

**DIFFERENTIAL ACADEMIC TRAJECTORIES
AMONG LATINO STUDENTS IN LOS ANGELES**

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ABSTRACT

DIFFERENTIAL ACADEMIC TRAJECTORIES AMONG LATINO STUDENTS IN LOS ANGELES

Gina Arnone

Daniel A. Wagner

Widespread underachievement among students classified as English learners (ELs) indicates the United States education system is not serving them well. Although there has been increased attention directed toward the challenges these learners face in school, efforts to improve their academic outcomes often narrowly focus on English language abilities. Undoubtedly, English proficiency is a central component of academic achievement in the U.S. However, the emphasis on English language development in policy and practice also advances the idea that English is the only language for learning in school. Additionally, it obscures the contributions of non-linguistic influences on school success for language minority learners. Using mixed methods, this research investigates the school experiences of both high- and low-achieving Spanish-speaking ELs in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) with the aim of better understanding factors – other than English – that contribute to their differential academic trajectories. Growth-curve analyses of longitudinal, student-level data indicate that Spanish language abilities relate to English language arts (ELA) and math achievement in classrooms where the teaching and learning activities are conducted overwhelmingly, or exclusively, in English. Achievement in both ELA and math was higher as a function of

increasing Spanish proficiency as measured in kindergarten, indicating that knowledge and skills gained at home in Spanish benefit learning endeavors at school in English. With ethnographic methods in a LAUSD middle school, the discussion of ELs' differential academic trajectories is extended to include social processes not detectable with the quantitative data. These qualitative findings suggest other factors that shape students' academic identities and create and maintain disparities in academic achievement. The practice of high-stakes achievement testing emerged as the primary school influence on the study participants' identities as learners. Through social identification processes the results of standardized achievement assessments become indicators of who students are as learners, as well as their learning potential, rather than simply scores on a test. The system of achievement assessments significantly affected access to curricula and quality instruction, and also influenced the relationships and interactions between students and teachers. Consequently, learning opportunities were expanded for some students and diminished for others.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The United States is home to approximately 60 million people over the age of five who speak a language other than English in their households (United States Census Bureau, 2011). Issues of the rights and resources afforded these individuals, who represent 20 percent of the total population (up from 18 percent in 2000, 14 percent in 1990, and 11 percent in 1980), are perhaps never more critical than within the nation's schools.

Experiences within the formal education system are significant not only because schools function as gatekeepers of opportunity (consider, for example, the weight placed on high school diplomas and college degrees in hiring decisions), but also because great schools are places where teachers with skillful practice foster learning across a range of disciplines. They are places where children and adolescents have occasion to discover which subjects move them and in which they excel, and where young people build meaningful relationships with peers and adults.

However, language minority learners are often at a disadvantage in U.S. schools. Here the term *minority* refers not to the number of speakers of a given language, but to a language's lower position of power and status relative to the community's dominant language(s). In fact, in many communities the majority of the population uses a minority language at home and in public settings. In the context of the U.S. education system, language minority learners include students for whom a language other than English (and more specifically, standard academic English) is primary. The disadvantages that many of these students experience in school stem, in part, from educational policies that call for teaching and learning activities to occur mostly, or entirely, in English. Without access to

primary language or bilingual resources, they do not receive adequate support to both become proficient with academic English and master academic content and skills (Rumberger & Gándara, 2008).

In addition to the challenges associated with learning by means of language practices that are unfamiliar (or less familiar than the primary home language practices), numerous language minority learners come from immigrant families,¹ and so their parents may have little, or no previous experience navigating the U.S. school system (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Therefore, for many of these learners academic success hinges on the quality of educational services that a school provides, whereas their more advantaged peers often have other avenues of academic support.

While immigrant youth – and language minorities, in particular – are among those with the greatest need for exceptional educational services, they are also more likely than youth from U.S.-born families to live in economically impoverished neighborhoods (Child Trends, 2010). Consequently, they commonly attend under-resourced schools with racially and linguistically segregated populations – conditions shown to be associated with negative academic outcomes (Orfield & Lee, 2006; Rumberger, Gándara, & Merino, 2006).

Indeed, low academic achievement among a majority of language minority learners indicates that the education system is not serving these students well. Nationwide, far fewer language minorities have reached grade-level proficiency on assessments of reading and math, as compared with learners whose primary home

¹ The term “immigrant family” describes a family with at least one parent or guardian who is an immigrant

language is English. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Moreover, language minorities (like students from other historically disadvantaged minority groups) are commonly overrepresented in special education programs and underrepresented in Gifted and Talented programs (Donovan & Cross, 2002). By high school, these learners leave the school system at alarming rates. For example, analyses of data for nearly 15,000 high school students across the U.S. indicate that 10.2 percent of language minority students who were in the tenth grade in 2002 were no longer attending school two years later – a dropout rate twice that of the native English speakers in the same sample (Rumberger, 2006). Similarly, Silver, Saunders, and Zarate (2008) tracked the academic progress of close to 50,000 students who were expected to graduate in 2005 from high schools in Los Angeles Unified School District (the context for the present study). They found that of the students who did not meet the district’s standards for English proficiency by ninth-grade, only 33 percent graduated four years later, as compared with 54 percent of students who either were native English speakers or had reached the standards for English proficiency by ninth-grade.

With a rapidly growing language minority population, underachievement among these students has become a widespread concern. However, efforts to improve their academic outcomes often narrowly focus on English language development. While English proficiency is certainly a central component of academic achievement in the U.S., the strong emphasis on English language development in educational policy and practice also advances the idea that English is the only language for learning in school, and obscures the contributions of non-linguistic factors that can impede or promote school success for language minorities.

Indeed the language classification systems employed within many of the nation's schools exemplify the primacy of English language development with labels like *English learner* (EL), *English language learner* (ELL), and *limited English proficient* (LEP). Arguably, these terms are inaccurate considering that *all* students in U.S. schools are learning English language skills. Furthermore, these classifications ignore the language practices that students bring to school from home. To address this issue, García (2009a) proposes instead using the term *emergent bilingual*. Rather than identify language minorities with reference to a perceived deficit (i.e. limited proficiency with English), the designation *emergent bilingual* works toward positioning them as knowledgeable learners whose home language practices can serve as valuable resources in school rather than problems to overcome (Ruiz, 1984).

Although increased attention directed toward the challenges language minorities face in school is critically important for positive change, conversations seeking to address these challenges have also functioned to homogenize what is a highly diverse population of students. Despite a shared language classification in school, the linguistic resources of students identified as English learners vary widely; and while these learners are typically considered together in educational research and decision-making processes, their academic experiences greatly differ.

While it is certainly easy to overlook the academic success stories when facing pervasive underachievement among students classified as English learners, remarkably, some do reach high levels of achievement in school – even with substantial structural and instructional barriers. As educators and policy makers strive to improve the school

experiences of all ELs, it becomes imperative to better understand the influences that allow some learners to thrive where other seemingly similar learners do not.

This research investigates the school experiences of both high- and low-achieving Spanish-speaking English learners in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) with the aim of identifying and describing factors other than English language abilities that contribute to their differential academic trajectories. The study takes as a point of departure the notion that teaching and learning is at once cognitive and social; and from there, investigations pursue the study aim through examinations of data from multiple sources.

With a two-pronged approach, I first consider how Spanish language abilities relate to academic achievement in classrooms where the teaching and learning activities are conducted overwhelmingly, or exclusively, in English. With longitudinal, student-level data I model the academic trajectories of students classified as ELs and examine the relationship between students' oral Spanish language proficiency as measured in kindergarten and their subsequent achievement in English language arts (ELA) and math.

Research Question 1: How do Spanish language abilities relate to academic achievement in an English-only context?

- (a) What is the relationship between oral Spanish language proficiency as measured in kindergarten with a standardized assessment and subsequent achievement in English language arts?
- (b) What is the relationship between oral Spanish language proficiency as measured in kindergarten with a standardized assessment and subsequent achievement in math?
- (c) How do Spanish language assessment results relate to students' programmatic placements?

Second, the research focus turns to social processes that unfold in school to shape students identities as learners (i.e. academic identities) and create and maintain disparities in academic achievement for the same population of Spanish-speaking English learners. Using ethnographic methods in an LAUSD middle school, I investigate social identification processes that influence students' access to curricula and quality instruction and affect the relationships and interactions between students and teachers, ultimately expanding opportunities to learn for some students while constraining them for others. The system of standardized academic achievement assessments emerged as the primary school influence on students' academic identities, and this portion of the research explains the process by which the results of the assessments become indicators of who students are as learners, as well as their learning potential, rather than simply scores on a test. With analyses of classroom observations and interviews with students and teachers, this portion of the research extends the discussion of ELs' differential academic trajectories by examining relational processes that unfold in classrooms and are not detectable with the quantitative data.

Research Question 2: How do social identification processes occurring in school influence academic trajectories?

- (a) What are the associated influences on relational dynamics among students and teachers?
- (b) What are the associated influences on access to curricula and quality instruction?

Context

In California, the setting for the present study, more than 2.3 million elementary and secondary school students speak a language other than English at home. Of those, close to 1.5 million are also classified as English learners within the school system. These young learners comprise approximately 23 percent of the total student population in California's public schools. (California Department of Education, 2011).

Underachievement among English learners is at the heart of an educational crisis in California. A wide variety of data indicate that numerous ELs fall far short of benchmarks for academic advancement. For example, during the 2010-11 academic year, statewide, less than 50 percent of ELs in second grade, and only about 15 percent in seventh grade exceeded a basic level of proficiency on grade-level assessments of English language arts. In math the achievement was only marginally better (California Department of Education, 2012a). That same year, less than 60 percent of ELs in California earned a diploma after four years in high school (United States Department of Education, 2012).

A significant portion of ELs in California attend schools in Los Angeles Unified School District, the state's largest – and the nation's second largest – school district. Comprised of more than 900 K-12 schools and close to 200 public charter schools organized within eight local districts,² LAUSD serves more than 640,000 students living in 32 cities in the greater Los Angeles area. The student population is more than 70

² During the time of this research, LAUSD was comprised of eight local districts. However, beginning academic year 2012-2013, the district reorganized the eight local districts into five local educational service centers: four regional centers and an additional center for innovative or non-traditional schools, and for those that are experiencing difficulties.

percent Latina/o, approximately 10 percent African American, nine percent white, four percent Asian, and two percent Filipina/o (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2013).

Although LAUSD's English learner population has fluctuated with the district's overall population, ELs have consistently comprised a substantial portion of the total student body. In 2011, ELs constituted nearly one third, and former ELs³ approximately one quarter of the student population. Although more than 90 languages are represented in LAUSD schools, close to 95 percent of the district's ELs speak Spanish at home (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2011a).

Similar to statewide patterns, ELs within LAUSD are outperformed in school by their non-EL peers. In fact, underachievement among ELs and African Americans prompted the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in March 2010 to launch a compliance review of LAUSD under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Results of the 19-month investigation determined that LAUSD has not adequately provided ELs and African Americans the educational services entitled to them by law (Zeidman, 2011). The school district and the OCR subsequently joined in a Voluntary Resolution Agreement, which states that LAUSD must ensure ELs and African Americans have access to high-quality and appropriate educational services. Following the agreement, changes to the educational programming for ELs include an overhaul of the English Learner Master Plan, the implementation of professional development for teachers aimed to improve instruction to ELs, and enhanced communication with parents. The OCR will monitor progress until it determines the school district has fulfilled the terms of the agreement.

³ After meeting a set of established criteria, the district reclassifies English learners as "fluent English proficient" (RFEP). The reclassification process is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Both past and current efforts to improve academic learning among ELs in California have centered on the development of English language skills. Although no one would likely dispute the critical role of English language practices in attaining high levels of achievement in U.S. schools, educational policy shifts – such as those associated with the 1998 passage of Proposition 227, which mandated classroom activities be conducted predominantly in English with primary language support provided to ELs during a brief period of transition to English-only instruction – seem to suggest that English is the *only* language with value for school success.

The centrality of English language instruction according to this pedagogical approach is apparent in the instructional plan for English learners. At the time of the present study, there were three kinds of programs available to ELs within LAUSD: Structured English Immersion (SEI), Alternative Programs, which include Basic Bilingual and Dual Language, and finally, Mainstream English (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2002). Within SEI programs students receive instruction overwhelmingly in English with the provision of primary language support by a bilingual teacher or paraprofessional. According to the English Learner Master Plan that was in place during the time of this research, “primary language support includes, but is not limited to, the use of primary language and materials during instructional time for a variety of academic purposes” (Los Angeles Unified School District, p. 10). Examples provided in the Master Plan include, using a student’s primary language to find out what s/he knows within a given content area, to explain abstract or complex ideas, and to communicate culturally relevant examples of curricular concepts.

Basic Bilingual programs provide instruction in the students' primary language and English. Gradually, usage of the primary language is reduced and usage of English is increased. Dual Language programs serve both English learners and non-ELs, and all students receive instruction and language development in both languages. Lastly, Mainstream English programs include instruction only in English. During the academic years 1998-99 through 2005-06, on average, 87 percent of ELs in elementary schools were enrolled in SEI programs, about seven percent in Basic Bilingual programs, less than five percent in Mainstream English programs, and less than half of a percent in Dual Language programs (Salazar, 2007).

Regardless of the program, and in accordance with California's Proposition 227, a primary district goal for all English learners is to develop English skills as quickly as possible. The strategies to meet that goal include a requirement that all English learners participate in an English Language Development (ELD) class in which students are grouped according to their ELD levels. For elementary school students, the ELD class must be distinct from any other English language arts class. Additionally, these students are to receive access to the core curriculum through differentiated instruction. Depending on the program, such instruction could come in the form of content-based ELD, Specifically Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), primary language support, and/or primary language instruction.

Significance

Los Angeles Unified School District is an important context in which to study the school experiences of English learners. As the educational system responsible for more

English learners than any other in the U.S. – and located in the state with the largest population of ELs – lessons learned in LAUSD may have implications for other districts facing similar educational challenges, but on a smaller scale.

While the development of English language skills has been the primary focus of the educational plan for English learners in LAUSD, this study aims to highlight other critical components of school success for Spanish-speaking ELs, namely Spanish language abilities, and social identification processes occurring in school that shape students' identities as learners. With analyses that integrate data from multiple sources, this work is positioned to contribute new findings to this area of research.

Several features of the longitudinal dataset utilized to examine the relationship between students' Spanish language abilities and academic achievement offer the potential to expand upon extant knowledge. Foremost is the Spanish language proficiency measure itself, as measures of home language proficiency are seldom available. Of course, like any single assessment, the particular Spanish language assessment employed by LAUSD does not allow for a comprehensive understanding of a student's linguistic repertoire. (Specific strengths and weaknesses of the measure are discussed in Chapter 3.) However, the data do allow for the investigation of the relationship between a set of Spanish language abilities (i.e. those measured by this assessment) and school achievement, as well as the potentially problematic influence of standardized assessment-based language classifications on students' programmatic placements. Also, the large sample size makes it feasible to identify patterns across language subgroups (e.g., students who are more and less proficient in Spanish, as measured by the assessment). In addition, the dataset comprises academic achievement information for ELs even after the

school district reclassifies them as proficient in English. Although reclassification is a primary aim of district programmatic planning for English learners, numerous students continue to struggle in school long after reaching that goal. This is perhaps unsurprising considering identified shortcomings in the reclassification process, such as course grading criteria that vary with the instructional context and a weak association between the English language skills needed to perform well on the standardized assessment of English that is used to guide reclassification decisions (in California, the California English Language Development Test – or CELDT – is used) and competence with the kinds of English that are utilized across academic disciplines (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009; Solórzano, 2008). For example, Gándara and Rumberger found that 60 percent of tenth-grade students classified as ELs in California reached a level of early advanced or advanced on the CELDT (a benchmark for reclassification), whereas only 3 percent reached a similar level of proficiency on the grade-level achievement test in English language arts. Therefore, it is critical to pay attention to the school experiences of both current and former ELs. Lastly, the inclusion of data for six cohorts of students allows for a comparison of learners entering school in different years.

The investigation of social processes that shape students' academic identities also contributes to the field's developing understanding of ELs' school experiences. Examining data from classroom observations and conversations with teachers and both high- and low-achieving ELs at a Los Angeles middle school, the analyses explain social identification processes that contribute to differential academic trajectories among learners who are often assumed to be similar. Additionally, while most successful ELs come from private educational institutions and/or higher income families, the experiences

of high-achieving ELs within LAUSD tell a different story. Despite the challenges associated with both language minority status and poverty, these learners manage to find academic success. An understanding of the resources that have contributed to their success can inform efforts to improve the school experiences for all ELs.

In conclusion, the provision of high quality and appropriate educational services to English learners is not only critical for the students themselves to lead healthy and productive lives; but also, comprising a substantial portion of the U.S. population, the well-being of these young people is inextricably tied to that of the nation. This research seeks to shift the discussion of academic achievement among English learners away from a homogenized conception of this population of students toward an understanding of the influences that contribute to their widely varying school experiences. Such information is essential to improve the learning opportunities available to all ELs.

Research Overview

The elements of this research are presented in the remaining chapters. Chapter 2 begins with a discussion of social and political factors affecting the school experiences of immigrant youth, and in particular, language minority students. This background information is followed by a review of the research literature that provides a conceptual frame for the present study. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology for each of the two portions of the study. The discussion of the quantitative methods begins with a description of the sampling procedure, then components of the dataset are detailed, the analysis techniques are explained, and lastly, limitations of the study are discussed. Next, the ethnographic methods are presented. First, the rationale for the research site selection

is offered, followed by an account of the development of the research questions, a description of data collection and analysis procedures, and a discussion of the study limitations. Chapter 4 reports the findings of the research. Similar to the discussion of the methodologies, this chapter first presents findings from the quantitative portion of the research, followed by findings from the qualitative portion. Chapter 5 extends the discussion of the study findings and states the implications for the education of students classified as English learners. The chapter concludes with a review of the major findings and directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Background and Conceptual Framework

Over the past fifty years, the U.S. immigrant population (including both documented and undocumented individuals) has steadily increased and by 2011 rose to an estimated 40.4 million, or 13 percent of the total population. Accordingly, a sizeable proportion of children in school come from immigrant families. Approximately 24 percent of children under the age of 17 have at least one immigrant parent, though notably the vast majority of those children (approximately 86 percent) were themselves born in the U.S. (Motel & Patten, 2013). By the year 2050, immigrant youth are expected to account for one third of all children in the U.S. (Passel & Cohn, 2008).

These young learners often face considerable challenges to high achievement in school. Students from immigrant families are more likely than children of U.S.-born families to live in poverty (Child Trends, 2010), and for children whose parents are not proficient in English, the ways of knowing and communicating that are commonly practiced in schools may be unfamiliar. This is especially true for children with parents who have not attended schools in the U.S. or have little experience with formal schooling more generally (Aud et al., 2013).

Although the majority of immigrant families currently reside in a handful of traditional receiving states (California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois), newcomers are more and more settling in areas that are not historically linked with immigration. In fact, a number of states (namely, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Arkansas, Nevada, South Carolina, Kentucky, Nebraska, Utah, and Alabama) have recorded greater than 275 percent growth in their immigrant populations between

1990 and 2011. Remarkably, in North Carolina the growth exceeded 500 percent (Migration Policy Institute, 2011).

Due to this shifting demographic landscape, provision of high quality and appropriate educational services to immigrant youth has become the responsibility of educators across the United States. However, with insufficient resources (both human and material) and competing demands, school communities struggle to serve these learners well.

Immigrant youth who are learning English as a second – or third – language are among those most in need of improved educational services. Year after year, a majority of English learners struggle to reach high levels of achievement in school. For example, while 70 percent of ELs scored below basic on the NAEP fourth-grade reading assessments in 2011, 70 percent of non-ELs scored at a basic level or higher. By the eighth-grade the disparities become even more substantial (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

With a rising number of immigrant families, the population of language minority children in school is also increasing. In fact, the proportion of the school-age population that speaks a language other than English at home has reached approximately 22 percent and an estimated 28 percent of those children speak English less than very well⁴ (Motel & Patten, 2013). While linguistic diversity has long characterized the nation’s schools, a consistent rise in EL enrollment has brought increased attention to these students’ school experiences.

⁴ While language data gathered via large-scale surveys (e.g., U.S. census data) are useful for gaining a sense of the nation’s linguistic diversity, these kinds of data are also problematic in that they reduce language to a “have or have not” skill. Furthermore, the focus is exclusively on English, implying proficiencies in other languages are not of importance.

Historical and Ideological Influences on Education Policies Affecting Language

Minority Children

Conversations about the challenges that immigrant youth face in school can generate ideas for educational policy and practice advancements. However, efforts to improve the educational services provided to these students too often become mired in debate. With conflicting public attitudes toward newcomers, immigrants are at once valued as the foundation of the United States and feared as threats to an “American way of life.” These differing perspectives surface during national conversations across a wide range of issues, including national security, taxation, job competition, economic wellbeing, racism, language access, social benefits, and human rights. They also contribute to a contentious context in which educational decision-making occurs. Consequently, educational initiatives concerning immigrant students such as the DREAM Act, which would grant permanent residency to undocumented high school graduates allowing them to pay in-state college tuitions and receive student loans, become highly controversial. Of course educational policies reflect knowledge about teaching and learning, but they also bear the influences of past and current ideologies. Indeed, pedagogical considerations become inseparable from social, political, and economic concerns. To situate public attitudes toward immigrants in historical context, the following section briefly lays out key influences that affected immigration from Latin America, and in particular Mexico, the leading immigrant-sending country.

Shifting Characteristics of Immigration

Over the course of the twentieth century, a number of immigration reform efforts spurred shifts – both intended and unintended – in the composition of U.S. immigration and significantly shaped American’s perceptions of immigrants. Following World War I, the nation entered a period marked by anti-immigrant sentiments. The Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 established numerical quotas, which controlled the entry of new immigrants based on their countries of origin and effectively curtailed the massive wave of immigration that had been underway since the end of the nineteenth century. The quotas favored immigrants from Northern and Western Europe and prohibited immigration from Asia and Africa (Zolberg, 2006).

While Latin American countries were not initially included in the quota system, other changes affected the immigration of Latinos. Following the 1910 Mexican Revolution, immigration from Mexico nearly tripled, totaling more than 600,000 by 1920 (Ngai, 2004). However, during the Great Depression of the 1930s the climate shifted substantially. During this time, the newly created U.S. Border Patrol deported an estimated 20 percent of all Mexican Americans (citizens, residents, and undocumented immigrants, alike). Mae Ngai described this repatriation as “a racial expulsion program exceeded in scale only by the Native American Indian removals of the nineteenth century” (p. 75).

With a domestic labor shortage during World War II, employers in the U.S. sought laborers from abroad. To facilitate the process, in 1942 Congress passed the Migrant Labor agreement, also called the Bracero Program, which provided migrant workers from Mexico with temporary work permits. Although granted transportation,

housing, food, and employment contracts, living conditions were poor and employers commonly violated wage agreements (Ngai, 2004). Moreover, the program restricted these men from working outside the agricultural domain and contributed to the marginalization of Mexicans by preventing opportunities to integrate with the broader society.

In 1965, Congress passed the landmark Immigration and Nationality Act. The primary goal of the Act was to abolish the brazenly discriminatory national origins quotas first legislated in 1921. Seeking impartiality, the new system capped the provision of resident visas at 170,000 for countries in the Eastern Hemisphere and 120,000 for countries in the Western Hemisphere. The reunification of families became a priority, and those joining a parent, child, or spouse already in the U.S. were given preference and did not count toward the numerical limits. While its supporters touted the law's fairness, they also sought to assure dissenters it would not significantly alter the ethnic and cultural makeup of the nation. Senator Ted Kennedy famously predicted that the immigration levels would remain "substantially the same" and that "the ethnic mix of this country [would] not be upset" (United States Congress, 1965).

