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Exploring English Language Learners' Identity Negotiation in a Sixth Grade English Language Arts Classroom

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Exploring English Language Learners' Identity Negotiation in a Sixth Grade English Language Arts Classroom

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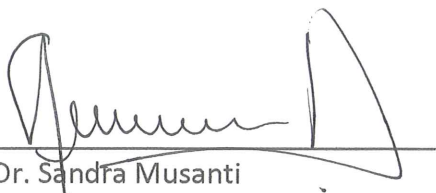
Carolina G. López

A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
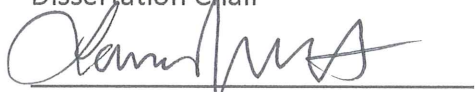
Doctor of Education

In the Field of Curriculum and Instruction
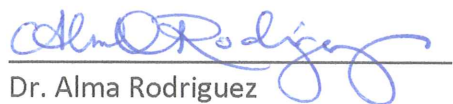
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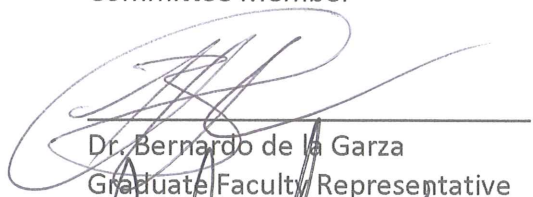
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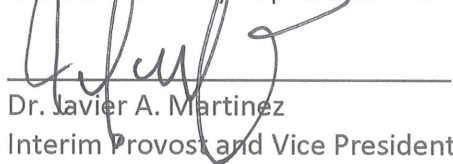
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July 2015

Exploring English Language Learners' Identity Negotiation in a Sixth Grade English Language
Arts Classroom

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of

University of Texas Brownsville

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction

By

Carolina G. López

July 2015

I dedicate this study to the children who allowed me to tell their story and learn from them every day.

ACKOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the love and support of my family who has carried me through every step of the way. I want to thank my children, Isaac and Andrew, for sacrificing so much for me. Thank you for waiting patiently for Mom to finish writing for a quick errand on the weekend, and waking up early in the summer to go with me to the library. In many ways this journey is yours too.

I want to thank my husband, Leroy, for "figuring it out" during the week and coming up with the right answer for why Mom was not home yet from school. I want to thank my parents, Feliciano and Maria Celia Gárate, who instilled in me a passion for learning and reminding me that there was more I needed to do. Dad, tu eres mi inspiración. Soy orgullosa de ser tu hija. To my sister Michelle and my brother Edgar, thank you for expecting this from me.

Thank you Ali for being my sounding board. I appreciate your patience and time when you listened to me stress about the next hurdle. You are a great friend.

I also want to thank all of my professors for your encouraging words. Thank you Dr. Musanti for your patience and understanding. I am grateful for your guidance and nurturing throughout this journey. Your words reignited my fire more than your will ever know. Dr. Jewett, thank you for pushing me to my potential and inviting me to "Write like the wind." Dr. Rodriguez, thank you for your responsiveness and attention to detail.

Last, I want to thank my fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Wanda Asogwa. You saw a fire in my eyes and made me feel like I could do anything. I strive every day to make my students feel the way I did in your classroom.

ABSTRACT

Secondary schools in the United States are filled with English language learners. The large amount of English Language Learners (ELLs) represent a diverse population with unique academic trajectories and language needs. The diversity among ELLs requires an examination of ELLs' identity, as it relates to literacy development and achievement.

This qualitative study explores how different types of ELLs negotiate identities in an English language arts classroom. Specifically, how different types of ELLs' perceptions as readers and writers impact identity negotiation is analyzed. The study takes place in a sixth grade English language arts classroom in deep South Texas. It is an in depth look at how 10 focal ELLs, representing different types of ELLs, engage in a teacher-researcher designed unit of instruction. The unit focused on identity and was designed to determine what learning opportunities help foster identity negotiation. The data collected occurred over three and a half months and included written and audio-recorded interviews, participant journal entries, student produced artifacts, and a teacher researcher journal.

The findings revealed that ELLs negotiate identities based on their previous schooling experiences and how language, high stakes tests, and teacher actions have critical impact in the identity negotiation process. More importantly, there are slight differences in how different types ELLs negotiate identities as learners, readers, and writers in the classroom, and it is through learning about the differences that teachers can best help ELLs.

Keywords: English language learners, identity negotiation, English language arts

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

It was midweek and I was struggling to get my sixth grade English language arts lesson started. I could hear the usual whispers and side conversations that often consume students after lunch. After several attempts to capture everyone's attention, I crossed my arms and announced, "Ok. That's it guys. Maybe I should take a break and not teach for a while since everyone seems to not care about what we need to do." I figured some shock and sarcasm would capture their attention. It worked. It was obvious in my tone that I was upset and frustrated at my repeated attempts and failures to begin the daily lesson. Yadira[1], an English language learner (ELL) pleaded, "No Ms. You can't stop caring. Please. This is the first time ever I am actually doing good in school. This is my first year liking school and I am getting good grades." I could hear the genuine concern in her plea. I responded with a, "Really?" She immediately smiled and looked down in a sign of embarrassment at her revelation. "What do you mean?" I asked, hoping to gain some new insight. Yadira began to share that she was a "trouble maker" and was always "getting yelled at" by teachers in previous years. I could not believe my ears. How could this be? How could Yadira, the sweet little 11 year-old with a great disposition, be labeled a "trouble maker" and a "struggler"?

The notion was difficult for me to understand. Yadira had been in school for seven years, and just now it was evident she was finding her voice in an academic setting. It was clear Yadira equated my teaching with caring, and that for her, many other teachers seemed not to care. Yadira unknowingly opened a flood gate of thoughts for me as a teacher researcher. Could it be that Yadira had experienced teachers who assumed she did not care about school, like I did so in my sarcastic announcement to the class?

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[1] A pseudonym is used.

The conversation I had a year ago with Yadira has remained with me. I found myself immersed with questions about identity. I only knew the Yadira who always answered with "Yes ma'am," or "I'm sorry Miss.," and always strived to reach her potential by voluntarily revisiting assignments before submission. I soon realized that Yadira's identity had undergone a transformation. How Yadira viewed herself and how others viewed Yadira had changed in only one semester. Most importantly, Yadira equated my caring as crucial to her continued success. Since Yadira's remarks, I became increasingly interested in how older English Language Learners (ELLs) negotiate identities in the context of an academic classroom.

I began to notice that ELLs in my English language arts (ELA) classroom, each at varying levels of language proficiency, were at times the first to complete assignments and eagerly continue with independent learning projects. Many of the independent learning projects occur with the use of computers, all of which are located in the back of the classroom, so students may work on media related assignments. This designated computer space is often occupied by ELLs, some of who have experienced little to no academic success, yet work efficiently to complete assignments, allowing them opportunities to work on media related independent learning projects. In fact, these same ELLs are quite often the eager students to stay after school in an extended day program for reading. I wondered how ELLs view themselves as readers and writers and how these perceptions influence identity negotiation in a classroom. Months passed, and I found myself contrasting the identities of ELLs with the institutional labels that accompanied them as "limited-English proficient", and often "strugglers" in the academic classroom. Such labels highlight a deficit rather than a bilingual advantage. Baker (2011) explains that categories such as "limited-English proficient" in the United States mean bilingual children are "classified as inferior" (p. 9). Gee (2000) refers to such labels as "Institution

identity" defined as a "position" (p. 100) assigned to individuals by those who hold power in an institution. The term emergent bilingual highlights a bilingual advantage and is defined by Garcia (2009) as "students who are in the beginning states of moving along a bilingual continuum" (p. 397), although most institutions like school districts and overseeing state agencies of education continue to refer to these students as ELLs. For this study I use the term ELLs because it is a label that is used and recognized in the context of this middle school classroom. It is also the label that impacts the lives of the participants. For ELLs, the notion of academic labels is important because the assigned label is directly associated to an ELL's identity. For example, ELL labels often refer to deficit views such as being "limited" in the English language, equating the lack of proficiency in English as a "struggling" student. I could not help but wonder if in some way, ELLs in a middle school English language arts classroom were negotiating their identities as learners in this context.

Yadira, unlike others, refused to remain part of a silent student body and instead shared her self-described trouble-maker identity in the classroom. I wanted to understand her better. As a secondary English language arts teacher I felt helpless, but as a researcher I saw the potential to make an impact in the life of more students like Yadira. As a thirteen-year bilingual and ESL teacher of English language arts, students like Yadira had always been one of my most challenging students, a long-term ELL (LTEL) in her seventh year of school who continued to struggle with academic English proficiency. Helping students like Yadira achieve academic success in the classroom in the context of high stakes standardized testing proved harder than what my undergraduate coursework in second language acquisition taught me. My experience, coupled with my knowledge as an emerging scholar led me to several questions.

This study provides an in depth look at how middle school ELLs negotiate identities in an English language arts classroom. As Cummins (2001) explains, the process of identity negotiation is complex, encompassing internal and external factors of the classroom that together communicate to students. Identity is directly connected to learning because it "shapes, or is an aspect of how humans make sense of the world and their experiences in it, including their experiences with text." (McCarthey & Moje, 2002, p. 28). It is through the analysis of how students view themselves as readers and writers, engage in identity negotiation, and respond to an identity oriented curriculum that I can best understand the process of identity negotiation.

The purpose of this study is to explore how different types of ELLs view themselves as learners, readers, and writers, and understand how ELLs negotiate identity in the ELA classroom. Distinguishing between different types of ELLs in this study highlights the diversity among ELLs and helped me as a teacher researcher understand how identity negotiation differs in ELLs. This is important because as Garcia and Menken (2006) suggest, our knowledge of who are those students defined as ELLs is insufficient, considering the number graduation and dropout rates of ELLs in our country. As an action researcher, I too must engage in looking for possible ways to help foster identity negotiation in ELLs.

Background and Context

In the United States, the number of ELLs has grown to 4.7 million, or 10% of students enrolled in public schools (U. S. Department of Education, 2013).   In Texas alone the number of ELLs has increased by 39.4% from 2002 to 2012, with an increase of students serviced in a bilingual or ESL program by 49.2% (Texas Education Agency, 2012b). Most notably, 91% of ELLs are Hispanic, while over 88% of ELLs are economically disadvantaged. (Texas Education Agency, 2012b). Hispanic ELLs are the face of mainstream classrooms in Texas, most notably

in the region of deep south Texas where 35.1% (Texas Education Agency, 2012a) are labeled limited-English proficient of which 97.5% are Hispanic, compared to the state average of 16.8% limited English proficient students, of which 50.8% are Hispanic.

An eerie picture of the future is painted if the learning needs of the growing number of ELLs are not met. Gándara and Contreras (2009) describe the situation as complex, and as a result, the situation can no longer be ignored. Local schools, regions, states, and the nation are now gripped by the voices of staggering numbers of failure rates of older ELLs on standardized tests.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading scale scores for fourth graders indicates a 36 point gap between scores of ELLs and non-ELLs (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). By the time ELLs reach 8th grade the gap between ELL and non-ELL reading scale scores is 44 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In Texas, the gap in scale scores is even more alarming. In grade 3 a 60 point scale score difference is recorded between ELL and non-ELL students on the reading portion of the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) (Texas Education Agency, 2014a). The gap is even larger in grade 8, with a reported 142 point scale score difference between ELLs and non-ELLs (Texas Education Agency, 2014b). The result is older ELLs in secondary schools, who despite being in US schools for years, continue to struggle with the academic English language demands of high stakes standardized assessments.

