input is crucial in the accountability system for ELLs. When educators do not believe in their students, this lack of confidence can negatively affect the progress of an English learning student. Torff and Murphy collected (2020) data from two random schools in a large and diverse city in the United States and concluded that teacher bias causes teachers to provide less rigorous assignments for English learning students.

A challenge that some ELL minority students face is that they are commonly compared to their White peers whose dominant language has been English from birth. This comparison is like reliving our nation's history and it is an unequal and unfair comparison as these English learners are being measured for their English proficiency (Thompson, 2018). Many of these ELL students have not had an equal amount of English language exposure as their peers. It is important to consider that the English Language proficiency assessments use higher-level vocabulary that an English learner might not be familiar with and, therefore, the assessment might not truly measure their growth. Not surprisingly, is that some ELL educators might see growth in their students as they see them performing well in daily academic work, but students seem to fail or lag on the

assessment? Teacher input should be considered to provide feedback and support on the students' growth academically and linguistically. Therefore,

> Some English learner advocates say educators who work directly with English-language learners should play a major role in determining when, and if, the students no longer need the specialized services. Before the change in law, only 15 states used teacher input or evaluation. (Mitchell, 2017, p. 25)

A teacher's input can play a critical role in a student's education, but a teacher's conception of how an ELL best learns English can be detrimental for the student. Jung (2017) talked about the existence of some common misconceptions and how they can make the learning process more difficult for ELL students. Jung added that a common misconception is that younger children learn English quicker and have acquired language skills that are better and faster in understanding the English language (Jung, 2017). The other misconception that exists is the belief that if the student has been in a class for a certain amount of time, then they are ready to enter the next level class. Another misconception is that once the students can speak English comfortably, then the students have complete control of the language. Finally, a misconception that exists is that all students learn languages the same way (Jung, 2017). Jung also supported that the truth exists in the misconceptions and stated that children learn a second language more quickly, while discomfort and difficulty pass quicker for children. When it comes to school settings, “the research literature does not support such a supposition” stated McLaughlin et al., (1992) and restated by Jung (2017, p. 11). When it comes to the ideal age, of the child learning a second language, Jung stated there was not enough research completed since most research had been in school settings (Jung, 2017). The

misconception of an ELL student knowing how to converse in English comfortably and now being in full control of the language is “half true” (Jung, 2017, p. 27). The misconception is half true because long-term English language learners were dismissed from their English classrooms when they were considered proficient, but still required elevated levels of reading and writing language skills with “higher level of vocabulary and acquire syntactic knowledge” (Jung, 2017, p. 27).

Some additional strategies that can be added to the ~~learning~~ experience of an ELL student learning the English language are for educators to provide students with a systematic approach. One language program known as Rosetta Stone (2020), which teaches people to speak a different language and focuses on three key areas including speaking, listening, and grammar, uses a systematic approach using interactive and academic language (Jacobson, 2020). ESSA expects our nation’s teachers to be using this systematic approach in the classrooms. Teachers must set ambitious standards and use academic language with their students so the students can become accustomed to the language.

On a different note, for an educator to approach an ELL student using the academic language, it is vital that they know more about their student and their learning style, dislikes, and likes. Thompson (2018) stated in her article that often teachers do not have access to their student’s information such as their level of fluency within the English language, their geographic origin, or dialect. One blog page titled A Champion of Home Language and Culture written by Huynh (2020) stated that Dr. James Cummins, who is a scholar of multiculturalism and multilingualism, has focused on reversing marginalization and described how vital it is to empower teachers and students. The

author suggested that teachers need to flip their negative and stereotypical mindsets on the students who are typically considered high-risk and are marginalized as failing students (Huynh, 2020). The failing students often come from immigrant backgrounds, low-income families, and communities that have been marginalized (Huynh, 2020). Considering each of these students, Huynh pointed out how to provide support and flip the mindset and described that instruction should be scaffolded. Scaffolding occurs when a teacher has broken down the lesson into manageable units for the student to learn. Independent reading should be provided, in addition, to allow for students and teachers to believe that they are an asset, and their multilingualism is something positive (Huynh, 2020).

Colombo et al. (2013) described how setting appropriate goals has a direct impact on the belief of teachers in their students' ability to achieve the goals, or agency, and the preparation of steps to set goals (pathways). It is important to note that "hope is goal pursuit thinking in which agency (goals) and pathway (steps to set goals) thoughts are emphasized before and throughout the pursuit of a goal" (Colombo et al., 2013, p. 83). When teaching ELLs, it is suggested to start with the agency that is creating a belief in the students that they can academically succeed, and teachers should then create steps for them to reach their goals (Colombo et al., 2013). An ELL students' goal, like any other student, can be shaped by his or her teacher and its teachings. "This agency depends on teachers' instructional pathways, which include a deep understanding of English language development and the necessary instructional tools and strategies for teaching ELLs" (Colombo et al., 2013, p. 84). In the article "Hopefulness for Teachers of ELLs in the Era of NCLB" the authors explain that "teaching is teaching and caring for the entire

child, which includes the family, home, and community" (Colombo et al., 2013, p. 84). However, not all educators have hope in their ELL students in reaching the goals set and when the goals are not easily reached by the student, it allows for hopelessness inside the schools and classrooms which then reduces teachers' agency for successfully teaching ELLs and it puts the blame on ELLs as being the problem (Colombo et al., 2013).

Blame is all too easily placed on the student, but the fault could be with the teachers or the educational system. Colombo et al. (2013) reported that one of the teachers interviewed for his study described not knowing what or how to assure that her ELL students were comprehending her instruction and the teacher restated it by a teacher calling it "just good teaching" (Colombo et al., 2013). This teacher's response demonstrates her lack of preparedness and lack of support from the school and district personnel (Colombo et al., 2013). District staff should help educate teachers on how to teach ELLs. One useful strategy is to differentiate ELL students' learning. The article also stated that some teachers lacked confidence and felt hopeless in the students' lives after school. Many teachers indicated that they only have the students for six hours and that the students' parents do not know how to help their children. Lastly, the school systems do not support families either. The authors described the low involvement of parents in school events such as open house attendance. Teachers from this study stated that they believe the parents that didn't come to open house didn't come because they weren't able to or because they didn't want to, but no teacher mentioned any form of creating more family involvement for families and school (Colombo et al., 2013). Districts across the nation need to work on creating a bridge for families of ELL and school personnel outside of school hours and expected school events. "Coursework and professional

development were unsuccessful in providing experiences that led participants to understand strengths in ELLs and their families, which would have likely promoted a cycle of critical hope and connections with ELLs' out-of-school lives" (Colombo et al., 2013, p. 85).

Another factor to consider about ELLs is to know and be aware of some of the reasons why immigrants come to the United States and to better understand the student and their families to appropriately help and educate them. Baecher (2002) completed a study on the program. Connect with College, which collaborated with LaGuardia Community College in New York and the New York City Board of Education. Baecher's (2002) purpose was to find out if the chain of events between the college, program, and board of education were successful in preparing ELL students to complete high school successfully and continue to post-secondary education. Although Baechers' (2002) research was completed more than 20 years ago, some of the reasons that ELLs come to the United States continue to be the same. For example, some ELLs might lack the opportunity to further their education in their native country. Economic suffering and trauma cause students and their families to migrate, for example some families have left "their home countries to escape war or political unrest, because of intolerable financial conditions, for the opportunity to pursue a free high school education, or to attend a U.S. college or university" (Baecher, 2002, pp.18). In addition to their reasoning for coming to the United States, a background factor can affect how students learn, based on whether they were raised in an individualistic or collectivist culture (Bojko-Jeewek & Eide, 2022). Therefore, when educators try to learn information about their ELLs' background and the type of culture, how ELLs are most influenced by it will help teachers guide their ELL

students, regardless of school or home culture (Bojko-Jeewek & Eide, 2022). As teachers, it is not necessary to "speak another language, but it is important to be aware of cultural and language transfer issues that might help or hinder learning for our English Language Learner" (Bojko-Jeewek & Eide, 2022). Reyes and Domina (2019) noted that knowing ELL students "are one of the fastest-growing student groups in the country yet are also among the lowest performers on a broad range of educational outcomes" (p. 3) emphasizing the importance of building a relationship with ELL students to better understand and support them is critical.

Inclusivity within the classroom and in the building, along with relationship building, plays a vital role in student success. When building relationships with the people of the community, relationships should not end at school, but instead should continue outside of school. For any student, let alone an ELL student, to succeed it is important to have parental support and community support. This is why it is important to have ELLs voice heard and be included in many academic and non-academic events to hear their needs and allow them to feel included in school and community events. One parent from a California school district noticed her student's school district was actively listening and has knocked down the language barrier that once existed by creating a new webpage for parents who only speak Spanish (Iraheta, 2020). "To see that finally, the Hispanic voice is being heard and that they are providing the tools that allow us to guide our kids and look for certain information, it's spectacular" stated Thairi Perez a Hillsborough County mom interviewed by Spectrum News 1 (Iraheta, 2020, paragraph 8).

Besides facing cultural differences, the most common obstacle that immigrant and refugee families face is not speaking comfortably the host language (Georgis et al., 2014). The lack of support from interpreters and other liaisons plays a key role in why many parents do not participate in their students' activities (Georgis et al., 2014). Therefore, having "organized wraparound family support and parent information meetings" was described as important, according to Georgis et al. (2014, pp. 24). The meetings have proven to "strengthen relationships and communication between families and the school and provide information around a wide range of topics" (Georgis et al., 2014, p. 24).

Most importantly the practices being used must allow families to feel included and are part of the school and to do that there needs to be an awareness of the three barriers which are language barriers, cultural barriers, and lastly, unfamiliarity with school laws (Georgis et al., 2014). Breaking barriers might be a difficult task but for some scholars it is important to support families in eliminating obstacles within the community to better serve the families and provide them support when facing any of the three barriers. Dearing et al. (2016) explained how learning to operate obstacles can also help in supporting the community,

> Scholars have increasingly called attention to learning obstacles that operate beyond the curriculum, instructional strategies, or the general academic quality of schools, emphasizing the importance of immigrant children's lives outside of school for their performance inside of school, including the importance of access to academic supports and enriching activities in their communities. (p. 884)

Dearing et al. (2016) described the Suarez-Orozco et al. discovery that for immigrant children, the supportive relationship that is built among the community, school, and the student's family can either positively or negatively affect their success. Suarez-Orozco et al., (2010) as cited in Dearing et al., (2016) saw a decline in student success when support was not present. The support described included having parents "actively engaged in their day-to-day lives, attended schools with relatively low poverty rates, and had ready access to extracurricular supports in their communities" (Dearing et al., 2016, p. 884). The findings discovered by Suarez-Orozco et al., (2010) as cited in Dearing et al., (2016) provided evidence that the students "who fared worst academically lacked supports—across their homes, schools, and communities—for school engagement and learning" (p. 884).

Baecher (2002), who Engstrom and Tinto (2008) agreed with later through the years, stated that school districts need to allow collaboration between ESL and content area staff (Baecher, 2002). In support of Baecher's statement regarding collaboration, Reyes & Domina (2019) stated that "ELL students, on average, score lower than non-ELL students in English, reading, writing, and comprehension, as well as in less language-intensive subject areas, such as mathematics and science" (pp.3). ESL staff are highly educated on the language acquisition topic but not qualified in the content subject area and vice versa, so it would be beneficial for the students if both teachers collaborated on the lesson plan (Baecher, 2002).

However, some schools encourage collaboration between teachers to meet the demands of ELL students. Such is the case for educators in Ontario where "all teachers—across all content areas—are teachers of both language and literacy" and ESL teachers

are asked to collaborate with classroom teachers to make the necessary accommodations for the students (Harper & de Jong, 2009, p. 70). One of the greatest successes of having teachers communicate and collaborate is that they will share the students' goals and use vocabulary to better instruct ELL students (Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). One of the greatest barriers to educators being able to collaborate tends to be the limited common planning time available (Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). It is vital to not rush the ELL students back into the classroom because the students' reactions can be regressive instead of progressive. When ELL students are placed in mainstream classes sometimes some ELL students are not able to keep up without the lack of ELL support, and there is "evidence that many ELLs were unable to meet the language demands of mainstream content classrooms after being exited from ESL support programs" (Harper & de Jong, 2009, p. 141). Another strategy being used in the classrooms and ESL departments is the pull-out from within strategy. When ELL students are removed out of the mainstream classroom it can lead to "subsequent English language pedagogy emphasized the cognitive and social nature of language learning and acknowledged the similarities between first and second language learning processes" stated Harper and de Jong (2009) (pp, 141). While deciding if the pull-out strategy or moving the ELL student to the mainstream class is preferable, it is important to consider the abilities of the ELL student and the teacher. For example,

> Studies have clearly shown that placement in mainstream classrooms without appropriate preparation of teachers and instructional accommodations can lead to the social isolation of ELLs, as well as to a lack of class participation, meaningful

> peer interactions and teacher feedback, and opportunities for language development and academic achievement. (Harper & de Jong, 2009, pp.138-139)

The pull-out strategy focuses on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and places importance on authentically interacting with other learners (Harper & de Jong, 2009). Conversely, Vintan and Gallagher (2019) stated how important it is to not use the pull-out strategy because "ELLs benefit from forming social relationships with their peers, context-specific learning, and feelings of inclusion and competence" (p. 71). Eyolfson (2016) described how their district is helping their ELLs and they agree that pulling students out of the classroom is not the best model; instead, they "have the classroom teacher and English specialist collaborate. This is vital to create the space for the change" (p. 63). Most importantly, Eyolfson (2016) supported the evidence by using the model because,

> Over a five year's period, English language learners' performance on the 5th grade Colorado state assessment increased by 25%. Scores for English learners classified as fluent English proficient increased by 29% and we eliminated the achievement gap between fluent English proficient and non-ELL students. (p. 63)

Along with the teaching of the English language, it is also considered important to add cultural competence in four ways. The Edutopia article, titled "4 Ways to Incorporate Culture in World Language Instruction," by Elena Spathis (2020b), contains an explanation that the first way to incorporate cultural competence is by following Spathis research on the 4 ways to add cultural competence because her research concentrates on teaching students the Spanish language but also the culture and creating curiosity in the students' minds. The author emphasized that it is important that the teacher does not

stereotype (Spathis, 2020b). The second way is to brainstorm cultural connections using themes such as nap times in certain areas. The third is to compile authentic resources by providing students with music, video clips, and images. Last, these four ways of being culturally competent might be one of the toughest things for ESL and ESOL students to complete because of their insecurities and/or lack of confidence. Teachers might not feel the need or importance of doing their research before teaching the language. If teachers do not complete their research, then they may create a negative trickle effect on the students learning and on their understanding of the language, culture, and student experience (Spathis, 2020b).