Substantial growth in the immigrant population in subsequent years revealed this calculus as flawed. However, the 1965 legislative change alone cannot explain the increase, and especially not with respect to Latin American immigrants (Massey & Pren, 2012). While the 1965 amendment expanded opportunities for immigration from Asia, the cap on immigration from the Western Hemisphere introduced numerical restrictions where previously there were none. Additionally, just months before enacting the Immigration and Nationality Act, Congress dismantled the Bracero Program. Concerned

about American labor interests, this reform sought to reduce the presence of Mexican workers. However, with high demand for their labor in the U.S., the removal of Mexican workers' main legal avenue for entry only compelled them to immigrate without documentation. Without a secure pathway, the circular pattern of migration between the U.S. and Mexico was no longer feasible and migrant workers increasingly stayed in the U.S. (Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2002). Additional legislative action in the 1980s and 90s increased the benefits associated with citizenship. By restricting access to public services for non-citizens, carrying out deportations without judicial hearings, and giving preference to citizens over residents seeking to secure visas for family members, the government unintentionally motivated residents to pursue naturalization (Zolberg, 2006). Ironically, the net effect of the immigration reform efforts was a dramatic increase in both documented and undocumented immigrants.

This current wave of immigration to the United States, underway since the late 1960s, has greatly diversified the nation's population. While the majority of immigrants who arrived during the first half of the twentieth century were European, newcomers have increasingly come from other regions of the world. The largest growth has been among immigrants from Asia and Latin America. In 1970, approximately 9 percent of recent immigrants had arrived from Asia, but by 2010 that proportion approached 30 percent. During the same forty-year period, the proportion of recent immigrants from Latin America increased from 19 to 53 percent, including 29 percent from Mexico (Jones-Correa, 2012).

Public Attitudes Toward Immigrants and Linguistic Diversity

With a rise in immigration, the portrayal of immigrants as a threat against which U.S. citizens must defend has become commonplace in public discourse. Latinos, comprising the largest proportion of recent immigrants, are often the subjects of this negative press. Chavez (2001, 2008) documented the proliferation of this “Latino threat narrative” during the second half of the twentieth century. He found that national media outlets increasingly alerted readers to an “invading force” from the south and characterized Latinos, and immigrants more generally, as unwilling to integrate with American society.

This cautionary tone has spread to discussions of language use and access and contributed to the gradual instantiation of “English-speaker” as a necessary element of American identity. In particular, the idea that Americans who do not speak English become problematic for society is emphasized in various media and political chains of discourse and embodied by laws that sanction only English. For example, legislators recently proposed two bills that would make Pennsylvania the 32nd state to declare English as the official state language (Pennsylvania House State Government Committee, 2011a/b), and while there is no official national language, federal legislators proposed (first in 2005 and most recently in 2013) the English Language Unity Act, which would require all actions of the federal government to be conducted in English (U.S. Congress, 2013). Those in favor of such legislation view the declaration of an official language as a method to foster national unity and motivate immigrants to learn English. Those opposed argue immigrants are already quite motivated to learn English and such laws are simply divisive.

Ideologies concerning immigrants and their languages that are evident in public discourse extend to influence educational policy decisions. This impact is perhaps most obvious with policies that control the language of instruction for language minority children. While numerous researchers and educators have worked to establish the benefits of primary language instruction for both English language development and academic learning more generally, recent trends in both federal and state legislation reflect an English-only movement.

National and State Educational Language Policies

On a national level, considerable changes to the educational services provided to language minority students came with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001. Previously, federal language policy acknowledged the importance of using one's home language in the teaching and learning process, as well as the value of bilingualism. As the name suggests, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (the Title VII amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) included legislative support of bilingual education. While the Act did not mandate bilingual or home language instruction, school districts seeking to implement such programs could receive federal funding by applying for competitive grants. In 1969, Title VII funded programs served 27,000 students (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988).

Over the course of 34 years and with a number of reauthorizations, the bill moved through various phases. Influenced by *Lau v. Nichols* (US Supreme Court, 1974), the case that decided the San Francisco school system had not adequately provided for its ELs, the first reauthorization of the Bilingual Education Act in 1974 declared English as

a Second Language (ESL) programs as insufficient in addressing the needs and rights of ELs. The bill defined a bilingual program as one that provides instruction both in English and a student's primary home language. During the 1974-75 school year, close to 400 school districts received Title VII funding for programs in 65 languages, serving approximately 340,000 students (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988).

In 1981, a Mexican-American family filed a case against the Raymondville, Texas Independent School District citing discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity and a failure to implement adequate bilingual education. The court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and passed additional legislation focused on the quality of educational programs serving ELs (*Castañeda v. Pickard*, 1981). Specifically, the law called on schools to demonstrate the “soundness of educational theory” upon which a program is based, “implement effectively” a program that is in line with the adopted educational theory, and after a trial period, evaluate the program to determine its effectiveness.

Moving forward, supporters of the Bilingual Education Act were at odds with some citizens and policy makers. Those opposed to the bill worried bilingual programs were too expensive, while proponents argued that benefits, such as lower dropout and unemployment rates, would far outweigh the costs. Through the debate, advocates fought to protect and improve the Act. The final reauthorization in 1994 was marked by a removal of the enrollment cap, which had limited the amount of time a student may participate in Bilingual Education Act programs to three years. Also, for the first time, the bill called not only for the usage of a student's home language, but also for the *development* of home language skills (Crawford, 2002).

This view of a student's home language as a resource and a right (Ruiz, 1984) stands in stark contrast to the perspective promoted by the No Child Left Behind Act (Evans & Hornberger, 2004). Enacted in 2001, NCLB replaced the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, and is the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Title III of NCLB, named the Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students Act, replaced the Bilingual Education Act. Title III calls on educators to focus on developing the English language skills of language minority students with the goal of quickly transitioning them to English-only classrooms. While programs providing services to ELs still receive federal funding, the process by which funding is awarded has changed. Instead of applying for competitive grants, school districts receive funding based on the number of ELs enrolled. While this results in funding for more students, the amount per student is reduced, and the money is allocated without regard to the pedagogical approach and goals of a given program.

Although the No Child Left Behind Act did succeed in drawing much needed national attention to the challenges ELs face in school, the bill has not improved their experiences. Unwittingly, the system of accountability shepherded in with NCLB has placed tremendous pressure on schools to meet unrealistic expectations (Crawford, 2004).

In addition to the federal regulations, a trend toward English-only public education is evidenced by legislation at the state level. This is exemplified with the 1998 passing of Proposition 227 (Prop 227) in California. Prop 227 is a fiercely debated policy that significantly changed the approach to education of ELs in California. Specifically, the law mandates instruction to be "overwhelmingly in the English language" and for

ELs to be “educated through sheltered English immersion during a temporary transition period not normally intended to exceed one year” (California Secretary of State, 1998). Under certain circumstances and if a parent requests, a student may seek bilingual instruction in the neighborhood school if such instruction is available, or in another school if not. Following California, Arizona and Massachusetts passed similar laws in 2000 and 2002, respectively.

Home Language Instruction and Academic Achievement

As the preceding sections illustrate, a complex interplay of social, political, and economic influences gave rise to the structure of educational services that are provided to most language minority learners attending schools in the United States today. However, widespread underachievement among numerous students classified as English learners suggests the current approach is often ineffective. Therefore, conversations continue concerning strategies to improve the services that schools provide to ELs and the debates persist concerning the role that students’ home languages could and should play in teaching and learning processes.

Despite the controversy surrounding the topic, there is a longstanding and growing evidence base lending support for the usage and development of students’ home languages in school. Indeed, when educators pay attention to minority ways of knowing and communicating, the benefits extend to both social and cognitive aspects of learning (Hornberger, 1989, 2003). In this section, existing research on the relationships between home language instruction and academic learning is reviewed. First, the discussion focuses on the influence of home language instruction on interactions, relationships, and

positioning in the classroom, and the ways in which these factors matter for both language development and academic learning more generally. Next the discussion turns to studies that investigate the ways in which students and teachers use and adapt their linguistic resources in two (or more) languages in the pursuit of academic learning goals. This portion of the discussion begins with studies that examine whether and to what extent specific abilities (e.g., phonological awareness) relate across languages. Next, research that considers the dynamic usage of two languages in concert is considered. Then, studies that examine the relationship between home language instruction and academic learning at a programmatic level are reviewed. Because research with language minority populations worldwide has significantly guided and informed scholarship in this field, examples from studies conducted both in the United States and abroad are cited. Lastly, this section provides an account of how previous research has framed, but not yet answered the specific questions addressed with the first portion of this study (Research Question 1).

Relationships, Interactions, and Positioning

Although numerous students who are classified as English learners in school often communicate using English during daily exchanges with family and friends, the first day of school may represent their first experiences with standard academic English. For others, the start of school is among their first experiences with any variety of English. By welcoming and utilizing all of the linguistic resources that language minorities bring to school (as opposed to only their English language resources), teachers can also position these students as legitimate members of the learning community and their ways of

knowing and communicating as valuable within the school context (e.g., Hayes, Rueda, & Chilton, 2009; Moll & Greenberg, 1990; Valenzuela, 1999).

Furthermore, when recognized as members of the group (i.e. a particular class of students and their teacher, or the school community more generally) language minority students become well positioned to learn the language of the group (i.e. standard academic English). Lucy Tse (2001) explains,

the allegiances we feel with particular language-speaking groups and the attitudes and feelings that flow from being associated with them [are] important because we tend to learn language better when we feel like a member of the group of people who speak that language (p. 60; cited in Chinen & Tucker, 2006, p.105).

In this way, educators can use students' home languages in school to cultivate membership in the learning community, which can then facilitate their English language development. Indeed, classroom activities that foster communication using two languages can promote academic learning, as well as linguistic development in both languages (Hornberger, 2003).

On the other hand, interactions and relationships in the classroom can become strained in the presence of policies that prohibit non-English languages from instructional activities. Because language practices are the primary means by which people shape individual and group identities (Gee, 1996; McKay & Wong, 1996), a decision to exclude a language effectively excludes the language's speakers as well. That is to say, restrictive language policies implicitly teach language minority students to disassociate their languages and cultures (and themselves) from ideas of academic learning.

The association of a particular language with a domain⁵ of society (e.g., community, government, media, education) is determined by tradition as well as by the relative power and influence of the society's languages. Thus, the purposeful association of a minority language with a particular domain can empower that language's speakers. In this way, a linguistically diverse school setting provides an opportunity to challenge the existing low status of minority languages. With the promotion of minority language practices, schools can facilitate the development of positive academic identities for language minority learners. Alternatively, when teaching practices privilege society's dominant language(s), they will reproduce in the classroom the power dynamics present in the broader society between majority and minority language speakers (Fairclough, 1989; Gee, 1990). In these ways, schools can either serve as vehicles for social change or perpetuate the inequalities that exist in society, but "schools are never neutral" (Lincoln, 2003, p. 149).

Even in bilingual classrooms where both dominant and minority language practices are utilized, the hierarchy of languages evident in the broader society can affect classroom interactions, and thus influence how the teaching and learning process unfolds. For example, to address the needs of multilingual student populations, some schools employ both monolingual teachers to provide instruction in the dominant language, as well as assistant teachers (or bilingual paraprofessionals, as they are referred to within LAUSD) who can communicate with the students in their home language. However, the power differential between speakers of the dominant language and speakers of the

⁵ Hornberger (1988) defines domains as "aggregates of situations in which place, time, role-relationship and patterns of language use go together in the culturally appropriate way" (p. 12).

minority language that are present in society more broadly can manifest in both the organization of class instruction, as well as the interactions between the teacher and bilingual assistant teacher, or paraprofessional.

Martin-Jones (1995) provides an example of this with her account of classrooms in northwest England taught by both English-speaking (monolingual) teachers and assistant teachers who are bilingual in Panjabi or Gujarati and English. Her research team found that the relative dominance of English over Panjabi and Gujarati in the society at large is reproduced in the interactions between teachers and assistant teachers. When the two teachers of a classroom “co-teach” the monolingual teacher clearly leads and controls the lesson, and the assistant teacher is relegated to a lower status, to be called upon by the teacher for interpretation or clarification in Panjabi/Gujarati. Also, a further indication of the low status of assistant teachers, and of the languages they speak, comes when teachers address assistants by their first names rather than by title and last name, as is standard practice amongst teachers in Britain (Martin-Jones & Saxena, 1996).

The potential effects of these relational dynamics are significant for interactions in school represent the primary opportunities to negotiate knowledge, and how students are positioned in those interactions greatly affects what learning can occur (Cummins, 2001). For instance, when compared with ELs, non-ELs – who are familiar with the language of instruction and practiced with the norms for use – are more likely to be comfortable debating subject matter and asking questions in the classroom. Therefore, they benefit from opportunities to influence the course of group discussions and advance their understandings of the content. In contrast, ELs who are less comfortable with the

language of instruction may be hesitant to present their own ideas or seek clarifications, and their learning can suffer as a result.

Bilingual Practices

L1 to L2 Transfer

While research on the transfer of reading skills between one's home language (L1) and a second language (L2) is complicated due to the mediating effects of other variables (e.g., general ability), well-designed studies have allowed researchers to observe the successful application of home language knowledge and abilities to reading practices in another language (For recent reviews, see August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Slavin & Cheung, 2005.).

More specifically, research has focused on particular language skills that have been shown to matter for learning to read, including phonological awareness, orthographic skills, and vocabulary knowledge (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). With research concerning academic learning in the United States the focal languages are typically Spanish (L1) and English (L2).

Most studies in this area consider the role of L1 phonological awareness (PA) – defined as “the ability to recognize, discriminate, and manipulate linguistic sounds apart from their meanings” (Branum-Martin et al., 2006, p. 171) – in developing both phonological awareness and more complex reading skills in the L2. Significant relationships have been found between PA in Spanish and PA in English (e.g., Branum-Martin et al., 2006), word processing in English (e.g., Branum-Martin et al., 2006;

Durgunoglu et al., 1993; Cardenas-Hagen, Carlson, & Pollard-Durodola, 2007), English vocabulary knowledge (e.g., Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1995), and reading fluency and comprehension in English (e.g., Lindsey, Manis, & Bailey, 2003).

For example, Branum-Martin and colleagues (2006) assessed children in kindergarten with tasks that involved blending nonwords, segmenting words, and phoneme elision in order to examine the extent to which PA in Spanish is related to PA in English and word reading in English. Considering both student- and classroom-level variables with a sample of 812 students (kindergarten through third grade) participating in 71 transitional bilingual classrooms from 23 schools in Texas and California, they found that Spanish PA and English PA are highly correlated ($r = .93$) indicating that students with highly developed PA in one language also had highly developed PA in the other. They also found that word reading in the two languages was highly correlated ($r = .74$), Spanish PA correlated with English word reading ($r = .74$), and English PA correlated with Spanish word reading ($r = .73$). Furthermore, these relationships varied across classrooms. Although all of the classrooms in this study followed a transitional bilingual model (wherein Spanish language instruction was used in the early grades with increasing English language instruction in the later grades), and none of the participants had yet transitioned to English instruction, the variation found across classrooms draws attention to the fact that different instructional strategies may be utilized in classrooms with the same stated language policy. Furthermore, the instructional model of a classroom can influence, not only the mean literacy outcomes, but also the cross-language relationships themselves.

With an examination of kindergarteners' knowledge of letter names and sounds, and oral language proficiency in kindergarten, Cardenas-Hagan, et al. (2007) also found a relationship between L1 abilities and the development of L2 abilities. The study participants included more than 1000 Spanish-speaking students classified as ELs attending 35 schools in four districts. Students participated in English immersion programs (where the instruction was primarily in English), transitional bilingual programs (where Spanish was used in kindergarten and first grade with a gradual transition to English), and dual language programs (where instruction was in both Spanish and English equally). Findings indicate students who began school with low letter name and sound identification skills in English, but high letter name and sound identification skills in Spanish, performed at higher levels with English word identification and comprehension tasks at the end of the year.

A final example comes from a study conducted by Jiménez, García, & Pearson (1995) that examined the reading strategies of bilingual (Spanish-English) students. Study participants included 14 students in the sixth- and seventh-grade who were attending three schools in two districts. 11 of the students were Latina/o, including eight successful readers and three less successful readers. The remaining three participants were successful monolingual (English) readers. The students participated in "think-aloud" activities during which they read passages (in Spanish and English) and were prompted with both general and specific questions "aimed at eliciting students' introspective knowledge of metacognitive strategies for dealing with informational text" (p. 97). Students were also interviewed to understand how they viewed the reading tasks,

and for the bilingual students, what they knew about reading in each of their two languages.

Results from the study indicate that five of the successful bilingual readers viewed the task of reading as essentially the same in both Spanish and English, just with different words and sounds. All eight of the successful bilingual readers were aware of the usefulness of Spanish-English cognates in working to understand texts (in both Spanish and English). The successful readers also used a variety of strategies that integrated the two languages in order to figure out the meanings of new vocabulary words (i.e. “using context, invoking relevant prior knowledge, questioning, inferencing, searching for cognates, and translating,” p. 100).

In sum, studies of novice readers provide compelling evidence that a learner’s home language is an effective medium for developing reading skills in that it taps into existing linguistic awareness whereas second language instruction does not. From this perspective, budding readers benefit by using texts that reflect the phonology and syntactic patterns of their spoken language variety, and they can then transfer the newly acquired skills to texts written in another language. Put simply, this research indicates that it is easier to learn to read in a language that you speak.

While these studies provide strong support for the usage of home language and literacy practices in school, it is important to note that decisions regarding best pedagogical practice should consider the particulars of a given learning context, including the perspectives of all those involved (e.g., learners, parents, teachers, communities). Indeed the implications of a chosen language of instruction go beyond the realm of linguistic awareness to include such factors as attitudes toward particular languages and

the relative support from stakeholders for L1 or L2 instruction (e.g., Robinson-Pant, 2000).

Evidence for the importance of carefully considering the learning context comes from research that has demonstrated that the absence of L1 instruction may not impair learning in the L2. One such “counter-example” comes from Wagner, Spratt, and Ezzaki (1989) with their study of 166 Berber- and Moroccan Arabic-speaking children attending school together in a rural village in Morocco, and learning to read in Standard Arabic. Using longitudinal data gained from a variety of reading assessments over a five-year period, they found that despite an initial lag, after five years in school children who were initially monolingual in Berber had reached a level of competence with Standard Arabic literacy abilities comparable to their Moroccan Arabic-speaking peers. The authors cite a number of contextual factors that may explain the findings. For one, there was no competing literacy in Berber. Also, the Berber-speaking children gained experience with spoken and written Arabic both in school and in their community. Finally, as the language of Islam, Standard Arabic was both useful and prestigious from the perspective of the study participants and their families. Thus, all of the children were likely motivated to learn Standard Arabic literacy practices.

Translanguaging Pedagogy

With the study described above, Jiménez, et al. (1995) sought to better understand the strategies that Latina/o readers use while reading in Spanish and English. The research methods they used, however, also provided a glimpse into some of the dynamic

ways in which bilingual learners employ knowledge and abilities in two languages to achieve communication and learning goals. Rather than use the L1 or the L2, or alternate back and forth between the two languages, bilingual learners more accurately use their linguistic resources in concert. In this sense, the languages themselves are not the subject, but instead the linguistic and bilingual practices.

These “translanguaging” practices allow learners and their teachers to move seamlessly across languages and literacies as they accommodate their own existing competencies and work to develop new ones (e.g., Baker, 2003; García, 2009b). A pedagogy that recognizes, encourages, and facilitates flexible and dynamic language practices will provide bilingual learners with opportunities to engage fully in both academic and social activities in school.

For example, Danling Fu (2009) has documented these translanguaging practices in action with children learning to write in Chinese (their primary home language) and English. When novice writers have the option to employ a combination of languages to create texts, they benefit from the freedom to express themselves using any words that come to mind (regardless of language) and the cognitive space to focus on developing writing competencies (e.g., organizing techniques). Fu demonstrated that by integrating all modes of both languages (i.e. speaking, listening, reading writing), English learners gain proficiency in conveying ideas through writing and can eventually apply their new competencies to the production of academic English-medium texts. In this way, the students were able to develop both home language and English language writing practices.

However, as discussed above, patterns of language use in schools often reflect the language ideologies present in the larger society (Blackledge & Creese, 2010). In the United States, despite rich linguistic diversity, languages other than English are often considered inappropriate (or even threatening) in public domains (e.g., schools). Therefore, pedagogy is commonly guided by restrictive rather than inclusive language policies (e.g., English-only). Despite the constraints imposed by monolingual ideologies, there are promising examples of teachers organizing classrooms and designing lessons and activities so as to harness, rather than suppress, the translanguaging practices of bilingual learners. (See, for example, Hornberger & Link, 2012.)

Instructional Programming

While programs referred to as “bilingual” or “dual language” vary greatly in design and implementation, findings consistently indicate that ELs benefit from extended (i.e. at least through the elementary grade levels) home language instruction (e.g., August & Hakuta, 1997; Howard, Christian, & Genesee, 2003; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Ramirez, et al., 1991; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Studies that compare the experiences of students classified as English learners who have participated in diverse instructional programs provide strong evidence for the positive influence of home language instruction on a variety of academic outcomes, including reading and math achievement (e.g., Burnham-Massey & Piña, 1990), persistence in school (Thomas & Collier, 2002), and perceptions of self and school (e.g., Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2001).

A study conducted by Ramirez, et al. (1991) in the late 80s provides an early analysis of academic outcomes among students participating in programs in the United

States with varying constellations of L1 and L2 instruction. This six-year study included about 2,000 Spanish-speaking students who had been classified as English learners within nine school districts in California, Florida, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. The overall aim of the study was to compare the academic outcomes of students participating in structured immersion programs and late-exit transitional bilingual programs to those of students participating in early-exit transitional bilingual programs – which the authors states were the most commonly funded programs at that time. With the early-exit programs in this study, instructional use of the L1 was limited, and children transitioned into English-only programs as soon as they reached district standards for proficiency in English. This typically occurred after two or three years. With late-exit programs, instructional use of the L1 occurred during at least 50 percent of the time, and children transitioned at the end of fifth-or sixth-grade. With structured immersion programs instruction was in English, and the L1 was used only informally (e.g., clarification, translation).

Findings show that the students in the long-term language programs (structured immersion and late-exit bilingual) had better outcomes than those who transitioned from Spanish to English in the earlier grade levels. Students in the structured immersion programs and students in the late-exit programs had similar English language and reading outcomes after sixth grade. However, by the sixth-grade math performance was higher among students in the late-exit programs than among students in the structured immersion programs.

In a more recent study, Lindholm-Leary (2001) also investigated the ELA and math achievement of students participating in programs with varying amounts of L1 and

L2 instruction. Specifically, she compared academic outcomes among students participating in fourteen 90:10 bilingual programs and two 50:50 bilingual programs located in California, and one in Alaska. All of the programs involved instruction in Spanish and English with the exception of one, which used Portuguese and English. In this study, with the 90:10 model, L1 usage occurred during 90 percent of instructional time and English language usage occurred during 10 percent of instructional time in the elementary grade levels. Then the ratio shifted to 50:50 in the secondary grade levels. In contrast, with the 50:50 model the L1 was used during 50 percent of instructional time for all grade levels. Results indicate that sixth-grade ELA and math achievement was comparable between the two groups, but students who had participated in the 90:10 programs were more proficient in Spanish.

In general, researchers consistently find that students classified as ELs who participate in programs with stable L1 instruction do reach similar, or higher, levels of academic achievement when compared with their EL and non-EL peers who participate in programs with limited L1 instruction or English-only programs. It is noteworthy, however, that there is some disagreement in the literature concerning whether languages in a bilingual classroom ought to be separated or allowed to mingle. In contrast to the translanguaging approaches discussed above, some scholars advocate for a separation of languages by instructional blocks of time and/or thematic units (e.g., Lindholm-Leary, 2001). Conceivably, a combination of methods could also be effective as teachers navigate the complexities of particular school contexts.

Home Language Influences Without Home Language Instruction

Despite mounting evidence for the benefits of home language instruction and an absence of evidence for adverse effects of home language instruction on language development or academic learning, programs that utilize students' home languages in the classroom are the exception rather than the rule. In fact, policies pertaining to the education of language minorities commonly call for the rapid development of English language abilities with minimal, if any, primary language supports. In California, for example, the provision of primary language supports does not normally exceed one year (California Secretary of State, 1998).

This approach is particularly troubling given that researchers have demonstrated that the development of the academic English language skills needed to reach high levels of achievement in school typically takes at least five years (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000) and as many as ten years if no primary language supports are provided (Collier, 1995). Realistically, ELs need adequate and appropriate language supports throughout their elementary school years in order to acquire both the content knowledge and the English language skills necessary to continue through the education system at the same pace as their non-EL peers.