Statement of the Problem

Undoubtedly, as a whole, ELLs perform lower on standardized assessment as opposed to non-ELLs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). ELLs is a term assigned by institutions for students with a background other than English who display "limited familiarity

with English" (Durán, 2008, p. 300). Many have written about the challenges ELLs face immersed in all English curriculum. Worth noting is that although reports group ELLs in one large sub-population, there are different types of ELLs. Olsen and Jaramillo (1999b) were the first to categorize ELLs. The categories included accelerated college bound, newly arrived in the ESL sequence, under schooled, and long-term limited English proficient. Each category is characterized by the academic trajectories of ELLs. The last category, long-term English proficient, today referred to as long-term English learner has captured the attention of many because of its rapid growth in population.

Many of the students who struggle with the academic language demands in middle and high school have been defined as LTELs (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Olsen 2010ab; Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999b). An ELL is considered a LTEL, as early as sixth grade, after which the student has attended seven years in US schools and at which point an academic achievement gap is already alarming. As Menken and Kleyn (2009) have found, part of the issue lies in the overwhelming lack of opportunity for LTELs to develop native language skills. In secondary schools native language support is at a minimum and the notion that more English is best provides for a curriculum that does not meet the needs of LTELs (Freeman & Freeman, 2007, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Menken & Kleyn, 2009). The result is an assumed identity or profile developing "habits of non-engagement, learned passivity, and invisibility in school" (Olsen, 2010b, p. 2). Students like Yadira, or LTELs, sit in my classroom, in our region, state, and country, creating together a growing student body that must be addressed.

Olsen and Jaramillo (1999b) are the first to introduce the concept of LTEL. Through their work with California Tomorrow, a nonprofit organization for the advancement of multicultural

and equitable education, Olsen and Jaramillo (1999b) conducted in depth interviews with students identified as English learners and found that different types, or profiles of ELLs, emerged. In 1999, Olsen and Jaramillo, used the term, Long-Term Limited English Proficient (LTLEP), as one of four types of ELL students. Since then, the concept of LTLEP has evolved into LTEL (Freeman & Freeman 2011; Olsen, 2010b). By definition a LTEL is an ELL who has been in US schools for seven or more years, sometimes with interrupted schooling, is a secondary student in grades 6-12, has limited literacy in the native language and English, and has had some form of bilingual education or ESL instruction inconsistently (Freeman & Freeman, 2011; Olsen, 2010b; Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999b). However, there is minimal research on ELLs who have been acquiring English for more than seven years in US schools and continue to struggle with the academic language demands (Menken & Kleyn, 2009). LTELs are the students who struggle with the academic English language demands in the classroom including high stakes tests. Some LTELs have been retained and others are at-risk of dropping out (Freeman & Freeman, 2011). Although some LTELs may be able to use language effectively in social interaction (Freeman & Freeman, 2011; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Olsen, 2010b), they struggle to meet the academic language demands required on high stakes tests and perform poorly in school, especially in content area classes (Freeman & Freeman, 2011). Based on current research, a common characteristic of LTELs is a cycle of repeated failure, due in part to inconsistent instructional bilingual or ESL programs, sometimes a result of interrupted schooling (Freeman & Freeman, 2011; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Olsen, 2010b). Research has found that these students' needs are often overlooked and they are often viewed as problematic students (Menken & Kleyn, 2009). Following Jacobs (2008) LTELs continue to be "lifers" in an ESL program in part due to low expectations and inadequate academic performance. Therefore, it can be argued that despite

the generalized consensus on the defining characteristics of LTELs (Freeman & Freeman, 2011; Menken & Kleyn, 2009, Olsen, 2010b; Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999b), more research is needed to understand these students' learning needs and how to support their progress (Olsen, 2010b). Moreover, more research is needed to explore and understand how LTELs construct their identities as readers and writers, and specifically how the negotiation of identities as readers and writers is directly related to academic achievement in middle school. A study of how different types of ELLs negotiate identities will expand knowledge on how to help LTELs.

Purpose

The overall purpose of this study is to gain in depth understanding of how ELLs view themselves as readers and writers and how their perceptions relate to identity negotiation that is directly related to academic achievement in middle school. The goal is to provide a case study of my ELA classroom and how different types of ELLs negotiate identities. In this study I explored the process of identity negotiation through the implementation of a unit on identity. I engaged in transformative pedagogy as described by Cummins (2000) and observed ELLs in a natural, everyday setting, within the context of my own English language arts classroom.

The participants in this study included a focal group of ten students in my English language arts classroom identified as ELLs. I included a recently reclassified non-ELL because of the arbitrary language proficiency levels many have argued exist (Durán 2008, Garcia & Kleifgen 2010; Solórzano, 2008). Solórzano (2008) explains issues with language proficiency tests including varying definitions of English language proficiency, norming, training for administration of testing, and a variety of English language proficiency assessments that complicate classification and reclassification of ELLs. A non-ELL label for a student who was recently reclassified from an ELL label may be interpreted as a student who no longer has

specific academic language needs. This is the same reason why such students are monitored for after reclassification (Solórzano, 2008).

Understanding how ELLs negotiate identities as learners in an English language arts classroom uncover possibilities and identifies strategies that can help students like Yadira, construct a self-image as successful readers and writers through transformative pedagogy. Transformative pedagogy is the result of a way of thinking and viewing the world. For Cummins (2000) at the heart of transformative pedagogy is how institutions and educators view language. The possibility of transformative pedagogy exists when institutions and educators can to believe and act in ways that demonstrate a genuine respect, acknowledgement, and honor for linguistic and cultural diversity (Cummins, 2000). This means that educators engaging in transformative pedagogy have students engage in reading, writing, and discussion that invites opportunities to challenge "forms of disempowerment" (Cummins, 2000, p. 281). Drawing from these main tenets of transformative pedagogy, I designed instruction that focused on identity related texts and culturally relevant literature aimed at supporting ELLs' process of reflecting on their identities and providing tools to negotiate identities in a way that could position students as effective readers and writers in an English language arts classroom as opposed to struggling and or apathetic readers and writers. I implemented a unit on identity in my classroom during a period of three months. This unit served to elicit dialogue and written responses about identities as learners, readers, and, writers in the classroom. In addition the unit served to invite possibilities of change and personal transformation by including learning opportunities to help foster positive identities as readers and writers at a crucial time for different types of ELLs the start of a secondary education.

Examining how different types of ELLs negotiate identities in the context of a cognitively demanding academic classroom, helps educators better understand the needs of ELLs. I define an English language arts classroom as cognitively demanding as one which requires students to go beyond reading and writing, and also seek to question the author and understand author's craft. Understanding how ELLs view themselves and how others view different types of ELLs may also help educators contextualize teaching in a way that promotes learning for students who have experienced minimal to no academic success.

Research Questions

Identity is two-fold, understanding one's self view and understanding how others view oneself (Gee, 2000; McCarthey & Moje, 2002, Skerrett, 2012; Rymes, 2009). McCarthey and Moje (2002) argue that "people can be understood by others in particular ways, and people act toward one another depending on such understandings and positionings" (p. 228-229). The result is an identity that Skerrett (2012) describes as "neither static nor singular" (p. 63). For ELLs this means educators must understand how identity negotiation is influenced and or related to social processes. In this study the main research question is: How do ELLs negotiate identities as learners in a sixth grade English language arts classroom?

The sub questions include:

1. How do ELLs view themselves as readers and writers in a middle school English language arts classroom?

2. How is the process of identity negotiation different for different types of ELLs?

3. How do instructional activities in a Language Arts' unit on identity foster identity negotiation in ELLs?

Answering such questions can contribute to educators and all stakeholders understanding of? ELLs, and to identify strategies that produce learning contexts where all ELLs are positioned as successful learners, readers and writers. Most importantly, by answering such questions, ELLs can be provided the curriculum and instruction necessary to support second language academic language proficiency.

Research Design Overview

I see myself as an emerging teacher researcher seeking to understand how the implementation of an instructional unit can provide insights on how learner identities are negotiated and how teachers can contribute to empower students' through instruction (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). In this study, I used an ethnographic approach through participant observation (Creswell, 2006; Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Omohunduro, 2008), and principles of action research (Altricher, Posch, & Somekh, 1993) to study ELLs in an English language arts classroom. In addition, I selected case study as a method for this study because I will be studying my classroom and a case study approach allows for the "in depth" (Yin, 2009, p. 111) analysis of the human experience of identity negotiation in a real-world academic setting that is my goal.

The case in this qualitative study is comprised of my sixth grade English language arts classroom including three different classes and myself, as teacher and action researcher. I focused my data collection and analysis on my ELLs students.   Stake (1998) calls case studies born from researcher interest, such as the one born in my own practice as "intrinsic" (p. 88). In addition, as dual teacher and action researcher, I contributed to a unique, or different case in that I intentionally used specific strategies and texts to understand how learner identities are negotiated and fostered in the classroom. Lichtman (2010) describes such cases as "*unusual, unique,* or special in some way" (p. 82).

I engaged in Creswell's (2006) definition of an ethnographer engaged in participant observation, "immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people" while observing, taking field notes, and interviewing the group participants (p. 68). I observed, studied, and learned from the observations about the participant language, behaviors, beliefs, and interactions to discuss issues of identity, power, and potential empowerment as it related to different types of ELLs. My daily reflections and researcher notes were recorded in a researcher journal, a critical component of action research (Altricher et al., 1993). Furthermore, following the suggestion of Creswell (2006) I explored an issue that is "deficient in actually knowing" how a group, in this case, ELLs work, in the context of a sixth grade English language arts classroom.

Assumptions and Theoretical Underpinnings

As I embarked on this qualitative study I made several assumptions based on my personal experience as a teacher, and theories I am learning about as an emerging scholar. First, ELLs negotiate between identities with the intent to claim a voice in the academic classroom (Cummins, 2001). This assumption is based on the idea that ELLs assume different identities in and outside of the classroom, attempting to meet the, sometimes, competing demands of their lives. Second, literacy is a vehicle through which ELLs enact identity (Gee, 2001). Through literacy events and practices students construct identities as readers and writers. Third, linguistic and cultural diversity is a resource in the classroom (Ruiz, 1984). This assumption is based on the notion that linguistically and culturally diverse children bring experiences and background knowledge that can and should be valued in the classroom. For example, experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse children bring different perspectives that provide rich classroom discussions. Fourth, the assumption is made that teachers have the ability to empower students (Cummins, 2001). This assumption is based on the guiding principle that caring

coupled with a culturally relevant curriculum that seeks social justice empowers students

(Ladson-Billings, 1995). Last, the assumption is made that ELLs have a desire to redefine their

own identity as readers and writers in a cognitively demanding English language arts classroom.

This assumption is based on the notion that despite repeated failures, traces of intrinsic desire to

learn are evident when students feel shame (Menken and Kleyn, 2009).

Rationale and Significance

Although the number of ELLs, and LTELs in particular, is staggering, all too often

districts and schools have ignored the ever growing needs of these students. As Olsen (2010b)

notes, recent state and federal guidelines have forced many schools and districts to monitor the

progress of all ELLs. Texas has initiated the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment

System which is designed to monitor the English language proficiency of ELLs in the domains

of reading, writing, listening and speaking. In addition, federal measures account for the

academic achievement of ELLs as an indicator for school success making districts and schools

answer the call to provide equal educational opportunities for all learners (Olsen, 2010b).

However, the trend remains: ELLs and especially those consider LTELs continue to struggle

academically. In addition, little is still known about how ELLs and LTELs view themselves as

readers, writers, while negotiating identities. The study serves to advocate for the already

marginalized group of LTELs who have known academic failure for years.