Teachers need to be teaching at the proficient level to academically prepare students for success on the English Proficiency exam. Also important is that teachers are effective and do not have a deficit-minded approach. Merod (2022) described that "while half the world's population is bilingual and jobs are increasingly favoring bilingual candidates, the education field often views ELL students as having a deficit in their learning" (p. 1). In a *K-12 Dive* article, a former student was interviewed, and described how she knew her 3rd-grade teacher believed she was dumb because she was given a coloring book while her classmates had challenging assignments (Merod, 2022). Instead of seeing their native language as a deficiency, Merod (2022) suggested teachers should have an asset-based approach in which they see the good in learning a language and positively compare the ELL student to their peers and not compare them in a negative light. One suggested way for ELLs to be able to communicate is translanguaging (Freeman & Freeman, 2021). Translanguaging is communicating and not focusing on the language (Freeman & Freeman, 2021). An example of allowing translanguaging to be

used in the classroom would be to have two Spanish-speaking students working together, switching back and forth between English and Spanish (Freeman & Freeman, 2021). If being bilingual is an asset, then the student should be able to use both languages. Such is the case that *National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum* (2016) wrote that "It's about using all your language resources to communicate" (p.1).

There needs to be an environment that supports language development. Parents need to expose their children to their native language early because many immigrant parents stop talking to their children in their native language after the children start attending school (Kim, 2016). To prevent from having ELL students lose their native language one way is to "minimize their risk is by reaching parents before it is too late" Kim (2016, pp. 20). In other words, it is important to communicate with parents regarding the value of their native language. Kim (2016) also suggested that policymakers and politicians create a public education system with more bilingual education for all children (Kim, 2016). It was also recommended that teachers use children's toys to initiate conversations, use gestures and nonverbal communication, ask questions to support and expand communication, allow time for students to provide answers, and lastly, model verbal and nonverbal communication (Kim, 2016). Depending on the state and district, a teacher can play a vital role in the ELLs' classification; for example, in California, teachers' and parents' recommendations are part of the decision-making process of reclassifying an ELL student (Reyes & Domina, 2019). The state of Kansas uses the KELPA to measure the proficiency of the English language and the staff that oversees the English Learners progress from the district or school helps make choices on the level of proficiency and the ELLs classification (Fultz, et al., 2018).

Baecher (2002) claimed that ELLs lack "individualized college counseling, opportunities for placement in college-preparatory courses, outreach to provide their families college information and understanding of employment opportunities" (p. 82) and they need these types of support to successfully transition into college from high school. A common intervention that continues to reappear is the use of bilingual education to be able to maintain bilingualism and biliteracy and provide ELL students with the same curriculum as their English-speaking peers (Chavez-Moreno, 2021). A dual language program "aims for students to achieve bilingualism/biliteracy and requires that half the students be fluent in Spanish and the other half be dominant in English" (Chavez-Moreno, 2021, p. 1107). Dual-language education, which provides an equitable education to Latinos, has quickly spread in elementary and secondary schools (Chavez-Moreno, 2021). This dual-language program has become popular among Whites as many parents want their children to have an enriched education (Chavez-Moreno, 2021).

De la Rosa (2020), described how it is important for students to focus on phonics in an article titled "Does A Phonics Focus Hinder ELLs in Literacy?" De la Rosa (2020) suggested that for students to be proficient in English, learning phonics is necessary, but she also added that it is equally important to be able to understand what was read. De la Rosa (2020) suggested that if a student cannot read by third grade, they will have long academic challenges. De la Rosa (2020), who focused on phonics, suggested that games and reading books aloud are a couple of strategies that will help students become better at vocabulary and comprehension, and phonics.

An article titled *Hillsborough County Schools Launches Spanish Language Social Media Channels* by Iraheta (2020) demonstrated how a Florida school was being

proactive by listening to students' families and creating a school page where all the information and updates are in Spanish to eliminate language barriers. This allows parents to be proactive and feel valued as their voices are being heard and language barriers are being broken down. The Hillsborough School District is providing support to more than 80, 000 Latinx families in the district. After the Spanish language hotline, the idea came to launch the Spanish district website (Iraheta, 2020). Underwood (2020) added that students need equal access to quality education, and school districts should provide families with equal access to participate in their children's education. For example, school districts should provide the available resources so parents can support their students through their educational journey. There should also be a priority in creating a safe environment for students and the community where they can have discussions about their differences and still respect each other (Reist, 2020). In her article titled "LPSs Plans to Help Students Deal with a Historic Election Full of Unknowns," Reist (2020) also added that being able to tie lessons to what is on the news is most beneficial and important. Even the hiring process can make a difference in how much the student learns as noted in the (2020) *K-12 Dive* newsletter. Teacher representation plays a crucial role in the student's learning experience and a teacher's ability and willingness to be culturally responsive can immensely help students learn (Jacobson, 2020). In addition, if a program is conducted to truly meet all students' needs such as a need for having culturally relevant educators, responsive educators, and equitably accessible opportunities, then it will be cultural and equitable for students and teachers.

According to Chávez-Moreno (2021), the existence of racist policies prevents non-English speaking students from having access to a dual-language program. Racist

ideologies and practices in the school systems and society play a crucial role in adolescent success because they become a target to lower academic tracks, less rigorous teaching, and teachers who devalue their home languages and have lower expectations (Chávez-Moreno, 2021). Reyes & Domina (2019), who focused her research on the reclassification of ELL students in California, described how students who attended high-poverty districts that were predominantly Hispanic were less likely to be reclassified in comparison to those ELL students who attended districts that were low-poverty and had other non-English languages as their majority.

If there is racial bias or if racial bias is to be eliminated, there are four things that a teacher can do to eliminate the racial bias and help a student learn the English language. In the article, "Using the Target Language with Novice Foreign-Language Learners" by Elena Spathis (2020a), the students that are learning a foreign language, such as Spanish, claim that four certain things need to be taught to become proficient in the language. Those four things are creating a Word Wall, using gestures and props, using visual aids, and modeling responses aloud (Spathis, 2020a). In addition, the article "Language Access Not Just for Students" written by Underwood (2020), emphasized the importance of providing students and their families with translated materials and services. In the article, Underwood (2020) stated that the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights grants linguistically diverse families the right to paperwork in their language from meetings and materials that are key to the student's success.

There are achievement gaps because some students come as refugees with their families such as many who came to the United States during the Cuban Revolution, or they are sent by their families to the United States (Thompson, 2018). ELL students are

sometimes forbidden to go to school by their parents in their own countries to keep them safe and alive. Some ELL students are trying to "reunite with their families, others were seeking to escape poverty, gang violence, or drug trafficking" (Thompson, 2018, p. 23). Regardless of the difficult circumstance of their arrival to the United States, "ELLs demonstrate determination and a commitment to academic success; frequently, the family value[s] educational opportunities that were not available in their native country" (Thompson, 2018, p. 27). During the study, they discovered that several strategies help support students during their college experience to complete their college program and be academically successful. According to Thompson the strategies are: "make content comprehensible; integrate language with content instruction; respect and incorporate first language; recognize how culture and language intersect with classroom participation; and understand the needs of students with different levels of formal schooling" (Thompson, 2018, p. 52).

For some schools, ELL students can be classified as challenging due to their high demand for ELL services, but Bond (2020) described how students can be mislabeled. When students are mislabeled ELL students can pass ELPA, however, on the other hand, if a student is mislabeled with knowing too much English then the assessment can have a negative effect. Such mislabeling can then lead the ELL student to experience additional pressure on passing the assessment such as how Bond (2020) describes how students who have a home language that is not English can negatively impact their assessments in a negative way due to anxiety about not understanding English, the traditional summer slide, or because the educator who scored their screening generously graded them. There are also in-school factors that contribute to the ELL achievement gap such as class size

and out-of-school factors such as television watching (Torff & Murphy, 2020). Paying close attention to these factors will help expand the learning curve on ELL students as it will help decrease the achievement gap because "there is a huge discrepancy between academic success between Latinx and Whites, evidenced in both Massachusetts and nationally" (Mitchell, 2005, p. 268). For example, nationally Latinx were graduating at a rate of 11 % in comparison to Whites graduating at a rate of 35% (Mitchell, 2005). In general, ELLs differ in their levels of schooling because, according to Walker (2015),

> Over 50% of ELLs in secondary schools are second- or third generation plus, indicating that despite of having all their schooling in the United States, these individuals are not learning enough English to be re-designated English proficient (RFEP) by the time they reach middle school and are at a greater risk of dropping out of school. (p. 2)

ESSA supports low-performing schools and their students, including ELLs, as they continue their education post-high school and to avoid the dropout rate from increasing because high school dropouts can affect society negatively. To better understand the school educational system, it is important to define a low-performing school as a school in which one-third or more of the students do not graduate (Darrow, 2016). A low-performing school depends on a system of support to support its students. To support students, schools need to develop some type of test accountability and decide what supports and interventions are implemented in low-performing schools (Darrow, 2016). When it comes to at-risk groups, the liability is held by the states and districts when an English learner drops out of school, they become part of risk groups such as the "low socioeconomic, minority status, and academic risk group" (Walker, 2015, p. 2).

Workforce dropouts are more susceptible to lower salaries, being unemployed, losing out on tenure opportunities, and upward and downward social or economic mobility. According to the National Dropout Prevention Center, these are expenses that cost society more than "200 billion dollars in lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue" (Walker, 2015, pp. 3). When ELLs are not supported within the educational community, it can become more costly for society because there is a link between dropouts from high school and being "3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested" adding to the "75% of "America's state prison high school dropouts" (Walker, 2015, pp. 3).

Regarding an educator feeling equipped to use any strategy, some teachers express that they do not feel prepared. But according to Thompson (2018), they specifically describe how they were prepared to become teacher candidates. To prepare future teachers to become ELL teachers and to learn how to appropriately plan lessons aligned with state standards, teachers must learn to use the most appropriate classroom strategies for ELLs (Thompson, 2018). For example, the teacher candidates are to discuss in a peer group the individual strategies they chose to use and how they would effectively work for each discipline. Then the candidates are required to create a lesson using the strategy they believe to be most effective (Coates, 2016). ESSA puts the responsibility on the educator to know through assessment data what next step is best to take; however, it appears that regardless of all the training, some educators still do not feel confident making such classroom or curriculum decisions. In addition, candidates learn that "a student's academic IQ, country of origin, and culture do not determine the rate at which a student acquires academic English" (Coates, 2016, p. 449). Within lesson plans, they are also encouraged to have a sheltered instruction operation protocol in which the

instruction is scaffolded, and instruction is varied to fit each student's needs (Coates, 2016). In addition to scaffolding, there are several other recommended strategies to be used, but these strategies if not shown to be taught correctly will do more harm than good. Rodriguez & Briceño (2018) described how to use sentence stems that rely on the curriculum and how sentence stems help to give the students more responsibility, teaches them to be independent, but can fail if a teacher does it incorrectly (Rodriguez & Briceño, 2018). For example, "Ms. Nielson asked one of her students to use the sentence starter "I think ___", but then Ms. Nielson interrupted and changed the answer prompted by the given sentence starter from being a prediction to an explanation" (Rodriguez & Briceño, 2018, p. 3). As the authors stated, this interruption to the student can be confusing. Using educational strategies is one way to prepare future candidates, but there is more to developing teachers and assuring they are up to ESSA standards like assuring the educator is culturally, linguistically, and knows their student.

In contrast, a student who does graduate from high school will be living on a minimum wage (Darrow, 2016). ESSA suggested exposing students to enroll in college or career-ready programs because 47% or nearly half of American high school graduates complete neither a college- nor career-ready course of study (Darrow, 2016).

When ELL teenagers arrive in the United States, they might be quick to learn the English language, but it does not necessarily mean that this skill will provide them the needed success to pass a standardized test or a writing assessment (Baecher, 2002). That is because many newly arrived ELL students come to U.S. high schools with little English proficiency, if any, and either average or below-average academic preparation in their native countries. These students may not have either content knowledge or English

language proficiency to handle their coursework in the U.S. and thus require additional years to complete graduation requirements.

ELL students need to know their rights. One of those rights is that ELL students can request that subject-area exams be in students' native language (Torff & Murphy, 2020). It is interesting to note that New York State's regent's exam that ELL students must pass to graduate, measures academic performance but not language skills and is one of the exams that can be translated into their native language (Torff, & Murphy, 2020). On the other hand, the Second Language Achievement Test assesses New York ELL students' English language abilities without measuring content knowledge (Torff & Murphy, 2020). A teacher can identify the difference between academic and "linguistic demands of the curriculum and provide linguistic supports that allow ELLs to meet the same rigorous standards as other students" (Torff & Murphy, 2020, p. 1). Some of the ways that a teacher can assist an ELL student is by providing scientific terminology, grammar, and punctuation that is required when writing a script in the state assessments (Torff & Murphy, 2020). Just like with any other student that is not ELL, the more support the student has the smaller the achievement gap that will exist between them and their peers (Torff and Murphy, 2020).

With an increase in the number of ELL students entering the nation's school districts, some research has provided evidence on the strategies and pedagogy that are most effective to support ELLs as they learn English. One strategy that is believed to be useful for ELLs when learning a second language is that the ELL should "possess a great deal of world knowledge in their native language and are better termed in their second language" (Cardimona et al., (2015). In other words, if an ELL student has strong

linguistic skills in their native language, then they have a higher chance of learning their second language. Researchers have found that learning a second language requires different work than when a person is learning a first language. For example, Cardimona et al. (2015) stated that when the second language is being learned, vocabulary acquisition is the foundation because vocabulary knowledge can improve reading comprehension.