Because the present circumstances are such that few ELs participate in bilingual programs, it is important to understand the role of home language abilities in the absence of home language instruction. Are bilingual learners finding ways to use their home language practices to advance their learning in school? Are teachers finding ways to support home language practices even though policy regulations mandate only English? If home language abilities do indeed support academic learning in an English-only

context, are the benefits evident across the grade levels? While numerous studies have identified and detailed the benefits of home language instruction for ELs' English language development and academic achievement, the relationship between individual students' home language abilities and their academic achievement trajectories over time in a context where the teaching and learning activities are conducted exclusively (or overwhelmingly) in English is not well known. The first portion of this study aims to address this gap.

Beyond Language

As decades of research make clear, current language in education policies, which narrowly focus on English language development for ELs, neglect the critical role of home language use and development in academic achievement. This focus is predicated on an assumption that underachievement among ELs is largely attributable to limited English language proficiency. A related assumption is that struggling ELs would reach high levels of achievement in school with more advanced English language practices. This perspective is problematic for several reasons. First, the implication is that academic struggles among ELs originate with their home languages and cultures. Although linguists and educators have long since debunked this deficit perspective – i.e. the view that some home environments are culturally and linguistically impoverished and the source of academic failure (see Labov, 1972, for an early challenge to the deprivation theory on language) – students' home languages are commonly treated as challenges to overcome in school. Rather than critique a chosen instructional method, the blame for low academic achievement among language minorities is often shifted to the students

themselves. Rather than viewed as a resource, the home languages of these learners become the problem.

Second, and unfortunately, there is ample evidence that numerous students from historically disadvantaged minority groups do not reach high levels of academic achievement despite their English language proficiency (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Lastly, the view that the students themselves need to change before they can learn engenders low expectations for their academic achievement and contributes to the common practice of tracking ELs into low level classes with less rigorous curricula (Ovando & Collier, 1998).

The second part of this research (Research Question 2) aims to shift the focus away from language proficiency to examine instead school processes that shape the academic identities of English learners and contribute to their differential achievement. Scholars have increasingly drawn on the concept of identity to understand the ways in which students are positioned in school and the associated influences on learning (e.g., Johnson, et al., 2011; Leander, 2002; Wortham, 2006). In contrast to historical conceptions that represent identity as a version of self that is achieved developmentally (Erikson, 1968), more recent scholarship instead conceives of identity as a social construct. That is, an identity is both available to an individual and recognized by others precisely because it is mutually constituted (Gee, 2001; Holland & Lave, 2001). Within this framework, both broadly available models of identity and more local conceptions define the range of possible selves. In practice, identification is accomplished as socially and culturally relevant behaviors, interactions, and events are interpreted in line with shared ideas of meaning and worth. Particular identities take shape and hold as acts index similar ideas across time and space (Wortham, 2006).

Within the context of a school, academic achievement can be conceived of as a practice that involves learning particular knowledge and skills and also interacting and communicating in sanctioned ways. Young learners must locate themselves in the community of practice (Holland & Lave, 2001) as they work to achieve in school. A host of factors could influence their positioning within the community at different points in time and in different places. For instance, learners' relative access to the social and cultural capital that is valued in school positions them variably toward the core or on the margins of the community. Another factor that influences positioning in the classroom is the power dynamic among community members. For example, (as discussed above) language minority learners in English-only contexts are pushed to the periphery of the community because they have less power than proficient speakers of the dominant language.

Guided by this notion of identification as a social process, this study considers the influence of achievement assessments on the academic identities of students classified as (former) English learners in a LAUSD middle school. As the crux of an accountability system that monitors student achievement, and teacher and school performance, standardized achievement assessments occupy a central role in numerous schools in the United States. Accordingly, researchers have examined the meaning of this system for the school experiences of students and their teachers. In doing so, they have identified negative effects on teaching and learning (e.g., Madaus, West, Harmon, Lomax, & Viator, 1992), and for language minorities in particular (e.g., Menken, 2008). For example, evidence indicates that standardized assessments can transform the culture of a school by shifting the overall goal from one that focuses on learning to one that focuses

on test performance (e.g., Black & William, 2004). Other researchers have called attention to the ways in which standardized assessments interfere with the practices of teachers by strictly dictating what and how they can teach, and by substantially reducing non-testing instructional time (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1988; McNeil, 1988). Less understood, however, are the processes by which the standardized assessment system shape students' very identities as learners. The second portion of this research aims to contribute to the discussion with an examination of these processes.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter comprises an account of the mixed methods used to identify and explain factors other than English language abilities that are related to differential academic achievement among Spanish-speaking students classified as English learners in Los Angeles Unified School District. Presented first are the quantitative research techniques utilized to investigate the relationship between students' oral Spanish language abilities (as measured by a standardized assessment) and their academic achievement trajectories (Research Question 1). Following that is a discussion of the ethnographic methods used to examine how particular social identification processes occurring in school shape high- and low-achieving students' academic identities and expand or limit their opportunities to learn (Research Question 2).

How Do Spanish Language Abilities Relate to Academic Achievement in an English-Only Context?

To examine how oral Spanish language proficiency in kindergarten (as measured with a standardized assessment) is related to subsequent academic achievement in English language arts and math nine years of longitudinal, student-level data from Los Angeles Unified School District were used to model students' achievement trajectories. Next, to contextualize the findings descriptive analyses of oral Spanish and English language assessment results from kindergarten were used to delineate students' (assessment-based) linguistic profiles and to consider the relationship between performance on the Spanish language assessment and programmatic placements.

Research Question 1: How do Spanish language abilities relate to academic achievement in an English-only context?

- (a) What is the relationship between oral Spanish language proficiency as measured in kindergarten with a standardized assessment and subsequent achievement in English language arts?
- (b) What is the relationship between oral Spanish language proficiency as measured in kindergarten with a standardized assessment and subsequent achievement in math?
- (c) How do Spanish language assessment results relate to students' programmatic placements?

The dataset used consists of data routinely collected by the school district.

Included are each student's basic demographic and family information (sex, primary home language, free- or reduced-priced lunch status, and parental education level), language classification (e.g., English learner), language assessment scores, programmatic placements, academic achievement test scores, and schools attended. The language assessment data include scores on both English and primary home language assessments for the academic years 2001-2002 through 2009-2010. Academic achievement test data include second- through seventh-grade scores on the California Standards Tests (CSTs) in English language arts and math for the academic years 2003-2004 through 2009-2010.

Academic Achievement and Language Assessments

To examine the relationship between kindergarten oral Spanish language proficiency and subsequent academic achievement, scores from the CSTs in English language arts and math were used as outcome measures. Internal consistency analyses

(measured by Cronbach's Alpha) indicate that the grade-level CSTs in English language arts and math from the academic years 2003-2004 through 2009-2010 are highly reliable with coefficients ranging from 0.92 to 0.94 (Educational Testing Service, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011).

Beginning in second grade, students are annually assessed on grade-level content using the CSTs. However, because the CSTs are criterion-referenced assessments that are not vertically-scaled, one cannot use the scores to measure growth in academic achievement over time. In other words, without vertical scales, the CST scores are not comparable across grade levels. For example, a given numeric score on the second grade English language arts assessment represents a different level of knowledge and skills than the same numeric score on the third grade English language arts assessment. Given this limitation of the CST data, I aimed to model *relative* achievement over time. Rather than growth in English language arts and math achievement, analyses assessed a student's achievement trajectory relative to grade-level peers attending LAUSD schools at the same time.

To this end, data from all students in the school district were used to convert the CST scale scores to z-scores (standardized scores with mean 0 and standard deviation 1). Both ELA and math scores were standardized for each grade level and year combination. For example, the standardized form of a given student's second grade ELA score is relative to all other students in LAUSD who took the second grade ELA assessment that same year. This standardization process also functioned to remove any differences in scores that may exist due to tests that vary in difficulty across grade levels or years, or because of varying levels of knowledge and skills across cohorts of students.

By using the CST scores of all students in LAUSD to calculate the z-scores, test performance among students in the analytic sample (defined below) was represented relative to test performance among the full population of students in the school district. Therefore, analyses estimated the achievement trajectories of students in the analytic sample relative to their grade-level peers – both ELs and non-ELs alike. With z-scores as the outcome measures, the average expected achievement trajectory was flat and centered at zero.

Next, it is useful to explain the process by which LAUSD determines a student's language classification, as well as introduce the assessments that the district administers in order to gain information regarding the English language and primary home language abilities of students classified as ELs.⁶ Language classification begins with the Home Language Survey (HLS). In accordance with federal and state laws, all students who indicate a language other than English on the HLS must take an English language assessment within 30 days of enrollment (California Department of Education, 2012b). LAUSD utilizes the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), which is the assessment adopted by the state. In alignment with the California English-Language Development (ELD) Standards, each grade span form of the CELDT (i.e. K-1, 2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12) is organized into four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing

⁶ The language assessment procedures described here changed following the June 2012 adoption of the new Master Plan for English learners. Most notable with respect to this research was the change in primary home language assessment procedures. During the time period of the present study, the district's language assessment policy required all ELs to be assessed in their primary home languages upon entry into the district. However, under the new policy students are tested in their primary home languages only if they are enrolled in an alternative instructional program (i.e. transitional bilingual, maintenance bilingual, or dual language). Any student may be assessed in a home language if recommended by the EL coordinator, counselor, administrator, teacher, IEP team, or parent (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2012).

(California Department of Education, 2002).⁷ Internal consistency analyses (measured by Cronbach's Alpha) indicate that the kindergarten listening and speaking subtests (the subtests which were used in the present study) from the academic years 2002-2003 through 2008-09⁸ are reliable with coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.93 (CTB/McGraw-Hill 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2007b, 2008, 2009).

Each of a student's domain scores is classified into one of five proficiency levels: Beginning, Early Intermediate, Intermediate, Early Advanced, and Advanced. A common scale allows for comparisons of scale scores across adjacent grade levels; however, with changes to the common scale in 2006, CELDT editions prior to 2006 are not comparable to later forms.

Since some students included in this study took the CELDT before the rescaling and others after, CELDT scores were also standardized to have mean 0 and standard deviation 1. Using listening and speaking CELDT data for all ELs in the school district, z-scores were calculated by cohort. In other words, for all ELs who entered the district as kindergarteners, "initial CELDT" listening and speaking scale scores (i.e. scores from kindergarten for students who entered the district as kindergarteners) were converted into z-scores, and this was done for each cohort separately. Therefore, a given student's standardized initial CELDT score is relative to all other ELs who were assessed in kindergarten that same year.

⁷ In 1999, the California State Board of Education adopted the ELD standards that were in operation during the present research. In October 2011, Assembly Bill 124 obliged California State Superintendent of Public Instruction to revise the existing ELD standards by November 2012. At the time of this writing, stakeholders are taking steps toward implementation of newly developed ELD standards (California Department of Education, 2013).

⁸ The 2001-2002 Technical Report for the CELDT was unavailable online.

With the initial CELDT assessment, students with an overall score of Early Advanced or Advanced, and with no domain below Intermediate, are classified as Initial Fluent English Proficient (IFEP). Students with an overall score of Beginning, Early Intermediate, or Intermediate, or who have one or more domain below Intermediate, are classified as ELs. Each subsequent year, students classified as ELs take the CELDT anew until they are reclassified as Fluent English Proficient (RFEP). Several criteria are required for reclassification with some variation across grade levels. For elementary students the criteria include, proficiency on the CELDT, a progress report of 3 or 4 for English language arts class, grade-level achievement on the state test in English language arts (i.e. the CST) as demonstrated by a minimum score of Basic, and parent consultation (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2011b).

During the time of this research, all students who were classified as ELs were also assessed in their primary home languages upon entering the school district – an assessment process that was required in the state of California. The vast majority of students included in the dataset (approximately 95%) took the Pre-Language Assessment Scale 2000 Español (*preLAS Español*). Other methods utilized to assess primary home language proficiency include, the Basic Inventory of Natural Language (BINL), the IDEA Language Proficiency Test (IPT), the Parent Inventory – Observation Checklist (PI-OC), and the Language Assessment Scales (LAS).

The *preLAS Español* is designed for use with bilingual and/or native Spanish-speaking children ages four through six and aims to measure expressive and receptive Spanish language skills (De Avila & Duncan, 1998). The assessment includes oral language and pre-literacy components; however, LAUSD administers only the oral

language component, which is comprised of five subtests: *Simón dice* (Simon says); *Muestra de arte* (Art show); *Repetición de frases* (Say what you hear); *El cuerpo humano* (The human body); and *Contando cuentos* (Let's tell stories). Table 1 details each of the oral language component subtests.

The *preLAS* Español has both strengths and weaknesses. One benefit of the assessment, as noted in a recently published guidebook for assessing Spanish-English bilingual preschoolers, is its likely appeal to young children (Barrueco, López, Ong, and Lozano, 2012). Barrueco et al. also highlight strong face and content validities owing to the wide variety of activities (e.g., classroom observations, item-level analyses) that informed item development and selection. Internal consistency for the oral language component of the *preLAS* Español is generally adequate with reliability coefficients (Cronbach's Alphas) ranging from 0.66 (*El cuerpo humano*) to 0.88 (*Muestra de arte*) (De Avila & Duncan, 1998).

Drawbacks of the *preLAS* Español include a lack of clarity regarding the scoring and classification procedures, as well as a narrow scope of assessment. More specifically, Barrueco et al. (2012) point out that the *preLAS* Español publishers do not provide justification for the scoring weights applied to each subtest. To determine a child's performance on the assessment, a test administrator first tallies the correct responses for each of the five subtests and then multiplies each of those sums by a subtest-specific weight. The five weighted scores are then combined to form the overall score. However, it is not clear on which theory(ies) or empirical data the weighting decisions were based. In particular, the subtest *Contando cuentos* is weighted highly, yet correlates weakly (i.e. in the 0.30 range) with each of the other oral language subtests. MacSwan, Rolstad, and

Table 1

preLAS Español Oral Language Subtest Descriptions

Subtest	Description
<i>Simon dice</i> (20%)	A measure of receptive vocabulary. After briefly explaining the popular children’s game, the test administrator first plays the role of Simon in order to practice with the child. Then the test administrator plays an audio recording that provides ten test commands for the child to follow. (E.g., “ <i>Simón dice esconde el lápiz debajo del papel.</i> ” – Simon says hide the pencil under the paper.) A response is correct if the child accurately follows Simon’s instructions, and incorrect if not.
<i>Muestra de arte</i> (10%)	A measure of expressive vocabulary. The test administrator points to an item in a drawing (e.g., a butterfly) and asks the child to name the item (“ <i>¿Qué es esto?</i> ” – What is this?) or both name the item (e.g., a table) and describe its function (“ <i>¿Qué es esto? ¿Qué puedes hacer con esto?</i> ” – What is this? What can you do with this?) Examples of acceptable responses are provided for the test administrator. Alternative responses are also acceptable if commonly used among proficient Spanish-speakers from the child’s community.
<i>Repetición de frases</i> (20%)	A measure of both receptive and expressive language. The test administrator instructs the child to listen to an audio recording and then say the same thing that s/he hears. (E.g., “ <i>Ninguno ganó.</i> ” – No one won.) A response is considered correct if the child repeats exactly the target phrase. There is no penalization for difficulty with pronunciation (e.g., consonant omission).
<i>El cuerpo humano</i> (10%)	A measure of expressive vocabulary. The test administrator points to parts of the body in drawings (e.g., nose), and the child is to name them. An item is correct if the child states the body part, and incorrect if not.
<i>Contando cuentos</i> (40%)	A measure of both receptive and expressive language. The test administrator reads the child a story that is accompanied with illustrative drawings. Then the child is to retell the story using the same drawings as cues. The process is repeated a second time with a different story. The test administrator both audio-records and transcribes the child’s responses, and the test manual provides age-specific guidelines for scoring the child’s responses.

Note. The percentages in parentheses indicate the weighting applied to each subtest.

Glass (2002) also cite the apparent omission of an explanation for the weighting decisions in their analysis of the previous version of the *preLAS* Español.

Similar to the subtest weights, the publishers do not provide an explanation for the proficiency level cutoff points. There are five proficiency levels associated with the oral language component of the *preLAS* Español: Level 1, *no fluente en español* (non-Spanish speaker); Level 2, *limitado en español* (limited Spanish speaker); Level 3, *limitado en español* (limited Spanish speaker); Level 4, *fluente en español* (proficient Spanish speaker); and Level 5, *fluente en español* (proficient Spanish speaker). However, it is not clear if there are meaningful differences in language abilities between two children with scores that are numerically close, but that fall on opposite sides of a proficiency level cutoff point.

Additionally, while portions of the *preLAS* Español are generally straightforward in terms of the tested language elements (e.g., *El cuerpo humano*), the subtest *Contando cuentos* privileges particular kinds of language over others (MacSwan, Rolstad, & Glass, 2002). For example, a child who uses a mix of Spanish and English in her retelling of a story would score lower than a child whose retelling is similar in content and complexity but who uses few or no English words. As a result, a child who is proficient in Spanish but accustomed to codeswitching may be at a disadvantage with this subtest. Also, the *Contando cuentos* subtest includes narrative practices that are common in school but may be rare at a child's home. For example, the storytelling traditions of some communities do not typically involve adults prompting children with questions that they already know the answers to, such as, "Who is this?" (while pointing at an illustration), or "What

happened here?” For this reason, the assessment storytelling activity may be unfamiliar to some students.

Furthermore, because the *preLAS* Español assesses only particular uses of Spanish (rather than a child’s full repertoire of Spanish), the classification labels are misleading. For example, a child who receives a low score on the *preLAS* Español, and is thus classified as a “Non-speaker,” may nonetheless speak Spanish.

LAUSD does not employ the numerical classification of levels (1 through 5), but uses only the following four classification names: NON (Non-Speaker); LTD (Limited); FNC (Fluent); and PRO (Proficient). With the school district’s classification system, Level 2, *limitado en español* (limited Spanish speaker) and Level 3, *limitado en español* (limited Spanish speaker) are combined. (Table 2 portrays the *preLAS* Español numerical classification of levels and descriptions along with the corresponding LAUSD classifications.). Because LAUSD utilizes the *preLAS* Español classification labels (e.g., non-Spanish speaker), they are retained here in reporting the analyses of the school district data.

Table 2

preLAS Español Proficiency Levels and Corresponding LAUSD Classifications

<i>preLAS Español</i> Level	<i>preLAS Español</i> Description	LAUSD Level	LAUSD Description
1	<i>no fluente en español</i>	NON	non-Spanish speaker
2	<i>limitado en español</i>	LTD	limited Spanish speaker
3	<i>limitado en español</i>		
4	<i>fluente en español</i>	FNC	fluent Spanish speaker
5	<i>fluente en español</i>	PRO	proficient Spanish speaker

Given the assessment limitations, the present study seeks to determine the relationship between a set of Spanish language abilities (i.e. those targeted with the *preLAS Español*) and academic achievement in ELA and math. At times in this discussion I use terms such as “oral language proficiency” and “expressive and receptive skills” in reference to the narrow set of Spanish language abilities targeted by the *preLAS Español*; I do not intend to describe students’ full linguistic repertoires.

Sample Selection

Selection of the student sample involved several steps. First, only Spanish-speaking students classified as ELs who entered LAUSD *in kindergarten* were included. Restricting the sample in this way minimized complexities that arise when comparing students with varying years of formal schooling and/or schooling in very different contexts. Second, student cohorts were defined based on the years when students entered

kindergarten (e.g., those in cohort 2002 entered kindergarten in academic year 2001-2002). Then the cohorts for whom the dataset includes both initial language assessment data (i.e. from kindergarten) and at least two years of achievement test scores were selected. Given the overall year-span of the dataset (academic years 2001-2002 through 2009-2010), six cohorts (comprising 141,788 students) satisfy those criteria (see Table 3).

Table 3

Available Grade-Level Achievement Test (CST) Data by Cohort

Cohort	Academic year						
	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10
2002	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2003		2	3	4	5	6	7
2004			2	3	4	5	6
2005				2	3	4	5
2006					2	3	4
2007						2	3

Note. CST = California Standards Test

Finally, the language assessment data was used to refine the sample. Only those students who have initial CELDT scores from their respective kindergarten years were selected. To provide greater assurance that only kindergarten CELDT data were included, the year of a student’s initial CELDT score had to match that student’s cohort year.

Therefore, data on this variable is missing for a student if either the dataset does not include an initial CELDT score, or the score is dated before or after a student was in kindergarten. With less than four percent of students (5,464) missing data on this variable, the sample was reduced to 134,727. Then, an additional 1,567 students, or approximately one percent, were deleted due to missing data on the Spanish language assessment. Lastly, seeking consistency with this primary variable of interest, only those students who took the *preLAS* Español (more than 96 percent of the sample) were retained. Ultimately, the analytic sample included 128,141 students (see Table 4).

Table 4

Analytic Sample by Cohort

Cohort	<i>N</i>
2002	25,268
2003	23,115
2004	19,965
2005	19,528
2006	19,433
2007	20,832
All	128,141

The sample is divided evenly between females (49.5 percent) and males (50.5 percent), and about 62 percent of students are eligible for free- or reduced-priced lunch. Approximately 37 percent of students' parents did not graduate from high school, about 20 percent have a high school diploma, less than seven percent have some post-high school education, and about four percent have a college degree or higher. For more than

30 percent of students there is no parental education information because either their parents declined to provide information (about 26 percent), or because data on this variable was missing (about six percent). In the analyses a binary variable was used to represent parental education level, where students are classified as having parents with or without a college degree or higher.⁹ Given the very small percentage of students whose parents have college or graduate degrees among the 70 percent of students with data on this measure, it is likely few students without information on this variable have parents with a college or graduate degree.

Since all students included in the sample entered the district as kindergarteners, they were assessed with the *preLAS* Español in kindergarten. Close to 14 percent of students were classified as Proficient, approximately 24 percent as Fluent, 28 percent as Limited, and 34 percent as Non-Speakers. On average, students scored at an Early Intermediate level on the listening and speaking subtests of the initial CELDT ($M = 417.18$, $SD = 78.00$). Approximately 14 percent of students were identified as eligible for special education services, and about 13 percent participated at some point in an alternative instructional program (i.e. a basic bilingual or dual language program). Table 5 provides a summary of the student characteristics for the analytic sample.

⁹ Although only four percent of students in the analytic sample have parents with a college degree or higher, I decided to include the parental education variable in the models because four percent constitutes more than 5,000 students. Moreover, because previous research (e.g., United States Department of Education, 2001) has identified parental education level as strongly and positively related to academic achievement it is an important variable to include, even though there is minimal variation within the focal population.

Table 5

Student Characteristics for Analytic Sample by Cohort

	Cohort						
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	All
Female	0.50	0.50	0.49	0.49	0.50	0.50	0.50
Free/reduced priced lunch	0.66	0.66	0.62	0.61	0.61	0.59	0.63
Parent w/ college degree or higher	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04
<i>preLAS Español</i>							
Non-speaker	0.28	0.32	0.34	0.36	0.37	0.40	0.34
Limited	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.27	0.28
Fluent	0.27	0.26	0.25	0.23	0.22	0.22	0.24
Proficient	0.17	0.14	0.13	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.14
Initial CELDT (mean)	413.46	421.60	416.36	416.48	418.32	336.63*	417.18**
220 – 409 = Beginning							
412 – 457 = Early intermediate							
460 – 501 = Intermediate							
506 – 548 = Early advanced							
555 – 710 = Advanced							
Special education ever	0.12	0.13	0.14	0.15	0.14	0.13	0.14
Alternative program ever	--	0.13	0.15	0.14	0.14	0.12	0.13
Number of students	25,268	23,115	19,965	19,528	19,433	20,832	128,141

Note. K = kindergarten; CELDT = California English Language Development Test.

CELDT cut-scores listed are those defined in the CELDT Technical Report for kindergarteners on the speaking and listening subtests (CTB/McGraw-Hill, 2002).

*With the new common scale first implemented academic year 2006-07, the CELDT speaking/listening kindergarten cut scores changed as follows: 180 to 352 = Beginning; 362 – 400 = Early intermediate; 411 – 453 = Intermediate; 470 – 500 = Early advanced; 531 – 600 = Advanced (CTB/McGraw Hill, 2007).

**The mean initial CELDT for all cohorts excludes cohort 2007 due to the difference in scaling.

The dataset does not include programmatic data for academic year 2001-2002; and so, without kindergarten data for cohort 2002, an accurate account of their participation in alternative programs was not possible.