Through this study I intend to contribute to the growing knowledge of ELLs and LTELs

in an effort to understand their needs. Understanding who ELLs are will reveal their academic

and emotional needs and provide insights on how to address those needs through appropriate

instruction. An analysis of the identities of ELLs might contribute to answer the often asked

question of how to help ELLs, in particular LTELs experience academic success. As a teacher

researcher, this study will significantly impact my future curricular and pedagogical practices. Most importantly, it is through this study that I set out to contribute to the field of curriculum and instruction for different types of ELLs by highlighting the intersections between the emotional academic needs that create unique dynamics within a classroom where success is obtainable. In particular, I seek to add to the knowledge of ELLs by understanding how learner identities are negotiated through literacy instruction and teacher provided learning opportunities. It is my intent to elaborate on what Menken and Kleyn (2009) describe as missed opportunities for LTELs. Among the central missed opportunities, the authors highlight caring, listening, interacting, purposeful text selection, and engaging students in learning opportunities that allow student voices to be heard and ultimately empowered as learners in an English language arts classroom.

The Researcher

As a doctoral student and secondary English language arts teacher, I became interested in understanding the many students in my classes who had experienced repeated failure. Prior to working at the secondary level I was a reading specialist for seven years at the elementary level. As a reading specialist I worked with small groups of students, including ELLs, who struggled with reading and writing. I often wondered what happened to the young ELLs once leaving the elementary and venturing off into middle school.

Upon teaching middle school students, I learned that the young ELLs I once worked with as a reading specialist at the elementary level unfortunately continued to struggle. The achievement gap was even larger, and most students experienced repeated failure on standardized assessments. Considering my experience and my new learning in curriculum and instruction courses, I became very interested in furthering my understanding of the complex

issues of identity within my classroom. Some of my ELLs, in particular LTEL students continued to struggle, and yet showed a desire and disposition to improve. I found myself asking how different types of ELLs negotiated identities in a classroom, specifically through literacy instruction. I wanted to know how different ELLs view themselves as readers and writers in a cognitively demanding classroom and how student perceptions contributed to the process of identity negotiation.

For thirteen years I have attended numerous professional development sessions meant to help me provide reading and writing interventions. However, none of the professional development sessions reached the core of the very real situation in my classroom, how to understand different types of ELLs as readers and writers. As a result, I felt lost, confused, and at times helpless. I decided I needed to take action and learn for myself how I could better understand the ELLs I was struggling to teach. For me, this meant looking at my own instructional and curricular practices to see how I could better understand the identities of different ELLs, while helping highlight the positive and potential of each struggling LTEL in my sixth grade English language arts classroom. This meant, studying how different types of ELLs negotiate learner identities. Together, my dual identity as teacher and researcher could merge to help schools answer the urgent concern on how to help older ELLs who have been in schools for more than seven years, have limited native language skills, and yet also continue to struggle with the academic language demands of English as a second language.

Definitions of Key Terms

The definitions presented below serve to contextualize my philosophical underpinnings and underlying assumptions of my role as a teacher researcher throughout the study. The definitions lay the foundation for the theoretical framework I will describe in detail in chapter 2.

1. *English Language Learners* (ELLs): An ELL is a "political construction", a term assigned by institutions to describe students from "non English backgrounds who show evidence of limited familiarity with English" (Durán, 2008, p. 300). Olsen (2010a) explains that ELLs may not have full access to the curriculum because of a lack of proficiency in English.

2. *Long-term English language learner* (LTEL): A LTEL is any student who has been in school for seven or more years, for some this includes interrupted schooling, orally fluent in English, and continues to struggle with academic language demands in content area classes, performing well enough to get by, but experiencing repeated failure on exams (Freeman and Freeman, 2011; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Olsen, 2010b; Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999b).

3. *Identity:* In this study, identity is defined as the "kind of person" one is "in a given context" (Gee, 2000 p. 99). Gee (2000) explains that the "kind of person" one is can change depending on the context and can be "ambiguous and unstable" (p. 99) meaning that individuals can have more than one identity depending on varying contexts. Identity includes how others view the self and how others act toward self as a result of adopting particular perspectives about an individual (McCarthey & Moje, 2002). This definition draws on the work of McCarthey and Moje (2002) and Gee (2001) who describe identity as situated and enacted through different social languages that is often influenced by issues such as power. Thus identity is "neither static nor singular" (Skerrett, 2012, p. 63) and instead a "dynamic, culturally based process of construction" (McCarthey, 2001, p. 125).

4. *Academic identity* is used to describe the dynamic process in which students assume roles and the views adopted about their own perceived academic ability, including how others view and perceive their academic ability (McCarthey, 2001).

5. N*egotiating Identities* refers to the interaction of different factors including power, policy, and practice that often influence how students begin to view themselves as learners (Cummins, 2001). The ways in which different factors interact create unintentional consequences for LTELs. Therefore, identity negotiation is observed through the "the messages communicated to students regarding their identities-who they are in the teacher's eyes and who they are capable of becoming." (Cummins, 2001, p. 21).

6. *Reading identity* is defined by how "personal and shared histories of readers" (Compton-Lilly, 2009, p. 35) including struggles and successes, that shapes one's view as a reader and how others including culture can label readers (Alvermann, 2001). Reading identities are influenced by views of reading as a "subject" rather than as "a social practice" (Alvermann, 2001, p. 686).

7. *Writing identity* is defined as a reflection of the "conflict, struggle, and tensions of writing differences that dominate the institutional bounds of school" for ESL students in the US. (Fernsten, 2008, p. 45). Writing identities are developed as either good or bad writers, with many ELLs, adopting negative views of themselves as writers (Fernsten, 2008).

8. *Literacy* is used to describe events and practices that engage learners in reading, writing, listening, and, or speaking in diverse ways of knowing (Heath, 1982). This definition of literacy describes a social perspective in literacy suggesting that "interest in literacy may

be dynamic and dependent upon various contexts rather than individual and fixed in

nature" (McCarthey, 2001, p. 122).

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework and literature review I use to guide my thinking and interpret the findings. The theoretical framework introduces different lenses on identity, identity negotiation, and transformative pedagogy that together contribute to understanding the purpose and goal of the study. The literature review presents relevant research findings in areas of language and literacy as it relates to identity and identity negotiation. The overall purpose of this chapter is to build a case for the need of research that explores how identity negotiation, in particular learning opportunities that foster positive identity negotiation, can become a source of empowerment for ELLs who have experienced previous academic struggles in the English language arts classroom as learners, readers, and writers.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in this study is grounded on critical theory and socio-cultural theories. I discuss how these theories constitute a theoretical framework used to understand how ELLs negotiate identities in a middle school English language arts classroom. To understand how ELLs negotiate identities in an academic English reading and writing classroom I draw from second language acquisition theories, sociocultural theory, and critical pedagogy. First, I use Gee's (2000) socio-cultural theory on identity in conjunction with Norton Peirce's (1995) conceptualization of identity to understand how reading and writing identities are developed. Second, I draw from Cummins's (2001) work on negotiating identities in an academic classroom. Third, Concepts including critical pedagogy as described by McLaren (2009) coupled with Freire's (1970/2009) notion of liberating the marginalized through what Valdés (1996) calls, "*life chances* [italics in original]" (p. 170), serve as an analytical lens to conceptualize literacy instruction that help foster ELLs' identity as successful learners.

In the following theoretical framework I begin with the concept of identity to help define its conceptualization in this study as a social construction and ongoing process. I briefly discuss some key definitions and conceptualizations of identity from different scholars. I then explore the concept of identity negotiation, a process that occurs throughout identity construction and reconstruction. Last, I focus on the power of transformative pedagogy for ELLs, specifically for LTELs.

Identity

Gee (2000) provides a very simple definition of identity, as one which describes the type of person one is. Gee (2000) argues that identities are socially constructed, resulting in a dynamic, complex process producing multiple identities. Identity is interconnected rather than separate entities, resulting in the various identities of individuals that at times create contradictions and are dynamic, fluid, and directly related to context. Gee (2000) provides a framework of four types of identities, defined as analytical lenses to answer questions in educational research: nature, institution, discourse, and affinity identity. In this study I focus on institution, discourse, and affinity identity. Institution identity is the identity given to a student from an institution. These identities come in the form of labels, such as "at-risk" or "special needs." Discourse identity is an individual characteristic that is recognized through dialogue with other persons (Gee, 2000) in students' words. Garcia and Menken (2006) argue that Spanish is often used as a classification of identity, where US Latinos are often viewed as "poor and uneducated Spanish speakers" (p. 168). Such classifications of identification show how Gee's (2001) conceptualization of identity as dependent on personal situation, is based on socio-cultural theories, in that identity is considered a social construction or process. Gee (2001) describes Discourses as "identity kits" with all the tools to "enact a specific identity and engage

in specific activities associated with that identity" (p. 720). For Gee (2000) it is through Discourse, or dialogue that students engage in practice that has the potential to assume a positive Affinity identity as English language learners. It can be argued that Discourse and Affinity identity can challenge the Institutional identity that is assigned through authorities of public education institutions. Affinity identity is the identity of a given group shared in a common practice (Gee, 2000). For example, the students in my ELA blocks all share the identity of 6th grade ELA students. Students who earn all A's are the "Superior Honor Roll" students. Understanding these types of identity helps guide the theoretical framework in this study as I explore how students negotiate multiple identities in the ELA classroom.

Gee (2001) argues that "reading and writing cannot be separated from speaking, listening, and interacting," (p. 714). Therefore reading is viewed as a social act and part of a social process. It is in through this social process of interaction that issues of power as they relate to second language learners and native English language speakers cannot be ignored (Norton Peirce, 1995). When adolescents engage in discourse in the English language arts classroom, they demonstrate knowledge of the language of the community of learners. By knowing the language of the community of learners in the classroom, students immerse themselves in a discourse identity and affinity identity that has the possibility of challenging the institutional identity (Gee, 2001). Identity development is a social creation and "developed through language, through an intentional negotiation of meanings and understandings" (Baker, 2011, p. 398). Therefore it can be argued that is possible for students to engage in literary discussions in the classroom and begin to immerse themselves in the identity of a reader and writer.

The identities created in the classroom can become what Norton Peirce (1995) refers to as "a site of struggle" because identities are "multiple and contradictory" (p. 15). Norton Peirce

(1995) further argues that the multiple positions one takes are often the result of issues of power. In the classroom this is often found in the teacher as the authority and the submissive student, where power is imbalanced.

McCarthey and Moje (2002) argue that identity, also includes how others view self and how others act toward self as a result of adopting particular perspectives about an individual. Identity becomes a medium in which individuals observe and learn from the world. These definitions of identity imply the possibility for multiple identities for one individual alone. McCarthey (2001) argues in the notion of multiple identities, highlighting the tension often found between the multiple identities of students. For ELLs multiple identities can be complex. With the help of the teacher students begin to negotiate identities through different literacy practices. For the ELL, identity formation includes struggles (Norton Peirce, 1995), and identity negotiation includes "tension" and cultural conflict" (Hafner, 2013, p. 44).

Identity Negotiation

The concept of identity negotiation is central to this study because I examine the construction of reading and writing identities of ELLs in an ELA classroom. Identity construction is a social process, and it is through interactions with text and conversations with others that students interpret messages about the world, their surroundings, and themselves as students (McCarthey and Moje, 2002).