The ideal age for ESOL is still debated, but it determines a student's ability to learn a second language. Cardimona et al., (2015) stated that while younger students have an advantage in learning a second language because of their early age, “once cerebral dominance is complete, usually around the time of puberty, and “automatic acquisition from mere exposure to language seems to disappear” (p. 543). According to Cardimona et al., (2015), there is no specific age in which a second language cannot be learned but, instead, there is higher attention to stimuli from the environment which causes some type of developmental event. In other words, the ELL student is to be more motivated to learn a second language because of the environmental forces such as friends who do not speak the ELL’s native language. It is believed that for someone to obtain adult competence in a second language, the latest acquisition can begin is 7 years old (Cardimona et al., 2015). Learning a second language continues to be a debate but there are certain factors to consider that affect learning a first language versus learning a second language. For example, “first language acquisition occurs primarily in early childhood, SLA can occur in childhood, adolescence, or adulthood and is influenced by the previously mentioned factors such as age, environment, skill, and language use patterns” (Cardimona et al., 2015, p. 544).

Transition to higher education in a new country for ELL students has not been an easy one. Students who are non-ELL sometimes have an idea of what higher education expectations look like or even what resources are available to them at the college level, but as an ELL, one might not be as familiar with such resources. In addition, many ELL students are considered at risk students and therefore when ELL are "beginning higher education with fewer academic resources than their peers, they are less likely to complete their degree programs" (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008, pp. 47). Therefore, support is vital for the success of students, especially ELL students.

Some schools are attempting to expose students to the world after high school by providing students with college fairs and informing them and their families about the options available, such as college credit courses offered at their high school. While high schools organizing events such as college fairs is a step in the right direction, an ELL student, or any student, will not be successful with access to those resources only. An ELL student will need to know about fairs and courses, and have access to them, but will also need emotional, monetary, and academic support as they choose to continue their educational post-secondary journey (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). Most important is to support ELL students as they are typically academically underprepared, poor, and statistically most unlikely to succeed (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008).

ELLs are "the most rapidly growing secondary immigrant group" and our nation's public schools continue to express the difficulties and challenges they face daily" (Baecher, 2002, p. 31). Engstrom and Tinto (2008) completed a study in which they uncovered the reasons why some low-income students attend college but have not completed a degree. Engstrom and Tinto (2008) described how students' income plays a

role in their educational experience. A student's income can even affect how long a student stays in college, for example the “National Center for Education Statistics indicates that while an estimated 56 percent of high-income students who begin postsecondary education will earn their four-year degrees within 6 years, only about 26 percent of low-income students will do so” (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008, p. 47). Most important is to support ELL students, or any non-ELL student, as they are typically academically underprepared, poor, and statistically most unlikely to succeed (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008).

Another important note is that while ELL students can go to public schools, some ELLs do not have many options after graduation such as working, receiving financial aid, or going to a college or university due to their immigration status (Baecher, 2002). Two reasons for the hardships that prevent ELLs from moving up the ladder include the lack of support from the government, as many ELLs are undocumented immigrants, and the lack of belief in the school system. Baecher (2002) described the disbelief as “the low-achievement of caste-like minorities is a result of this history, out of which youngsters have developed strong feelings of distrust and disbelief that the existing opportunity structure holds any real hope for advancement” (pp. 48). Hackmann et al. (2019) described the importance of graduating from high school and entering a workforce that calls for a two- or four-year college degree and industry-recognized certificates because “as nearly all job growth in the US since 2011 is occurring in high- and middle- skills occupations” as cited by Carnevale et al., (2016) in Hackmann (p. 4).In addition, Hackmann et al. (2019) described how the school system is inequitable for ELL students as they access information about schools, or the schools just try to obtain results after the

students have enrolled in college. Some data provided by Hackmann et al.'s (2019) research was that in "2019, states' postsecondary attainment rates ranged from 36% to 65% nationwide. Attainment for African Americans, American Indians, and Hispanics was lower than for Asian-Americans and Whites" (Hackmann et. al, 2019, p. 4). This data proves that the achievement gap continues to exist between white and ELL students.

According to Engstrom and Tinto (2008), "institutions have to take seriously the notion that the failure of students to thrive in college lies not only in the students but also in the ways they construct the environments in which they ask students to learn" (p. 50). This strategy of creating a supportive environment that is culturally responsive and inviting to differences will support educators to better educate their ELL students as they will be motivated to learn the language and class subjects. Some of the most valued themes throughout the research were that students feel included and part of the environment and teacher and classmate willingness to accommodate to the student's needs and differences. For any student, including an ELL, having a supporting environment allows for relationship building to grow. Engstrom and Tinto (2008) described collaboration pedagogy and community participation as the two strategies that have most helped reach and support ELL students and teachers working directly with ELL students to best support ELL students, so they continue their education. Norms created by the school faculty such as included tutoring, study groups, and a counselor assigned to the learning community in which the educators are their own leaders and motivate each other are also considered supportive to the educational growth of an ELL (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). The goal of the faculty created norms is to have students be "not an individual in a class" but to feel as "part of a class" (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008, p.

49). The linked curriculum included a basic skills class with a content knowledge class that allowed students to feel that more progress was made and valued earning college credits while learning a skill (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). The linked curriculum allowed students to not feel as they were enrolled in two different classes (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008).

Researchers discovered that students were "more successful in college when they had a learning community because they felt safe to share ideas as they had support, trust, and respect from their peers" (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008, p. 48). In addition to the community built within the classrooms, students also shared a collective response of feeling as if they belonged in college and that their teachers believed in their success (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). Students were able to observe how the curriculum links together and understand the reasons for needing to take the course (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). ELL students reported in the study the feeling of community in high school was one of the reasons why they were successful; therefore, the sense of community when attending college is a useful strategy.

Summary

Chapter 2 provided an analysis of the literature on the history of the nation's and states' responses to supporting the growth in ELL education. Research demonstrated the numerous factors that play a role in the decision-making of an ELL's identification, types of assessments used, academic and rigorous capacity, proficiency. Several other factors can play a role, but in a negative form and, therefore, teacher bias and racism were discussed along with teachers' lack of belief in their students. Additionally, the importance of a support system of parents and community members was suggested as a

positive factor in an ELL's education and the teacher's awareness of culture and language. Finally, the importance of informing, providing options, and supporting students and their parents in the world after high school. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology for the study.

Chapter 3

Methods

This study examined ELL high school graduates' perceptions of the linguistic skills taught in the high school while they attended, and the perceptions of the strategies being used to support their transition from high school to post-secondary education. In addition, the study examined ELL's experiences after being identified as ELL and the skills needed for teachers to appropriately support ELL high school graduates during their transition to college. In this chapter, the researcher provides detailed information about the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis synthesis, researcher's role, limitations, reliability, and trustworthiness.

Research Design

Identifying the topic is the first step for any researcher when choosing a research design. The researcher developed an interest in ELL students as this group grew to become the largest minority in the KC metro area where the research was conducted. After developing an interest in the topic, the researcher decided to complete a qualitative study. The qualitative study included interviews as its method and its approach was phenomenological. The phenomenological approach is a scientific study of subjective experiences. These descriptions and explanations allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences as they went through their educational courses in high school and transitioned from high school to college. After a thorough investigation of the historical research focused on ELLs transitioning to post-secondary education, the researcher developed the research questions. After the development of the

research questions, the investigation was planned and conducted. The researcher collected, analyzed, and presented data in the most honest, relevant, and accurate form possible.

Setting

This study took place in a Kansas City Metro area with participating ELLs who had graduated from a Midwestern Public High School. The choice to pursue the study at this school was based on the school's classification as having the largest group of minorities across the nation with a total minority enrollment of 87% (U.S. News & World Report, 2022). The total number of students in the school according to the article in U.S. News & World Report (2022) was approximately 1,300 during the 2019-2020 school year.

Sampling Procedures

The target population to inform this study consisted of ELL graduates from the Midwestern Public High School during school years 2015-2021, who were enrolled at or had graduated from a college, university, or tech school. For this qualitative research, the sampling procedures used to select participants for the interviews were criterion and snowball sampling. Rubin and Rubin (2012) emphasized the importance of selecting participants experienced with the topic to enhance the research's credibility. In this case, Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) defined criterion sampling as the best process to ensure all chosen participants would have had similar experiences based on the topic of the research. Selection of the participants included:

1. The participants were all from a country where Spanish is the first language.
2. The participants had been living in the United States for a minimum of 8 years.

3. The participants attended the ABC school district continuously for 4 full years.
4. The students were graduates from the ABC School District during the school years 2015-2021 and were enrolled at or had graduated from a college, university, or tech school when they were interviewed.

Requiring the participants to have lived a minimum of 8 years in the United States was needed for them to be able to demonstrate a good understanding of how the American school culture functions. It was also vital to have the participants have a continuous school experience of four years. Also, to obtain a more diverse sample within this study the researcher selected participants from various Spanish-speaking countries instead of one country.

The researcher created social media posts informing former high school students and teachers from the KC Metro area about the recruitment for the study. The flyers can be found in Appendix B (English) and Appendix C (Spanish). Printed copies of physical flyers were also placed throughout the community and in the former students' regular gathering locations such as Walmart, a local library, or The Shack (a hangout spot for kids after school) to obtain potential participants' attention. The social media posts and printed flyers included a brief explanation from the researcher as to why the study was being performed and the criteria that participants needed to meet to participate in the study. In addition, the researcher's contact information was included in the flyers and social media posts. The participants then contacted the researcher through their social media or phone.

Instrument

For this study, the researcher used a semi-structured interview format. A semi-structured interview format means that researchers ask open-ended questions instead of a list of answers to choose from. In addition, the researcher wrote the interview questions on her own. In the interview script, there are 14 interview questions. All participants were asked the same set of questions, but the researcher sometimes asked additional questions to clarify a point or gain more details or examples. The questions were developed to address the research questions. The questions were written in English and in Spanish to provide participants an opportunity to fully comprehend the questions being asked and to effectively communicate their responses. Both sets of questions can be found in the appendices section. English questions are in Appendix F and Spanish questions are in Appendix G. The questions focused on the transition from high school to college for ELL students. The interview first started with the researcher reading the interview consent form to the student so the student could know his or her rights and expectations. The interview letter of rules and expectations letter can be found in the appendix section (Appendix E). Then, if the participant had no questions the next step was for the participant to sign the consent form. The consent form can be found in Appendix F section. The first interview questions began with two warm-up questions, which were then followed by the research interview questions and follow-up questions that address each research question. To ensure validity from the participants in this study respondent validation was used. The interview questions are listed below with the research questions but can also be found in the appendix section (Appendix F for English and Appendix G for Spanish).

Warm-up Questions

1. Tell me about yourself and your high school experience with learning English.
2. Describe your high school experience academically and socially.

RQ1

What are high school ELL graduates' perceptions of the linguistic skills including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, that are currently taught in the high school they attended?

3. Describe how confident you are in writing in English.
4. Describe how confident you are in understanding what you listen to in English.
5. Describe how confident you are in speaking in English.
6. Describe how confident you are in reading in English.

RQ2

What are high school ELL graduates' perceptions of the strategies being used to support their transition from high school to post-secondary education?

7. During your transition to college, what support from your high school made your transitional experience successful?
    i. What support was lacking?
8. What strategies did your high school use to prepare you to be successful academically in college?
9. What strategies did your high school use to create a supportive environment through the transitional process of high school to college?
    i. What strategies were lacking?

RQ3

10. What are high school ELL graduates' experiences in college when being identified as an ELL for their native language not being English?
11. Describe how being a student categorized as an English Learner affected your ability of making friends in college.
12. Describe how being categorized as an English Learner affected your level of comfort participating in the college classroom.

RQ4

What skills are needed for teachers to appropriately support ELL high school graduates during their transition to college?

13. What skill did a teacher or teachers use to make you feel supported during your transition to college?

The questions were designed to collect data. The students were encouraged to elaborate on their stories and provide as much detail as possible. In addition, the researcher used follow-up questions and probes to encourage further explanation and detail from their initial responses. If a participant shared a story and the information provided required slightly more detail to understand or complete, then the researcher prompted the participants for further explanations and examples.

The interview questions were provided to a peer reviewer because of her bilingual and bilateral skills to check for accuracy in the translations. During the process of peer reviewing, in which the responses from the participants were sought and received were interpreted differently. In addition, some of the questions could have affected the response by the way the questions were worded. The participant's answers could be

understood differently from the researcher compared to the peer reviewer based on the researchers' bias and personal experiences.

Data Collection Procedures

The first step that must be taken before conducting the study was to get permission from Baker University. The researcher must have all the literature research completed, flyers, consent forms, interview expectations, and interview questions translated and, in this case, audited. The Institutional Review Board committee from Baker University approves research before collection and the approval can be found in the appendices (see Appendix A). After the approval, the data collection process was started.

The researcher contacted participants through email or by phone to schedule an interview. Once the interview was scheduled, the guidelines and expectations were explained through a letter titled interview expectations letter that was read aloud to avoid any misunderstandings and to allow the participants to ask any lingering questions. The ~~interview expectations~~ letter was sent to the participants by email so they could read it ahead of time ~~as well~~. The ~~interview~~ expectations letter can be found in Appendix E. ~~Then,~~ participants had to agree to sign the consent forms after being read the interview expectations in which they agreed to continue participating in the study. The consent form, which can be found in the Appendix H section, were provided by email to each of the participants several days in advance before the interview was held to help create a trustworthy and comfortable environment by providing the interviewee with the purpose of the interview. In this case, the consent form describes in detail that the researcher was conducting an interview study to explore how not understanding the English language

affects ESL and ELL graduates in their post-high school future education after graduating from a Midwestern, public high school. The consent form also communicated to the participants that they were going to be anonymous and could stop the interview process at any time they wished. Before the interview began, each participant was asked if they had any questions and signed the consent form. If the participant had any questions, then answers were provided at the start of the interview. The interviews were recorded and transcribed easily because the interviews were conducted using Zoom or in person. Each participant was interviewed individually through a Zoom, or an in-person meeting. The participants in the study were each assigned a number, were informed that they would remain anonymous, and their information would stay confidential to gain their trust to obtain honest answers. The researcher needs to obtain trust from the interviewees so ~~when they are interviewed,~~ they can be comfortable and completely honest, and ~~this will~~ allow for the results to be accurate. It is equally important that the responses be truthful, so the information provided in the research is reliable.