Analyses

To compare the relative academic achievement trajectories of students with varying levels of oral Spanish language proficiency in kindergarten hierarchical growth curve modeling with cross-classified random effects was used. Descriptive analyses were conducted to examine students' oral Spanish and English language proficiencies and to

identify language patterns across separate cohorts of kindergarteners, as well as to investigate the relationship between students' language assessment performance and their programmatic placements.

Hierarchical modeling, alternatively referred to as multilevel analysis, mixed effects modeling, or random coefficient analysis (Laird & Ware, 1982), allows for the assessment of growth or decline in academic achievement over time, while also considering the influences of both student and school characteristics (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1988). Several qualities of this method make it particularly suitable for educational research. Advantages include the flexibility to model individual trajectories by allowing the regression coefficients for time to vary across subjects. Additionally, subjects need not be measured on the same number of occasions. Those with incomplete outcome data are retained with the assumption that the data are missing at random (i.e. the probability of a data point to be missing is assumed related to observed data but not to missing data), a more relaxed assumption than missing completely at random (i.e. the probability of a data point to be missing is assumed unrelated to any value, missing or observed) (Little, 1995).

Random cross-classified models offer an improvement over traditional multilevel models for situations in which data are not strictly hierarchical (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). A common illustration of the cross-classified structure considers the effects of school and neighborhood characteristics on students' educational achievement. In this example, rather than a purely nested structure in which all students (Level 1) attending a set of schools (Level 2) live in the same neighborhood (Level 3) or alternatively, all students (Level 1) living in a cluster of neighborhoods (Level 2) attend the same school

(Level 3), a more complex arrangement exists with each school serving children from various neighborhoods, and each neighborhood providing children for various schools.

Similarly, when individuals are members of more than one higher-level unit, a cross-classified modeling structure can better accommodate the data than a model that assumes a distinct hierarchy of levels. In educational research, multiple-membership often occurs with longitudinal data owing to student mobility (Grady & Beretvas, 2010). Students commonly change schools for numerous reasons, including residential moves, desire to participate in particular academic programs, difficulties with teachers or peers, or transitions from one grade-level to the next. In such cases, it would not be accurate to attribute school effects on achievement to any single school. Other methods for handling the complication of student mobility include considering only the students who remained in one school during the course of the study, or using only data from the first school each student attends. Instead, with cross-classified random effects modeling, one can include data from all students and schools.

In the present study, because of changes to school membership among students during the measurement period, repeated measures of academic achievement are cross-classified by students and time-varying schools. To investigate the relationship between kindergarten Spanish language proficiency and subsequent academic achievement, multilevel models were fit using HLM 7 (Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, et al., 2011), standard statistical software for analyzing multilevel data. With cumulative effect models the program incorporates carry-over treatment effects to capture a student's membership in more than one school (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002, pp. 390-393). Using a full

maximum likelihood approach, estimates of the fixed regression coefficients and the variance components were obtained.

The primary predictor of interest was performance on the *preLAS* Español. With four possible classifications on this Spanish language assessment (Proficient, Fluent, Limited, and Non-Speaker), Non-Speaker is held out as the reference group. To control for observed student characteristics related to academic achievement, several covariates were included in the models. With the exception of the continuous CELDT variable, all of the covariates were represented by dummy codes. Dichotomous variables had a single dummy code with the first listed option serving as the reference group: sex (male, female), FRL status (no FRL, FRL), and parental education (no college degree, college degree or higher).

To establish the latent form for relative academic achievement trajectories, first the unconditional model was implemented. An unconditional model is one without predictor variables that indicates how much variance in student achievement can be attributed to factors on which students differ and how much to factors on which schools differ. Both linear and quadratic components for time were added to the model to describe the patterns of change in the outcome measures. With annual academic achievement assessments as the outcome measures, grade level advancement was used to represent time. Using Raudenbush and Bryk's (2002) representation of levels, the Level-1 model takes the form,

$$Y_{ijk} = \pi_{0jk} + \pi_{1jk} a_{ijk} + \pi_{2jk} a_{ijk}^2 + e_{ijk} \quad (1)$$

where Y_{ijk} represents the outcome (ELA or math) at time i for student j in school k ; π_{0jk} represents the mean achievement for student j ; π_{1jk} represents the linear component of time and π_{2jk} the quadratic component of time for student j 's trajectory; a_{ijk} takes on the values 0 to 5 for second to seventh grade, respectively; and e_{ijk} is a random within-subject residual assumed normally distributed with mean 0 and variance σ^2 . The Level-2 model can be expressed as,

$$\begin{aligned}\pi_{0jk} &= \theta_0 + b_{00j} + c_{00k} \\ \pi_{1jk} &= \theta_1 + b_{10j} \\ \pi_{2jk} &= \theta_2 + b_{20j}\end{aligned}\tag{2}$$

where θ_0 represents the grand mean for achievement (ELA or math); b_{00j} is the random effect associated with student j on the mean achievement; c_{00k} is a random school effect, or an expected deflection to the growth curve associated with attending school k ; θ_1 is the average linear rate of change, b_{10j} is the random effect associated with student j on the average linear component, θ_2 is the average quadratic rate of change, and b_{20j} is the random effect associated with student j on the average quadratic component. Including a school-level random effect for growth would allow the model to separate individual and school-level influences on growth; however, since students of different backgrounds are not evenly distributed across schools, the school effects may capture part of what is really an individual phenomenon (i.e. the school and individual effects are confounded). As such, I chose to include only a student-level random effect for growth since the research questions focus on individual student experiences. Substitution of the Level 2 model within the Level 1 model yields a mixed effects model given by the formula,

$$Y_{ijk} = \theta_0 + \theta_1 a_{ijk} + \theta_2 a^2_{ijk} + b_{00j} + b_{10j} a_{ijk} + c_{00k} + e_{ijk} \quad (3)$$

Next, to test whether oral Spanish language proficiency in kindergarten could explain some of the variation in individual trajectories, a conditional Level-2 model was constructed. In addition to performance on the Spanish assessment, the above named covariates were also included; thus, the effect of oral Spanish language proficiency assessed in the model was over and above that of the covariates. To allow language abilities to influence patterns of change in achievement, interactions between the components for time and the two language variables (i.e. scores on the oral Spanish and English language assessments in kindergarten) were added. This conditional Level-2 model can be expressed as,

$$\begin{aligned} \pi_{0jk} &= \theta_0 + b_{00j} + c_{00k} \\ &\quad + \gamma_{01} (FEMALE)_j \\ &\quad + \gamma_{02} (FRL)_j \\ &\quad + \gamma_{03} (PAR\ ED)_j \\ &\quad + \gamma_{04} (PRO)_j \\ &\quad + \gamma_{05} (FNC)_j \\ &\quad + \gamma_{06} (LTD)_j \\ &\quad + \gamma_{07} (CELDT)_j \\ \pi_{1jk} &= \theta_1 + b_{10j} \\ &\quad + \gamma_{11} (PRO)_j \\ &\quad + \gamma_{12} (FNC)_j \\ &\quad + \gamma_{13} (LTD)_j \\ &\quad + \gamma_{14} (CELDT)_j \\ \pi_{2jk} &= \theta_2 + b_{20j} \\ &\quad + \gamma_{21} (PRO)_j \\ &\quad + \gamma_{22} (FNC)_j \\ &\quad + \gamma_{23} (LTD)_j \\ &\quad + \gamma_{24} (CELDT)_j \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

where, for example, γ_{01} is the expected difference in mean achievement between females and males at school j . For *CELDT*, the only continuous predictor, γ_{07} is the expected change in mean achievement given a one-unit increase in performance on the CELDT.

Separate analyses were conducted for English language arts and math achievement. Taking into account missingness by design (i.e. the number of potential outcome scores based on the data available for each cohort), 85 percent of possible data points were actually observed (not missing) and included in the analysis (477,843 for ELA achievement, and 477,335 for math achievement of a possible 568,198 for each). Table 6 details the overall count of observed data points by cohort and grade. Again, likelihood-based inferences remain valid under the assumption that the missingness mechanism is missing at random or missing completely at random (Little & Rubin, 2002).

Table 6

Observed Data Points by Grade and Cohort

Grade	Cohort													
	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		All	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
2	24,105	24,176	22,053	22,032	18,943	18,918	18,532	18,529	18,633	18,629	20,309	20,297	122,575	122,581
3	22,783	22,757	20,477	20,497	17,770	17,792	17,812	17,811	17,772	17,836	17,757	17,820	114,371	114,513
4	21,171	21,340	19,365	19,428	17,118	17,143	17,011	17,072	15,389	15,451	--	--	90,054	90,434
5	20,101	20,181	18,802	18,835	16,386	16,437	14,532	14,599	--	--	--	--	69,821	70,052
6	18,450	18,524	16,985	17,040	13,133	13,165	--	--	--	--	--	--	48,568	48,729
7	17,831	17,065	14,623	13,961	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	32,454	31,026
All	124,441	124,043	112,305	111,793	83,350	83,455	67,887	68,011	51,794	51,916	38,066	38,117	477,843	477,335

Note. -- = not applicable.

Limitations

Each student in the sample has access to a range of “communicative competences” (Hymes, 1972) that vary with factors such as one’s conversational partner(s) and the situational context¹⁰. However, like any standardized language assessment, the *preLAS* Español assesses only a small portion of these abilities during an unnatural testing situation. Although this study represents a rare examination of the influence of home language abilities on students’ long-term academic achievement trajectories in the absence of home language instruction, these data can afford only a static representation of highly dynamic processes.

Related, standardized academic achievement assessments (e.g., the CSTs) are inaccurate gauges of learning if the testing situation does not accommodate students’ language proficiency levels (American Educational Research Association et al., 1999). Without appropriate and adequate accommodations, an assessment measures, at least in part, a student’s (mis)understanding of the testing language rather than knowledge of the subject matter. Furthermore, test questions target bodies of knowledge that represent the learning experiences of the dominant culture, and so students’ personal histories of “culturally-conditioned learning experiences”, as well as their particular school experiences, affect their opportunities to learn the tested material (Cummins, 1988, p. 267). That said, for the purposes of the present study, academic achievement assessments are employed to measure a student’s academic trajectory relative to peers. Because the achievement assessments are high-stakes in the sense that the test results drive a number

¹⁰ This notion of communicative competence moves beyond the grammaticality of linguistic rules to include the rules of acceptable use. In bi- and multilingual communities, this includes learning which languages are used when and where, by whom, and for what purposes.

of programmatic decisions (e.g., tracking, language reclassifications, special education placements), students' scores are relevant indicators of advancement through the education system.

Additionally, variables such as parental education level and free- or reduced-priced lunch status provide only crude representations of family characteristics, and may beg more questions than they answer. Home experiences important for both a child's language development and academic achievement more broadly remain unobserved. Similarly, educational program labels (e.g., Structured English Immersion) offer few insights into a student's lived classroom experiences.

Lastly, students who enrolled in LAUSD after kindergarten – either because they immigrated to the country at an older age or because they transferred to LAUSD from another school district – were not included in the analytic sample. Ensuring that the analyses consider only students who have (thus far) received all of their educational services from LAUSD simplifies the interpretation of findings; however, this approach also excludes a substantial portion of the district's Spanish-speaking EL population. Students who immigrate to the United States as older children or adolescents, as well as students with highly mobile lifestyles due to their families' employment or affordable housing opportunities often face additional barriers to high levels of academic achievement (Ingersoll, Scamman, & Eckerling, 1989). Further research is needed to understand the unique challenges associated with residential moves and school transfers and to identify the protective factors that allow newcomers to a school district to find academic success.

How Do Social Identification Processes Occurring in School Influence Academic Achievement?

The second portion of the research considered how social identification processes shape Spanish-speaking English learners' identities as students and the related influences on their opportunities to learn. Indeed, a variety of school experiences combine to shape the academic identity of each student. To name a few, a given student's positioning in school (e.g., as a female, a Mexican-American, an introvert, a shuffler¹¹, a Spanish-speaker, a newcomer) influences her relationships and interactions with teachers and peers; the cultural relevance of lessons has an effect on whether academic learning is personally meaningful for her; and prior academic accomplishments and challenges motivate her school engagement and affect the expectations others have for her.

At the outset, I aimed to examine the role of language(s) and linguistic resources in the social identification processes that shape students' academic identities. However, after the initial stages of data collection, attention shifted to accommodate more significant influences. Specifically, the research focus centered on how standardized assessments of academic achievement, influence students' conceptions of themselves as learners, as well as the perceptions teachers and other students have of them, and ultimately expand or limit their opportunities to learn.

Given the assumption that social identification is fundamentally relational (discussed above in Chapter 2), qualitative research techniques, and ethnographic

¹¹ "Shuffling" emerged as a distinct dance in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Its origins are located in the Melbourne dance parties of that time period (Coles, Knispel, & Knispel, 2005). There are numerous variations of the dance, but the basic steps are fast heel-toe movements. Shuffling was a popular pastime among student participants of this study. Those who practiced the dance created "shuffle crews," while other non-shufflers touted their allegiances to particular crews.

methods in particular, afford the tools to access the processes involved. The design and methodology of this study were ethnographically informed in the following ways: First, a variety of research activities, including participant observations, field notes, conversations and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers, and collections of learning materials, school documents, and student assessments together yielded a rich corpus of information; also, drawing from these multiple sources for analysis allowed for triangulation of data (Fielding & Fielding, 1986); and lastly, with an ongoing process of analysis research questions posed during the initial stages of inquiry were replaced as more critical themes emerged.

Research Site Selection

I decided to conduct this portion of the research in the greater Los Angeles area for several reasons. First, because the longitudinal analyses of language assessment and academic achievement data described above pertain to students attending schools in LAUSD, I aimed to consider relational dynamics operating in the same context. Also, as a former research analyst for the school district and resident of Los Angeles, I reasoned my knowledge of the historical and cultural learning narratives would allow for a greater depth of inquiry, and my familiarity with the district would facilitate the research process.

With a research goal of identifying and explaining school processes that shape Spanish-speaking ELs' academic identities and influence their achievement trajectories, I decided to focus on eighth-grade students in a middle school. By this grade level, students have had extensive school experiences, including accomplishments and challenges, various teachers, classes on diverse subjects, and meaningful relationships. At

the same time, with a number of school years remaining, students are still forging pathways through the educational system.

Moreover, students in eighth-grade, approaching a transition from middle school to high school, are entering a pivotal period in their journeys through formal schooling. When students move to a different school with unfamiliar social and academic expectations they become vulnerable to declines in school engagement and performance (Eccles, Lord, & Midgley, 1991; Harter, Whitesell, & Kowalski, 1992; Neild, 2009). Students' identities as learners in middle school can (positively or negatively) influence their abilities to attain a sense of belonging and academic success in high school.

I elected to conduct participant observations in students' English language arts classes because I reasoned the content and organization of an ELA classroom, with discussions, writing assignments, and student presentations, could provide substantial opportunities to get to know students both academically and personally. Also, ELA is a central component of the curriculum in the United States, and with the current emphasis on achievement testing in ELA and math specifically, these courses have moved into the policy spotlight.

Vernon Middle School

To investigate the varying school experiences among Spanish-speaking students (formerly or currently) classified as ELs, I selected Vernon Middle School¹² (Vernon) as the research site. Vernon serves more than 1500 sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students, of whom close to 90 percent are Latina/o and about eight percent are African American (Vernon Middle School official document). Located in a neighborhood where a

¹² All names – including those of schools, school staff, and students – are pseudonyms.

majority of households earn less than \$40,000 each year, and close to half earn less than \$20,000 (Los Angeles Times, 2013), the school community is representative of numerous others in the district in terms of economic poverty.

Vernon's campus houses a number of buildings for instructional, administrative, and recreational purposes. An eating area adjacent to the cafeteria and the central quad area provide outdoor spaces for students to hang out during nutrition and lunch, while a field sparse with grass and large blacktop located behind the buildings are utilized during physical education and other sporting activities. A tall, barred fence surrounds the school grounds on all sides. Although the setting is overwhelmingly concrete and asphalt, ongoing efforts to improve the school environment include a mural project and the planting of greenery in the quad.

With extensive reductions in funds experienced district-wide in recent years, Vernon, like many other schools, has had fewer resources at its disposal. Perhaps most notable, the school community experienced a substantial number of teacher layoffs. Additionally, Vernon lost its custodial staff due to the budget cuts. To manage that loss, Principal Acosta requested that teachers and other staff members assist with sweeping classroom floors, removing trash, and other daily maintenance duties.

Vernon's restricted budget also constrains everyday teaching and learning activities. Students share textbooks, and computers are dated and in limited supply. Additionally, serving a large population of students on a campus with insufficient space, it becomes impossible for each teacher to have a designated classroom. Instead they employ a system of shared classrooms to accommodate the schedule of courses. Each semester administrators identify a new set of teachers to take a turn as "roamers" who

conduct classes in different rooms that become available over the course of the school day.

With below average performance on the academic achievement assessments over the years, the school community has struggled to meet the district's school performance benchmarks. For example, during the 2010-11 academic year, approximately 32 percent of students at Vernon scored at the Proficient or Advanced level in ELA as compared with 44 percent of students at the average school in LAUSD. However, more recently the school has demonstrated improvement with achievement assessment performance and Vernon was removed from the district's list of low-performing schools that may undergo reconstitution as charters.

Mr. Turner's Classroom

During a research-planning meeting, Principal Acosta outlined the organization of Vernon's program of study, in general and the eighth-grade English language arts classes, in particular. Within each grade level teachers across all core subjects are arranged into two teams. Each student then belongs to a relatively small community of teachers and other students. Consistent with common practice in schools across the United States, students at Vernon are grouped into classes based on academic achievement levels. Since I was interested to better understand the school experiences of both students who were finding academic success and students who were struggling, Principal Acosta and I reasoned it would work well for me to observe in the classroom of a teacher with students at multiple achievement levels.

The first teacher I approached, Valeria, was set to teach two advanced ELA classes, as well as a low level class composed of students with substantial difficulties in ELA. This would be Valeria's first experience teaching a low level class. As she prepared lessons based on an unfamiliar curriculum she awaited the start of the school year with a sense of apprehension. Already uneasy, Valeria was hesitant to invite an observer into her classroom.

Principal Acosta then suggested a teacher named George who welcomed me without pause to join his classroom. George (Mr. Turner, to his students) was scheduled to teach two advanced classes and one standard class. Additionally, during a shortened period of each day he would teach reading comprehension skills as part of a supplemental instructional program for students who have not attained proficiency on the ELA achievement test. The program operates on a rotating schedule such that a given teacher works with one group of students for four weeks after which that group rotates to another teacher who instructs on a different ELA or math topic, and a new group of students take their place. During that shortened period of the day, students who have achieved proficiency in ELA and math instead participate in elective courses.

Mr. Turner has more than a decade of experience teaching middle school ELA in California's private and public schools. Through participation in professional development trainings, he met the district's requirements to teach advanced classes, including the Gifted and Talented program curriculum. As an African American and graduate of LAUSD schools, Mr. Turner shares with his students the experience of navigating the educational system as a member of a historically disadvantaged minority

group. Unlike a majority of his students, he does not come from an immigrant family, nor does he speak Spanish.

Participant Observations and Interviews

As a participant observer, I sought opportunities to spend time and interact with members of the school community and to join them in activities in order to gain an emic perspective of the setting and of participants' school experiences. I decided to spend the vast majority of my time in Mr. Turner's classroom in order to gain a solid understanding of the classroom dynamics and to get to know him and his students well. However, to gain a sense of students' experiences in ELA at Vernon more broadly, on a number of occasions I joined the classes of the other two ELA teachers on Mr. Turner's team, Ms. Vazquez and Mr. Lewis.

Over the course of seven months during the academic year 2011-2012, I conducted participant observations, on average, three days a week. Each day at the school, I observed during three 90-minute class periods and one 35-minute class period. During each classroom observation I found a vacant chair and sat among the students. Mr. Turner arranged the room with small clusters of tables, each cluster oriented toward the front. Students sat two at a table. With assigned seats, my location generally stayed the same, though when a student was absent or during small group work, I changed my seat in order to facilitate interaction with different students.

Initially, students seemed unsure of my role in the classroom. After awhile, they realized I would not call out students for covert texting, passing notes, or other violations of the classroom rules. In time, they learned I was not in a position to give out hall passes

nor to reason with Mr. Turner on their behalf when he decided to allocate detentions. My regular presence in Mr. Turner's classroom seemed to increase students' level of comfort with me. For example, students would initiate conversations with me, request that I sit near them, and make comments in Spanish that they would not have repeated in English, comfortable with the knowledge Mr. Turner could not understand, though I could.

Students who obtained written parental consent participated in audio-recorded interviews. I distributed parental consent forms after several months at Vernon in order to first allow time for the students to get to know me. (See Appendix A.) Although the course of a regimented school day presents little room for additional activities, a number of teachers graciously facilitated the research by creating time and space for formal interviews with students. Interviews took place during the school day in various locations on campus, including the cafeteria, classrooms, and outside in the courtyard. The duration of student interviews ranged from approximately 30 minutes to 60 minutes. In total, I interviewed 22 students.

Additionally, I took every opportunity to engage students in informal conversations in the classrooms during group work, in the hallways and classrooms before and after class periods, and outside in the common areas during nutrition and lunch. I used these occasions to ask specific questions regarding class or school happenings that I had observed or heard about, and to discuss a range of topics that they introduced, including their frustrations with teachers and assignments, music, romantic relationships, family life, and graduate school.

Mr. Turner participated in two audio-recorded interviews, each approximately one hour in duration. Also, I met with Principal Acosta on several occasions, and I joined

numerous informal conversations with Mr. Turner, Mr. Lewis, Ms. Vazquez, and several other (science, math, and history) teachers who gathered together in Mr. Turner's classroom twice daily during nutrition and lunch. Similar to my informal conversations with the students, I used these opportunities to seek insights from teachers regarding their experiences with specific students and thoughts on classroom happenings. Discussions also touched on more general topics, including charter schools, professional development workshops, and school organization.

Both student and teacher interviews followed a loosely structured format. I posed both open-ended and specific questions to elicit conversation on relevant topics and to gain perspective on classroom events and interactions. (See Appendix B for sample interview questions.)

Formulation of Qualitative Research Questions

In the course of data collection, I modified the research questions to reflect central themes that emerged. Initially, the question guiding this portion of the study was: How do the participants' school experiences with language(s) shape their academic identities and influence their achievement trajectories? Indeed, in a school where a majority of students came from immigrant families, bilingual and biliteracy skills were conspicuously absent from positive models of academic identity circulating at Vernon. Numerous events and interactions (which transpired during class or were discussed during interviews) demonstrated how Spanish language skills were omitted from conceptions of excellent students and how Spanish language proficiencies exhibited by students went unnoticed (at least overtly) by teachers.

For example, one of the focal participants, Esteban, consistently constructed course writings using a mixture of English and Spanish (e.g., student work, October 14, 2011). On Fridays, students regularly presented their compositions by reading them aloud to the class. In Esteban's case, this provided occasion to not only share his ideas, but also to demonstrate his linguistic competence in two languages. At the same time, these occasions represented squandered opportunities to position Esteban as a knowledgeable member of the school community, as readings were never accompanied by class discussions. Even though Mr. Turner could not understand the Spanish portions of Esteban's speech, he did not seek understanding of the code-switching decisions or English translations of the text, thereby positioning Esteban's linguistic skills, as well as the content of his writing as inconsequential (e.g., field notes, October 14, 2011).

Contributing to the notion of Spanish as having little worth in an academic context was the sanctioned usage of "Mock Spanish" in the classroom. Jane Hill (1995) defined Mock Spanish as the appropriation of Spanish language elements (e.g., words, grammar) by – often, monolingual – English speakers with derisive effect. Through a process of "dual indexicality" Mock Spanish enhances the image of those who produce or consume it, while denigrating those for whom Spanish language and culture are native. A common strategy for generating Mock Spanish, one that Mr. Turner often employed in class, is the affixation of the masculine suffix *-o* to English words: "Book-o, desk-o... that's what you guys do, just add an 'o,' right?" (field notes, October 13, 2011). With this example, the "direct indexicality" is comical (Ochs, 1990). With self-deprecating humor, Mr. Turner highlights his limited knowledge of Spanish by using Mock Spanish words that inspire laughter with their absurdity. The "indirect indexicality" is insulting (Ochs).