Faircloth (2012) describes identity as an "ongoing negotiation of participation, shaped by – and shaping in response – the context(s) in which it occurs" (p. 186). For ELLs, identity negotiation creates opportunities to invest in the lives of students. For Gutiérrez (2008) identity negotiation occurs through teacher created third spaces defined as spaces in which "students begin to reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and

beyond" (p. 148). In addition, students' sense of belonging to a group is constantly evolving based on peer relationships (Gibson, Gándara, & Koyama, 2004). Yoon (2008) suggests that students renegotiate their position continuously according to the classroom environment provided by the teacher. Barton, Kang, Tan, O'Neill, Bautista-Guerra, and Brecklin (2013) describe the concept of identity negotiation as "identity work" (p. 38). Identity work refers to the

> Actions that individuals take and the relationships they form (and the resources they leverage to do so) at any given moment and as constrained by the historically, culturally, and socially legitimized norms, rules, and expectations that operate within the spaces in which such work takes place. (Barton et al., 2013, p. 38).

Faircloth (2012) describe identity negotiation as:

> …a student's negotiation of their identity-in-practice within the context of school (i.e., their participation, or how they choose to receive, resist, or revise contextual cues) is powerfully positioned to either constrain or nurture their engagement in learning. (p. 187)

Identity negotiation is constantly occurring in the classroom as identity is "neither static nor singular" (Skerrett, 2012, p. 63). Hall (2009) agrees, describing identity formation as a "fluid, dynamic process that can be manipulated or altered" (p. 289) meaning that identity negotiation is occurring when identities are changing. For Skerrett (2012) it is through social relationships between individuals, peers, and teachers, how identity and the position a person occupies are negotiated.

Institutional assigned position and space impact identity formation of students, affecting the Institutional identity (Gee, 2000). For example, the common practice of tracking students, or placing students in particular academic paths such as the low track or honors courses, create spaces in which students' identity construction and academic achievement intersect (Yonezawa & Wells, 2005). In some cases, the classrooms in which minorities, including Latinos, are placed do not acknowledge the rich culture of students, and therefore do not afford students the necessary "alternative spaces they desperately need in order to redefine themselves in

preparation for their encounter with the outside world" (Yonezawa & Wells, 2005, p. 61). How student see themselves as learners is evident in the way students position themselves in the classroom (Gibson, Gándara, & Koyomara, 2004). Positioning as ELLs occurs through identity negotiation in the classroom.

Cummins' (2001) discusses how culturally diverse students negotiate identities in the classroom. He defines identity negotiation as messages sent from the teacher to the student about their identity including "who they are in the teacher's eyes and who they are capable of becoming" (p. 21). This idea helps to explain how teachers can serve as a source of empowerment to the marginalized population of ELLs.

Cummins (2001) defines empowerment as "*the collaborative creation of power* [italics in original]" (p. 16). This means that students are not powerless, feel validated in the classroom, and understand that their opinions and voices matter. Then empowerment can be a product of identity negotiation if ELLs interpret messages that highlight their worth in the academic classroom. Cummins highlights the potential for diverse outcomes of ELLs in a classroom depending on the messages interpreted from the teacher. These diverse outcomes are referred to as "identity options" (Cummins, 2001, p. 17) that are the result of schooling experiences, especially those that occur with teachers. He explains "the identity options that teachers open up for students will dramatically affect the extent and the manner in which they will engage in cognitively and academic tasks" (Cummins, 2001, p. 17). For teachers of ELLs this means that specific opportunities designed for ELLs to negotiate identities must ensure that the experiences provided will transmit messages of respect and acceptance.

Messages sent by teachers take the form of informal conversations in the classroom between students and teachers, encouraging adolescents to begin gradually transforming into the

identity projected through the community of learners (Cummins, 2001). These informal conversations can occur in academic settings, where students and teachers discuss texts, responding verbally and in writing.

The challenge originates when messages sent from teachers to students do not show a respect for language and cultural diversity. In some cases the process of identity negotiation is a reflection of struggle referring to "tensions of negotiating school identities" with "personal identities" that portrays cultural conflict (Hafner, 2013, p. 44). The result is an "interplay of participation and resistance of academic tasks" attributed to identified and unidentified learning needs (Hafner, 2013, p. 43). For ELLs this means that identity negotiation can become a process that invites and recognizes language diversity as a powerful tool in the classroom. Hafner (2013) argues that teachers can indeed "generate transformative opportunities for renegotiating student identities in the classroom" (p. 40). This means that issues of language and power are crucial elements in the process of identity construction and eventually identity negotiation for ELLs in the academic classroom. Therefore, identity development and identity negotiation, especially for the ELL, is dependent on situation and context (Gee, 2001). The opportunities Hafner (2013) describes are part of a larger concept that also drives this study, transformative pedagogy.

Transformative Pedagogy

Cummins (2001) describe transformative pedagogy as an approach based on the fundamental ideas of ensuring equality for students of racial and cultural diversity. Transformative pedagogy is the result of a way of thinking and viewing the world. For Cummins (2001) at the heart of transformative pedagogy is how institutions and educators view language. The possibility of transformative pedagogy exists when institutions and educators can to believe and act in ways that demonstrate a genuine respect, acknowledgement, and honor for

linguistic and cultural diversity (Cummins, 2000). Cummins (2000) describes relations of power as either coercive and or collaborative occurring both at the macro and micro levels of interaction. The power relations at the macro level of interaction consist of teacher-designated roles as they relate to the organizational structure of an institution, whereas the micro level interactions exhibiting power relations occur between teacher and students. Together these types of interactions can interact to create what Cummins (2000) refers to as transformative pedagogy. Transformative pedagogy can be exemplified through culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum that empowers linguistically and culturally rich ELLs.

By using the cultural differences of ELLs in the classroom, the teacher positions students as "resources and learning partners" in the reading classroom which allows for students to maintain their own identity (Yoon, 2008, p. 508). Campano (2007) describes such teaching practices as those which are created in an "alternative pedagogical space," one which is an "ideological space" (p. 40) where teachers teach in between the lines of high stakes testing and allow the "culture of engagement" to quietly invade the "culture of measurement" (Padilla, 2004/2010, p. 272). It is through teaching along the margins that teachers can create new positions and spaces for students. Gutiérrez (2008) refers to this different level of teaching as third spaces. To exclude the alternative teaching spaces described by Campano (2007) is to create a disservice to students, especially those who are marginalized through institutional labels. For ELLs teaching in the third space is critical, in particular, for ELLs who have experienced continuous academic struggles, LTELs.

What this means is that educators can teach in ways where students become critically aware of implications when interacting with text. The idea is that students engage in concepts such as critical literacy, where students begin to see how power is distributed in the world around

them. Some refer to this notion as critical pedagogy that creates a classroom with a "cultural terrain that promotes student empowerment and self-transformation" (McLaren, 2009, p. 62). The empowerment and self-transformation occurs when teachers engage students in conversations about how one understands the world, how the understandings are formed, and experienced (McLaren, 2009). This means that the teacher focuses on drawing attention to helping students understand issues of power and privilege interact and influence social relationships (McLaren, 2009). More importantly, engaging in critical pedagogy attempts to create opportunities where students learn that the social injustices can be conquered and changed (McLaren, 2009) through targeted actions. The result of such instructional approach is empowerment and self-transformation.

Empowerment and self-transformation are evident in what Padilla (2004/2010) describes as the "culture of engagement" (p. 32). Padilla (2004/2010) describes a framework including the concepts of a "culture of measurement" and a "culture of engagement" (p. 32). Understanding Padilla's (2004/2010) framework helps contextualize the learning opportunities that ELLs are either afforded or excluded from. The opportunities they are excluded from are evident in the culture of measurement. Padilla (2004/2010) defines the culture of measurement as the decontextualization of teaching where "the abstract student becomes a reality and the real student becomes an abstraction" recognizable via a test score (p. 73). Padilla (2004/2010) argues that such an emphasis in testing isolates people in schools due to scores, status, and rankings. A culture of engagement is founded on many different principles (Padilla, 2004/2010). Padilla (2004/2010) defines a culture of engagement as one in which its "chief goal…is inclusion and human development in pursuit of democratic participation and *justicia* (justice)" (p. 73).

Padilla (2004/2010) strikes a dichotomy between these cultures. For example, in the culture of measurement students are assimilated into the history and culture of the majority where as in the culture of engagement the individual culture of students is recognized, celebrated, and valued throughout pedagogy and the curriculum. Other differences between the culture of measurement and the culture of engagement include modes of thinking about culture including culture deficit thinking in the culture of measurement and culture viewed as assets in the culture of engagements. The culture of measurement is founded on the fundamental belief of self-interest and individual gain, such as in high test scores which invite college opportunities and eventually jobs, versus the culture of engagement which is founded on the belief of public interest as a whole.

Padilla's (2004/2010) framework and McLaren's (2009) definition of critical pedagogy, as student empowerment and self-transformation, serve as a theoretical framework that ground the curriculum and instructional learning opportunities and help to analyze how different ELLs negotiate identities as learners, readers, and writers, in an era of high stakes accountability. In addition, it is through the joint work of Cummins (2001), Gee (2000, 2001), Freire (1970/2009), Hafner (2013), Norton Peirce (1995), McLaren (2009), Padilla (2004/2010), and Valdés (1996) where I find a cohesive theoretical framework that provides a guiding lens in my quest for understanding how my own students negotiate identities. Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the theoretical framework I draw on for this study.
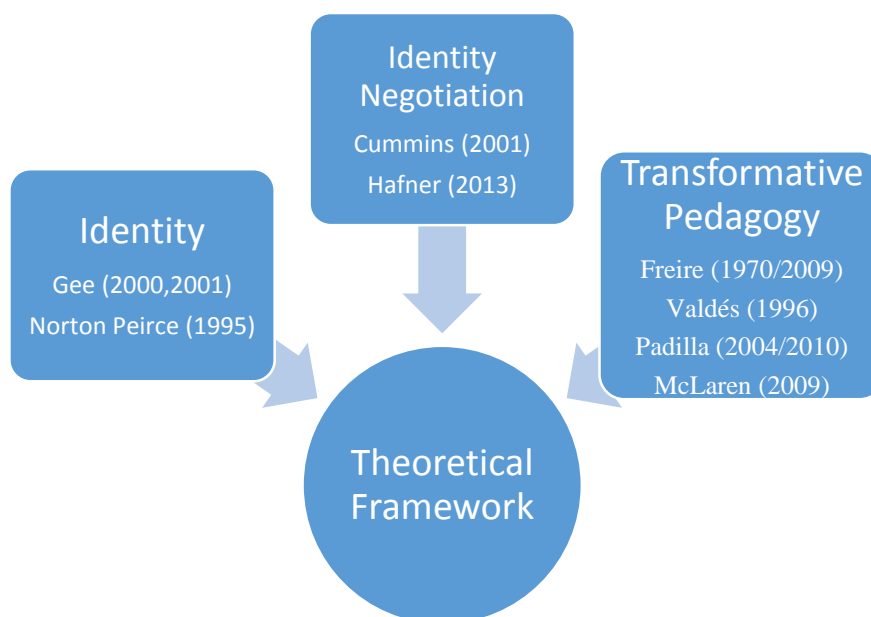
Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

One way teachers can communicate messages to students is through the curriculum orientation adopted in the classroom. Ornstein and Hunkins (2012) call one approach to the curriculum the humanistic approach. This approach to curriculum considers the "whole child" and uses life experiences beyond cognitive factors to reach students. Teaching the whole child is a concept that means teaching in a holistic way, where not only is the child's academic needs met, but their emotional, and in some cases physical needs are met, to provide the best learning environment. Those who adopt a humanistic approach believe that the "student's self-concept, self-esteem, and personal identity are essential factors in learning" (p. 8). Other views of curriculum include Shubert's (2010) critical reconstructionist speaker's view makes note of the "intentional and unintentional" (p. 23) consequences of injustice in the public education system when large disparities are evident in the educational experiences of different types of students. Implementing a humanistic approach to the curriculum where a student's identity is central to learning (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2012) and mindful of the critical reconstructionist speaker (Shubert, 2010). Freire (1970/2009) describes how dialogue coupled with change and a sense of

hope can coexist to help the marginalized experience liberation from the unfortunate situations. For ELLs this means providing a humanistic approach to the curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2012) and recognizing the critical reconstructionist speaker, as described by Shubert (2010) will help foster positive identity negotiation as learners, readers, and writers. Freire (1970/2009) called for the need to situate oneself in the lives of others to engage in genuine dialogue with the purpose of instilling change. The teacher as an agent of change, sending the critical messages of empowerment through specific curriculum and instruction aims at bringing the change and sense of hope for ELLs (Freire, 1970/2009).