The interviews were all held between January and March 2023 and were transcribed using the Trint online transcription program. After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher reviewed the data eliminating any errors the software may have made. Then, each participant was provided a transcript to review the responses and validate that their responses were accurate to what they wanted to convey in the interview ~~and that the transcription was accurate~~. Creswell (2014) described the importance of using member checks so the participant can review the interview transcript and change anything stated or transcribed incorrectly. The transcripts collected were analyzed and reviewed to classify them into codes and organize them into themes or reoccurring topics.

The participant's information was kept at the researchers' homes and kept on a secured external drive for several years after the dissertation was defended.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

After the interviews were held the researcher then transcribed the recordings. The interviews that were in Spanish were translated and then returned to the participant for a member check. After the participants checked the transcripts, they were then sent back to an auditor to check on accuracy of translation. After gathering the data the researcher was able to identify recurring topics or themes. The software that was used to analyze the data was Dedoose Research Analysis software and it was also utilized to code participants' responses. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that during this process, the responses are coded and placed into categories to better organize the data. The researcher can then examine the transcripts that need to be included. Once the data is transcribed and organized into themes, they were applied to the results section. The Dedoose software allowed for a count of how many times a specific code or theme was provided in the interviews.

The coded words were organized and put into statements that were then organized into themes. The codes were then separated from the participants who rated themselves low in how confident they felt in speaking in English and the participants who rated themselves high in their level of confidence in speaking in English. All the codes were then organized in the same manner. The researcher examined all 15 codes that kept reappearing during the analysis and were tied to answering the research questions. According to Gibbs (2008), the researcher should maintain the codes and themes as it is a qualitative analysis that involves identifying passages of text and focusing on what the

research questions are. Gibbs (2008) recommended the use of tables to keep the information organized. For this study, the researcher used the tables in three ways to best organize the responses received. The first table was constructed to examine the patterns within the answers to put them into themes. The second table was developed to examine the common themes that appeared with the patterns. The last table explained the phenomenon further in which it explains the three-step process in forming and describing the patterns of the data, which are;

1. Examining patterns within the data.
2. Constructing models based on the patterns examined.
3. Providing explanations for the phenomena.

After analyzing carefully, the repeated codes and identifying the themes, the researcher then placed the information in the table to prepare the researcher to be able to read it in an informational manner. In addition to having the data transcribed and peer-reviewed, the information would be free of any bias as any other person could read the information on the table and obtain the same information.

Reliability and Trustworthiness

For the data and dissertation to be kept free from bias, Shenton (2004) suggested the researcher should consider participants to volunteer on their own to avoid research bias by selecting the participants and to avoid only certain influences. Therefore, the researcher was careful not to persuade or hand-pick any participants. Another important reason for the participants to be criterion selected is to be able to provide an accurate representation of the larger group response by interviewing the small group (Shenton, 2004). In addition, another way to minimize bias, the researcher is advised to use a

variety of data sources to be able to compare the responses against each other and use that information for additional rich support on the research (Shenton, 2004). Shenton (2004) described having member checks allowed for any responses received to be transcribed to assure that they were accurately captured and read correctly. The researcher emailed the responses to the participants to double check responses were accurate. The researcher should be able to develop trust and reliability with their interviewees and their collected research (Shenton, 2004). When a researcher completes the above steps, this allows for trustworthiness to be developed and it minimizes any bias from the unknown.

Reliability and trustworthiness in a qualitative study produce unique challenges compared to other study designs. According to Shenton (2004), the key components regarding reliability in a qualitative study include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The researcher took several steps to enhance the reliability and trustworthiness of the current study. Conducting a peer review of interview questions used in the study was a step taken to ensure higher levels of credibility. Interview questions were submitted for a peer reviewer to ensure alignment with research questions and unbiased, accurate wording. Based on feedback, appropriate revisions were made to the interview questions. Another measure taken concerning the concept of credibility was the use of member checking to gather feedback from participants. The transcript was shared with each participant for review to ensure their responses reflected their thoughts as intended. The respondents each approved their respective transcripts with no changes made. The researcher also attempted to address transferability and dependability through a detailed description of the study's methodology. In addressing the matter of confirmability, the researcher engaged in reflexivity. According to Creswell

and Poth (2017), reflexivity involves the researcher disclosing biases and viewpoints from the outset that could influence the study, so the reader understands the position from which the researcher undertakes the inquiry.

Researcher's Role

Understanding the researcher's role is vital to avoid any bias so it does not affect the results. The researcher's interpretation of the transcripts should be examined, and personal bias be avoided. Patnaik (2013) explained that one form of bias that the researcher could face is that the researcher's own experience could affect the results of the interview. In this case, the researcher of this study took more of a personal role because the researcher had also been an ELL student and attended the ABC district and attended the Midwestern Public high school. The researcher was also a first-generation ELL attempting to enter college without knowing where or how to start. The researcher struggled from lack of support from being a Mexican woman. Due to this part of history, the researcher faced many obstacles as many factors could have prevented her from continuing her education. Factors included not being financially supported, lack of family support, and feelings of loneliness by being the first generation in college, but somehow continuing and accomplishing the goal. To avoid such influence the researcher was advised to practice reflexivity. Reflexivity is "the constant awareness, assessment, and reassessment by the researcher of the researcher's contribution/influence/shaping of inter-subjective research and the consequent research findings" (Patnaik, 2013, p. 100).

Another bias that a researcher could face was the values and attitudes carried that could create a bias in how they interpret information therefore it is vital for the researcher to keep the primary focus on their participants (Patnaik, 2013). Sometimes the researcher

can be faced with bias without intentionally being biased. This could occur by the choice of location the researcher chooses to interview (Patnaik, 2013). The researcher struggled with bias as some participants were former students and in addition, conversations easily flowed. The researcher found it difficult to refrain from interrupting during mid-interview. Also, the researcher, being a former ELL student, caused her to feel this topic deeply and have the urge to add to the participant's answers.

Limitations

In this research study, several limitations that may interfere with the results of the research are the following.

1. A college, university, or trade school might not be taught with the same course curriculum, or standard expectations and the grading might be different. The results of the interviews might be different if an ELL student attended school in a welcoming ELL community compared to an ELL high school student who was taught in a non-welcoming ELL community.
2. The memory of each participant might affect the responses to the interview questions as each participant might have a distinct memory or interaction that might reinforce or eliminate a memory of a certain skill that was taught or was not taught.
3. Every several years, teachers must alter the way they teach to accommodate the needs of students or theories and research-based information presented by the board and superintendents. These theories affect the way students learn because sometimes school administrators may struggle with some teachers who lack trust and do not follow the new policies put into place by government officials.

4. The researcher's own limitations as a result of her ESL status and the translation from her native language to English may cause errors not intended.

Summary

This chapter provided in detail how the qualitative research design was given to each of the 16 participants. Included in this section is a clear description of how the participants were informed about the study and how the interviews were set up during a pandemic. The interview questions were included and provided data on how high school prepared or did not prepare students during their transition to college. This chapter described the methodology of the study including the research design, sampling procedures, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and limitations of the study. Chapter 4 explains the data analysis results.

Chapter 4

Results

This qualitative phenomenological study was undertaken to investigate English language learners' perception of the support and preparation with the transition phase from high school education to college. The type of support that the ELL participants provided in the research study was paperwork guidance. Along with the paperwork guidance, emotional support was also included as important support. This chapter presents an understanding of the experiences that emerged through analyzing the participant's responses to the interview questions.

Demographic Data

The participants in this study were selected based on the criteria described in Chapter 3 which included being born in a Spanish-speaking country, living in the United States for a minimum of 8 years, and attending high school in the KC Metro area continuously for 4 years. The participants were all students who graduated from a midwestern high school and attended college. There were 16 bilingual participants. Out of the 16 participants, there were 13 female participants and 3 make participants which compromised a total of 100 % of the study sample. Five of the participants had already graduated from college or a trade school before the interview was completed. During the study two of the participants confessed they had just dropped out of college but were allowed to participate in the study because they met all other requirements. Nine participants were still enrolled in college during the time of the interview. Participant M dropped out because she had a medical emergency. While participant L said he dropped out because he learned better when classes were in person, but both participants stated

they planned to go back to college. When the interviews were conducted, 9 participants were still enrolled in college. Even though all participants were bilingual the researcher did provide them the choice of having their interview questions asked in Spanish or English and the participants could answer in their preferred language. If a participant decided to have their interview questions in Spanish, then the researcher had to transcribe the responses and then have the transcriptions peer reviewed. The peer review process must be completed before the participant can complete a member check on their transcript. If a participant chose his interview questions to be asked in English, then the researcher would only have to transcribe the responses and then have the participant complete a member check. Five of the participants preferred their interview to be conducted in Spanish so they could express themselves more thoroughly.

Results of the Qualitative Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and translated and then passed to a peer reviewer to check the accuracy of the translation. When participants were asked the interview questions in English and their responses were in English then the researcher would only transcribe the responses and then send the results to the participant for a member check. When the participant asked for the interview questions to be asked in Spanish ~~then~~ they naturally chose to respond in Spanish as well. The research must take additional steps because the responses in Spanish must be transcribed, translated, and then peer-reviewed to then be sent to the participant to complete a member check. Twelve of the interviews were conducted through Zoom, two were conducted via telephone, and two were conducted in person. All were conducted between the dates of January 17, 2023, and February 1, 2023. The internet application Zoom was utilized to perform video

conferencing interviews with twelve of the interviewees and to record the interviews conducted through a speaker phone and in person. A couple of the participants were unable to access Zoom due to time constraints or lack of internet availability to complete the interviews and therefore asked to be interviewed by phone.

The researcher analyzed the data by applying qualitative content analysis to inductively analyze the data. The data had patterns which were then classified into codes and lastly into findings. The codes found in the research study totaled fifteen. The codes identified were level of comfort, making friends, confidence in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, educational level, relationship building, sex, successful strategies for college, strategies for a supportive environment, and judiciously chosen to keep the themes organized and stay consistent. There was a total of 8 findings. The first four findings directly answered the first research questions. The first finding is ELL perceptions of linguistic skills which describes participants' perception of their English linguistic skills; read, write, speak, and listen. The second finding is titled ELLs perception of difficulties in understanding English. The third finding is about the participants' struggles with writing in English. The fourth finding describes ELLs' perception of their confidence levels when speaking in English. Finding 5 answered the second research question. The fifth finding describes the ELLs' perception of the most helpful transitional strategies. This finding includes the details of ELLs' academic and social strategies they found most helpful to prepare before and during their transition. Finding 6 and 7 responded to research questions three. The sixth finding focuses on ELL's importance of relationship building. This finding focuses on the power of creating a positive professional relationship between a student and a high school staff member to

gain trust and faith. The seventh finding demonstrates the changes ELLs face after being identified as an ELL. The seventh finding focuses on the positive and negative effects in social and academic settings when a student is identified as an ELL. Lastly, the fourth research question was answered through finding 8. The last finding includes suggestions on what changes are needed in the future and it concentrates on changes that can or should be applied in our ELL's education in the future to better support their education and transition.

Finding 1: ELL Perceptions of Their Linguistic Skills

Finding 1 was developed through participant responses to the interview questions related to RQ1, "What are high school ELL graduates' perceptions of the linguistic skills including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, that are currently taught in the high school they attended?" In interview question 6, "Describe how confident you are in reading in English?" participants were first asked to describe how confident they are reading in English. Fifteen participants reported being highly confident in their ability to read in English. One participant described being unable to read in English but did not provide a reason or explanation for her struggle. Participant C asked the researcher if she could provide an answer in the form of a rating system with 10 being the best and she provided a small number of 7.

Finding 2: ELL's Perception of Their Difficulties with Understanding English

Finding 2 was developed through participant responses to the interview question 4 related to RQ1, "Describe how confident you are in understanding what you listen to in English?" A total of 14 participants reported not being confident in understanding what they listened to in English. Participant C stated that she wasn't confident in understanding

what she listens to in English, but she did not go further into explaining what was difficult for her. Participant L described his struggles by describing that he was one of the students who had recently dropped out of college due to COVID because in-person classes were more comfortable for him instead of online courses. This participant stated finding it difficult to understand what someone said in English because of their regional accents. One example he gave of the accents he had struggled with was those of people from New York because he believes they speak too fast. Another struggle that Participant L had difficulty with was the accent spoken by people from a rural place or a ranch. The English spoken from Britain was also a struggle for this participant and, therefore, the participant stated he only understands the "natural English spoken in the United States."

Finding 3: ELL's Perception of their Struggles with Writing in English

Finding 3 was developed through participant responses to the interview question 3 related to RQ1, "Describe how confident you are in writing English?" For writing, ten participants stated that they were highly confident in their writing. Four participants classified themselves as slightly confident. Two participants categorized themselves as not being confident in their writing but did not provide any explanation. Participant H, who reported herself as confident in writing, stated that she was "more confident in writing than speaking because in writing I can gather my thoughts altogether and I can delete something if I don't think, see that it's correct, or it's not written in the proper form." Participant P and Participant C, classified themselves as slightly confident and not confident, respectively, indicating they had not thought to be as confident as their peers in writing participant P explained that his struggle with writing in English was the grammar because he claimed to not "know what goes where, where you put this, or where you put

that." Participant M, who rated herself as slightly confident in writing, declared that having attended schools in both, her native country, and the United States, was vastly different in the topic of education. Participant M, who stated feeling slightly confident in writing, continued to describe her confusion and mental struggles. She said, "My first language was Spanish so I'm like OK the grammar wasn't taught when I was going to school in Guatemala" and then once in the United States "I'm like okay, well, I didn't learn that over there and I'm not learning it over here. What do I do?" Participant A reported her lack of confidence in her writing and expressed her struggles because "I struggled with the spelling of some words because I know there are words where the P is silent or it's just there, but we don't say it."