As an acknowledged non-speaker of Spanish, Mr. Turner's simplistic modification of English words to create Mock Spanish words implies the Spanish language is an unsophisticated derivative of the English language, and by association, Spanish-speakers are relegated to a social position inferior to English speakers. Students commonly responded to Mr. Turner's Mock Spanish with a mixture of laughs and eye-rolls, perhaps indicating they perceived both the direct and indirect implications.

On the other hand, among the students themselves Spanish language skills were often valued tools for identity construction at school. For example, while conversing with each other, bilingual students commonly utilized both Spanish and English. At times, conversational language choice functioned to (inadvertently or deliberately) exclude students or teachers with minimal knowledge of Spanish. In this way, Spanish language skills afforded bilingual students a degree of power in relational interactions. This in turn affected students' opportunities to connect with peers.

One instance of this occurred at the start of class one morning. A group of students entered the room together, several of them conversing in Spanish. James, an African American student with limited knowledge of Spanish, feigned comprehension with intermittent attempts to back-channel, or signal the speakers to continue, in Spanish: "Sí... sí... sí... sí..." (yes... yes... yes... yes...). James' friends, though, did not allow his performance to carry on unchecked. Instead they began posing questions to him directly like, "¿Qué te parece?" (What do you think?). James responded to each question nonsensically with the same word, "Sí." Frustrated with his exclusion, James then took his seat declaring, "I hate when they speak Spanish" (emphasis his, field notes, November 9, 2011).

As the above examples illustrate, school experiences with language(s) certainly had implications for the participants' identities as learners in school. However, after regularly spending time at Vernon, it became clear that this research focus did not capture the most salient school influences on students' academic identities. Instead, the role of academic achievement assessments emerged as a more critical theme. The practice of high-stakes testing and the associated classroom organization tactics, labels, expectations, and relational dynamics significantly shaped student identities and influenced the direction of their academic paths. Consequently, data were analyzed asking the following questions:

Research Question 2: How do social identification processes occurring in school influence academic achievement?

- (a) How do academic achievement test results shape students' identities as learners in school?
- (b) What are the associated influences on relational dynamics among students and teachers and on students' academic achievement trajectories?

Analyses

Research activities comprised an ongoing, "reflexive" process, wherein data were collected continuously and analyzed inductively throughout the period of study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). During the course of each day at Vernon, I wrote field notes whenever possible. Occasionally, I could comprehensively document classroom happenings and dialogue; however, at moments when my participation was more involved only brief jottings were feasible. With those initial writings I aimed to record as much as possible in order to facilitate a thorough reconstruction of the day afterward.

Following each occasion of participant observations, I typed the field notes, elaborating on details while the memories were still fresh. Typically, I reconstructed the day chronologically, using the notes to facilitate recall of events, contextual and precipitating factors, atmosphere, and conversational details.

As an early step in processing the raw data, I created a brief outline of the field notes from each day at Vernon. With this format, I could highlight noteworthy events and conversations, and continually review the information more easily. Similarly, I wrote a one-page synopsis of each transcribed interview. With substantially reduced content, numerous re-reads then became doable. Physical copies of these condensed data, along with school documents were maintained in chronological order of collection for organizational purposes. Through this gradual process, the institutionalized system of academic achievement assessments emerged as the primary school influence on the study participants' academic identity development.

With this general focus, I returned to the raw data for the initial stages of coding, and I imported both typed field notes and transcribed interviews into Atlas.ti (qualitative data analysis software) to facilitate the process. Next, I applied preliminary themes to relevant events, activities, expressed thoughts and feelings, phrases, statements, and descriptions, making a conscious effort to keep the themes close to the data and withhold any interpretations at this early stage of analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). This process yielded more than 200 themes, or "open-codes" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The next step involved reducing the preliminary themes to a manageable number by combining closely related themes and dropping themes with minimal or no connection to any other. Using both tools available with Atlas.ti, as well as spreadsheets, I could

visually manipulate the themes to discover patterns and associations and begin to develop codes.

As discussed above, with the objective of uncovering and explaining the social processes that unfold in school to shape ELs' learning identities and influence their achievement trajectories, I aimed to consider the experiences of students with varying educational attainments. To that end, the student sample included students who had maintained high levels of achievement throughout their years in school, students who had consistently struggled in school, and students with educational pathways characterized by ups and downs. Therefore, I sought to create codes that captured the participants' differentiating school experiences.

Code creation and modification was an iterative process that began with the consideration of a subsample of four participants, two high achieving and two low achieving. Preliminary codes that effectively contributed to an understanding of their differential academic achievement were retained and subsequently modified as additional student subsamples were considered. Because not all students could be considered either high-achievers or low-achievers as their individual experiences varied across classrooms and over the years, for these students useful codes clarified their personal variation. The triangulation of data from the interviews and observations, along with student work, class assignments, and school documents provided cause to confirm, disconfirm, or modify emerging codes. Consistently effective codes guided the analysis.

Consistent with the conceptual framework, which positions social identification as a relational process, the analytic lens focused on the interactions between student, teacher, and institutional perspectives. Three broad, code-clusters ultimately organized

the presentation of findings below: (1) an institutionalized model of academic identity; (2) characteristics of test score identities and the identification process; and (3) test score identities and resultant opportunities to learn. (See Appendix C for code examples.)

In order to provide detail regarding the influence of achievement tests on students' identities, as well as the specific implications for their academic learning, the discussion of findings centers on four focal student participants. I selected these four because they represent a range of school achievement experiences, including consistent high-achievement (Lisa), consistent underachievement (José), gradual improvement in academic performance (Jennifer), and a generally positive achievement trajectory that has fluctuated with contextual circumstances (Esteban).

Limitations

Undoubtedly, various experiences outside of school affected each study participant's ability to find academic success. For example, José cited area violence as influential on his academic performance. During class, he would sometimes find himself thinking about violent incidents that he had witnessed or worrying about what might occur when walking through his neighborhood. Other students discussed the heartache of difficult events, such as parental divorce, the death of a loved one, or the separation of family members due to migration and deportation. Although life circumstances, and relationships with family members and friends certainly influence a young person's path through school, the nature of the data collection did not allow for documentation of experiences occurring beyond the school grounds. To the extent that participants did discuss elements of their out-of-school lives during interviews and informal

conversations, a greater understanding of their school experiences became possible. For example, knowledge of students' familial relationships provided insights necessary to identify teacher misconceptions regarding parents' involvement in promoting the academic growth of their children.

Similarly, the time frame of this research limited data collection to one academic year. In-depth interviews and regular observations over the course of the year allowed for the examination of social identification processes through which achievement assessments influenced students' identities as learners and opportunities to learn. However, it was not possible to follow participants into their high school years to examine how their identities were recreated and contested over time and across institutional settings.

Finally, the study participants' attended a school in which nearly all of the students were Latina/o and a majority were former or current ELs (as classified by the school district). Their school experiences likely differ in meaningful ways from those of Spanish-speaking ELs who attend less segregated schools or schools composed of primarily white, monolingual peers (Gándara & Orfield, 2010).

Chapter 4: Findings

Findings from the two portions of the research are offered in turn. First, results of the growth curve analyses investigating the relationship between oral Spanish language proficiency in kindergarten and subsequent achievement in ELA and math, as well as descriptions of students' linguistic profiles in kindergarten are presented below.

Relationships Between Oral Spanish Language Proficiency in Kindergarten and Subsequent Academic Achievement

An examination of both ELA and math test performance among students in the sample revealed individual patterns of academic achievement vary greatly. Using z-scores, a plot of a given student's assessment results over time indicates a pattern of achievement relative to other grade-level peers (including non-EL students) attending LAUSD schools at the same time. Highlighting this variability, 29,639 students (23.1%) consistently equaled or exceeded performance by the average student in the district on grade-level tests of ELA, and 58,211 students (45.4%) consistently performed below the average student. Another 40,291 students (31.4%) performed both above and below the average student depending on the measurement occasion. Similarly, on grade-level tests of math 28,716 students (22.4%) consistently scored at or above average, 54,101 (42.2%) consistently scored below average, and 45,324 (35.3%) performed both above and below the average student depending on the year. This spread in individual achievement is illustrated with Figures 1 and 2. These graphical depictions also reveal that the gap in achievement between the average student in the EL population and the average student in

the overall population narrows in English language arts as students progress through the grade levels, whereas in math the gap is consistent across grade levels.

For both ELA and math achievement, the variability in relative achievement due to differences across schools was minimal. Models including school-level predictors (e.g., percent of the student population classified as English learners) are not presented here, because although the effects are statistically significant, they are too small to be practically meaningful. In fact, each student-level predictor had a highly significant effect ($p = < 0.001$) on both ELA and math achievement; however, because significance tests are sensitive to sample size (and this sample is quite large), a significant effect does not necessarily indicate a meaningful effect. Therefore, specific estimates are discussed in terms of their respective effect sizes. With z-scores as outcomes, the parameter estimates represent standard deviations, and thus can be interpreted as effect sizes.

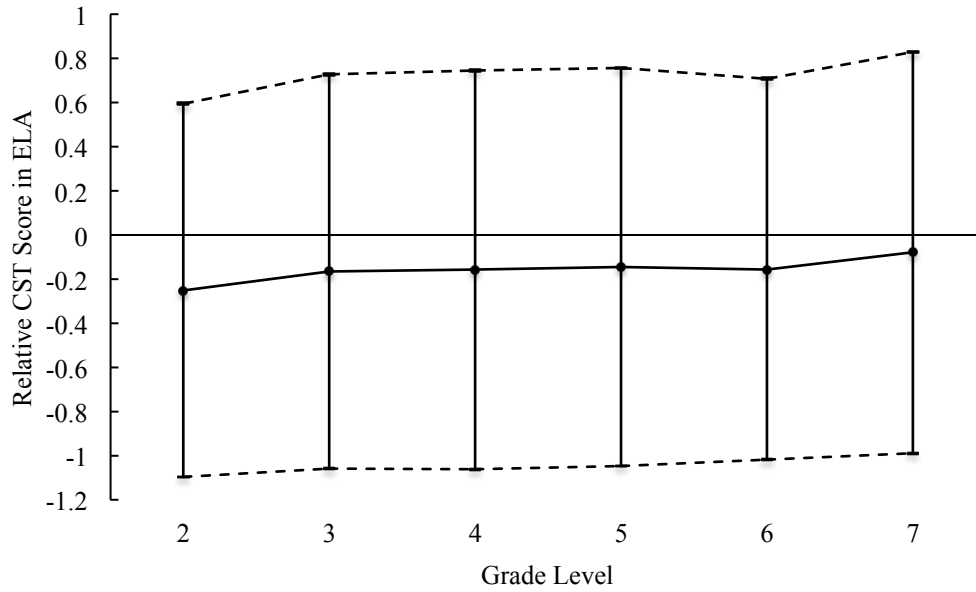


Figure 1. Variability among students in the analytic sample for ELA achievement.

Note. The solid line represents the mean level of relative ELA achievement and the dashed lines are 1 SD above and below the mean, respectively.

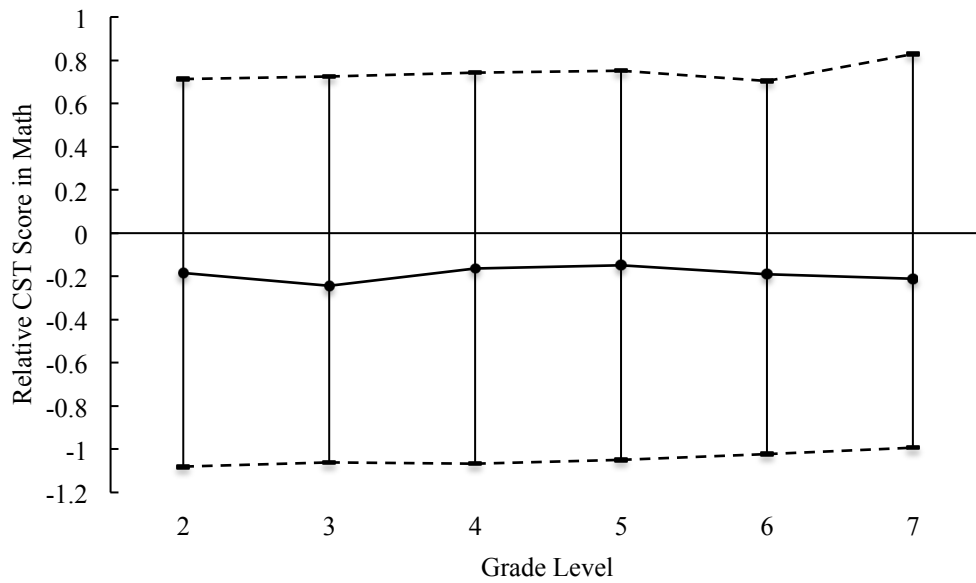


Figure 2. Variability among students in the analytic sample for math achievement.

Note. The solid line represents the mean level of relative math achievement and the dashed lines are 1 SD above and below the mean, respectively.

English Language Arts Achievement

Parameter estimates and standard errors for the unconditional model for ELA achievement are provided on the left side of Table 7. The intercept estimate is negative indicating that, on average, students in the sample did not perform as well on the second grade ELA achievement test as did the average student in LAUSD. More specifically, the average student in the sample scored 0.26 standard deviations lower at intercept than the average student in the district. Estimates of the linear and quadratic polynomials reflect the direction and shape of students' trajectories. Both estimates are close to zero, which indicates that a student's relative positioning among peers generally remains the same across the grade levels. Variance component estimates reveal approximately 78 percent of the variation in relative ELA achievement is between students, 22 percent is across measurement occasions within students, and less than one percent is between schools.

The relationship between kindergarten oral Spanish language proficiency as measured by the *preLAS* Español and students' relative achievement in ELA was assessed by implementing the conditional model. Parameter estimates from the conditional model for ELA achievement are presented on the left side of Table 8. Relative to students who were classified as Non-Speaker, students who scored Proficient, Fluent, or Limited had higher achievement in ELA at intercept, and their relative positions among grade-level peers improved over time at slightly faster rates. The effect of kindergarten oral Spanish language skills on initial ELA achievement was greatest for students classified as Proficient (SD = 0.29). A lesser effect of 0.14 standard deviations was found for kindergarten oral fluency in Spanish. Finally, students classified as having

limited oral proficiency in Spanish achieved marginally higher in ELA at initial status than students classified as Non-Speakers (SD = 0.05)

Table 7

Parameter and Standard Error Estimates for English Language Arts and Math Unconditional Models

	ELA achievement			Math achievement		
	Fixed effects			Fixed effects		
	Coeff	Estimate	(SE)	Coeff	Estimate	(SE)
for Intercept	π_0			π_0		
Intercept	θ_0	-0.2571	(0.00)	θ_0	-0.1802	(0.00)
for Time	π_1			π_1		
Linear slope	θ_1	-0.0050	(0.00)	θ_1	-0.0040	(0.00)
for Time-squared	π_2			π_2		
Quadratic trajectory	θ_2	0.0022	(0.00)	θ_2	0.0030	(0.00)
	Random effects			Random effects		
	Coeff	Component	<i>p</i>	Coeff	Component	<i>p</i>
Var betw measures	<i>e</i>	0.1529	<0.001	<i>e</i>	0.1938	<0.001
Intercept var betw stds	<i>b_{00j}</i>	0.5565	<0.001	<i>b_{00j}</i>	0.6145	<0.001
Linear slope var betw stds	<i>b_{10j}</i>	0.0356	<0.001	<i>b_{10j}</i>	0.0712	<0.001
Quad trajectory var betw stds	<i>b_{20j}</i>	0.0008	<0.001	<i>b_{20j}</i>	0.0021	<0.001
Intercept var betw schs	<i>c_{00k}</i>	0.0010	<0.001	<i>c_{00k}</i>	0.0022	<0.001
	Model fit			Model fit		
Deviance	794,247			887,006		

Note. ELA = English language arts; var = variance; quad = quadratic; stds = students; schs = schools; betw = between; coeff = coefficient.

Table 8

Parameter and Standard Error Estimates for English Language Arts and Math Conditional Models

	ELA achievement			Math achievement		
	Fixed effects			Fixed effects		
	Coeff	Estimate	(SE)	Coeff	Estimate	(SE)
for Intercept	π_0			π_0		
Intercept	θ_0	-0.2454	(0.01)	θ_0	-0.1497	(0.01)
Female	γ_{01}	0.0499	(0.00)	γ_{01}	-0.1225	(0.00)
Free/reduced lunch	γ_{02}	-0.0183	(0.00)	γ_{02}	-0.0124	(0.00)
Parent college grad	γ_{03}	0.1448	(0.01)	γ_{03}	0.1170	(0.01)
Proficient Spanish	γ_{04}	0.2855	(0.01)	γ_{04}	0.3632	(0.01)
Fluent Spanish	γ_{05}	0.1409	(0.01)	γ_{05}	0.1975	(0.01)
Limited Spanish	γ_{06}	0.0490	(0.01)	γ_{06}	0.0985	(0.01)
CELDT	γ_{07}	0.1922	(0.00)	γ_{07}	0.1766	(0.00)
Special educ eligible	γ_{08}	-0.7265	(0.01)	γ_{08}	-0.7114	(0.01)
Alternative prog ever	γ_{09}	-0.1560	(0.01)	γ_{09}	0.0296	(0.01)
for Time	π_1			π_1		
Linear slope	θ_1	-0.0264	(0.00)	θ_1	0.0266	(0.00)
Proficient	γ_{11}	0.0468	(0.00)	γ_{11}	-0.0628	(0.01)
Fluent	γ_{12}	0.0349	(0.00)	γ_{12}	-0.0438	(0.00)
Limited	γ_{13}	0.0205	(0.00)	γ_{13}	-0.0407	(0.00)
CELDT	γ_{14}	-0.0139	(0.00)	γ_{14}	-0.0248	(0.00)
for Time-squared	π_2			π_2		
Quadratic trajectory	θ_2	0.0056	(0.00)	θ_2	-0.0018	(0.00)
Proficient	γ_{21}	-0.0063	(0.00)	γ_{21}	0.0104	(0.00)
Fluent	γ_{22}	-0.0053	(0.00)	γ_{22}	0.0071	(0.00)
Limited	γ_{23}	-0.0035	(0.00)	γ_{23}	0.0064	(0.00)
CELDT	γ_{24}	0.0010	(0.00)	γ_{24}	0.0025	(0.00)
	Random effects			Random effects		
	Coeff	Component	<i>p</i>	Coeff	Component	<i>p</i>
Var betw measures	<i>e</i>	0.1530	<0.001	<i>e</i>	0.1938	<0.001
Intercept var betw stds	b_{00j}	0.4231	<0.001	b_{00j}	0.4834	<0.001
Linear slope var betw stds	b_{10j}	0.0350	<0.001	b_{10j}	0.0701	<0.001
Quad trajectory var betw stds	b_{20j}	0.0007	<0.001	b_{20j}	0.0021	<0.001
Intercept var betw schs	c_{00k}	0.0011	<0.001	c_{00k}	0.0023	<0.001
	Model fit			Model fit		
Deviance	763,596			863,322		

Note. ELA = English language arts; Var = variance; Stds = students. Schs = schools. Coeff = coefficient.

Figure 3 depicts the estimated trajectories of relative ELA achievement for students in each of the four oral Spanish language proficiency classification groups. The disparities among the groups are clear in second grade and remain through seventh grade, though the gap between students classified as Limited and those classified as Non-Speakers narrows by seventh grade. Students classified as Proficient begin (in second grade) on par with their peers and then steadily improve their relative positioning over time. Students in the other three *preLAS* Español classification groups all perform below the average student in the district from second through seventh grade, though they also improve their relative positioning over time.

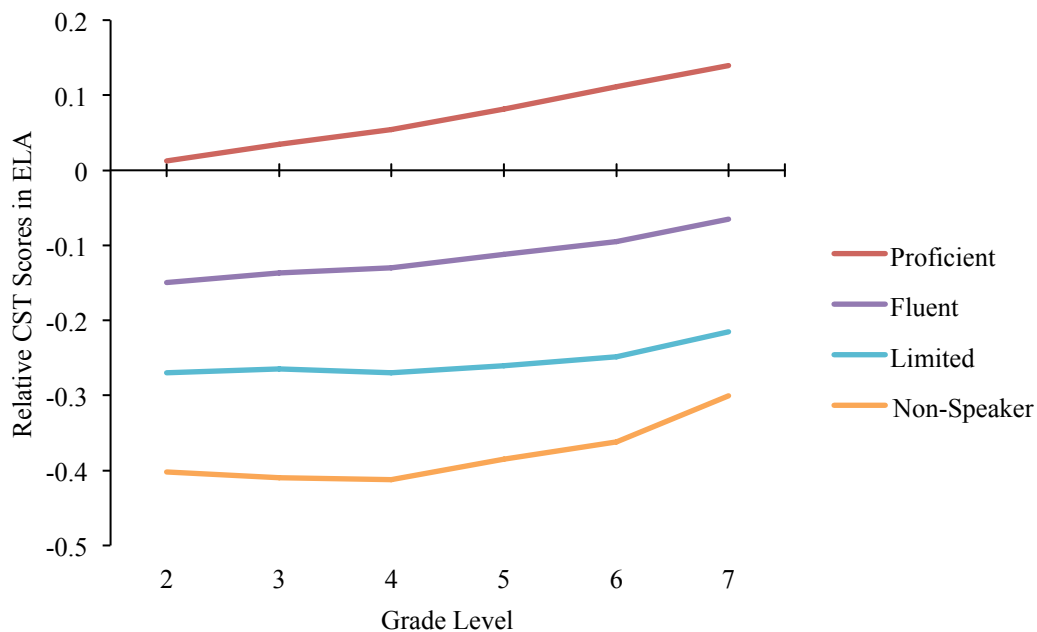


Figure 3. Fitted ELA relative achievement trajectories by Spanish oral proficiency level.

Note. ELA = English language arts

The effect of oral Spanish language proficiency is over and above that of the covariates included in the model. With the exception of special education eligibility, which had a substantial negative effect on initial ELA achievement (SD = -0.73), the effects associated with the covariates were not as strong as that of kindergarten oral Spanish language proficiency. For every standard deviation increase in performance on the oral language components of the initial CELDT, initial ELA achievement increased 0.19 standard deviations. Students with parents who have college or graduate degrees (SD = 0.14) and females (SD = 0.05) had higher initial levels of ELA achievement, while students who had ever participated in an alternative instructional program (SD = -0.16) and students who were eligible to receive free or reduced-priced lunch (SD = -0.02) had slightly lower initial levels of ELA achievement. Together the student-level predictors explained about 24 percent of the between-student variance in initial ELA achievement.

Math Achievement

For math achievement, parameter estimates and standard errors generated with the unconditional model are provided on the right side of Table 7. The intercept estimate indicates that on the second grade math achievement test, students in the sample scored on average 0.18 standard deviations lower than the average student in LAUSD. Again, linear and quadratic estimates are close to zero indicating that for the average student in the sample, relative positioning among peers did not change substantially across grade levels. Variance components indicate about 76 percent of the variation in relative math achievement is between students and about 24 percent is across measurement occasions

within students. As with ELA achievement, less than one percent of the variation in relative math achievement is due to variation between schools.

The conditional model yielded parameter estimates for the effects of individual-level predictors on relative math achievement among students in the sample (see Table 8). Patterns were similar to those resulting from the model estimating effects on ELA achievement with a few differences. As with ELA achievement, students who scored Proficient, Fluent, or Limited on the *preLAS* Español had higher achievement in math at intercept than students who were classified as Non-Speakers. The relative achievement of the average student classified as a Non-Speaker improved over time though never catching up with grade-level peers. For students classified as Proficient the effect at intercept was sizeable ($SD = 0.36$). The effect for kindergarten fluency in Spanish was smaller at 0.20 standard deviations. Lastly, students classified as having limited oral Spanish language skills in kindergarten initially achieved only slightly higher in math than students classified as Non-Speakers ($SD = 0.10$).

A depiction of estimated relative math achievement trajectories presented in Figure 4 reveals that wide disparities exist between students with more and less oral Spanish language proficiency. The differences between the groups are widest at second grade and narrow somewhat across the grade levels. Appreciable differences persist through seventh grade, though the gap between students classified as Limited and those classified as Non-Speakers decreases substantially over time. Students classified as Proficient begin with slightly higher achievement than the average student and their relative positioning stays generally constant through seventh grade. Students classified as

Fluent, Limited, and Non-Speakers all begin and remain at a level of achievement lower than the average student.