Through Freire's (1970/2009) concept of dialogue as a tool for change, teachers can create what Valdés (1996) describes as "*life chances*" defined as "of how and how far people can unfold, what they can achieve, and what is meaningful" (p. 170), all of which is constructed through classroom culture and climate. In a sixth grade English language arts classroom, this means creating a set of social conditions that provide "*life chances*" (*italics in original,* Valdés, 1996, p. 170) and in the process help make use of their potential. Freire (1970/2009) and Valdés (1996) each call for opportunities created by teachers that invite students to believe, hope, dream, and realize a better life. In my own pedagogical approach, I draw on the idea of dialogue as described by Freire (1970/2009) to create life opportunities that invite questioning, thinking, and problem solving through literary texts that demand social justice.

Social justice is defined as "the full and equal participation of all groups" in a classroom that aims at meeting student needs through equitable distribution of resources and making each student feel mentally and physically safe (Bell, 2007, p. 1). Culturally relevant pedagogy is described as a set of teaching actions that are dynamic seeking social justice through meaningful experiences, dialogue, and caring in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings

(1995) describes culturally relevant pedagogy as one that upholds "personal accountability" (p. 478) where teachers understand that social inequities exist and use culturally responsive instruction as a median to help the marginalized ask questions and seek possible solutions. For ELLs this means providing a sound curriculum (Freeman & Freeman, 2011) with integrated instructional practices that aim to help students negotiate how they view themselves (Cummins, 2001) as learners, readers, and writers. Social justice education rejects accepting a negative perception (Bell, 2007) of weak readers and writers, and instead encourages students to reimagine possibilities as students and challenge the discourse of remaining struggling students (Cummins, 2001).

Literature Review

I begin the literature review with a discussion on ELLs, exploring issues of their learning as it relates to academic achievement. Following, I include a discussion on different types of ELLs, including an extended discussion of research on the distinct characteristics and academic needs of LTELs. The discussion on LTELs is followed by a review of research that explores ELLs and LTELs literacy developments. Then, I discuss research that explores different aspects of ELLs and LTELs identity, particularly research on identity construction in reading and writing. I then explore literature that discusses how the English Language Arts classroom is a space for identity construction. I conclude the literature review with a discussion of research that explores transformative pedagogical approaches in different contexts including studies that focus on ELLs in secondary schools.

I identified a series of criteria to help define and organize this literature review while providing a more concise understanding of ELLs and the potential for empowerment through identity negotiation. Central criteria for literature use in this review includes empirical studies and or articles discussing relevant theories on identity as it relates to ELLs and LTELs in a

reading and writing classroom. Most of the empirical studies analyzed for this literature review focus on secondary English language learners, primarily those who are Spanish speaking, and students who are struggling readers and writers. However, there are a few studies in early identity formation and classroom interaction with participants in the elementary reading and writing classroom that are used in this review of research to best understand the development of an academic identity. In addition, there is one study related to identity negotiation that is of an ELL who is not a native Spanish speaker.

Defining English Language Learners

By definition, an ELL is a "political construction", a term assigned by institutions to describe students from "non English backgrounds who show evidence of limited familiarity with English" (Durán, 2008, p. 300). Olsen (2010a) elaborates on Durán's definition of ELLs adding, "English learners are students who are foreclosed from educational opportunity because they don't have sufficient proficiency in English to fully access the academic curriculum" (p. 30). Many have argued that what defines a student as an ELL is problematic, due to arbitrary language proficiency levels that are measured through language proficiency assessments (Durán 2008, Garcia & Kleifgen 2010; Solórzano, 2008). Garcia (2009) has proposed the term emergent bilingual to describe ELLs. Garcia (2009) explains how this term is intended to acknowledge the value of students' linguistic repertoire, a recognition that students cannot abandon their first language if they are to acquire a second language. For Garcia (2009) the term emergent bilingual recognizes bilingualism, inviting heteroglossic ideology. Nonetheless, it is language proficiency assessments that define and ultimately label a student as an ELL, the term that is currently used by governing agencies and school districts. As a result, ELL is a term that I use to describe the students in the context of my classroom. Garcia and Kleifgen (2010) describe the

identity of ELLs as one that is empty in that it is defined by a lack of English language proficiency. Once labeled as an ELL, many focus on comparing ELLs' academic achievement to that of their non-ELL peers. For example, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading scale scores for fourth graders indicates a 36 point gap between scores of ELLs and non-ELLs (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). By the time ELLs reach 8th grade the gap between ELL and non-ELL reading scale scores is 44 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Statistics such as these have inspired further exploration into the academic achievement of ELLs.

Empirical studies that have explored the academic achievement of ELLs, all of which have helped define what being ELL means for administrators, teachers, parents, and students themselves. For example, in a non-experimental study by Ardasheva, Tretter, and Kinny (2012) the academic achievement of current ELLs and recently reclassified non-ELLs middle students found that recently reclassified non-ELLs outperformed current ELLs indicating that these students had indeed met academic language proficiency in English. This type of study replicates what the statistics of the U. S. Department of Education (2012) found when comparing ELLs with their non-ELL peers, in addition to the findings of Kim and Herman (2009) who found patterns of achievement gaps between ELLs and non-ELLs. Other studies like that of Miller (2005) have found that the achievement gap continues even when ELLs are considered higher performing. In a quantitative study Miller (2005) found that ELLs enrolled on advanced placement courses performed lower than their non-ELL peers. Undeniably, ELLs' academic performance as a whole, has been repeatedly compared to that of non-ELLs.

For many years, and to some extent today, as in some state accountability models, ELLs are still lumped in one large category of struggling students. Over the past several decades, as the population of non-native English speakers continues to increase in our nation, ELLs have

garnered the attention of educational institutions (Olsen, 2010a). Understanding the academic

achievement of ELLs highlights the diversity that exists among ELLs. Through the work of

pioneers including Olsen and Jaramillo (1999b) different categories of ELLs have emerged and

been described. No longer are all ELLs considered the same, but rather different, each with

unique learning needs in the academic classroom (Durán, 2008). For Olsen (2010a) this means

that ELLs are identified based on an English language proficiency continuum.

Types of English Language Learners

Distinguishing between different types of ELLs is important to this study because the

negotiation of identity is examined specifically for different types of ELLs. Not all ELLs are

struggling with academic English, specifically as readers and writers, and understanding this

important fact is critical to studying how identity negation differs in ELLs. There are some ELLs

who have been exited from bilingual or ESL programs, and who are thriving in mainstream

classrooms such as recently reclassified non-ELLs.

Olsen and Jaramillo (1999b) were the first to categorize and describe four types of ELLs,

each defined by their educational histories. The four types of ELLs as described by Olsen and

Jaramillo (1999b) include: accelerated college bound, newly arrived in the ESL sequence, under

schooled, and long-term limited English proficient. Each category of ELL is identified by key

characteristics related to the academic trajectories each has followed.

Accelerated college bound ELL students are those who have sufficient native language

instruction in core academic areas and show promise of graduating in a four year span,

demonstrating success in the academic classroom despite limited English proficiency (Olsen &

Jaramillo, 1999b). Newly arrived in the ESL sequence ELLs are described by Freeman,

Freeman, and Mercuri (2002) as those who are newly arrived with adequate schooling.

Newly arrived ELLs with adequate schooling are able to reach academic levels of their native English peers, although perhaps still scoring low on standardized English assessments (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri 2002). Under schooled ELLs are those who have been in US schools for only a few years or less and did not fully develop academic L1 due to interrupted, limited, or no formal schooling in the home country. Freeman, Freeman, and Mercuri (2002) describe these students as those who are newly arrived with limited formal schooling. Long-Term Limited English Proficient students are described today as LTELs (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Olsen, 2010b).

LTELs, are characterized by seven or more years of academic schooling in the US, but who continue to struggle with academic English (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Olsen 2010ab; Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999b). This group of ELLs is also the largest and fastest growing in the nation (Olsen, 2010b). In an effort to address the unique needs of LTELs, leading scholars in the field of bilingualism including Freeman and Freeman (2011) have created yet another group of ELLs, that is Potential LTELs. Potential LTELs run the risk of falling into the category of LTELs if enrolled in inconsistent bilingual and or ESL programs. Olsen (2010a) reports that 75% of all ELLs enrolled in kindergarten or first grades have a 75% chance of becoming an LTEL.

As noted, each category of ELLs is defined according to traits of academic histories. It is the academic histories of each ELL that profiles an assumed institutional identity as struggling learners, readers, and writers. It can be argued that the academic histories and trajectories of ELLs define their identity as learners and are crucial for identification and academic language needs.

A Closer Look at LTELs

The growing number of ELLs in the nation reveals an alarming trend. ELLs in secondary schools perform significantly lower than their native English peers on standardized assessments (Hernandez, 2008). In the US, secondary schools are filled with ELLs who are struggling with English academic language proficiency. ELLs in secondary schools who have been enrolled in inconsistent bilingual and or ESL programs for seven or more years and continue to struggle with academic English have been defined as LTELs (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Olsen 2010ab; Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999b). LTELs have also been referred to as "ESL Lifers" (Olsen, 2010a, p. 30), students who have remained in bilingual and or ESL programs without ever reaching academic English levels necessary to meet the demands of content area classes and high stakes assessments. Despite the growing numbers of LTELs in US schools, curriculum offered in secondary schools is often designed to meet the needs of newly arrived ELLs, as opposed to students who have oral English proficiency, and are not newly arrived to US schools (Olsen, 2010a).

Although there is not a national or state adopted definition to describe the majority of secondary ELLs who are struggling with English beyond conversational fluency, despite being in US schools for seven or more years, the term, long-term EL, or LTEL has been recently used by experts in the field of bilingualism to describe such learners. LTELs' needs have been overlooked despite federal and state efforts to address ELLs (Olsen, 2010ab). LTELs are the largest and fastest growing population of ELLs (Olsen, 2010b). In fact, most 59% of ELLs, are LTELs and ultimately face the potential possibility of dropping out of high school (Olsen, 2010b). Olsen (2010a) provides the following definition for an LTEL: "A Long Term English

Learner is a student who has been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years, is making inadequate progress toward English proficiency …, and is struggling academically" (p.31).

Ascenzi-Moreno, Kleyn, & Menken (2013) critique the term LTEL because of its emphasis on the struggles and length of years acquiring academic English for these types of ELLs. Instead, they suggest the term "emergent bilingual" (p. 2) arguing that this term best reflects the notion of how ELLs have different academic language and literacy skills.

Other scholars including Asher (2011), Forrest (2006), Harklau, Losey, and Siegal (1999) Valenzuela (1999), have used the term Generation 1.5 to describe LTELs. Generation 1.5 is often used to describe high school or college students who are products of inconsistent ESL programs and who Asher (2011) describes as children of immigrants who are "neither fluent in the language of their parents or the English of their peers" (p. 43). For these students a discrepancy is observed between social English proficiency and academic English language proficiency (Freeman & Freeman, 2011; Forrest, 2006; Menken & Kleyn 2009; Olsen, 2010b).