Finding 4: ELL's Perception of Their Confidence When Speaking in English

Finding 4 was developed through participant responses to the interview question 5 related to RQ1, "Describe how confident you are in speaking in English?" Eleven participants classified themselves as highly confident in their skills. Eleven of the participants asked the researcher if it were okay if they used a 1-10 rating system to rate themselves with 10 being the score that indicated the most confidence and the researcher agreed so the participants could express their confidence in their skill of speaking in English. Participants C and D reported that they did not feel confident and rated themselves a 5 on the self-assessment. The participants did not provide further information as to why they rated themselves a 5 or what made them struggle.

The last three participants rated themselves as slightly confident and they provided input on the daily struggles they had faced. Participant A claimed not to have confidence in her speaking abilities because she believes she has an accent. The

participant continued to say that she thought she does not know how to pronounce words like “Caesars (Scissors)” and had felt that when she had tried talking to people, they thought she was saying Caesar’s salad or scissors like Tijeras (scissors). The last two participants indicated how their ability to be bilingual had affected their level of confidence because both participants stated that their speaking ability has been affected by who they are talking to and their way of processing information. Participant P stated, “Sometimes it messes with my head. I either forget the correct words in English and I don’t know how to translate them. Or explaining it.” Participant M described to the researcher that when asked a question in English she thinks of the answer using the English language but then cannot produce the word in her native language or vice versa. She said, “I can’t say it in Spanish, or I know this word in Spanish, but I don’t know it in English. Sometimes I speak too fast and I’m not thinking of what I’m going to say. I just say it.”

Finding 5: ELL’s Perception of the Most Helpful Transitional Strategies

Finding 5 was developed through participant responses to the interview related to RQ2, “What are high school ELL graduates’ perceptions of the strategies being used to support their transition from high school to post-secondary education?” Participants discussed various strategies their schools provided as support during their transition and how that support played out differently when in an academic setting versus a social setting. The first important background information to point out is that several of the participants in this research study are first-generation students who have never been to college nor have had anyone in their family go to college or university. Six of the participants stated during their interviews that they are the first in their families to attend

college. This plays a vital role because several ELL students stated during the interview that they had no clue as to how to get started with the process of getting into college. During this interview, the number one response from participants was having received help from school staff to fill out the paperwork needed to be admitted into college. Participant P stated how a staff member assisted her with the administrative work needed for college,

> A college counselor and she was very helpful, she helped me a lot when I was getting the financial aid or scholarship I was given from school. I was confused because that was the first time, I had ever seen that [a financial aid form].

Participant F described how her teacher helped her apply to college and complete the FAFSA, which is how she paid for her school. Participant H expressed how her teacher supported her:

> She was always helpful and helping me like, she was always telling me like, 'Hey. Go call these colleges, make sure you're summing up graduation quotas to have enough scholarships and financial aid to cover your school expenses and stuff like that. Make sure your scholarship offer covers or they cover it or what other scholarship you have that can cover it.

Participant P said, teachers "made me the letters of recommendation and all of that. And that they helped with the documents, like the transcript and all of that, I had to send to the school because I didn't know any of that." Participant E described how his accomplishments would not have been possible without his teacher's help

> [She] really pushed applying for scholarships my senior year and FAFSA. I think I wouldn't be here without [her] pushing like, 'Hey, apply for scholarships'

> college visits, all that she really pushed it on us. I haven't thanked her, even though I have her on Facebook. But I haven't really thanked her and said, 'Hey, without you like, I wouldn't have done this.'

While the number one response was how staff members helped them fill out the applications needed to be admitted to college, several students indicated that programs or classes offered in high school also helped them. For example, Participant O, who had already graduated, described how her high school offered a class for all the seniors to prepare them for college. Participant O explained, "So, it was the first period and you sat in the auditorium and the teachers taught as if they were in college. So, they just lectured." The experience of being in a class with more than 100 students helped this student prepare for what lecture classes would be like in a university, per se, where there could be over a thousand students in a lecture hall. Participant L said how having college classes in high school helped him feel more prepared to go to college.

> What helped me was that I took college classes. And that helped put my mind on what college was going to be like. But honestly, it was a big jump because college is different from high school where I studied. It was something difficult to adapt to. Participants made it clear that staff members' assistance in filling out paperwork and actual college classes, which provided high school students college credit if they obtained a passing grade, gave ELL students a taste of college life that wouldn't have been possible.

For Finding 2 the participants were asked the interview question for research question 4 where they are asked to describe any strategies that were taught in high school that prepared them to be successful in college. Participant A recalled a note-taking

strategy that was color-coded, and she said, “You wrote down your evidence and opinion and additional stuff. While she could not remember the colors used, she did admit that she continued to use that note-taking strategy but with some adjustments. Participant C described how getting work done by a certain date was helpful to be responsible. Other students said that they found programs like KU Gear Up, IB program, Honors, and AP classes to be extremely helpful. Participant G expressed how a KU Gear Up staff member’s advice pushed her to reach for the stars when it came to deciding what college to attend. She explained,

> People are scared to like run, to like to somewhere big. I understand that from the community we come from, from the area we come from a lot of people are undocumented, you know. Or they want to go to college. And they can’t because they can’t do more than KCK. You know, [she] helped me a lot because whenever I got accepted with KC scholars, I was like Okay, I’m just going to go to KCK and get it over with. And you know, she would be like, you have all these opportunities, imagine they gave you 50K you can go somewhere else, you do not just have to stick to KCK.

Some additional strategies that provided support academically and created a supportive environment for these ELL students in high school were recommended to the participants by the career services program. Participant B described how this program helped her prepare for success.

> Career services gave out a lot of workshops of that sort. Like financial aid, how to write a scholarship, how to draft professional essays, and how to do interviews or

> speeches. Some professors were like it was unnecessary back in the day when I was in high school but as a college student, I do appreciate it.

Finding 6: Relationship Building

Finding 6 was developed through participant responses to the interview questions 7 and 8 related to RQ2 Question, "What strategies did your high school use to prepare you to be successful academically in college?" Participants N and H said they felt that the relationship built between the teacher and themselves made a difference in their success. Participant H explained, "Having teachers that care about their students and not just be there for a paycheck. I feel like that was the biggest resource because I had good teachers." Participant N mentioned that "it was mostly the teachers. You know, teachers that mostly care about you and your future. That wanted you to have something." Participant G, said, her doubts and how one teacher changed her entire perspective as she prepared for college.

> I was just really scared, and I was like, "Okay, what am I gonna do? Now, I'm in college you know?" She broke it down a little bit. And she told me if I ever needed support that there were always people that could help me. She told me that even though I didn't know, I had support. She said I could talk to my counselors or get tutoring and don't be embarrassed to get tutoring, ya know. Because everyone learns at a different pace. I feel like she boosted my confidence before college.

Finding 7: Identified as ELL

Finding 7 was developed through participant responses to the interview questions 10 and 11 related to RQ3, "What are the high school ELL graduates' experiences in

college when being identified as an ELL for their native language not being English?" Thirteen participants indicated that being an ELL affected their level of participation in the college classroom. Participant K explained that in high school she felt a feeling of relief or comfort as she was in classrooms with most Hispanic students and students from other countries who were also ELL, with similar English abilities to herself. Participant K also stated that she found comfort in helping each other and knew she wouldn't be judged because she was in the same boat as the other students. Participant M explained she went into college with that same attitude stating,

> I feel like getting out of that habit and getting out of your circle or comfort is hard in college. I feel like I got more comfortable making friends in college because we're all going through the same thing, we're all not sleeping, and we all have the same homework. I feel like having friends and a study group helped me a lot, especially my first year when I was going to campus because we would study together and try to help each other. If you didn't know something, and you did, you can help me, I can teach you. Or if not, we would all stay behind in class and try to ask the professor or hey, did you do this or did you do that. So, I feel like having friends in college is better than trying to do it alone.

The other participants did not feel the same way and instead said that being an ELL brought out some uncomfortable feelings when they thought about or were asked to participate in the college classroom. Six participants stated that being ELL slightly affected their participation in the classroom. Participant B, currently in her fourth year of college, explained that she felt shy and intimidated during her first year of college. Participant A said that not knowing the other students in the classroom at the beginning

of the year affected her comfort in participating in the classroom. There were 10 common responses about fear of pronouncing something wrong and then being made fun of for their wrong pronunciation. Participant A expressed her experience,

> I have that fear that I might pronounce it wrong. I might say it wrong. I might say something completely different just because of my accent. And I'm going to be made fun of. Laughed at. They won't, but I just have that thought in the back of my head that I'm going to say this word wrong and they're going to laugh at me and after class, they're gonna say, 'Oh, she can't even say this simple word.' That's one of my biggest fears.

Participant P described how being bilingual affected his confidence in answering in the classroom.

> I did want to answer and like I said I would forget the word specifically what it was. I knew in my mind what it was, and I knew it in Spanish, or I knew it in an image. And I can imagine the answer in my mind, but I couldn't say it in English. Then, I'd say something, like the thingy thing, or the thing that looks like this, or something like that to explain what I wanted to say.

Participant E pointed out that the reason he had struggled with reading at times is because of the technical words that ELL students had not been used to seeing and saying in everyday life or have even been exposed to. As Participant E put it,

> I feel like when problems got really complex, I could not explain the problems to my professor correctly and I don't know if that's being an English second language, or I just wasn't exposed to it. But it always came down to, I don't know

that it must be because I'm like in a Mexican household. No one speaks like that. Chances of someone saying that in my house were low.

Finding 8: Supporting ELLs During College Transition

Finding 8 was developed through participant responses to the interview question 12 related to RQ4, "What skills are needed for teachers to appropriately support students during their transition to college?" During the interview process, participants expressed some of the frustrations they encountered as they transitioned from high school to college. The participants included information lacking from the teacher's toolbox and ELL strategies and programs they would have preferred to have had more of or that needed adjustment to better assist ELL students. Participant C said that during the time her counselors had talked to her about college, she hadn't fully understood everything. Schools should make sure that when they are instructing students about the different options after high school, it reaches every student in the school. Participant B stated that her school offered a class, called Little League, that prepared students for college, but only "certain people were able to get in the class" and it was not offered at the start of the freshman year. Therefore, Participant B said classes, such as Little League, should be offered to all students and not just a few high-achieving students, and the class should be offered at the start of the first year instead of their senior year. Participant B said, "I know the help came in like towards the end of junior year when we're taking our ACT. So, I would have liked it, it would have helped us out right from the beginning. And not wait until we're like one year and a half of like almost done with high school." Agreeing with Participant B about the after-school options being offered late during their senior year,

Participant D said that what is needed at schools is to "have more conversations, go to FA [Family Advocacy], instead of leaving the overload to teachers."

Participant J explained how teachers and schools could help many students if they had the right information.

> I feel like I didn't have the support that I needed, and it seems to be a recurring issue at least with the students that I've talked about because there are still things trying to happen around this issue. So, not knowing what to do when they are dealing with an undocumented student or DACA [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals] student. So, it was not knowing if I could go to school, first. Not knowing if Kansas allowed undocumented students to go to school. Not knowing if I could apply for financial aid.

Participant J expressed her struggles during the beginning of her transition. She said,

> You are trying to go to college, and you are trying to get a scholarship and things like that, a lot of the colleges ask for like a social and like residency or citizenship and things like that. I feel like a lot of teachers and college workers that help you with your application and things like that do not think about that.

Participant J also shared how she would have appreciated having someone to talk to and just say "I've been there, or I don't have the social security like you or the resources" and Participant M said she felt lost going to college. She explained, it was "because I did not know what to expect. I don't know what to do. Hey, like how was I going to get there because I didn't have transportation? So, I was like, I just felt completely lost." As was mentioned earlier in the chapter, first-generation students went to college and therefore they lacked resources on how to enroll in college so having that

extra encouragement from someone like them had been particularly important. Participant E, who had just graduated from a local university, recalled not having anyone to talk to and said he believes that is the support lacking for Hispanics. Participant M said,

> I think it was more family support. I'm the oldest one. So, I either figured it out or had no guidance at all. I think being the oldest has a lot of weight on your shoulders. Like, either you make it, or you don't make it. And then you're like the role model to every one of your siblings.

While nine students described feeling support from several teachers, two Participants, N and E, described not feeling the support coming from administrators. Participant E described the lack of support from administrators as a battle situation between administrators vs. teachers helping students learn life skills. Participant E described the battle as not having time allowed nor financial means to pay teachers for working after school hours to hold events where they help students fill out vital paperwork for college.

During the interview, two participants described their lack of knowledge and talked about the importance of knowing how grade point average (GPA) works. Participant C suggested a further explanation of how the GPA works and a clear explanation of credit hours would be beneficial for students as they attend high school and prepare for college. Participant B, who at the time of the interview had one year left of college, said

> My grades were always like, they were ok. They could have been a lot better if I would have realized how much GPA would have mattered. I know there's some

> like some scholarships that require at least a 3.8 to get like the major colleges and stuff like that.

One suggestion from Participant E was that students need to learn how to study because he stated only having utilized study habits in high school when having taken his AP English class. Participant E said that he struggled when he got to college and had to ask for help. Participant, I expressed that the curriculum in her high school was not "up to what's expected in college." Four students did say that they struggled once they started taking classes in college. Interestingly, these students described themselves as national honor society students with straight A's in high school and said they felt very prepared and intelligent going into college. Participant M agreed with high school not preparing her for college but said she places more responsibility on the student. She said,

> I didn't think the public high schools really prepared you for college. I mean, I feel like if you're a good student and you apply yourself, it's good enough for you to take you to college and be like, okay, if I apply myself here, I just need to adjust and plan.