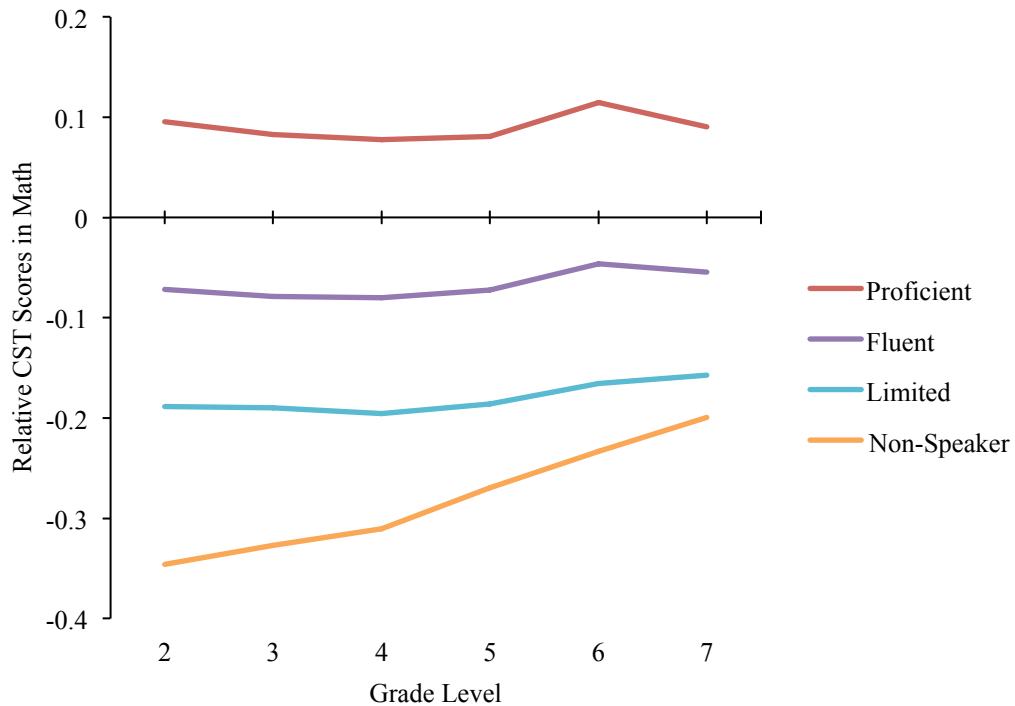


Figure 4. Fitted math relative achievement trajectories by Spanish oral proficiency level.

Among the student-level covariates, eligibility for special education services again had the most substantial effect on initial achievement (SD = -0.71). For every standard deviation increase in performance on the oral language components of the initial CELDT, initial math achievement increased 0.18 standard deviations. As with ELA, students with parents who have college or graduate degrees had higher initial math achievement (SD = 0.12) and students who were eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch had slightly lower initial math achievement (SD = -0.01). Unlike ELA, females had lower

initial math achievement ($SD = -0.12$) and students who have ever participated in an alternative instructional program had slightly higher initial math achievement ($SD = 0.03$). Combined, the student-level predictors explained approximately 21 percent of the between-student variance in initial math achievement.

Linguistic Profiles and Associated Programmatic Placements

To gain a clearer picture of students' linguistic skills in kindergarten, descriptive analyses were used to examine scores on the oral Spanish and English language assessments. Notably, the correlation between scores on the two assessments was quite low ($r = 0.02$) indicating that this population of learners is highly diverse, and students come to school with varying skill sets in both Spanish and English. This is in line with previous research that has found little relationship between oral language skills across languages at the beginning of kindergarten (Cardenas-Hagan, et al., 2007).

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate the relationship between students' oral proficiencies in the two languages. Figure 5 displays the range of initial CELDT scores in quartiles by oral Spanish language proficiency classification. For each classification there is a similar spread of CELDT scores, with the lowest and highest quartiles varying the most while each middle quartile comprises a more narrow range of CELDT scores.

However, using Figure 6 to examine the data by cohort, a trend of declining variability among Spanish proficiency levels over time becomes evident. This graph presents the mean CELDT data for each cohort and each oral Spanish language proficiency classification. In 2002, the difference between the group with the highest average CELDT score (i.e. students classified as Proficient in Spanish) and the group

with the lowest average CELDT score (i.e. students classified as Non-Speakers of Spanish) is 0.11. This difference steadily decreases over time, and by 2007 the difference between the group with the highest average CELDT score (i.e. students classified as Fluent or Limited in Spanish) and the group with the lowest average CELDT score (i.e. students classified as Proficient in Spanish) is only 0.03. Also, with visual inspection, one can detect a slight trend of decreasing CELDT scores among Spanish Proficient students and increasing CELDT scores among students classified as Non-Speakers of Spanish, though for the most part the relationship between CELDT scores and any given *preLAS* Español classification varies without pattern from one cohort to the next.

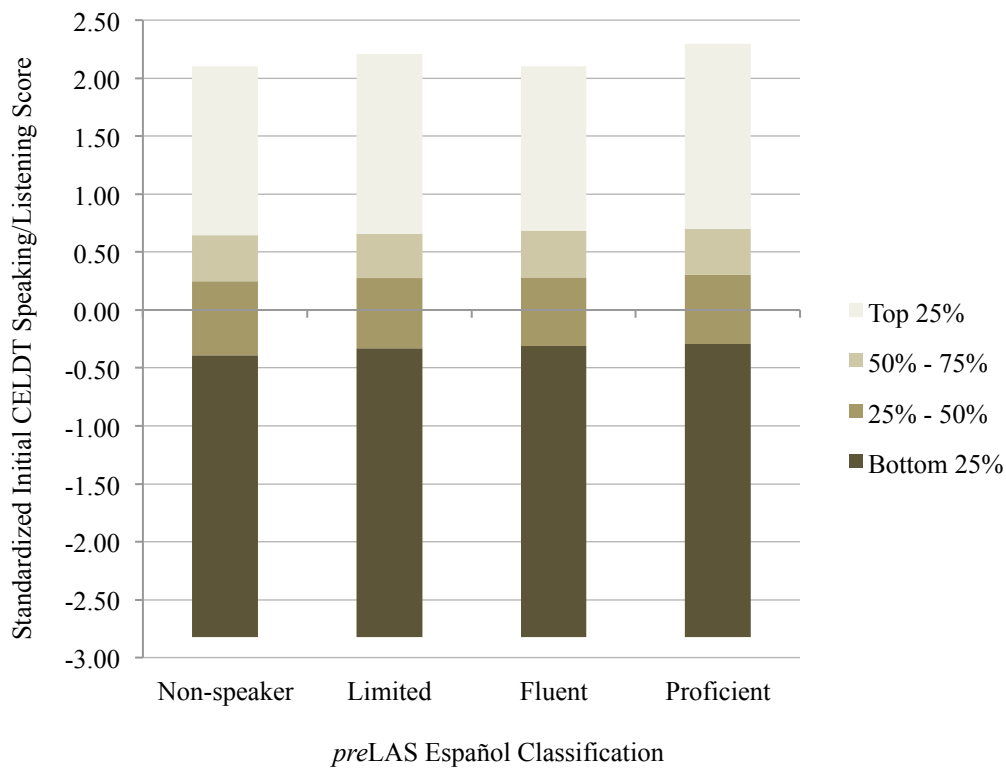


Figure 5. Initial CELDT speaking/listening score quartiles by *preLAS* Español classification.

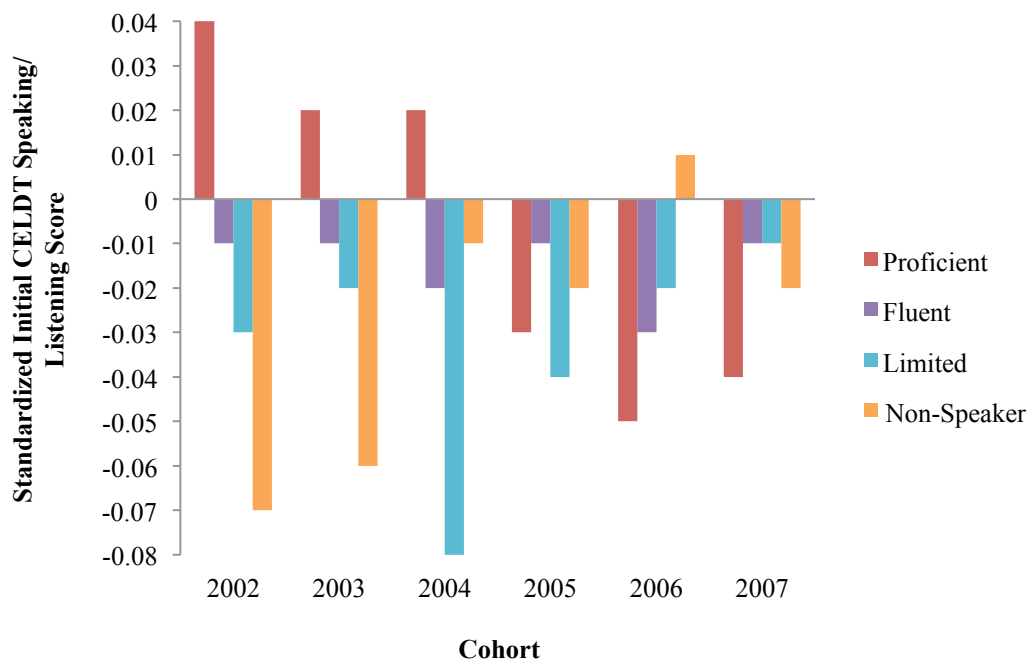


Figure 6. Mean initial CELDT speaking/listening score by *preLAS* Español classification and by cohort.

It is perhaps not surprising that a higher level of proficiency in one language does not imply a lower level of proficiency in the other, as many students are well-practiced using both Spanish and English. Also understandable given the limits of discrete assessments, a student may perform poorly on both language assessments. In other words, although poor performance on both the English and Spanish assessments could be indication of a language disorder, low scores may instead reflect the assessment limitations. As discussed in Chapter 3, with emergent bilinguals who are accustomed to codeswitching, access to only one language may limit their actual range of expression and reception. Also discussed in Chapter 3, the assessments may privilege particular ways of speaking over others.

To consider the potential relationship between scores on the assessment of oral Spanish language proficiency and the determination that a student is eligible to receive special education services, simple percentages were calculated. For each cohort, at least 20 percent of students classified as Non-Speakers of Spanish were also placed in a special education program. Among students classified as Limited, Fluent, or Proficient speakers of Spanish the proportions participating in special education programs were substantially smaller (see Figure 7).

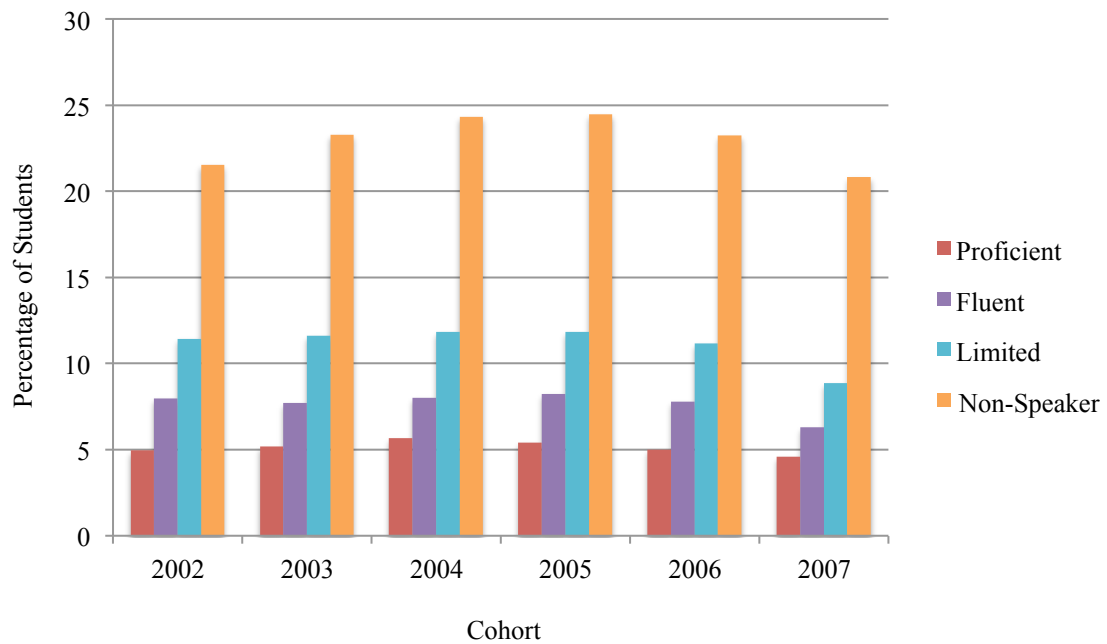


Figure 7. Percent of students within each Spanish oral proficiency level classified as eligible for special education services, by cohort.

Interestingly, the percentage of kindergarteners who performed well on the oral Spanish language proficiency assessment has declined over time while the percentage

that performed poorly has grown. With graphical representation the trends emerge clearly (see Figure 8). For example, in 2002 approximately 17 percent of kindergarteners that took the oral Spanish language proficiency assessment scored Proficient, whereas by 2007 the proportion decreased to approximately 12 percent. During the same time period, the percent that were classified as Non-Speakers increased from approximately 28 percent to close to 40 percent (see Table 9). Given that the assessment did not change over the years, and assuming test administrators consistently adhered to the same scoring procedures, this pattern could be the result of “language shift” – a possibility considered below in the Discussion section.

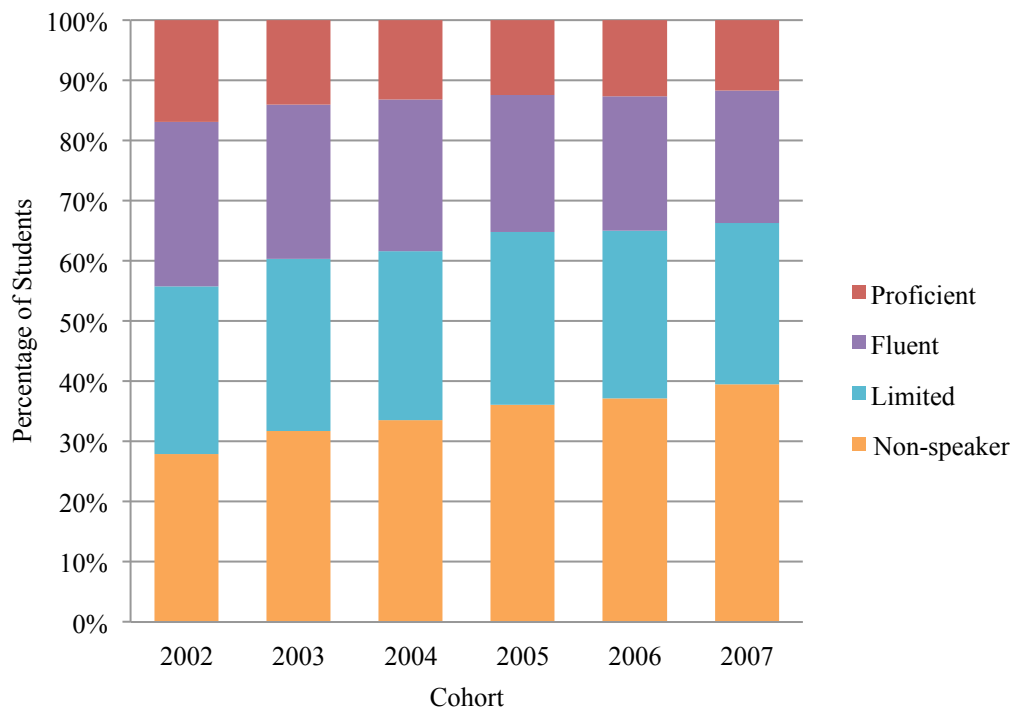


Figure 8. Percentage of students within each *preLAS* Español classification by cohort.

Table 9.

Number and Percentage of Students Within Each preLAS Español Classification by Cohort

	Proficient		Fluent		Limited		Non-Speaker		Total
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	
Cohort									
2002	4,262	16.9	6,921	27.4	7,044	27.9	7,041	27.9	25,268
2003	3,243	14.0	5,909	25.6	6,626	28.7	7,337	31.7	23,115
2004	2,632	13.2	5,029	25.2	5,612	28.1	6,692	33.5	19,965
2005	2,415	12.4	4,461	22.8	5,601	28.7	7,051	36.1	19,528
2006	2,453	12.6	4,334	22.3	5,430	27.9	7,216	37.1	19,433
2007	2,433	11.7	4,584	22.0	5,587	26.8	8,228	39.5	20,832
All	17,438		31,238		35,900		43,565		128,141

Standardized Achievement Assessments as Indices for Social Identification

Focal Student Participants

This section provides brief educational histories for the four focal student participants. To highlight the linguistic diversity among students classified as English learners, each narrative begins with a short description of reported (Spanish and English) language use. Following their brief histories, Table 10 and Figures 9 and 10 present summaries of the focal participants' performance on California's achievement assessments (i.e. the California Standards Tests, or CSTs) in English language arts and math from second grade – the first grade level in which students take achievement assessments – through sixth grade – the most recent grade level for which data were available for this cohort. Table 10 shows the participants' ELA and math assessment classification levels for each grade level, and using data from the quantitative portion of this research, Figures 9 and 10 depict their relative achievement trajectories (i.e. relative to grade-level peers attending LAUSD schools at the same time) in ELA and math, respectively.

As the graphical depictions make clear, the academic trajectories of the focal participants vary widely. Lisa consistently performed very well on the assessments of both ELA and math. She scored Advanced on every assessment, with the exception of one Proficient score in fifth-grade math. In contrast, José consistently struggled in both subjects with scores of Below Basic and Far Below Basic on each assessment. Jennifer and Esteban each showed some variation in performance on the assessments over the years. Jennifer had some fluctuation but maintained an overall positive trajectory, as she

improved her performance in both ELA and math over time. Esteban also showed overall improvement in ELA; however, his math achievement varied from year to year.

José

At home, José speaks Spanish with his parents and English with an older cousin who lives with the family while attending college. José also has an older brother who resides with his wife. As a young child, José improved his Spanish skills during several lengthy visits to Mexico with his parents, who are both Mexican. It was in Mexico that he learned to read and write in Spanish. By the end of sixth grade (again, the most recent year for which school district data were available at the time of this study) José was still classified as an English learner.

Recalling his elementary school years, José described himself as, “a bad little kid” who was frequently reprimanded for throwing things and hitting others on the playground. Small in stature as a young child, older adolescents in the neighborhood would often bully José; and consequently, he sometimes acted out at school. Despite this adversity, José developed positive and meaningful relationships with his teachers – who he knew well, having attended the same school for kindergarten through fifth grade – and he generally behaved well in the classroom.

As an adolescent, José has a slender, athletic build. He is both a quick-witted jokester and reserved in demeanor. Although José remembered his elementary school teachers fondly, he dislikes his middle school teachers and stated that they do not treat him well. At the time of the study, he was not enjoying any of his courses, though he was maintaining good grades in math, English, and history, and found those subjects to be “pretty easy.” He was failing his eighth-grade science course and attributed his low

grades in that class to difficulty learning in an environment where he “get[s] in trouble for any little thing.”

Generally, José described his eighth-grade experience as a daily struggle to motivate himself to attend school. He completes assignments with the goal of continuing to box and play soccer competitively, privileges that his mother revokes when he does not achieve good grades. Also, he puts forth effort in school with the hope that he can avoid the challenges his older brother has had to face since dropping out of high school. José plans to attend college and become either a police officer or an engineer.

Jennifer

Jennifer lives with her mother, stepfather, and three younger siblings. A tight-knit family, they look forward to opportunities to hang out and have fun together. However, with longer workdays in recent years, Jennifer’s parents have had less time to spend at home. This is one reason the younger siblings do not speak Spanish as well as Jennifer does. While Jennifer had a great deal of practice as a young girl conversing in Spanish with her parents, her siblings more often hear English at home from both Jennifer and television programs. Also, unlike Jennifer who was enrolled in a bilingual program for kindergarten, first, and second grades, her siblings were enrolled in English immersion classes from the start. Jennifer was classified as an English learner through fifth grade.

Jennifer has curly brown hair, glasses, and a childlike appearance that belies her adolescence. She is energetic and talkative; traits that, at times, got her into trouble with teachers who sought to maintain quiet classrooms. She has struggled with her coursework at times, and explained that she encounters the most difficulty when expected to absorb

material by reading textbooks. Instead, she benefits from learning activities, stories, and mnemonics.

Jennifer's academic performance has steadily improved over the years. She was especially proud to have reached a level of Proficient on the standardized assessment in English language arts for the first time in seventh grade, and at the time of this study, she was maintaining an A or B in each of her classes. Jennifer reported that she has always been motivated to do well in school: "When I was small, I never said I didn't want to go to school. I would always wake up in the morning and say, 'I'm ready.'" She is driven to attend college and has long had her sights set on UCLA. In fact, Jennifer's academic motivation has played a central role in her mother's decision to remain in the United States. Her mother has considered bringing the family to Mexico, where she is from, but persists at her job in the United States, in large part, because of Jennifer's enthusiasm for her studies.

Esteban

Esteban lives with his mother, father, and three-year old sister. His parents, both from El Salvador, completed school through the eighth grade and immigrated to the United States as adults. Although he speaks only Spanish with his parents at home, Esteban learned English prior to attending school by watching English language television. Esteban was classified as an English learner through first grade.

Before enrolling at Vernon in sixth grade, Esteban attended two Los Angeles elementary schools, one from kindergarten through second grade, and the other from third through fifth grade. He has positive memories from his elementary school years,

and noted teachers who instructed with attention and kindness: “My teachers were really helping me a lot to learn, and taught me good, and cared.”

Esteban has generally found success as a student throughout his time in school. However, he reported occasional difficulties with his coursework in both elementary and middle schools, which he attributes to adverse relationships with particular teachers.

Heavysset with close-cropped, brown hair, Esteban has a calm and friendly disposition. He considers himself to be smart, though he worries how peers will perceive him: “I’m smart but I tend not to show it because people make fun of me that I’m too smart.” Esteban strives to do well in school in order to serve as a positive role model for his sister and to get into a good college (preferably UCLA or USC). Ultimately, he hopes to become a doctor or dentist, and to be in a position to help his family members with any financial difficulties.

Lisa

Lisa lives with her parents, nine-year-old sister, and nineteen-year-old brother. She speaks English with her siblings, except when her mother is within earshot, and then only Spanish is allowed. Although not as fluent as her brother (who spent childhood summers in Mexico with their grandparents), Lisa described herself as competent with Spanish. She remembered being selected to lead her First Communion ceremony, as she was the only child who could both speak and read in Spanish. Lisa was classified as an English learner through first grade.

Lisa stated that in elementary school she was, “a big nerd who always wanted to answer all the questions.” She reported that her favorite subject was math, though she

liked all of her classes. She earned good grades and scored high on the standardized assessments, which qualified her for the district's Gifted and Talented program. In fact, her advanced academic achievement has played a role in facilitating her parents' pursuit of United States residency, a process that has induced some stress for Lisa.

Like many of her peers, Lisa carefully maintained her appearance, styling her long, black hair and applying makeup each morning. She continued to do well in middle school, though she would no longer raise her hand frequently during class and was generally less "out there" about her academic achievement. As an eighth-grader she was maintaining a grade of A or B in each class.

At the time of this study, Lisa was in the process of deciding which private high school she would attend in ninth-grade. After gaining acceptance and securing financial aid from several schools, she had options to consider. After high school, she plans to enroll in college with the goal of becoming an engineer or architect.