Although there is a plethora of research regarding identity in educational research, little is still known today about LTELs (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012). The lack of research is critical because for LTELs, the institutional identity of limited English proficiency masks the diversity of dynamic and fluid identities that exists even among LTELs (Nero, 2005). Minimal empirical studies on LTELs indicates that within this largest groups of ELLs exists two different kinds of LTELs. Menken et al., (2012) found in a qualitative descriptive study of LTELs in New York schools that LTELs are comprised as either (1) those who have been enrolled in US schools for 7 or more years, but have been in inconsistent and or bilingual education programs in part due to high mobility, different program offerings and language policies of schools and (2) those who

are transnational students that have experienced interrupted schooling as they travel between countries attending school in each.

What minimal empirical studies on LTELs have found is that the academic needs of LTELs are unique from that of other types of ELLs such as students who are recently arrived with formal schooling (Durán, 2008; Menken, et al., 2012; Olsen, 2010a). As ESL students in secondary schools, LTELs', linguistic identity is compromised by the ideologies enacted by institutions, and the social and political factors that combined, affect the LTEL (Nero, 2005). Harklau (1994) argues that for LTELs,

> Such judgments of individual ability begin early in schooling and take place slowly and incrementally over many years through the gradual accumulation of artifacts (school records and standardized-test scores), teacher perceptions of ability, student internalization of school judgments, and the schooled knowledge and attitudes produced by previous schooling experiences in a certain ability group (p. 351).

For the LTEL this means that position and identity are often institutionally and socially assigned. Worth noting is the power of standardized assessments that often drive decision making on classroom language use and help build teacher perceptions of LTELs, although not much is known about the linguistic and academic ability of ELLs through such tests (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010). Standardized tests, particularly those administered in English language arts are meant to measure over all knowledge and competence and not measurement of growth (Durán, 2008). For the LTEL this means that standardized testing invites unfair labels of incompetence. Garcia and Kleifgen (2010) describe how the power of standardized assessments has the potential to be perilous, inequitable, and ill-fitted for ELLs. Assessments become invalid when academic language used to test content proficiency (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010) are written for native English students instead of bilingual students (Garcia & Menken, 2006). For LTELs this means that high stakes assessments have the potential to create unfair labels that monumentally

impact educational experience. Such is the case found among bilingual students in Texas, a monolingual test determined the language of instruction (Palmer & Lynch, 2008). At the secondary level, the LTEL is left taking an English assessment with little to no academic English proficiency in ESL content areas classes where in some cases virtually no native language support exists. The result is low academic achievement, a characteristic experts agree describes LTELs. When standardized tests are not the focus of language instruction, students have proven to perform significantly high (Smith, et al., 2002). Many suggest portfolio assessments as one way to assess students like LTELs who primarily speak English, but struggle with academic English language demands of high stakes tests. Garcia and Menken (2006) argue that if we are to be a democratic nation ensuring equity for diverse populations then, "assessment of language and literacies must respect the difference between knowledge and standard English use" (p. 179).

Some have identified characteristics that identify LTELs (Freeman & Freeman, 2011; Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; 2010; Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012; Olsen, 2010b). Characteristics include: 6 to 7 or more years in U.S. schools, in some cases inconsistently, and performing below level on standardized tests while obtaining passing grades in coursework (Freeman & Freeman, 2011; Olsen, 2010a). Durán (2006) has also labeled students with five years or more in US schools who are in middle school or high school as LTELs. LTELs students have conversational fluency but lack academic language proficiency in part due to inconsistent ESL and or bilingual education programs (Freeman & Freeman, 2011; Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002).

Menken & Kleyn (2010) describe the learning experience of LTELs in US schools as subtractive, in that LTELs are not given the opportunity to fully develop native language proficiency, resulting in difficulties acquiring the English language. In addition, Menken and

Kleyn (2010) found that although LTELs are orally proficient in English and their native language, most prefer reading and writing in English, because this is what their schooling has emphasized. The result is students who comprehend Spanish, may speak Spanish reluctantly, but are unable to read and write in Spanish (Garcia & Menken, 2006), the effect of partial language loss and subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999). Interestingly, LTELs often regard their English literacy skills as a weakness in school (Menken & Kleyn, 2010).

Olsen (2010a) has documented several common findings in a review of academic files of LTELs from California. She identifies common trends such as: periods without English language support, although some cases included enrollment in weak English language development programs, lack of curriculum designed to meet the specific needs of ELLs, inconsistent enrollment in a bilingual and or ESL program, and "narrowed curricula and only partial access to the curriculum" (Olsen, 2010a, p.32). Undoubtedly LTELs have very specific academic needs.

The academic needs of LTELs are becoming a pressing issue in the era of accountability and progress monitoring. Olsen (2010b) describes how LTELs acquire "habits of non-engagement, learned passivity and invisibility in school" (p. 2). Shapiro (2014) found that often standardized testing is what contributes to "deficit discourse" (p. 395) in secondary ELLs and is often the sole instrument for placement in lower tracks. Likewise Menken and Kleyn (2010) found through in depth interviews that students had low self-efficacy due to low test scores. Although the research on LTELs is emerging, there are some academic needs that have been addressed by scholars interested in learning more about the educational experiences of LTELs (Freeman & Freeman, 2011; Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2009). Worth noting is that the academic needs of LTELs differ from that of newly arrived students, for

whom most curriculum is prepared (Menken & Kleyn, 2009). The lack of specific instructional programs to meet the specific academic needs of LTELs only further complicates the situation of LTELs (Menken & Kleyn, 2009).

Some recommendations to meet the academic needs of LTELs include, allowing LTELs an opportunity to develop native language proficiency by offering consistent bilingual programs (Menken & Kleyn, 2009). Menken & Kleyn (2009) also suggest using explicit instruction, even at the high school level, to help students develop academic English proficiency. Freeman, Freeman and Mercuri (2002) suggest using thematic based curriculum to enable teaching content through language, using students' cultural and linguistic diversity as a resource.

Other strategies aimed to help LTELs include cooperative learning to develop academic language proficiency, using strategies such as preview, view, and review, and helping students increase self-efficacy as learners, readers, and writers through teachers who demonstrate a genuine concern in helping bridge the academic achievement gap for students (Freeman, Freeman & Mercuri, 2002). Menken & Kleyn (2009) suggest offering students instructional programs specifically designed to meet the academic needs of LTELs including Spanish language classes to develop bilingualism and biliteracy and content area classes where language is taught through content while developing literacy (Menken & Kleyn, 2009). Some schools have even gone as far as offering Spanish AP courses as one way to help bridge native language skills to English language learning producing significant improvements (Garcia & Menken, 2006).

Worth noting is the research conducted by the Graduate Center at City University of New York (CUNY). At CUNY scholars have created a framework specifically to meet the needs of

LTELs in grades 6-12. Among the recommendations for LTELs provided in the framework are the following five key components:

1. Pragmatic structures that provide content area instruction that meets the needs of LTELs and is rigorous.

2. Curricular structures that are culturally relevant to LETLs, providing support in literacy and language learning.

3. Explicit instruction that maintains high interest for LTELs.

4. Teaching strategies that promote bilingualism for LTELs.

5. Assessments that meet the specific needs of LTELs showcasing already existing knowledge to determine starting points of instruction. (Ascenzi-Moreno, Kleyn, & Menken, 2013).

The above mentioned strategies coupled with heterogeneous grouping of ELLs with non-ELLs (Olsen, 2010a) can provide LTELs with comprehensive learning opportunities that provide full access to a cognitively demanding curriculum in the English language arts classroom.

Much like teachers who renegotiate between a professional and personal identity as needed, students must also renegotiate self-perceptions within a specific classroom and school context. Durán (2008) argues that there is not a distinct dichotomy between a learner's identity and that of learning experiences in school and community because it is through experiences that an identity is constructed. For the LTEL this means that the label of being an LTEL is the result of an intricate and complex web of factors (Olsen, 2010b). It can be argued that the LTEL must then navigate between identities to understand what it means for their academic identity. The

concept of identity negotiation invites possibility and the idea that the potential to succeed lies in students (Cummins, 2001). For Cummins (2000) it is the micro level interactions between teachers and students that create opportunities for identity negotiation that can either empower or disempower ELLs. It is these micro-level interactions embedded in literacy development that has the potential to empower ELLs.

Literacy Development of ELLs and LTELs

The growing number of ELLs, in particular LTELS is currently raising concern and capturing interest of those who seek to help give voice to these students. This section provides a review of empirical studies that describe how identity is developed through language and literacy. I include a subsection on how the English language arts classroom can become a space for identity construction.

Garza-Reyna, Esquerido, Ruiz-Escalante, and Gomez (2010) found that ELLs in a consistent dual language program for ten years felt empowered linguistically, whose voice was heard, acknowledged, and respected in the classroom. In studies of literacy English language learning, and identity in Pakistan and Uganda (Norton, 2010) placing students in a position of power in literacy practices helps promote positive self-identity, language learning, and future imagined identities. Identity negotiation in an English language arts classroom that values the linguistic and cultural diversity of LTELs may very well offer the language, voice, and ultimately power, LTELs need, allowing for identity negotiation through empowerment. For example, Jacobs (2006) a high school teacher of LTELs, found a way to honor and empower her students by letting their stories be told.

It is worthy of noting the findings by Lindholm-Leary (2013) who in a quantitative study of over 1,000 Hispanic students in grades four through eight found that as students progressed in

dual language programs, so did English language proficiency. By the time students reached the secondary level in seventh and eighth grade, ELL students were scoring as well as their native English speaking peers (Lindholm-Leary, 2013). The findings suggest that dual language programs are closing the achievement gap for LTELs and creating students with the academic achievement necessary to compete with native English peers. Such is the case for students in a consistent dual language program in deep South Texas who reached high levels of academic proficiency (Garza-Reyna et al., 2010). This means that dual language programs may perhaps help eliminate LTELs and instead extend the number of bilingual students who achieve academic success.

While native language use at home is acceptable and valued, native language use in the ESL classroom is often devalued and discouraged resulting in contradictory feelings of language use for ELLs (Giampapa, 2010). The notion of voice and representation in the ESL classroom is lost, while voice is valued and empowered in the developmental dual language classroom. In some cases, like in the community of Davis, Spanish as a minority language has been dismissed and instead accepted and valued as critical to second language acquisition and bilingualism (Smith, et al., 2002). As de la Piedra (2010) found in a study of the literacy practices of adolescents in a US-Mexico border town in Texas, using native language and English to understand academic literature instead of a defined separation between languages proved successful. It is through a dual language program that students occupy a pace that allows for "exploring the power and efficacy" of bilingualism (Fitts, 2006, p. 338). By including both languages as a means of learning, the developmental dual language learner is empowered. Most importantly through a dual language program, the voice of LTELs is made explicit, as most who experience difficulties or whose culture teaches students not to question authority, will not speak

unless invited to (Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999a). Literacy instruction may then become the necessary space to help students, particularly language minority students, navigate the complicated terrains of identity development.

Since reading is a social act (Gee, 2001) students must not only interact with the text, but with others to enhance comprehension and understand perspectives and interpretations of others. Cekaite and Willén (2013) argue that speaker identities are co-constructed through peer interaction. Even in a whole class interaction where the teacher is the most frequent evaluator of all sequences children are often evaluators of responses not only assessing, but criticizing their peers' language use by offering giggles and laughs when mistakes are made. Peer criticisms can often become the norm in a classroom, by reaffirming the identities of speakers, the teacher as the authority, and the student as the vulnerable and sometimes incompetent learner.