Participant H, who is in her 4 years of college at the time of the interview and was a soccer player described her struggles,

> I think I got good guidance, but also, I wanted to play a sport. And it was also hard getting recruited and stuff like that, so, all of that, I had to search it up on my own and kind of see like my options.

Participant O said that the struggles in college "stem on what you don't know. Like you don't know the resources that are in college that can help you"

Participant B suggested because her school was "supposedly made up of students whose parents never went to college so most of the, most of us, I believe are a first generation, so we don't have no one at home to really help us out." Two students described the feeling of being lost and not knowing what to expect in college as being where the high school lacked in preparing them. One of the students described her experience once in college. She said,

> Yes, they explain[ed] it to us, but we didn't know what it really was. They were telling us this is college, this is what to expect, and one thing is saying it but when you're actually in college you're like this is not what they like pictured it. So, that was a big transition.

Participant O felt that her high school lacked in preparing her to have clear expectations as to what the next steps look like regarding becoming more independent and having to seek everything out on her own. Participant O said,

> I feel like in high school we were given everything right then and there. And going to college you know you have to look out for your things. You have to do; you have to sign up for everything on your own.

In addition to learning to adjust to being more independent, Participant O said that there should be "Trio programs that do check in on you sometimes. Once you're in college, especially if they helped you get in or navigate through that process." When it came to success participant G described her high school did not prepare educators in helping students from the moment registered for their classes, and she continued to describe her experience.

They are supposed to be successful coaches. And all of them, when I say, did not have the patience. Because as college students we like to ask the class descriptions, how is this going to help me in the future, or is this required for my major? You know what I mean? And they were not helpful at all. They are just trying to get them out. Do the schedule really quick and get them out.

Participant A got all their resources and she continued, describing some of the resources that could have been useful for her when she first started college. She said,

> Some students had to either move out or do the dorms because it was better than just commuting every day. Maybe help them out where they can get supplies as well. Or I know I struggled knowing where to buy books.

Participant J said she believes that communication and knowledge for all staff members are what is needed to better serve students, particularly those students who are undocumented. She added, "I think having connections, having more organizations or institutions that do maybe provide some of that work." Agreeing with the previous participant about communication, Participant B stated her high school lacked in informing students about available scholarships. She said,

> There's a lot of money for students who don't have the money to go to college but are too scared to ask, I feel like they should push more to tell you. I feel like informing a lot of students should be mandatory. It is vital to recognize that our ELL students lack resources and therefore knowledge is power when it comes to providing information to ELLs.

Summary

Sixteen students classified as ELL who graduated from a Midwestern high school were interviewed for this study. The results include the analysis of data collected from qualitative interviews about ELL's confidence in their use of linguistic skills in English, the support from their high school as they transitioned to college, and their experience in school after being identified as an ELL. The examination of five major themes in the chapter were included in the findings sections.

The themes were ELL perceptions of linguistic skills, transitional strategies from staff support with subthemes of academic strategies, and supportive strategies. The third theme is relationship building. The fourth theme that was identified was regarding what support is best for ELLs as they transition to college in the future. Chapter 5 presents the interpretation and recommendations, study summary, findings related to the literature, and conclusions.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

Chapter 5 is divided into several sections. The study was guided by four research questions about high school ELL graduates' perceptions of their linguistic skills in English and high school ELL graduates' perception of the strategies being used to support their transition from high school to college. The third research question investigated what high school ELL graduates' experiences in college are when being identified as ELL. The last question addressed what skills are needed for teachers to appropriately support ELL high school graduates during their transition to college. A review of the problem, purpose statement and research questions, review of methodology, and major findings are found in the study summary. Findings related to the literature and research questions are included. The conclusions section consists of a discussion of implications for action, recommendations for ELLs future research, and concluding remarks.

Study Summary

The study summary presents an overview of the problems faced by ELL students. Additionally, the purpose statement and research questions describe why the study was conducted. The review of the methodology includes a discussion of how the researcher designed and collected data for the study. The results of the current research study are provided in the major findings section.

Overview of the Problem

An increase in the number of immigrants entering the United States is causing the U.S. government to create policies ~~such as former President Obama~~. ESSA requires schools to make yearly progress through standardized tests to receive Title I funding (KS

Legislative Division of Post Audit, 2020). In addition to the tests, it asks for ELL students to be classified as ELL and to be provided extra support in language development. Even with all the language support services provided by ESSA there are still challenges that ELLs and their schools face as they prepare ELL students for KELPA and their transition to college. Some of the challenges that are being seen are that there is not enough information about ELL students' perceptions of their transition to college and the ELL strategies that were used to prepare them for KELPA and their transition to college because of lack of research on the topic.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this research study was to examine ELL perceptions of their linguistic skills and the strategies being used to prepare them academically for college, and lastly, the experiences of ELL high school students during their transition to college. For this study, the researcher chose a qualitative study to allow participants to share their firsthand experiences and perceptions through responsive interviews. Specific areas of research included the participants' struggles with learning English, personal obstacles as they transitioned from high school to college, and personal barriers that were faced by lack of support or knowledge. Four research questions were used to guide this study.

Review of the Methodology

A qualitative phenomenological research methodology was utilized for data collection within the study. ~~Qualitative~~ interviews were conducted to gather data. Open-ended interviews were conducted with 16 ELL participants who had attended college after graduating high school, were still in college, or had already graduated from college. Data collected from the study participants represented their perceptions of their linguistic

abilities and the strategies being used at the high school level to support and prepare them for college. After the interviews were completed, the audio recordings were transcribed, and audited, if needed. Then, the electronic transcripts were uploaded into the Dedoose Research Analysis Software. Codes were generated based on participant responses. Major themes were developed based on the frequency of the codes and presented as part of the study's findings.

Major Findings

Data collected from interviews indicated that high school strategies being used to support and prepare ELL students for college, along with their perception of their linguistic English abilities, were factors affecting participant college experiences. Most participants reported feeling confident with having learned to read and write in English. The linguistic skill listening was reported back from most participants as a level of confidence that was low because of regional accents that were hard for the participants to understand. When it came to the skill of writing the results were that participants were reporting themselves as confident and only two participants reporting as not confident without any further explanation. The rest of the participants reported themselves as slightly confident because of the lack of knowing the rules about grammar but feeling slightly confident because of the flexibility of editing. Therefore, the strategies in place helped the majority of participants feel confident with their own linguistic skills. Participants reported that the assistance with the college paperwork from teachers and staff was a positive factor influencing their education. Two other strategies that allowed participants to enter college confidently were participating in college courses offered in high school, note-taking strategies, and relationship building. Being identified as an ELL was reported by

participants as a positive experience overall but described experiencing moments of feeling uncomfortable and newness from being in a new environment and new people. Lastly, study participants included their perception on what support should be included to best support ELLs in the future as they transition to college-level education. Some suggested support ideas were informing students of options after high school and informing them in a prompt manner instead of at the beginning of the students last year of high school.

Findings Related to the Literature

The literature demonstrated the numerous factors that play a role in the process of an ELL's identification, types of assessments used, academic and rigorous capacities needed within a teacher and be taught in a classroom to continue growth in English language proficiency. After completing the study, some participants stated they did not feel that the everyday class work and the curriculum benefitted them towards the KELPA assessment and college. Several other factors can also played a role in the lack of support of improvement in an ELLs education such as teacher bias and racism as they were discussed along with teachers' lack of belief in their students. Even though in this study, the researcher did not have a participant reporting having received any negative feedback or had been in a negative situation with an educator. Factors that lack ELL support in their education, a support system of parents and community members was suggested as a positive factor in ELL's education coupled with the teacher's awareness of culture and language. Finally, educating the whole family about the importance of being informed, having options provided, and feeling supported, students and their parents during and after high school. The primary response from participants was the lack of understanding information and resources available and the appreciation of each person that helped them

with the resources for them to successfully transition to college from high school. The current research study was designed to add to the existing research on effective strategies to provide support and academically prepare ELL students for college.

The former president Barack Obama has created the ESSA policy in which ~~it was created~~ to secure an equitable education for English learners (Montecillo et al., 2021). In addition to policies put in place by the federal government, there are also local state policies such as teacher specialization in which colleges offer specialized licenses or programs that focus on educating ELLs. These are practices that were created for many school districts to provide professional development that is balanced to better teach and support students individually by providing educators with examples of how the instruction should look for educators, guide students into additional practice, and alter the scope and sequence of a student's newly learned skill before continuing with the next skill or lesson (Dennis, 2016). These specializations provide teachers with a depth of knowledge and skills to teach ELLs beyond what is expected of mainstream teachers. The KELPA measures and focuses on the sections of reading, writing, speaking, and listening of those students whose first language is not English (Walker, 2015).

Teachers play the most important part in this entire process of creating positive student outcomes especially if educators "view the children we teach as if they were our own, which includes a willingness to bear witness and share in students' suffering that stems from inequity" (Colombo et al., 2013, p. 81). While teachers can willingly view students as their own and create positive student outcomes, there is also a downside when teachers' are not sufficiently prepared or supported to teach ELL students and then are held accountable for standardized tests because "either of these factors—lack of appropriate

teacher preparation or inappropriate accountability measures—could easily diminish any teacher's hope for achieving successful educational outcomes with ELLs, and many teachers of ELLs experience these factors daily" (Colombo et al., 2013, p. 81). Therefore, it is no surprise that when an educator loses hope for their students' achievements, it then creates lower expectations for students and it decreases the positive student outcomes (Colombo et al., 2013). In addition, teachers who have received the experience or necessary coursework claim to still not feel adequately prepared to meet the social and emotional needs of ELLs (Thompson, 2018).

To provide an education for all students and prepare them for college and career ESSA was created. One flaw with this strategy is that research indicated that many educators feel the urge to lower their curriculum or expectations because they assume ELL students are not knowledgeable or ready for such material and, therefore, they provide less rigorous work than to their peers (Torff & Murphy, 2020).

Estrada-Burt (2022) stated that each school district could choose what they measure from students, and what assessments are used, and this creates confusion for a student, especially a student who is between school districts. Agreeing with Jung (2017), Estrada-Burt (2022) describes that the federal government mandated a quick fix because the ELPA assessment outcomes have not proven to help students pass these language assessments or to pursue their post-secondary education. Students are lagging 20 points in reading assessments and while Jung (2017) statement might appear correct, there are many factors to consider. One factor to consider was ESSA has focused on preparing teachers to educate ELL students utilizing the appropriate strategies to educate students with the knowledge and skills required for college academic success and employment

performance and career progression (Hackman, 2019). Although the ESSA law has created more responsibility for the educator, the assessments are still a challenge for students.

Historically, Hackmann et al., (2019) went into detail about how there exists pervasive inequities in U.S. public education and discovers through Dowd and Bensimon's study that there are policies that give the idea of being an equal opportunity for all but "may disadvantage underserved students, reproducing inequities between White and minoritized racial and ethnic groups" (p. 6). In 2020, ESOL expenditures in Kansas totaled approximately 21.1 million dollars (Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit, 2020). In Kansas, ESL and ESOL programs are funded by the state but must meet certain requirements to continue to receive funding (Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit, 2020). The first requirement is to identify the student's home language to classify the student as an ELL student. The student must then take the KELPA test and score at a determined level to be considered proficient. If the student is classified as an ELL and scores under the proficient level, the district receives one more year of funding and directly impacts the ELL students (Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit, 2020). This is one of the reasons why historically ELLs have been considered an expensive or challenging group of students.

On the opposite end of the teaching spectrum, "teachers with higher self-efficacy regularly use students' cultural experience, prior learned knowledge and individual learning preferences can act as a conduit to facilitate the teaching and learning process" (Shi et al., 2021, p. 2).

First, the process of what an ELL goes through will be explained before describing the important role of how a teacher's self-efficacy can affect an ELLs educational experience. This study explained that the first part of the identification of an ELL is done through an (ELPA) to determine how much English the child has learned or knows. The English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) can be problematic because each school district gets to choose what should be measured and what assessment is used, and this could cause problems as students travel within the states (Estrada-Burt, 2022). In addition, another problem that ELPA brings is that it compares ELL students, who had to learn English as a second language, to their White peers whose first and dominant language has been English from birth. Thompson (2018) described how many school districts in the nation enroll their students by age instead of their school knowledge or English speaking and comprehension ability (Thompson, 2018). This placement from the school system can also be detrimental to ELL's success because they may not have the prerequisites for any required class for graduation (Thompson, 2018). Another reason the comparison between an ELL and non-ELL is challenging is that an ELL student has a lower percentage of being exposed to the English language or a higher-level vocabulary compared to their peers. Therefore, an assessment when it is used primarily to compare an ELL to a non-ELL might not truly show their growth or what they know because of the comparison to a non-ELL.

Menrod (2022) suggested that it would be beneficial if teachers have an asset-based approach where they can see the positive in learning a second language and compare the ELL student to their peers in a positive light. Mitchell (2017) stated that before the law changed, teachers saw them striving for success daily and can also

pinpoint their struggles and weaknesses to focus on future teachings to better their academic success. Thompson (2018) described that ELL students are being asked to take the exams in English and it causes them to receive lower scores even after accommodations when compared to their peers. There was no evidence showing the participants struggled with reading in English while completing any schoolwork, but several students did describe having a challenging time with certain vocabulary or school-related texts. Therefore, this leaves the researcher to believe that students could be struggling from lack of exposure, whether it be the higher-level material they are being asked to read or the career-related type of language that the ordinary person would not know either. In addition, many students are not exposed to this type of vocabulary even in their native language and therefore leaves educators wondering if what they know in their first language will also determine how much they know in their second language. Such is the case that Walker (2015) described that "proficiency is judged independently and does not imply lack of proficiency in another language" (p. 10). One participant did describe her frustration with writing in English because of her lack of knowledge in grammar and because she had not learned it in her native country, she felt she might not learn it here either.