Table 10

Focal Participants' Academic Achievement Assessment Classifications

	José		Jennifer		Esteban		Lisa	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
Grade								
2	Far Below Basic	Below Basic	Below Basic	Basic	Basic	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced
3	Far Below Basic	Below Basic	Below Basic	Proficient	Basic	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced
4	Below Basic	Below Basic	Far Below Basic	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient	Advanced	Advanced
5	Below Basic	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Proficient	Basic	Advanced	Proficient
6	Far Below Basic	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced	Proficient	Advanced	Advanced

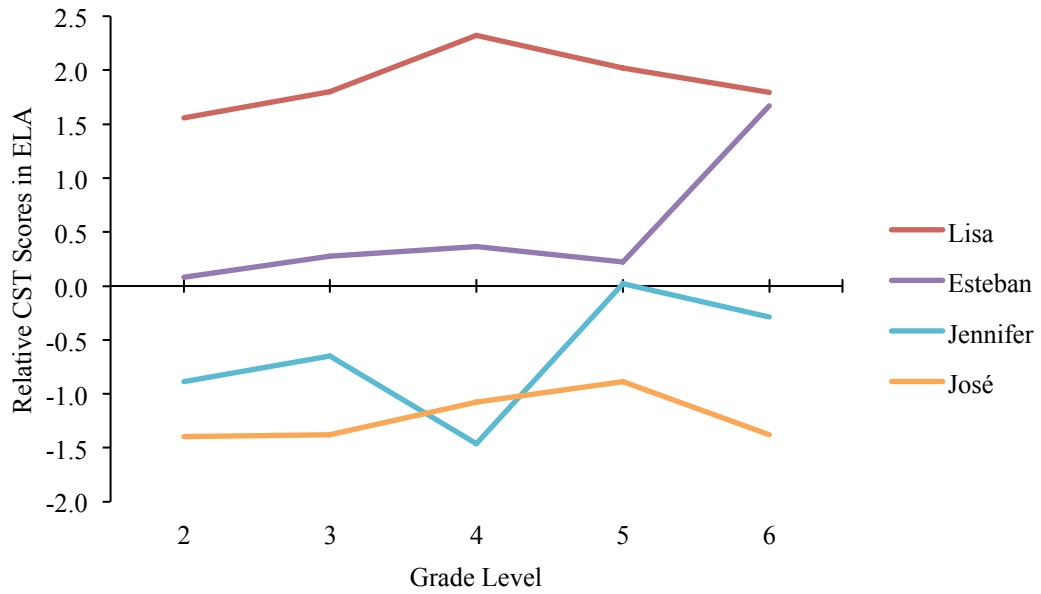


Figure 9. Relative ELA achievement trajectories for the focal student participants.

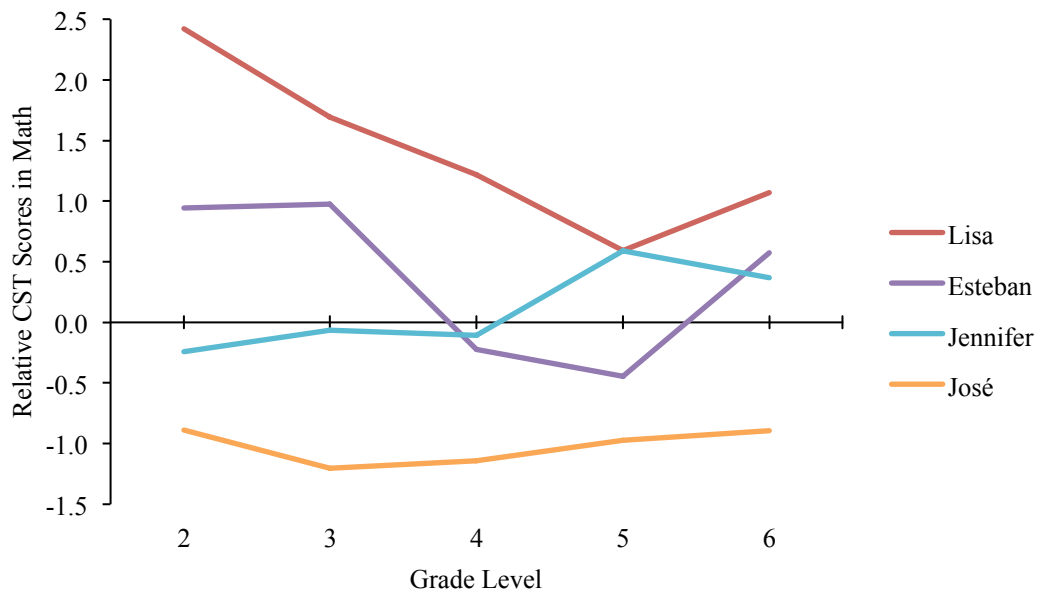


Figure 10. Relative math achievement trajectories for the focal student participants.

An Institutionalized Model of Academic Identity

As the brief accounts of the focal participants' educational histories illustrate, students classified as English learners do not experience school uniformly. Notwithstanding their common identity as English learners, the participants' *academic* identities varied considerably. Indeed, participants reported the language classification as carrying little weight for them in terms of their lived school experiences. This was despite (and perhaps because) a majority of students at Vernon were – former or current – ELs. Esteban explained, “I don't think [students] care about it. I think they are just like, whatever.” In fact, numerous students stated they were unaware of their language classifications.

Unlike those generated by language assessments, classifications based on academic achievement assessments strongly influenced the participants' identities as learners in school. At Vernon, dominant ideas about “good students” were characterized chiefly by advanced scores on the achievement tests. This model of academic identity is rooted in a testing regime that governs numerous schools nationwide. In recent years, standardized tests of student learning – in English language arts and math, in particular – have become the predominant indicators for an accountability movement sweeping the public school system. As the movement has expanded, educational policy decisions affecting students, teachers, administrators, and school communities have become increasingly tied to student performance on these tests (Popham, 2002).

Consequently, standardized achievement assessments played a central role in most aspects of the school day at Vernon. To start, the assessments informed the organization of classes. Students were grouped together according to their assessment

scores, with the highest performing students comprising the honors classes. Additionally, during a shortened period of each day, students who had not attained a basic level of proficiency on the tests of English language arts and math were scheduled for supplemental instruction on particular topics (e.g., reading comprehension, writing), while high-achieving students participated in elective courses.

Student test scores also guided teaching assignments. Typically, Principal Acosta would match teachers who he considered to be the most effective with classes composed of high-achieving students. However, during the year of this research he undertook a new approach to increase student learning and instead assigned several of the teachers whose practice he regarded highly to instruct classes at varying levels of achievement (field notes, August 30, 2011).

Evaluation of a given teacher's effectiveness was, at least in part, based on comparisons of her students' current-year test scores to their previous-year test scores. With California's achievement assessments a student's performance on a given subject test is associated with one of five possible classifications: Far Below Basic, Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, or Advanced. Following the release of test scores in the spring of each year, teachers at Vernon met to review and discuss the results. Mr. Turner described this as a stressful process that could antagonize teachers:

Every year, we get our test scores back and we sit in a department meeting and look over test scores. And the teachers who have the Basic kids or the Below Basic kids, they're like, "Oh, man, I don't want to look at [the scores]," or "Your test scores are this because you've got the honors kids." While I'm like, "No, I work my ass off trying to get them to move from Proficient to Advanced!" So I think there's a little animosity (interview, September 24, 2012).

Furthermore, achievement assessments played a central role in decisions affecting the school community as a whole. Specifically, following a period of low performance, Vernon's student test scores rose. The improvement ended speculation that the school would be reconstituted as a charter – a prospect that had spurred passionate debate among various stakeholders. During the period of this research, copies of a one-page document presenting Vernon's latest test scores alongside the average test scores in the district circulated among the teachers (document, November 14, 2011). In light of Vernon's recent struggles, the document underscored not only the school's progress, but also the powerful influence of achievement assessments on the future of the school.

Characteristics of Test Score Identities and the Identification Process

The influence of achievement tests on the participants' academic identities strengthened as teachers characterized individual learners based on their test scores and compared particular classes of students to each other. Mr. Turner, for one, indicated that his four classes differed in academic ability and classroom behavior. He often described his first period class, which was comprised of students with the highest test scores, as “deep-thinkers” who enjoy intellectual challenges (e.g., field notes, October 13, 2011). Because of their willing engagement in academic activities, Mr. Turner generally favored teaching this group of students.

In contrast, he stated that students in his lower-level ELA classes avoided reflecting on academic subject matter and instead sought “the right answers:”

You can tell the difference between the [first period class'] critical thinking and how they thought about the world around them as compared to the [low-level classes] – they're just not deep or reflective people. English is about you thinking and putting your thoughts down, but with the [low-level classes] I've always taught, it's like, "What's the right answer? – so I can get this done, and do something else." Like, in classroom discussions, no matter how many times I try to force it, they just want to know what the right answer is. Well there's no right answer. It's all subjective. The only wrong answer is that you're not doing something (interview, September 24, 2012).

Mr. Turner reasoned this tendency could explain why students who struggle in ELA might perform better in math class where there is less subjectivity. Similarly, Mr. Lewis attributed low levels of engagement among particular students to a "Walmart mentality," a phrase that he used to indicate limited aspirations (field notes, October 20, 2011).

To expound this idea of a disparity in academic aptitude between high- and low-achieving students, Mr. Turner offered an example: The previous year, students in his honors class started regularly goofing off during instructional time. As a reprimand, Mr. Turner began assigning independent textbook work during class each day; however, he provided no explanation to the students for the change in classroom activity. After several days of this, a couple of students approached Mr. Turner before class. They let him know that members of the class had met during lunch to discuss their frustration with the recent classroom happenings and consulted about it with students in Mr. Turner's other classes. They discovered theirs was the only class doing independent textbook assignments. The students concluded this was unfair treatment. Mr. Turner went on to explain that while the honors students "would not stand for" this conduct, the underachieving students preferred it. From his perspective, students in his lower-level classes disliked classroom interaction and would have rather worked independently (field notes, October 20, 2011).

Although students in the honors classes did, at times, break classroom rules (as the above example illustrates), teachers generally associated student misbehavior with low test scores. For instance, during a participant observation in Mr. Lewis's class, rather than remain quiet in their seats, students moved about the classroom conversing loudly. Mr. Lewis justified the poorly managed classroom by citing the students' test scores: "These kids are all BB and FBB, so that's what you're seeing here" (field notes, October 24, 2011).

These shorthand labels – BB and FBB, for Below Basic and Far Below Basic – were commonly employed as identifiers that not only described students' test scores, but also indexed ideas about their academic capabilities and ambitions. Often during lunch breaks, teachers discussed with each other their frustrations with disruptive classroom behavior and minimal effort on class work among the "BBs and FBBs." They wondered why numerous students underachieved in school while others attending the same school, living in the same neighborhoods, and coping with similar economic stresses excelled. They concluded students' low performance was due, in some measure, to a lack of educational "buy-in" on the part of students and their parents (e.g., field notes, February 15, 2012). During an interview, Mr. Turner explained further:

For some reason [these students] are not caring about what's going on in the classroom... If they [go home] and their parents aren't like, "Where's your homework?" or "What's going on?"... If they don't have any accountability at home about school, they're not going to buy into it (September 24, 2012).

The disparities in academic behaviors between high-achieving and under-achieving students at Vernon surely existed. However, explanations that attributed these disparities to the extent of educational commitment among students and their families

badly misconstrued the circumstances. José's school experiences illustrate this point well. While his consistent low test scores indicated to some that he and his family were not invested in his education, the opposite was true. José's mother closely monitored his performance in school and instituted an incentive system as added motivation. José maintained a highly active lifestyle with daily extracurricular activities, including competitive soccer and boxing. His mother permitted these, and other privileges, only when he worked hard in school. During the year of this study, José's mother also advocated for him in his (albeit, unsuccessful) efforts to switch science teachers following disciplinary actions in class that both José and his mother perceived as unfair treatment.

Esteban's experiences also exemplify how, at times, teachers mistakenly attributed poor academic performance to limited investment in education on the part of students and their families. Although Esteban generally did very well in school, at the time of this study he was having difficulties with his science coursework. He disliked his teacher's pedagogical approach (largely textbook assignments) and was not grasping the material. Consequently, he had lost motivation, became less conscientious with his work, and forgot to do his homework on at least one occasion. His teacher interpreted Esteban's behavior to mean he and his family did not value education. Esteban reported that his teacher "was very mean to [him] and made [him] feel bad." He continued, "She said that my parents didn't care about me. That if I was in her house, I wouldn't be doing the things like...I forgot to do a homework" (interview, March 19, 2012).

Following their teachers' lead, the students also used achievement test scores and the associated class placements to characterize their peers (and themselves) as learners.

They commonly discussed how particular classes behave and the perceived levels of intelligence among students in each class. For example, Lisa stated that, “all of the classes are different, like [some classes] don’t even care that much. But Mr. Turner’s first period class, they’re like, really nerdy. They’re really smart.”

At the same time, students objected to the practice of comparing classes, and resisted the identities ascribed to them. As a member of the esteemed group of students, the comparisons did not harm Lisa’s identity as a learner; however, she imagined the class comparisons could have deleterious effects on individuals in the lower-level classes by fostering negative self-perceptions. She went on to describe her own observations:

Mr. Turner’s period three, they’re are always telling us that he doesn’t like them and that he’s always talking good things about us. And [our math teacher’s] period three, he always tells us that they’re like the noisy class, and the bad class; and [our science teacher’s] class, we always score higher on tests, so the other class is jealous... she tells them that they’re never going to catch up to us. And, well I think that the teachers put the other kids down by comparing them to other kids. It makes them feel inferior (interview, March 20, 2012).

Test Score Identities and Resultant Opportunities to Learn

Programs of Study

As mentioned above, students at Vernon who had not reached a level of Basic or higher on the ELA and math assessments were scheduled to receive supplemental instruction on specific topics during a designated period of each day. The organization of this supplemental instructional program was a source of frustration for teachers. As a recently established initiative, the curriculum was frequently modified, which interfered with teachers’ efforts to become accustomed to the material and refine their practice.

Additionally, teachers reported that four weeks was insufficient time to work with a group of students (field notes, January 26, 2012).

In Mr. Turner's reading comprehension class, very little instruction occurred. Typically, he would assign textbook exercises that consisted of passages to read and related questions to answer. Mr. Turner would stay seated at his desk in the back corner of the classroom while some students worked and others simply passed the time by pretending to work, or talking with friends. There were no class discussions, and Mr. Turner did not collect completed assignments (e.g., February 16, 2012). His low motivation to teach in these classes was due, in part, to the disorder of the program: "They need to organize it better. We just changed rotations yesterday and we didn't get the new roster [of students] until twenty minutes before those classes began. And they change the curriculum every single rotation" (interview, September 24, 2012).

Not only did they receive poor-quality teaching during this period of the day, but the participants with low test scores also missed out on opportunities to engage in academic pursuits other than ELA and math. While they participated in the supplemental instructional program, students with high test scores participated in elective courses. Overall, this method of differentiating curricula based on assessment scores contributed to inequitable learning opportunities for high- and low-achieving students.

Teachers' Expectations

In addition to the distinct programs of study, inequities in learning opportunities also emerged as artifacts of relationships and interactions between teachers and students. Because of the dominant perception that students with low test scores have limited

academic potential, teachers came to expect less from these learners; and their lowered expectations influenced the pedagogical and interactional approaches employed in the classroom. For example, Mr. Turner explained that he would comport himself differently depending on which class he was teaching. In the honors classes he conducted lessons in a relaxed manner, often joking around with students as he taught. However, during the class period designated for supplemental instruction for struggling students, Mr. Turner's demeanor noticeably shifted, as he seldom smiled and hardly interacted with the students at all. He explained, "I really need to crack down on these students" (field notes, October 13, 2011). This comment reflected Mr. Turner's belief that he needed to maintain a serious, no-nonsense attitude with the low-level classes otherwise the students would not work during class. He viewed these students' underachievement as a product of their own minimal effort in school. Mr. Turner's perception of underachieving students as lazy and indifferent to their schoolwork fostered in him an aversion to teaching the low level classes, though he stated some high-achieving students also lack motivation in school. During an interview he explained this frustration,

I don't care if you score Far-Below-Basic, or Basic. I just want kids in the classroom who don't mind working. I've got kids in just regular English class – Below Basic, or Basic, or Far Below Basic – they just didn't mind working. That's all I want. I want kids that will try. That's what works my nerves the most. Kids that are just like, 'Ah, forget it. I can't do it. Ah, I don't want to try,' or 'Ah, this doesn't motivate me.' I'm like, 'Come on, man. You've got to try (interview, September 24, 2012).

The students themselves were well aware of teachers' lowered expectations for particular classes. A number of participants reported that the classroom behavior and academic performance standards set for students varied considerably from class to class.

For instance Esteban stated, “Some teachers think that some of the kids are smarter, so they give them the projects only, and not the other kids. And then, like, if the other kids are trying... they won’t still give them the projects.” Although he himself was in a higher-level class, Esteban’s friends in the lower-level classes talked with him about their frustrations regarding particular teachers. In reference to one teacher Esteban reported, “[my friends] say that [the teacher] is not cool because, like, they say: ‘She only gives us homework and classwork, while the other kids do the fun things’” (interview, March 19, 2012). Similar to Esteban’s friends, José expressed discontent with his teachers’ treatment of his class: “The teachers that I don’t like treat the different classes better than us... nicer than us” (interview, March 22, 2012).

As teachers moderated their expectations for students (largely based on student test performance), students became less motivated for school. Disengagement from classroom and homework activities among low-performing students then reinforced the notion that students with low test scores have limited academic potential, and thus prompted teachers to maintain their low expectations. In this way, both teachers and students unwittingly perpetuated a troubling interactional dynamic, and student learning suffered as a result.

On the other hand, teachers who disregarded achievement test scores when judging academic potential could positively influence learning among struggling students by conveying high expectations and providing students with increased learning supports. Jennifer, for example, cited her seventh-grade English language arts teacher as instrumental in her considerable improvement in that subject. Throughout elementary school, Jennifer had struggled to reach high levels of achievement in ELA. She reported

that it was not until seventh-grade that she really began to progress: “I was in [Far Below Basic, Below Basic, or] Basic before. And then [my seventh-grade teacher] said, ‘I believe everyone could be Proficient or Advanced,’ and she taught me well and she would say to stay after school, and she would partner me up with some people that know so they could tutor me or give me more advice, and I moved up a level because of her” (interview, March 26, 2012). That year, for the first time, Jennifer reached a level of Proficient on the ELA assessment.

Access to School Information and Resources

Unequal access to the information and resources necessary to effectively navigate the school system contributed to disparate learning opportunities among the study participants. As eighth-graders, planning a pathway from middle school to high school was perhaps the participants’ most pressing academic concern. However, in a large school district with numerous possibilities, there was no clear route to take. To make an informed decision regarding a particular high school option, a student and her family had to consider several issues, including the benefits and drawbacks of the academic program, the size of the school, and the feasibility and cost of daily transportation to and from the campus. Additionally, while matriculation at neighborhood high schools followed basic registration procedures, admittance into magnet programs, charter schools, and private schools involved more complicated, and often competitive, application processes.

Students commonly sought information regarding high schools from family members and friends. A number of participants intended to go to their neighborhood high school because of its familiarity and close proximity to their homes. Other participants

planned to attend particular schools that older siblings or friends had attended. For example, José hoped to go to a magnet high school that he learned about from a neighbor whose brother had been a student there. After attending Vernon, which José found to be hectic and distracting due to its large student population, the smallness of this high school appealed to him: “My neighbor had been there once and told me there’s not a lot of kids so... I like being calm” (interview, March 22, 2012).

Other participants gained high school direction from information sessions held at the middle school. To facilitate the transition into high school, Vernon organized meetings for students and their parents during which invited educators from a number of high schools presented their respective academic programs. These sessions were a source of motivation for students like Jennifer and Esteban, who set their sights on particular high schools based on inspiring presentations. Captivated by languages, and French in particular, Jennifer decided on a school after learning of its program focused on global languages and cultures: “They did a presentation of [the school] and it was a school for language, to learn French, Japanese, Chinese... and I really got interested because I’ve always wanted to learn French and they got me motivated” (interview, March 26, 2012). Similarly, Esteban decided to apply to a high school with a program designed for students pursuing careers in the medical field.

However, for a student considering a magnet school, her selection of a program of interest is only the first step. Actual admittance into a given program follows a somewhat complicated decision-making process that is determined by a school’s goal of achieving and maintaining a racially balanced student population and by a school’s available space.

Indeed, there was some confusion among the participants regarding the magnet school application process. For example, by mid-March José had not yet applied to the school he hoped to attend; and although Esteban did complete the required form to indicate his magnet school selection, he was unclear about whether or not the form constituted an application.

Although the information gained from family members, friends, and Vernon's information sessions did provide some support for students as they navigated the transition to high school, high-achieving students benefitted from access to additional resources. Specifically, students with the highest test scores received individualized guidance on high school applications from Miss Noriega, Vernon's Gifted and Talented program coordinator. Miss Noriega met with students to discuss their interests and goals, to identify appropriate high school options, and to complete applications. Students eligible to apply to private schools also received critical assistance with financial aid requests. Lisa, for example, applied to four private schools, three of which accepted her. Lisa's preferred school, however, offered less financial aid than the other two. To manage the situation, Miss Noriega counseled Lisa to call her preferred school and inform them that while she would like to attend their school, the others were offering more financial support. This strategy was successful, as Lisa gained additional aid from her preferred school.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

Home Language Abilities Support Learning in English-Medium Classrooms

Analyses of longitudinal data indicated a significant and positive relationship between oral Spanish language proficiency and academic achievement for this sample of Spanish-speaking English learners. Achievement in both English language arts and math was higher as a function of increasing Spanish proficiency, as measured in kindergarten with a standardized assessment. Substantial disparities in ELA and math outcomes among students with varying levels of Spanish proficiency were evident even after accounting for other factors known to affect academic achievement. In other words, the benefits associated with expressive and receptive Spanish abilities were not attributable to other well-established advantages for academic achievement, including having a parent with a college degree, living in a household with an income above the poverty level, and attaining more advanced levels of oral English language proficiency by kindergarten (as compared with other ELs). Gaps in achievement between students with varying oral Spanish language proficiency were already evident by second grade (the earliest grade level for which achievement data is collected in this school district). Moreover, students with the highest level of Spanish proficiency outperformed the average student in the district on grade-level assessments of ELA and math.

These results substantiate previous findings that oral proficiency in the home language benefits children as they learn in school. However, while most research investigating the potential influence of home language skills on learning and academic achievement do so in the presence of some form of home language instruction, the

students in the present study sample have had minimal to no experience with instructional use of Spanish in school. Few students in the sample (approximately 13 percent) have ever participated in an alternative instructional program (i.e. bilingual or dual language). Of those, the vast majority did so for only one or two years.

Moreover, it is prudent to interpret the effects of alternative instructional programs (slightly negative with ELA achievement and slightly positive with math achievement) with caution for several reasons. First, participation in an alternative instructional program requires a series of actions by both parents and school staff. Under Prop 227, a parent can request an alternative program for a student by submitting a “parental exception waiver” in person at the school each year. There are three types of waivers: for children who already know English, for ELs who are ten or older, and for ELs with special educational, psychological, or physical needs. The principal may deny waiver requests for students who do not meet one of the three criteria and parents may appeal a decision to deny. Additionally, the availability of alternative programs depends on the number of parents requesting waivers. When the parents of 20 children in two consecutive grade levels submit waivers, the school will provide a Basic Bilingual class. With less than 20 waivers, parents may seek an alternative program at a different school, and students can transfer schools provided space is available and transportation for families is feasible (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2008). Given the fairly extensive set of conditions that must be met, participants in alternative programs of instruction may differ systematically from nonparticipants on unobserved variables. Secondly, several studies have highlighted disparities in information on instructional programs provided to parents, which may influence the programmatic choices parents

make (e.g., García, 2000). Lastly, actual practices can vary considerably across classrooms operating under the same policy mandate, a point underscored by the Office for Civil Rights' compliance review of LAUSD. Without knowledge of specific classroom pedagogy, the experiences of students participating in instructional programs labeled Basic Bilingual or Dual Language may not be comparable.

The observed positive relationship between oral Spanish language proficiency and academic achievement demonstrates that home language abilities can benefit language minority learners, even in an English-only context. In the absence of Spanish language practices in the classroom, higher academic achievement among students who scored Proficient on the Spanish language assessment indicates the assessment taps into underlying knowledge and abilities relevant for their academic achievement. In other words, students are able to apply learning strategies developed at home in Spanish to learning endeavors at school in English. Some students may have also benefited from teachers who find ways to utilize home language abilities during teaching and learning activities despite language rules and restrictions.