When a student is engaged in interactions with peers, the teacher, and text, the student assumes the role of a literary. By assuming the role of a literary, the student begins to see themselves as a reader. It is through language that students communicate and in doing so display identity including the characteristics, and understanding of specific identities (Hall, Johnson, Juzwick, Wortham, & Mosley, 2010). Gee (2001) explains how Discourses allow for people to engage in different identities.   Opportunities for book talks such as in literature circles and book clubs encourage interaction while facilitating identity reconstruction as literaries (Broughton & Fairbanks, 2003).

Using small group engagement and one to one learning opportunities encourages ELL students to participate in language production more than in whole class instruction (Brooks and Thurston, 2010). Yoon (2008) suggests that a key determining factor in whether ELLs will participate in the classroom is how the teacher approaches students in the classroom. Teachers

of ELLs must meet the cultural and social needs of students in order to ensure academic success (Yoon, 2008). Furthermore, teachers must provide opportunities for ELLs to engage in small group and one to one learning opportunities to increase interactions in the middle school classroom (Brooks and Thurston, 2010).

Students develop identities when they have opportunities to interact with each other (Skerrett, 2012). Matthew and Kesner (2003) suggest that when students are given the opportunity to interact with peers during literacy experiences they begin to develop their identity of themselves as readers. In addition, peer interactions, either positive or negative, will transfer to the self-perception of the student as a reader. When students share in literacy activities they bring with them their own identity as a student. Dorner and Layton (2014) suggest that teachers get to know how students view themselves and their peers to encourage interaction. Interaction between students with negative and positive self-perceptions as readers, allow for those who view themselves as successful students and readers to serve as mentors in literacy experiences.

For LTELs it is important that interactions in the classroom serve to capitalize on the linguistic and cultural capital students bring. In an ethnographic case study of a French-Canadian elementary school in Toronto, Giampapa (2010) highlights interactions between peers, teachers, and parents that serve to capitalize "cognitive engagement" (p. 412) through native language literacy and culture. Such experiences can be promoted through book talks and other literary discussions. Allowing students to discuss book selection values ELLs and LTELs as individuals and readers. Elish-Piper and Tatum (2006) found that students attributed deep questions posed by teachers as a tool that facilitated reading comprehension.

An important note on classroom and literary discussion is the suggestion of Garcia and Menken (2006) that balanced interactions where student and teacher voices are both heard,

including allowing student uninterrupted time to simply talk about texts and tell their own stories

of lived experiences are essential to provide meaningful connections to text. Teachers must then

provide opportunities for ELLs to engage in small group and one to one learning opportunities to

increase interactions in the middle school classroom (Brooks and Thurston, 2010). Matthews and

Kesner (2003) suggest using open ended questions for literacy responses to allow for

heterogeneous pairing and grouping. Lesley (2008) found that open-ended questions invite

conversations that engage students in discourse which empowers the at-risk learner and helps

students begin to see themselves as readers, assuming a new reading identity in the classroom.

Open-ended questions allow students to feel comfortable responding despite level of proficiency

in reading or English.

Bradley and Reinking (2011) suggest using decontextualized demands to elicit responses

that allow for increased student interactions through explanations and lengthier utterances. An

example of one teacher with recorded increased interactions is illustrated by Verplaeste (2000)

who describes a science teacher with the ability to elicit student utterances by evoking teacher

agency that depicts a sense of vulnerability. Decontextualized demands of, "I wonder," by the

teacher, prompted students to respond not only to the teacher but also amongst each other during

classroom talk. Such types of sequences are a break from the traditional initiation, response,

evaluation, sequence that is often the routine in many classrooms. Through carefully crafted

opportunities for classroom interaction teachers can begin to foster positive reading identities.

ELLs' and LTELs' Identity

Since identity formation is the result of a social process, identity and language are

inseparable, and therefore, an English language arts classroom serves as the soil in which young

identities can thrive. In this section I discuss research that explores different aspects of ELLs and LTELs identity, including construction or reading and writing identities.

    A look at the work of Day (2002) demonstrates how classrooms can serve as the context for identities of ELLs to flourish, in particular, how dynamics in a classroom including peer relations allow for ELLs to negotiate identities. In a case study of one young ELL named Hari, Day (2002) demonstrates how ELLs can be positioned in classrooms as having lower status by some peers despite acquiring English fluency. Hari did not have effective strategies to resist such negative discourse and power relations to reposition himself in the academic classroom. For ELLs social relationships with different members in the academic classroom will create multiple identities (Day, 2002). In the case of this kindergartner ELL, Hari's social relationships with some peers positioned him as inferior and powerless, while his social relationship with the teacher provided a safe environment where the young ELL felt comfortable talking about his own experience and participating in group discussions. Garcia (2009) emphasizes the importance of "discursive practices that are encouraged and supported in school" as having "an important impact on children's identity and their possibilities of developing agency or resisting" (p. 84). For Hari, the discursive practices supported by his teacher, enabled him to negotiate his identity as an ELL in an academic classroom.

    For other ELLs, the simple fact of being labeled ELL or an ESL student becomes detrimental to their academic identity. In the case of Hoon (Yi, 2013), a high school ESL student, his ESL identity was viewed as negative, influencing Hoon to enroll in lower level academic classes in order to maintain a high GPA that would serve to compensate for his status as an ESL student. In this case, Hoon had a negative self-view as a learner due to his status as an ELL or ESL student. His English language arts teacher encouraged his negative self-identity as

learner when he received written academic papers filled with corrections and comments on his syntax in the English language.

Yi (2013) describes the identity of ESL and or bilingual students as one that is "regularly confronted with a deficit identity and their rich and diverse backgrounds are not always seen as positive" (p. 225). Nero (2005) describes the unique situation of ELLs as one which has prescribed, or predetermined identities based on labels such as limited English proficient which automatically assign students to a language group other than English. In addition, the labels of English speaker or non-native English speaker create tension for students who are already experiencing low self-efficacy when the label serves as a reminder of a deficit rather than strength (Nero, 2005). The institutional label of being an ESL student is an issue of concern (Early & Norton, 2012). Gibson, Gándara, & Koyama (2004) argue that the very institutional label of limited English proficient creates the possibility of students to assume and function in the very role assigned. Nero (2005) describes the tension as a conflict between the monolingual bias and the multilingual identities of ELLs. Academic identities of ELLs can be influenced by peers, as in the case of Hari (Day, 2002) or Institutional assigned identities, such as the label of ELL or ESL student, as in the case of Hoon (Yi, 2013).

Hoon's case exemplifies the power of the language one speaks that serves as a self-identifier, complicating the nature of identity formation for ELLs in an English classroom. Individuals self-identify often directly related to language spoken. McCarthey (2001) argues that race, culture, and language are types of "subidentities" (p. 143) for some students including a young Mexican American student who used literacy experiences to write about her ability to speak in English and Spanish. Most importantly, the development of identities in classrooms

may be intentional, crafted through dialogue, interactions, and positioning by teachers (Hall et al., 2010).

Worth noting is how a teacher's self-refection own identity and feelings about culture and language learning helps uncover how students are positioned and view themselves in the context of a multilingual classroom (Giampapa, 2010). In a district in Arizona, where native language fluency is not required, ELLs were more likely to hold negative perceptions of self. Whereas in Texas, ELL teachers are required to have native language fluency, ELLs were found to have positive self-perceptions (López, 2010). Therefore, how teachers view personal language proficiency will transpire to the students in the classroom.

Identity negotiation is constantly occurring and can be fostered positively when teachers not only help students "reimagine" possibilities of self, but in doing so also help the community and society by contributing to a "socially just and responsive 'possible world'" (Early & Norton, 2012 p. 196). In a narrative inquiry Early and Norton (2012) found that the stories students told about their teacher revealed classroom practices that afforded students learning opportunities and the possibility to assume different identities within the classroom. In doing so, the teacher created an environment where students became "invested" in language learning in the classroom (Early & Norton, 2012, p. 199). For the LTEL this means that the blend of two identities including languages and respective cultures can and should evolve to become one identity whose hybridity is recognized and respected in the classroom.

An individual is capable of changing their own identity. In a ethnographic study of two high school recent arrivals Harklau (1994) found that it is possible "through strategic understandings of their ability, move upward through the tracking systems" (p.359) through teachers and counselors who served as agents of empowerment. For LTELs this means it

becomes possible to reposition themselves in the classroom and occupy spaces that enable them to see themselves as readers and successful students through identity negotiation (Harklau, 1994). In some cases allowing students to make a connection to learning through self-selected texts, is the springboard for identity negotiation (Faircloth, 2012). Becoming a part of a community of readers within a classroom is a possibility for LTELs. Therefore, identities can be intentionally and strategically constructed within a classroom (McCarthey & Moje, 2002). A result of strategic instruction teachers empower students by providing instruction to meet the individual needs of students.

Yonezawa and Wells (2005) discuss how minority students who are often placed in low tracks and have an option to transfer into higher tracks often feel alone and uncomfortable. For these students entering a high track class means, abandoning an institutional label that includes tension when friends and a self of identity it lost. In an ethnographic study, Hurd (2004) details the conflict and tension that students in a high school English Language Development (ELD) class experience. The identity struggles described by Hurd (2004) explain how some students, are compelled to decide between being a " 'schoolboy' " or " 'acting out' " in class (p. 65) creating opportunity for identity negotiation of institutional labels.

In some cases, the academic identity of LTELs is adversely affected by institutional labels that automatically devalue the student, ignoring the rich, cultural, and linguistic resource students bring to the classroom (Garcia, 2009). Students must decide which identity to assume and in doing so experience stress (Norton Peirce, 1995). Such practices call for change. Fairbanks and Arial (2006) describe the situation of some students as those who "find ways to play the 'school' game, maximizing the resources they bring with them without sacrificing other aspects of their identity" while "others struggle to negotiate a place for themselves" (pp. 349-

350). Through informal conversations in the classroom and discourse between students and the

teacher and students themselves, adolescents often experience a tension between the academic

identity brought to the classroom and what is valued in schools (Cummins, 2001). Furthermore,

through certain discourse practices, LTELs may be adversely affected and begin to assume an

identity that may be contradictory to the expectations of teachers, creating the classic example of

a LTEL experiencing academic failure (Olsen, 2010b).

For an LTEL in a mainstreamed ESL program there is often no negotiation. The LTEL is

expected to conform and acculturate, abandoning the original identity upon entry into the ESL

classroom. LTELS in a mainstream ESL classroom are expected to read, write, listen, and speak

in the second language, diminishing the interactions in the first language that serve to capitalize

on the culture and identity students bring to the classroom. Therefore, critical thinking is at a

minimum, not allowing for interactions that capitalize and value student linguistic and cultural

attributes (Giampapa, 2010). Therefore, LTELs reaffirm a self-perception of weak, incapable

learners, resulting in acceptance of a negative identity. Giampapa (2010) describes the denial of

native language speaking as the inability for an ELL to negotiate their identity and create a space

and position in the learning community. Teachers, therefore, become the "linguistic

gatekeepers" in the mainstreamed ESL classroom for the LTEL (Giampapa, 2010, p. 418).

Jiménez (2000) states that:

> These are also identities that are too often misunderstood, misinterpreted, and at times
> entirely overlooked by those representing mainstream institutions which see and position
> these children in ways that often serve to distance them from more fully literate identities.
> (p. 985).