When it comes to educators getting to know their students, it is important for teachers to collaborate to share their thoughts on students because students act differently with different teachers and subjects. Teachers teach differently and each teacher has their own bias which can lead to a deficit or asset mindset which results in a bond or vice versa with the student. Therefore, Baecher (2002) suggested that collaboration needs to take place between ESL and content area staff and clearly this study shows that if such a

scenario were allowed by the school district this would only be beneficial for students' education. Vintan and Gallagher (2019) said it the best, “one of the greatest successes of having teachers communicate and collaborate is that they will share the students’ goals and use of vocabulary to better instruct the ELL students” and they go on to add that it can also be “one of the biggest barriers if their time is limited” (pp. 72). When teachers can collaborate, they can create a curriculum with higher vocabulary for students to learn and use. The importance of working together is to keep the curriculum as academically challenging as possible, but also doable because many participants complained about not feeling that the curriculum was challenging enough or prepared them for the next best step to college. Torff and Murphy (2020) stated that many educators feel the urge to lower their curriculum or expectations because they assume ELL students are not knowledgeable or ready for such material, and therefore, they provide less rigorous work than their peers (Torff & Murphy, 2020). When several people are working together, and different opinions are flowing it could help eliminate the idea of lowering the curriculum because many educators understand the importance of ELLs learning vocabulary or such subject to pass KELPA and advance to college.

When the curriculum is lowered, there is a trickle effect that occurs; that is, these students are not exposed to the academic vocabulary needed to pass assessments like KELPA. Students do not feel as confident because they lack the vocabulary their peers have, which affects their social life in academic settings, and they do not participate in the classroom. When in college and provided with homework at a higher level than used to, some participants admitted to struggling. One participant admitted to re-reading items to better understand the reading material, and if that did not help her understand, she

would read the article aloud. De la Rosa (2020) described it as one of several strategies that will help students to become better at vocabulary, comprehension, and phonics. While it is important to know phonics, it still does not help ELL students with academic vocabulary to pass state assessments such as KELPA.

One suggested way for ELLs to be able to communicate is translanguaging (Freeman & Freeman, 2021). Translanguaging is communicating and not focusing on the language (Freeman & Freeman, 2021). An example of allowing translanguaging to be used in the classroom would be to have two Spanish-speaking students working together, switching back and forth between English and Spanish (Freeman & Freeman, 2021). If being bilingual is an asset, then the student should be able to use both languages. Such is the case that EAL (2016) wrote that "It's about using all your language resources to communicate" (p.1).

During the research study, it was also found that ELL students struggled to find the correct word when speaking one language as they thought about the word in their native language. For example, various participants described having to use gestures and descriptions such as "thingy thing" because they could picture the item in their head and could say it in Spanish but could not think of it in English or vice versa. Freeman & Freeman (2021) suggested allowing ELL students to use translanguaging so they can communicate instead of focusing on what language is being used.

Historically, the label of language being a problem creates a stigma for the identity of students who are tested "making them more vulnerable to becoming victims of a dehumanization and disposability process" (Reyes, 2016, p. 340).

In this study, no participants reported any type of discrimination, dehumanization or teacher bias. The researcher did find that some students had complained about the lack of help they received from their high school counselors because the counselors did not have the time to answer students' questions as they applied for college, or counselors seemed to offer and help only the counselors pre-selected students and not the entire student population. Merod (2022) stated that educators having a deficit-minded approach to ELL students will lead them to lack belief in their students. Mitchell (2006) stated that Latinx were graduating at a rate of 11% in comparison to Whites graduating at a rate of 35% (Mitchell, 2005). The general census data for 2000 was able to capture the achievement gap through the previous percentages. It is important to understand that even though ELLs demonstrate determination toward academic success, “ELL students along with their families value the educational opportunities that were not provided in their native country the achievement gap still exists” (Thompson, 2018, p. 27). This study sheds light on the lack of knowledge about these available resources for them. Also important is that if there are people such as counselors that are there to provide ELL students with such information but refuse to help or limit how much they help them it sets them up for failure or creates a bigger challenge for the ELL student.

In our nation’s history when ELL students are placed in mainstream classes sometimes some ELL students are not able to keep up without the lack of ELL support, and there is evidence that many ELLs were unable to meet the language demands of mainstream content classrooms after being exited from ESL support programs” (Harper & de Jong, 2009, p. 141). This is due to “when reclassification occurs too early, English learners can find themselves struggling without the support services they need. If the

process happens too late, students may be restricted from taking higher-level courses that would prepare them for college" (Mitchell, 2017, p. 26).

Two out of the 16 participants described being reclassified in their years in high school. Mitchell (2017) stated that "must happen at the correct time" (p. 26) because if it occurs too early or too late it could cause the student to struggle from the lack of support and if it happens too late this could cause the student to not take high-level courses that would prepare them for college (Mitchell, 2017). Contrary to Mitchell's belief, both students stated that they did not feel ready to transition onto mainstream classes, but felt they had to force themselves out of their shells to succeed in speaking English and academically.

Throughout history the misconception of an ELL student knowing how to converse in English comfortably and now being in full control of the language is "half true" (Jung, 2017, p. 27). The misconception is half true because long-term English language learners were dismissed from their English classrooms when they were considered proficient, but still required elevated levels of reading and writing language skills with "higher level of vocabulary and acquire syntactic knowledge" (Jung, 2017, p. 27).

Some misconceptions were mentioned in the literature section. The first misconception is that younger children learn English more quickly and have acquired language skills that are better and faster (Jung, 2017). The participants for this study all learned English as older students and one of the participants even declared that she felt she learned English much faster than her younger siblings. The second misconception was that students were ready to go from having ELL courses to mainstream classes

without any ELL aides after being in the ELL class for a certain amount of time. Two participants were not fully prepared for this change of ELL classes to non-ELL but pushed themselves out of their comfort zone to succeed. Another misconception was that if the ELL student can speak English comfortably then the student has achieved complete control of the language which was as stated by McLaughlin (1992) and restated in Jung's (2017) dissertation. However, that is not accurate because several participants expressed being confident in speaking English but lacked exposure to big words or academic vocabulary which is needed for academic writing and passing the KELPA. This is why participants' confidence and skill level varied with the four skills. The last misconception was that all students learn the same way which was as stated by McLaughlin (1992) and restated by Jung (2017) in his dissertation.

In the article "Hopefulness for Teachers of ELLs in the Era of NCLB" the authors explain that "teaching is teaching and caring for the entire child, which includes the family, home, and community" (Colombo et al., 2013, p. 84). However, not all educators have hope in their ELL students in reaching the goals set and when the goals are not easily reached by the student, it allows for hopefulness inside the schools and classrooms which then reduces teachers' agency for successfully teaching ELLs and it puts the blame on ELLs as being the problem (Colombo et al., 2013).

When it comes to an ELL student, or any student, teacher representation and being culturally responsive is stated important by Harper (2009). The data from the research study demonstrated that no participant ever mentioned feeling a need to have a teacher of their race or culture. Instead, participants stated feeling appreciated by any teacher that was willing to help them with the transition to college. The school

educational system, at a national and local level, seems to continue to fail the ELL student population as they ignore the importance of teacher preparation and the need for bilingual educators (Harper, 2009). Several participants know their bilingual ability, knowing about the struggles and challenges ELL students were facing culturally and linguistically, and providing ELL students additional time to complete their work. In addition, the participants focused on how being able to bond and be friends with a teacher was helpful and encouraging when they faced their doubts about being capable of going to college encouraging, the participants also described the importance of providing their families with the information and opportunities needed to best assist their students. One participant described how he would not be where he is today if it weren't for his Family Advocay teacher requiring him and his classmates to attend a FAFSA event at their school. Events such as the FAFSA night that the participant attended are another factor that contributes to a student's education because many students do not know how to get started. Many participants repeated that they are first-time generation students going to college. In the article "Hopefulness for Teachers of ELLs in the Era of NCLB" Colombo explained that "teaching and caring for the entire child, which includes the family, home, and community" (Colombo et al., 2013, p. 84).

First generation students face many obstacles. Georgis et al. (2014) described how there are three barriers that schools need to be aware of and they are language, cultural barriers, and unfamiliarity with school laws. It is important to recognize that an ELL student will need to know about the college fairs and courses, and have access to them, but will also need emotional, monetary, and academic support as they chose to continue their educational post-secondary journey (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). Based on the data

provided by the research study, the participants stated they did not know about resources and faced uncertainty on how to get started with college. One participant described how it was very frustrating how her mom expected her to go to college but did not provide any other support except setting ambitious standards for her. Most of the participants were first generation and stated their parents not knowing the language and being their translator. Based on the study data, the students became their parents' teachers through their transition from high school to college. The schools have made progress of teaching strategies within the classroom and the exposure of college to students but now the work is to educate parents to be able to obtain their support.

Conclusions

The current research study presented information on the experiences of ELL students as they transition from high school to college. Responsive interviews from ELL students provided rich data that helped understand ESL struggles, barriers, and challenges they face as they transition to and arrive at college. The responsive interviews also helped the researcher understand what strategies are in place from the schools and what policies in place at the state and national levels are working and which strategies and policies need improvement. The existing literature has demonstrated the efforts the nation has made by enhancing policies. The literature has also shown how some school districts have worked around policies or applied changes that benefit the students. In addition, literature helps to demonstrate the importance of teachers being culturally responsive and encouraging. Lastly, the vital role that politics play influences school districts' decisions and provides a trickle effect on students. When the government creates a new policy, it directly affects how each state, along with the department of education, handles the

policy change at the schools. Once the rules and expectations are set for the school administrators, they then assure teachers understand the expectations which then puts pressure on the teachers to meet such measures with their student's data. The results of the qualitative surveys could provide useful information for policymakers and school districts seeking to provide opportunities and support for ELL students as they transition to college because access without support is not an opportunity. Additionally, the negative experiences provided in the current research study can foster discussion about ELL, minority, and disadvantaged students in the academic setting. Implications for action are detailed in the next section.

Implications for Action

This research study has demonstrated the importance of needing to expose students to opportunities beyond high school, but "Access without support is not opportunity" (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008, p. 50). Keeping this quote in mind, changes need to be implemented from the government level to the local level. Politicians need to legislate laws that support the entire child which includes the home and the child's family and, of course, the community they live in which helps shape them daily (Colombo et al., 2013). The student can get to college but once at college, the ELL student needs to be supported emotionally, physically, and socially so the student can continue and finish their college degree. Politicians need to not create quick fixes, but instead, find solutions for obstacles and barriers that continue to appear in ELL students who want to continue their education. School districts need to be provided the financial and physical support to hire teachers that represent the students they teach and to educate teachers on being culturally responsive and utilize appropriate ELL strategies that will better prepare

students for college and assessments. In addition, whether national or local level, if someone asks teachers to get additional hours or licenses then teachers need to be aided monetarily or educationally. For teachers to better educate students, they also need to be provided with time to collaborate within all content areas. Having such a global and multicultural world that continues to change at a fast speed, educators must encourage all students "to use their diverse backgrounds" (Yol & Yoon, 2019, pp. 2). It is time that educators look closely at how teachers can better educate themselves, their schools, and their laws to better educate and instruct their students, instead of blaming or seeing the ELL student population as the problem.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations represent areas of future inquiry identified by the researcher. The current study included ELL students from midwestern high schools. Additional studies could include minority educators from other geographical locations such as the Midwest. More studies could include ELL students from other geographical locations. Data for this study was collected from sixteen participants. The sample size could be increased to include additional ELL students.

ELL graduates from high school were interviewed for the current study. Future studies could focus on graduated participants who entered the school system in elementary school or middle school. This information could be valuable to better understand the ELL student and to see if more years of living within the American culture makes a difference in their desire to pursue college. Further research could also be focused on the different schools and school districts.

ELL students from Latin American countries were recruited for this study. Further studies could focus on ELL students from specific Spanish-speaking countries, especially the ethnic groups where current research is limited. One participant in the study discussed being the only college student in his field, therefore, future studies could focus on certain careers or fields of study.

One of the participants in the study mentioned that her brother and friend took a year or more off between high school and college before attending college. Future studies could focus on those students that took time off between high school and college. Districts could benefit from a better understanding of the reasons why students take a break and what motivates them to come back to college.

Several participants mentioned that their schools had not trained their staff adequately to prepare ELL students for college. Future studies should examine the different interpretations of the laws each state and school district make. In addition, a closer examination could be looked at the professional development provided by the schools to further educate and support teachers.

Concluding Remarks

The results of this study provided additional insight into an area where little research currently exists in 2023: ELL high school graduates' perceptions of the support and strategies used in the English language skills being taught and the transition from high school to college. The findings of the common obstacles and lack of support experienced by this study's participants will contribute to the collective body of knowledge surrounding the post-secondary education of ELLs in the nation. The findings of this phenomenological qualitative study could provide bridges through which future

ELL students can utilize to explore their futures as they will have the opportunity to enhance their education, careers and lives.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Baker University Letter of Approval IRB

Baker University Institutional Review Board

November 4th, 2022

Dear Vanesa Salgado-Munoz and Harold Frye,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.
6. If this project is not completed within a year, you must renew IRB approval.