On the other hand, poor performance on the Spanish language assessment does not necessarily indicate the absence of Spanish language abilities or a language disorder. Rather, the particular Spanish language abilities that some learners have gained at home and in the community may not have prepared them to perform well on this assessment. As discussed earlier, some students who score low on this assessment may be accustomed to communicating using a combination of Spanish and English. With access to only some of their linguistic resources (i.e. only Spanish language resources) the structure of the assessment may effectively limit their opportunities to express themselves fully. Also

discussed earlier, the *preLAS* Español – and the *Contando Cuentos* subtest, in particular – may privilege certain ways of communicating over others. Therefore, some learners may be at a disadvantage when taking the assessment. Still other learners who perform poorly on the assessment may simply shy away from verbal communication in the context of an unfamiliar testing situation.

For these reasons, programmatic placements and instructional decisions informed by this language assessment may be misguided (Artiles, Salazar, & Higuera, 2005). Among students in the analytic sample who were classified as Non-Speakers of Spanish, there was disproportionately high participation in special education programs. That said, since there is no district policy directly linking students' Spanish language assessment results to their identification for special education services, it is difficult to determine to what extent the assessment results informed these programmatic decisions. Nonetheless, the data do draw attention to the inequities that may stem from attaching high stakes to the results of discrete language assessments.

Findings from this study suggest the use and development of students' home languages in school would afford advantages for both instruction and assessment. First, the positive and significant relationship between oral Spanish language proficiency and academic achievement indicate home language skills are quite meaningful for academic success. The implication is that with home language instruction ELs would benefit from increased access to their principal tools for learning. Indeed, academic learning is maximized by providing access to *more* resources, not less. As Heath (1986) noted, “the school can promote academic and vocational success for all children, regardless of their first-language background, by providing the greatest possible range of oral and written

language uses” (p. 144). Additionally, in bilingual classrooms teachers gain opportunities to observe and engage with students utilizing their home language. In contrast, English-only classrooms produce rare occasions to assess students’ natural home language use. As a result, teachers have less information with which to assess students’ abilities and tailor instruction to meet their learning needs.

Additionally, provision of spaces at school for ELs to utilize and develop language skills gained at home (e.g., bilingual classrooms, teacher-facilitated translanguaging practices within mainstream classrooms) may represent pivotal opportunities to alter the course of language shift. Intra-generational shift commonly occurs with bilingual children decreasing their use of the home language and increasing their use of English as they progress through school and into adulthood (Cummins, 1993; Wong Fillmore, 1991). Also, language shift advances across generations, as numerous children do not learn the primary language of their parents and grandparents (Portes & Hao, 1998). The steady decrease observed in the percentage of students scoring Proficient on the oral Spanish language assessment could be a result of these shifts.

Although this study provides evidence that non-English linguistic resources are significantly and positively related to language minority students’ academic achievement, still substantial variation in achievement between students attending the same schools remains unexplained, as does variation in achievement of individual learners from one year to the next. This suggests that data routinely collected by the school district do not capture other key factors that promote academic learning for language minority students. To address this point, findings from the second portion of this research identify social identification processes that unfold in classrooms and shape qualitatively different

learning experiences among English learners in the same school. The discussion now turns to these findings.

Institutional Classifications as Indices of Academic Potential

Student participants in the research at Vernon Middle School were all classified as English learners – and subsequently reclassified as fluent in English – within the school district. However, despite the common language classification, their school experiences and achievement trajectories varied widely. The findings from this study are consistent with the work of other researchers who have employed the concept of academic identity to understand achievement in school. That is, the results indicate that the ways in which teachers and peers at Vernon viewed individual students as learners, as well as students' perceptions of themselves, strongly influenced their opportunities to learn and contributed to differing pathways through LAUSD schools.

More specifically, findings revealed that the institutionalized system of academic achievement assessments, and associated administrative and pedagogical practices, were instrumental in shaping the participants' academic identities. Similar to numerous schools nationwide, the achievement assessment system occupied a powerful position at Vernon with respect to most aspects of daily school life. Students' assessment results guided the organization of instruction, including the grouping of students into classes, and the matching of teachers to particular classes of students. Additionally, individual students' scores on these tests affected their high school applications, and together with the test scores of peers, were considered in teachers' performance evaluations. Student test scores

also held implications for district-level decisions regarding future plans for the school community.

The high-stakes associated with these assessments within LAUSD and the national education system more broadly position students who score well to then engage in teaching and learning activities with the most effective teachers, gain admittance to top-quality schools, and have the option to pursue their studies in colleges and universities. In this way, high test scores have come to represent a future of academic promise, rather than student understanding of the tested material (and test-taker motivation).

Interacting with these dominant, institutional representations of promising students, educators and students at Vernon actively constructed academic identities for individual learners in their school community. By comparing classes of students (sorted based on achievement assessment performance) to each other, teachers established distinctions between them that extended beyond scores on particular tests to include ideas about students' academic ability and potential, as well as the educational investment of their parents; and shorthand labels for students, like "BB" and "FBB", indirectly indexed these ideas. At times, students assumed the identities ascribed to them and even advanced the associated ideas about academic capabilities with class comparisons of their own. Other times, they resisted this identification process and protested the implications of particular identities.

As social identification processes are repeated over ontogenetic time and across spaces (e.g., different classrooms and schools) individual identities take hold, or "thicken", (Holland & Lave, 2001). The practice of tracking students to low- and high-

level classes facilitates the thickening of test-based academic identities, as disparate learning opportunities across the levels – including varying instructional quality, moderated expectations from teachers, and unequal access to supportive resources – hinder upward mobility through the tracking system. Indeed, previous research has found academic achievement among English learners is more closely associated with tracking than English language proficiency (e.g., Callahan, 2005).

This is not to imply that schools should do away with assessments. Rather, assessments of student understanding are critically important for any teaching and learning process. Among numerous utilities, assessments can provide valuable information regarding the difficulty of curricula, the compatibility of specific teaching methods and learning styles, and the progress of individual students. With this information in hand, a teacher can modify her instruction and help students identify actions they can take to advance their learning. Indeed, these formative assessment practices are critical for English learners and their teachers as they work to achieve both language and content learning goals (Heritage, Walqui, & Linqunti, 2013).

However, the primary intended function of standardized achievement assessments is summative as they are administered once at the end of each academic year to evaluate student learning. Conceivably, teachers could use the assessment results to serve some formative objectives; however, the scheduling of the assessments (i.e. once a year, in the spring) limit their usefulness with respect to the adaptation of instruction to meet individual students' learning needs. Moreover, as the experiences of the study participants demonstrate, the classification system associated with these tests can actually work counter to learning goals.

Institutional classification systems more generally hold significant implications for language minority students' academic identities and related opportunities to learn. At Vernon, the achievement assessments were the primary influence on social identification processes, at least in part because students did not differ according to other standard school classifications. For example, most of the students at Vernon – and all of the study participants – are Latina/o English learners whose parents have not attained high levels of formal education in the United States or in their home countries and are facing the many challenges that are associated with poverty. In contrast, in a school with mostly monolingual students or with a highly diverse student population the system of language classifications (for example) would likely have more influence on the lived school experiences of students classified as English learners (e.g., Gándara & Orfield, 2010).

This study points to a need for educators to bring to a level of conscious awareness the ways in which institutional classification systems shape students' academic identities and significantly affect their opportunities to learn (Thesen, 1997). Academic achievement assessments in particular have become standard, and the social processes that ascribe meaning to the achievement assessment classifications often unfold without adequate attention to – or understanding of – their influence. It is critical that educators actively consider these relational processes, for they position some learners in a given school context to excel and others to struggle.

Conclusion

With a rise in the immigrant population in the U.S, and the associated growth in school enrollments among children from immigrant families, education policies

concerning services provided to language minorities now affect a sizeable portion of learners in schools. In fact, academic learning is subject to the effectiveness of such policies for a majority of students in Los Angeles Unified School District. While the academic achievement of students classified as English learners in particular has become a central policy focus, persistent struggles in school among these learners demand an improved pedagogical approach. As described above, heated debates on the topic indicate that interested parties agree the stakes are high. However, with differing ideas about the efficacy and value of specific instructional and assessment strategies, consensus on a forward course is probably not imminent.

This dissertation has been an attempt to demonstrate that educators, researchers, and policy makers must continue to work to provide equitable education for English learners, and recognize student differences as central to this goal. “English learner” is not an individual trait, but an ascribed characteristic. The linguistic resources and school experiences of students classified as English learners vary greatly – even among students attending the same school at the same time.

First, while English language and literacy practices are important to develop, academic success for language minority learners does not hinge on these practices alone. Rather, home language abilities also play a significant role in academic learning, even in contexts in which they are ignored by the curricula and/or expressly prohibited by law. Additional research is needed to investigate the specific ways in which some teachers have managed to craft and implement translanguaging practices within the confines set by restrictive language policies, the (fluid) boundaries of their own communicative

competences, and the particulars of a given context. This valuable information can provide important support for other teachers striving to do the same.

Second, the academic achievement assessment system employed for accountability purposes can, in practice, work in opposition to learning goals for language minorities (and all students). Indeed for some, the classifications associated with achievement assessments more accurately reflect social identification processes that unfold in classrooms than they do students' academic abilities. Similar to current language in education policies, accountability regulations can constrain teaching and learning. Further research into how associated social identification processes variably facilitate or hinder student learning is sorely needed.

Ideally, education policies should support teaching and learning methods that experts have identified as best practices. However, with competing social, political, and economic interests, progress at the policy level can be slow. For this reason, efforts toward improving the educational services provided to language minority children must aim to directly support teachers in their classrooms. Positive change cannot wait with the future of so many young learners in the balance.

Appendix A.1: Parent Permission and Voluntary Consent Forms (Spanish)

FORMA DE PERMISO DE PADRES

Estimado/a Padre / Tutor/a,

Mi nombre es Gina Arnone, y yo soy una estudiante de posgrado en la Universidad de Pennsylvania en la Escuela de Graduados de Educación. He estado pasando tiempo en la [REDACTED] desde septiembre como parte de un estudio de las experiencias escolares de los estudiantes bilingües. Esta investigación incluye una revisión de archivos de los estudiantes relacionados con el lenguaje y entrevistas informales con los estudiantes. Estoy pidiendo que usted permita que su hijo, _____ participe en esta investigación.

Me gustaría que su hijo participe en este estudio para conocer sus experiencias como un estudiante bilingüe. La identidad de su hijo se mantendrá confidencial en todo momento. Sus respuestas (junto con las respuestas de otros estudiantes) se utilizará en un artículo académico para ayudar a educar a otros sobre cómo enseñar mejor y relacionarse con los jóvenes. Los detalles sobre el proyecto están impresos en el reverso de esta página.

Por favor, conteste las siguientes preguntas y luego firmar y fechar el formulario. Por favor, haga que su hijo regrese la forma en la clase de Inglés.

1. Da usted permiso para que los registros escolares relacionadas con estudios del lenguaje de su hijo sean revisados por la investigadora (Gina)?

Si _____ No _____

2. Da usted permiso para que su hijo participe en una entrevista en audio grabada con Gina?

Si _____ No _____

Sí, estoy de acuerdo

Padre / Tutor(a) _____ Fecha _____

POR FAVOR FIRME AQUÍ

Investigadora: Gina Arnone, de la Universidad de Pennsylvania, [REDACTED]

DETALLES DEL PROYECTO

¿Qué es este estudio? ¿Qué tengo que hacer?

El propósito de este proyecto es desarrollar una comprensión de las experiencias escolares de los alumnos bilingües y multilingües. Para participar, el niño sólo tiene que participar en la clase como él / ella haría normalmente. Además, su hijo puede participar en una entrevista informal.

¿Cuáles son los beneficios de participar? ¿Tengo que participar?

Este estudio puede ayudar a mejorar la educación para los estudiantes bilingües y multilingües, como su hijo, dando a los maestros comprender los tipos de experiencias que han dado forma a quiénes son esos niños en el aula hoy en día y las formas en que participan en la educación. Su hijo puede recibir un pequeño regalo para darle las gracias a para participar en una entrevista, si el estudio tiene los fondos necesarios para proporcionar este. Su hijo no tiene que participar en este estudio. Si no desea que su hijo a participar, no habrá ninguna consecuencia. Si usted decide participar ahora, pero más tarde cambia de opinión, simplemente tienes que hacérmelo saber. Mi información de contacto está en la parte inferior de esta página.

¿Existe algún riesgo? ¿Es esto confidencial?

No hay riesgos en participar. La identidad de su hijo se mantendrá confidencial. Su hijo nunca va a ser identificado personalmente cuando escribimos los resultados de esta investigación. Audio-grabaciones de las entrevistas se transcribirán sin ningún tipo de información de identificación (por ejemplo, todos los nombres se cambiarán). Una vez que la transcripción es completa, las grabaciones de audio serán eliminados.

¿Qué pasará si decido no participar?

No hay problema. La participación es voluntaria.

¿A quién debo llamar si tengo preguntas o quejas?

Usted puede llamar a Gina Arnone, [REDACTED], para más información. Si usted desea hablar con alguien más, por favor póngase en contacto con la Oficina de Asuntos Regulatorios de la Universidad de Pennsylvania con cualquier pregunta, preocupaciones o quejas. Su número es [REDACTED].

Investigadora: Gina Arnone, de la Universidad de Pennsylvania, [REDACTED]

FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO VOLUNTARIO: Los estudiantes

Estamos pidiendo su permiso para ver los registros relacionados con los idiomas de la escuela y participar en una entrevista informal. Su participación es voluntaria. Si no está seguro acerca de algunos de los detalles, por favor pregunte Gina Arnone (la investigadora), o tu profesor para aclarar. Si usted decide participar, por favor, firmar las dos copias de este formulario de consentimiento y guarde una para usted para que tenga nuestra información de contacto y respuestas a las preguntas acerca de este estudio.

¿Qué es este estudio? ¿Qué tengo que hacer?

El propósito de este proyecto es desarrollar una comprensión de las experiencias escolares de los estudiantes bilingües y multilingües. Si usted está interesado en participar, Gina le entrevistará. También pedimos que nos permiten ver los registros relacionados con el lenguaje de la escuela.

¿Cuáles son los beneficios de participar? ¿Tengo que participar?

Este estudio puede ayudar a mejorar la educación para los estudiantes bilingües y multilingües como tú, dando a los maestros comprender los tipos de experiencias que han dado forma a lo que eres en el aula, así como las formas en las que participan en la educación. Usted no tiene que participar en este estudio. Si no desea participar, no habrá ninguna consecuencia. Si usted decide participar ahora, pero más tarde decide que no quiere que su entrevista incluida en el proyecto, sólo tienes que hágamelo saber y lo eliminaremos. Mi información de contacto está en la parte inferior de esta página.

¿Existe algún riesgo? ¿Es esto confidencial?

No hay riesgos en participar. Su identidad se mantendrá confidencial. Usted nunca será identificado personalmente cuando escribimos los resultados de esta investigación. Audio-grabaciones de las entrevistas se transcribirán sin ningún tipo de información de identificación (por ejemplo, todos los nombres se pueden cambiar). Una vez que la transcripción es completa, las grabaciones de audio serán eliminados.

¿Qué pasará si decido no participar?

No hay problema. La participación es voluntaria.

¿A quién debo llamar si tengo preguntas o quejas?

Usted puede llamar a Gina Arnone, [REDACTED], para más información. Si usted desea hablar con alguien más, por favor póngase en contacto con la Oficina de Asuntos Regulatorios de la Universidad de Pennsylvania con cualquier pregunta, preocupaciones o quejas. Su número es [REDACTED].

Quando usted firma este documento aquí, usted está de acuerdo para dejarnos ver el lenguaje relacionados con los registros de la escuela y para grabar a su participación en una entrevista informal en espera de autorización de tus padres.

Su nombre (letra de molde)

Su firma

Fecha

Investigadora: Gina Arnone, de la Universidad de Pennsylvania, [REDACTED]

Appendix A.2: Parent Permission and Voluntary Consent Forms (English)

PARENT PERMISSION FORM

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Gina Arnone, and I am a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education. I have been spending time at [REDACTED] since September as part of a study of the school experiences of bilingual students. This research involves viewing students' language-related school records and informal interviews with students. I am requesting that you allow _____ to participate in this research.

I would like your child to participate in this study to learn about his/her experiences as a bilingual student. Your child's identity will be kept confidential at all times. His/her responses (along with other students' responses) will be used in an academic article to help educate others on how to better teach and relate to young people. Details about the project are printed on the reverse side of this page.

Please answer the questions below and then sign and date the form. Please have your child return the form in English class.

1. Do you grant permission for your child's language-related school records to be viewed by the researcher (Gina)?

Yes _____ No _____

2. Do you grant permission for your child to take part in an audio-recorded interview with Gina?

Yes _____ No _____

Yes, I agree

Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____

PLEASE SIGN HERE

Researcher: Gina Arnone, University of Pennsylvania, [REDACTED]

PROJECT DETAILS

What is this study about? What do I have to do?

The purpose of this project is to develop an understanding of bi- and multilingual students' school experiences. To participate, your child merely needs to participate in class as he/she would ordinarily. In addition, your child may agree to participate in an informal interview.

What are the benefits of participating? Do I have to participate?

This study may help improve the education for bi- and multilingual students like your child, by giving teachers insight into the kinds of experiences that have shaped who these children are in the classroom today and the ways they participate in schooling. Your child may receive a small gift to thank him/her for participating in an interview, should the study have the funding to provide this. Your child does not have to participate in this study. If you do not wish for your child to participate, there will not be any consequence. If you decide to participate now, but later change your mind, you simply have to let me know. My contact information is at the bottom of this page.

Are there any risks? Is this confidential?

There are no risks in participating. Your child's identity will be kept confidential. Your child will never be identified personally when we write up the findings of this research. Audio-recordings of interviews will be transcribed without any identifying information (for example, all names will be changed). Once the transcription is complete, the audio-recordings will be deleted.

What will happen if I decide not to participate?

No problem. Participation is voluntary.

Who should I call if I have questions or complaints?

You can call Gina Arnone, [REDACTED], for more information. If you wish to speak with someone else, please contact the Office of Regulatory Affairs at the University of Pennsylvania with any questions, worries, or complaints. Their number is [REDACTED].

Researcher: Gina Arnone, University of Pennsylvania, [REDACTED]

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM: Students

We are asking your permission to view your language-related school records and to participate in an informal interview. Your participation is voluntary. If you are unsure about some of the details of this research, please ask Gina Arnone (the researcher) or your teacher to clarify. If you choose to participate, please sign both copies of this consent form and keep one for yourself so that you have our contact information and answers to questions about this study.

What is this study about? What do I have to do?

The purpose of this project is to develop an understanding of the school experiences of bilingual and multilingual students. If you are interested in participating, Gina will interview you. We also request that you allow us to view your language-related school records.

What are the benefits of participating? Do I have to participate?

This study may help improve the education for bi- and multilingual students like you, by giving teachers insight into the kinds of experiences that have shaped who you are in the classroom, and the ways you participate in schooling. You do not have to participate in this study. If you do not wish to participate, there will not be any consequence. If you decide to participate now, but later decide that you do not want your interview included in the project, you simply have to let me know and we will remove it. My contact information is at the bottom of this page.

Are there any risks? Is this confidential?

There are no risks in participating. Your identity will be kept confidential. You will never be identified personally when we write up the findings of this research. Audio-recordings of interviews will be transcribed without any identifying information (for example, all names will be changed). Once the transcription is complete, the audio-recordings will be deleted.

What will happen if I decide not to participate?

No problem. Participation is voluntary.

Who should I call if I have questions or complaints?

You can call Gina Arnone, [REDACTED], for more information. If you wish to speak with someone else, please contact the Office of Regulatory Affairs at the University of Pennsylvania with any questions, worries, or complaints. Their number is [REDACTED].

When you sign this paper here, you are agreeing to let us view language-related school records and to audiotape your participation in an informal interview pending consent from your parent.

Your Name (print)

Your Signature

Date

Researcher: Gina Arnone, University of Pennsylvania, [REDACTED]

Appendix B.1: Sample Student Interview Questions

Home life

Can you tell me about the family members who live with you?
Describe your neighborhood.
Tell me about a typical day for you.
What have been your parents' experiences with school?

Previous school experiences

Where did you attend elementary school?
Describe your elementary school teachers.
Describe yourself as a student then.

Current school experiences

Describe yourself as a student now.
How do you feel about your teachers at Vernon?
How are your school experiences similar to or different from those of your friends?
What do your parents know about your school experiences?
How do your parents feel about Vernon and your teachers?
How do you motivate yourself in school?

Learning

What is your favorite/least favorite subject in school and why?
What do you do if you are having difficulty in a class?

Future school plans

What are your plans for next year (i.e. high school)?
How have you found out about specific high schools?

Appendix B.2: Sample Teacher Interview Questions

Teaching history

Tell me about your teaching background.
How long have you taught at Vernon and what brought you here?
What has been your experience working with English learners?

Teaching perspectives

In your experience, what resources have helped some students do well in school? And what challenges do other students face?
How are teachers prepared to work with students with diverse school experiences?

Teaching at Vernon

What are the benefits/challenges to teaching at Vernon?
How are your experiences at Vernon similar to/different from those of other teachers here?

Particular students

What are your thoughts on [participant's name] as a student?
Why do you think [participant's name] is doing well/struggling in your class?

Appendix C: Sample Codes

The following codes – which are included in the code-cluster, ‘characteristics of test score identities and the identification process’ – are provided as examples.

Name:

Test score reference direct (test ref direct)

Description:

A teacher, administrator, or student uses an achievement test score classification to reference the academic behavior or abilities of an individual student or group of students in a situation or conversation that does not pertain to achievement tests. The reference is communicated directly to students, or at least one student referenced is present to hear (or in a position to overhear) the comment.

Example(s):

“These kids are all BB [below basic] and FBB [far below basic] so that’s what you’re seeing here.” (This teacher was referring to student behavior in the classroom. The comment was directed to the researcher, but two students were well within earshot.)

“These kids are here [in this class] because they suck at math.” (The comment was directed to the researcher as a student entered the classroom.)

Exclusion(s):

Do not use this code for a literal reference to achievement test performance. Only use if at least one student witnesses the reference.

Name:

Test score reference indirect (test ref indirect)

Description:

A teacher, administrator, or student uses an achievement test score classification to reference the academic behavior or abilities of an individual student or group of students in a situation or conversation that does not pertain to achievement tests. No students referenced are present to hear (or in a position to overhear) the comment.

Example(s):

“FBBs are never absent. That just never happens.” (This teacher was speaking sarcastically to imply that students who score Far Below Basic on achievement tests are frequently absent from school.)

“They’re just not deep or reflective people.” (Spoken in reference to “FBBs and BBs.”)

Exclusion(s):

Do not use this code for a literal reference to achievement test performance. Only use if no students witness the reference.

Name:

Class comparison direct (class comp direct)

Description:

A teacher, administrator, or student draws a comparison between the academic behaviors or abilities of students in one class to those of students in another class. The comparison is communicated directly to members of one of the classes, or to the entire class.

Example(s):

“With the other two classes conversation flows. With you guys it gets stuck.”

“I come in here up here [lifting his arm and hand up above his head to indicate a high level] from period one, then with you guys it’s down here [lowering his arm and hand to waist-high to indicate a lower level].”

Exclusion(s):

Only use if at least one student witnesses the comparison.

Name:

Class comparison indirect (class comp indirect)

Description:

A teacher, administrator, or student draws a comparison between the academic behaviors or abilities of students in one class to those of students in another class. The comparison is not communicated directly to members of either class.

Example(s):

“Like that period one class, that was a challenging class. You can tell the difference between their critical thinking and how they thought about the world around them as compared to the period three class. It’s just a higher level of thinking.”

Exclusion(s):

Only code this if no students witness the comparison.

Name:

Individual comparison direct (indiv comp direct)

Description:

A teacher, administrator, or student makes a direct comparison between the academic behavior or abilities of individual students and the comparison is directly communicated to at least one of the students included in the comparison.

Example(s):

“You’re so smart. Did you know that? You’re really smart. Grading your papers and it’s 5, 5, 5... I’m not sure you’re as smart as [Maria] but you’re smart.”

Exclusion(s):

Only code this if at least one of the students being compared witnesses the comparison.

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