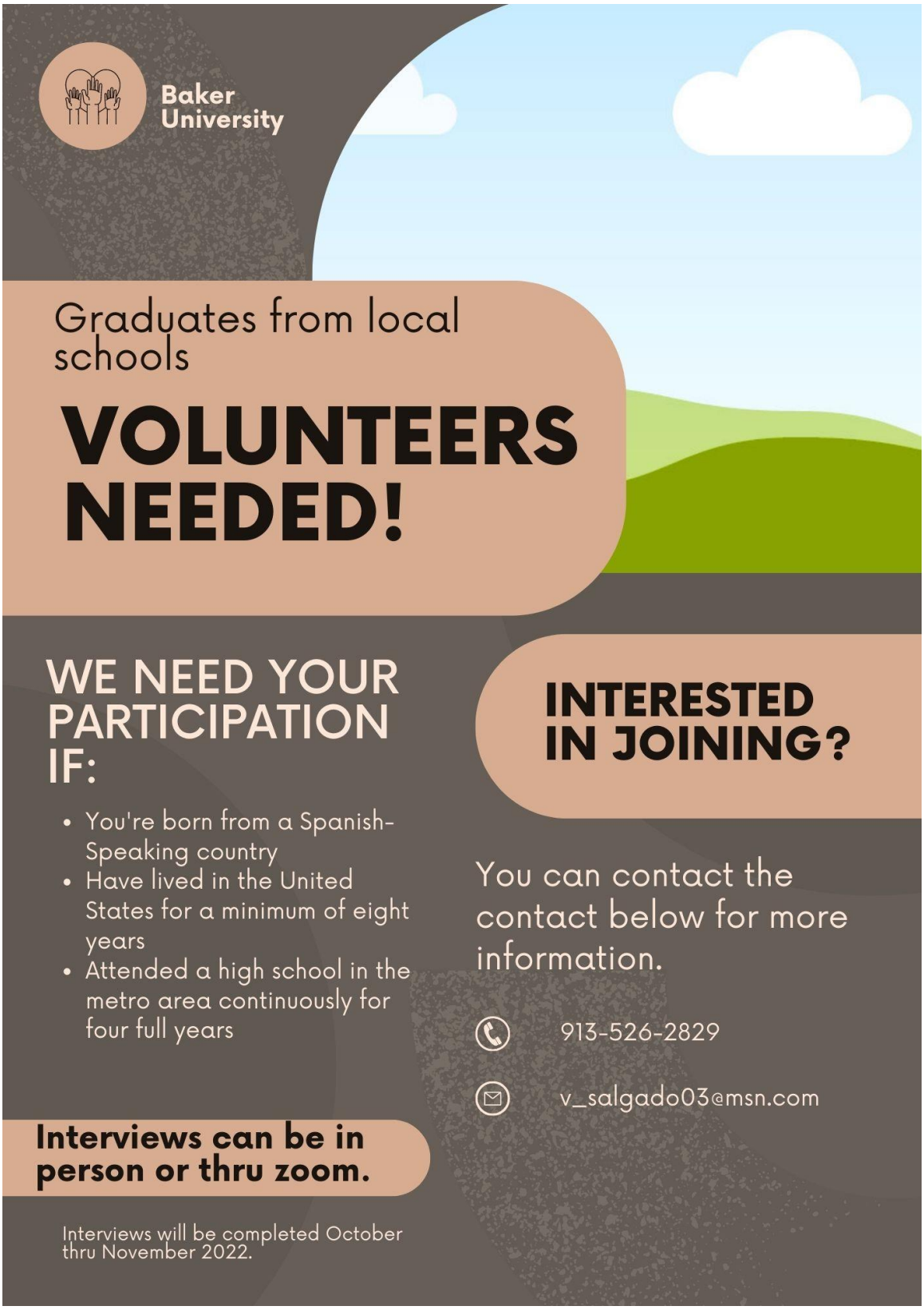
If you have any questions, please contact me at npoell@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,

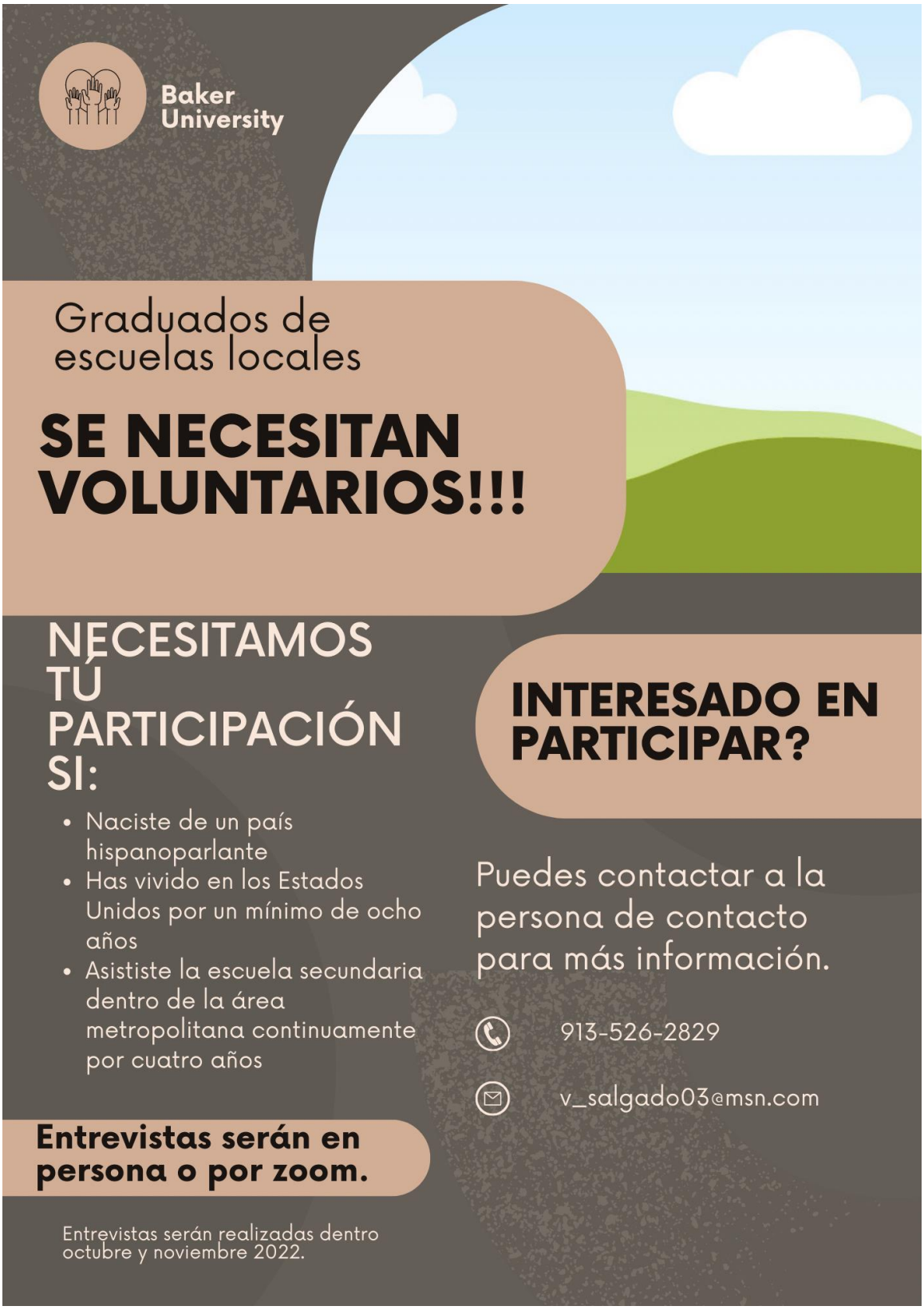
Nathan Poell, MLS
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Tim Buzzell, PhD
Nick Harris, MS
Scott Kimball, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD

Appendix B: English Recruitment Flyer


Baker University
Graduates from local schools
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!
WE NEED YOUR PARTICIPATION IF:
You're born from a Spanish-Speaking country
Have lived in the United States for a minimum of eight years
Attended a high school in the metro area continuously for four full years
INTERESTED IN JOINING?
You can contact the contact below for more information.
913-526-2829
v_salgado03@msn.com
Interviews can be in person or thru zoom.
Interviews will be completed October thru November 2022.

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer in Spanish


Baker University
Graduados de escuelas locales
SE NECESITAN VOLUNTARIOS!!!
NECESITAMOS TÚ PARTICIPACIÓN SI:
• Naciste de un país hispanoparlante
• Has vivido en los Estados Unidos por un mínimo de ocho años
• Asististe la escuela secundaria dentro de la área metropolitana continuamente por cuatro años
INTERESADO EN PARTICIPAR?
Puedes contactar a la persona de contacto para más información.
913-526-2829
v_salgado03@msn.com
Entrevistas serán en persona o por zoom.
Entrevistas serán realizadas dentro octubre y noviembre 2022.

Appendix D: Recruitment Email Invitation to Participate

Hello,

My name is Vanesa Salgado-Muñoz, and I am a doctoral student at Baker University in Kansas and a former Spanish High School Teacher for the Kansas City Kansas school district in Kansas City, Kansas. I am currently working on my dissertation focusing on possible correlations between the ELL strategies and high school students transition to post-secondary education.

This e-mail is an invitation to participate in the study. As a participant, you will be asked to complete a zoom or face-to-face interview regarding your perceptions and opinions about ELL strategies and your post-secondary transition from your own experience. The interview will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary, and you may decline to answer any questions. Any personal and identifiable information will be kept confidential.

Please respond through e-mail if you are willing to participate in the study.

Thank you for your consideration,

Respectfully,

Vanesa Salgado-Muñoz

Baker University Doctoral Candidate

(913) 526-2829 Vanesa.salgado-munoz@stu.bakeru.edu

Appendix E: Interview Letter of Rules and Expectations

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today, so I can learn about your high school experience and get updates on your college experience. It appears that many students from a Midwestern high school who have entered college have either dropped out of college or struggled in college, but students' explanations and reasons are rarely discussed. For this interview, when I say ELL students, I am talking about the English Language Learner (ELL) who is continuing to actively learn English and whose first language is one other than English. An ELL is also a national-origin-minority student who is not proficient and limited to the English language according to the English language proficiency exam. All the questions I will ask will focus on ELL graduates' high school educational experience from a Midwestern public high school.

Before starting, I need to have your consent by having you read and then sign the consent form. Pay close attention to the risks and benefits that will come with participating in this study. The potential risks that I can see are those uncomfortable feelings may appear as you discuss any negative high school or college experiences, or you might not recall many details because the experience occurred several years ago. The benefits I can foresee would include recalling innumerable experiences to discuss. It is important to know that the information you share will help me better understand ELLs' experiences as they transition from high school to college.

After reading and signing the consent form you are welcome to stop and ask me questions. You may also stop the interview at any time. Questions? You can sign the consent form at this moment.

Appendix F: Interview Questions in English

The first two questions can be classified as introductory questions. Following the introductory questions are the research questions, each one with a set of questions that help address the research questions.

1. Tell me about yourself and your high school experience with learning English.
2. Describe your high school experience academically and socially.

RQ1. What are high school ELL graduates' perceptions of the linguistic skills including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, that are currently taught in the high school they attended?

3. Describe how confident you are in writing English.
4. Describe how confident you are in understanding what you listen to in English.
5. Describe how confident you are in speaking in English.
6. Describe how confident you are in reading in English.

RQ2. What are high school ELL graduates' perceptions of the strategies being used to support their transition from high school to post-secondary education?

7. During your transition to college, what support from your high school made your transitional experience successful?
8. What strategies did your high school use to prepare you to be successful academically in college?

9. What strategies did your high school use to create a supportive environment through the process of transitioning from high school to college?

RQ3. What are ELL high school graduates' experiences when being identified as an ELL for their native language?

10. Describe how being a student categorized as an English Learner affected your ability of making friends in college.
11. Describe how being categorized as an English Learner affected your level of comfort answering questions out loud in the college classroom.

RQ4. What skills are needed for teachers to appropriately support ELL high school students during their transition to college?

12. What skill did a teacher or teachers use that made you feel supported during your transition to college?

Appendix G: Interview Questions in Spanish

Catorce preguntas de entrevista fueron desarrolladas para dirigir las preguntas de investigación cuales son:

1. Cuéntame un poco de ti y de tu experiencia en la preparatoria aprendiendo inglés.
2. Describe tu experiencia académica y social en la escuela preparatoria.

RQ1. ¿Cuáles son las percepciones de los estudiantes graduados de ELL en las habilidades lingüísticas; como leer, escribir, escuchar, y hablar, ¿que actualmente son enseñadas en la escuela secundaria?

3. Describe que tan seguro/a eres en escribir ingles.
4. Describe que tan seguro/a eres en entender lo que escuchas en inglés.
5. Describe que tan seguro/a eres en hablar en inglés.
6. Describe que seguro/a eres en leer en inglés.

RQ2. ¿Cuáles son las percepciones de los estudiantes ELL graduados de la escuela secundaria sobre las estrategias que han sido usadas para apoyar la transición de la escuela preparatoria al colegio?

7. Durante tú transición al colegio, ¿qué apoyo de tu escuela preparatoria hizo tu experiencia más transitiva?
    a. ¿Qué apoyo te hizo falta?
8. Que estrategias uso tu escuela preparatoria para prepararte para ser académicamente exitosa/o para el colegio?
9. ¿Qué estrategias uso tu escuela secundaria para crear un ambiente de apoyo durante el proceso de transición?
    b. ¿Qué estrategias hicieron falta?

RQ3. Cuáles son las experiencias en el colegio al ser identificados como ELL porque su idioma nativo no es inglés.

10. Describe como el ser un estudiante identificado como ELL afecto tu habilidad de hacer amigos/amigas en el colegio.
11. Describe como al ser identificado como ELL afecta tu nivel de confortabilidad en participar en el salón del colegio.

RQ4. ¿Qué habilidades son necesarias para maestra/os para apropiadamente apoyar estudiantes ELL durante la transición al colegio?

12. ¿Qué habilidades tuvo alguna maestra/o o maestras/os que te hizo sentir apoyo durante tu transición al colegio?

Appendix H: Consent to Participate Form

Research Study Informed Consent to Participate

Dear _____,

This communication is to confirm your willingness to participate in Vanesa Salgado-Muñoz research study that includes a 30-minute interview. All participants for this interview will be recorded, but their information will be kept anonymous. Please indicate your preferred dates, times, and location for the interview. Local interviews may be conducted face-to-face, by phone or video conferencing. If you are located outside of the Kansas City metro area, please let me know if you prefer to interview via Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Facetime, or by phone. In the case of completing the interview by Teams, Zoom, Facetime, or by phone there will be an additional meeting with the doctoral student to obtain a signature for the consent form. Another option would be to send the signed consent form to the doctoral student by email.

I, _____ consent to participate in the research study conducted by Baker University doctoral student, Vanesa Salgado-Muñoz. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and will be recorded and remain confidential. In addition, I may terminate my participation at any time. I understand that my responses will remain anonymous and that I may correct or recant any statements I provide during the study.

Participant Signature: _____ Date of Consent: _____

Appendix I: Results of Dedoose Data Analysis of Interview Responses

Figure 1 Results of Dedoose Analysis of interview Responses