For LTELs in the mainstream ESL secondary classroom, an identity is lost after

inadequate native language support, and forgotten by a system meant to serve as a support

(Olsen, 2010b). LTELs in a mainstream ESL classroom are caught in a cycle of academic failure

and often fall further behind. Olsen (2010b) describes LTELs in the secondary classroom as unengaged, static, and unnoticeable. LTELs are no longer partners and resources for learning (Martin-Beltran, 2010), but rather deficient and limited, requiring immediate immersion in English and acculturation of the majority language and culture while in the mainstream ESL classroom. Therefore, what ELLs specifically LTELs need are teachers who care for the genuine academic progress and emotional well-being of students (Yoon, 2008). Teachers must act and teach in ways which explicitly let adolescents know that they are genuinely cared about (Broughton and Fairbanks, 2003). One way teachers can show caring is by defining students by their strengths (Yoon, 2008) instead of their weaknesses such as in the case with institutionalized labels. Students know when they have been labeled (Yi, 2013) and begin to act according to the label. The struggling reader, the repeated failure, the English language leaner, the at risk student, all begin to display characteristics of the label. When teachers focus on the student and not the label, students perceive genuine caring (Broughton and Fairbanks, 2003). When students know teachers genuinely care, positive student behaviors are observed (Broughton and Fairbanks, 2003). Students begin to share their concerns and a caring teacher will listen (Elish-Piper and Tatum, 2006). Ultimately, the act of caring and listening to the concerns and voices of students is what jumpstarts the negotiation of an identity.

Research on Reading Identity Construction

When examining reading identities it is important to recognize that how one views identity will impact how one views literacy and vice versa (Moje, Luke, Davies, & Street, 2009). This concept is important for ELA teachers because Franzak (2006) argues that an English language arts classroom provides the center stage for reading identity development. ELA

teachers are faced with the challenge of helping ELLs construct their academic identity as readers and learners.

Getting to know students and understanding their literacy needs helps teachers reconstruct ELLs' reading identities (Broughton & Fairbanks, 2003). Greenleaf and Hinchman (2009) describe the absence of instruction on how to read complicated texts as a primary cause for numerous struggling readers at the secondary level. Consequently, older, struggling readers slowly lose motivation to read (Greenleaf & Hinchman 2009). In addition, ELLs have been found to have a lower self-efficacy than non-ELLs in the classroom (LeClair, Doll, Osborn, & Jones, 2009).

Some ELLs have low self-efficacy because of the discrepancy between ELL's cultural background and what counts as literacy in the classroom as noted by Godina's (2004) ethnographic study of 10 Mexican-background students. Godina (2004) found that Mexican ELLs were often identified by the school system based on their deficiency in English, while their knowledge of Spanish was only recognized by their peers. Using students' strengths rather than weaknesses during instruction helps learners succeed academically (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009).

At times, students often see themselves as students and readers based on institutional labels based on state assessments (Skerrett, 2012). For the student who may not be successful, this means a low standardized test score determines that they are not a good reader or student. Students begin to act according to institutionalized labels such as limited English proficient (Gibson, Gándara, & Koyomara, 2004). Students themselves recognize how institutional labels and their view of themselves as readers affect their effort in the classroom (Alvermann, 2001; Skerrett, 2012). This means that educators and administrators who equate ELLs with a test score

must recognize the impact such conceptualization has on the identity of ELLs (Turkan & DaSilva Iddings, 2012). ELLs soon begin to self-identify according to test scores and may in some cases even use the language of the test to describe their identity as learners (Turkan & DaSilva Iddings, 2012).

How adolescents are positioned in the classroom is impactful on reading identities (McCarthey & Moje, 2002). Student identities created and labeled by teachers in the classroom as either thriving, avid, or struggling readers, are all identity labels that students understand (Alvermann, 2001). Teacher can engage ELLs in critical literacy where students assume an active role in pursuit of social justice, are encouraged to actively engage in the reading community, and allowed opportunities for students to engage in discourse that empowers learners (Lesley, 2008). Students are encouraged to question texts and the ability for the text to affect readers (Alford, 2001), inviting discourse between ELLs and native English speakers to discuss perspective in texts, valuing their interests and ultimately their perception of themselves as readers (Skerrett, 2012).

Students come to understand that understanding their own views of reading and themselves as readers become factors in their identity and practice in the reading classroom (Alvermann, 2001). Hall (2009) states:

> Therefore, helping students become good readers is in part, about helping them understand the role of identity and how the discursive identities they place on each other, and worry about having placed on them, contribute to their development as readers (p. 305).

For the struggling reader, attempting to assume a new reading identity is difficult when trying to hide their identity as poor readers from peers (Hall, 2009). In many cases teachers are unaware of the unintended consequence readers suffer including the admission of being a poor reader, when attempting to construct a new identity as a reader (Hall, 2009). Students who are

given opportunities to discuss their struggles as a reader with past literacy experiences helps students analyze their identity as a struggling reader and ultimately reconstruct an identity as a reader (Skerrett, 2012). If students are positioned in ways where background knowledge is valued, institution labels of good or bad are dismissed, allowing for students the space to engage with text in ways that allow for the formation of a new identity.

A balance of literature in the classroom, how students see themselves as readers, and helping students value themselves as readers and their literacy practices as reading, will help reconstruct a new reading identity (Alvermann, 2001). However, some teachers continue to teach reading more as a subject rather than a mode in which students engage in interactions with texts, peers, and the teacher (Alvermann, 2001). An ethnographic study of four seventh grade girls in a middle school found that adolescents enjoy socialization through reading and talking about books (Broughton and Fairbanks, 2003). Part of the discourse in the classroom between the teacher and student should include explicit highlights of the reading process and what is occurring when the students is actively engaged in text (Alvermann, 2001). By providing learning activities involving discourse between peers students develop a reading identity and discourse which includes adolescents in the reading community of a classroom (Broughton and Fairbanks, 2003). Jiménez (2000) suggests relevant texts are powerful tools toward helping students change the way they see themselves as readers. It can be argued that ensuring that classroom libraries are accessible and filled with a variety of genres and reading levels which match students' interests and independent reading levels allows for ELLs to feel a part of the reading community and begin seeing themselves as readers.

Undoubtedly, a readers' experience with reading success or failure contribute to the reading identity construction (Compton-Lilly, 2009; Elish-Piper & Tatum, 2006). Greenleaf and Hinchman (2009) propose reconstructing reading identities by stating,

> As students explore and experiment with possible selves, teachers can encourage them to try on new reader identities, expanding their vision of who they are and who they can become. Such identity work is critical if they are to embrace literacy, engage as readers, and improve academic performance (p. 6).

Creating an environment that is risk free and carefully structured invites students to assume different reading identities and explore new ones without fear of unintended consequences. For a group of ninth graders, student reading levels increased (Hurst, Franklin, & Scales, 2010) and as a result helped students gradually begin to view themselves as readers. Students can successfully reconstruct their reading identity with the support of teachers and parents through a culture and community of book sharing and book talks (Skerrett, 2012).

Students must not be assessed solely on reading skill proficiency, and should consider competencies already possessed, helping students acknowledge all self-mastered reading competencies (Alvermann, 2001). Acknowledging home literacy practices helps ELLs define their identity as readers and writers, fostering identity negotiation. To create a more holistic identity label teachers must assess students' reading proficiency on school oriented reading tasks and reading tasks students engage in outside of the classroom (Greenleaf & Hinchman 2009; Jiménez, 2000). One way teachers can value home literacy practices is by allowing students to tell their own stories, or narratives, inviting the possibility of constructing writing identities in the classroom.

Research on Writing Identity Construction

Campano (2007) argues that writing can be used as a medium to help ELLs "reach outward and connect to a larger world" (p. 43) and in doing so rewrite an identity. Through

writing teachers can employ all domains of language including reading, speaking, and listening (Adams, 2009) to help students develop a writing identity. Teachers of ELLs understand that writing tasks can be very difficult for students, eliciting reluctant writers in part mainly due to struggles with academic English, when the thoughts students wish to communicate are quite complex (Adams, 2009). The writing difficulties of adolescent ELLs prompted Harklau, Losey, and Siegal (1999) to devote an entire book toward understanding the needs of ELL high school graduates that struggle with college-level English composition. It can be argued that ELLs have poor writing experiences, when their written messages are overlooked and dismissed to grammatical errors. In some cases, as Yi (2013) demonstrated in a case study of Hoon, a high school ELL student, whose negative view of self as an ESL student contributed to his continued lack of proficiency in English academic writing due to teacher emphasis on writing conventions rather than content. The result was Hoon's intent to meet the academic writing demands of his teacher by writing lengthy sentences that did not produce text that demonstrated academic ability, and instead created even more grammatical errors. Hoon opted to avoid classes that demanded extended academic writing in order to maintain a high GPA that would compensate for his status as an ESL student. Spence (2010) found that a "generous reading" (p. 634) of ELLs' writing values linguistic and cultural diversity, which may potentially impact identity negotiation in the classroom.

In an effort to help students create a writing identity Adams (2009) called all her students writers, with frequent daily reminders that together the class created a community of writers. As a high school teacher of ESL students, the key for Adams (2009) was to show students the writing process. This meant that students had to see their teacher in action, writing, and exposing her own vulnerabilities as a writer contemplating word choice and the many other

decisions that a writer must make. Adams (2009) credits this process as a turning point in the academic lives of her students as writers who began to understand that writing is difficult for all even those who are not ELLs. As in the vulnerability displayed through teacher agency by Mr. Wonder-ful (Verplaeste, 2000) by prompting student responses through "I wonder" statements, Adams (2009) used her own teacher agency, showcasing her vulnerability as a writer to demonstrate that writing is a process that requires skillful thought and decision making. Through journal writing, and picture book read alouds with messages about memories and writing, Adams (2009) was able to use her own students' lives as a mosaic from which to explore identity, a concept often difficult for ELLs.

One way in which teachers can help ELLs explore issues of identity is through thematic units. In a quasi-experimental design, Méndez (2006) found that a thematic based curriculum including the concept of identity, improved the writing skills of Chicano and Mexican students at one high school on the border in California. Likewise, Coady and Escamilla (2005) found that fourth and fifth grade bilingual students were able to use their own writing to display a negotiation of identities and their own multiple beliefs of social reality including school and the world through specific writing prompts about identity, such as writing about the future. While writing ELLs often draw on their rich linguistic and cultural backgrounds to tell their narratives (Serna, 2009), further affirming their identities in the classroom.

Olson and Land (2007) argue that often teachers do not explicitly teach strategies meant to help ELLs write because teachers believe that the concepts are too difficult for ELLs to understand. Such ideologies are driven from deficit views of language as a problem (Ruiz, 1984). Writing is a cognitive process, in that before words are written on paper, they are first thought of in the mind. It can be argued that the ELL writing samples that evidence the

culturally and linguistically rich background of students transcends into the cognitive ability of ELLs. Through specific cognitive writing strategies taught to ELLs, Olson and Land (2007) found that students writing improved and gave students the confidence needed to see themselves as writers and eventually successful learners.

Teachers may provide opportunities for reflective writing. Written interactions with teacher and other peers on reading practices helps students begin to see themselves as readers (Skerrett, 2012) and eventually writers. In addition, engaging ELLs in writing that is meaningful provides the necessary context to produce successful writers (Spence, 2010). Specifically the use of "*double-entry journals* [italics in original]" (Garcia & Menken, 2006, p. 178) where students use excerpts from texts read and write thoughts side by side allows for students to construct meaning, make inferences, become independent thinkers, and scaffold academic writing. Above all, writing identities are directly related to student voice. It is through writing that students tell stories, and with words ask questions, plant seeds of thought and in some cases demand social justice. Transformative pedagogy helps foster writing identities with voices that do not remain unheard or silenced.

English Language Arts Classroom as a Space for Identity Construction

Literature suggests that English Language Arts teachers have "more than any other academic discipline" the "potential to facilitate identity development" (Broughton and Fairbanks, 2003, p. 433). The English language arts teacher is central to helping students create a reading identity (Franzak, 2006). Therefore, focusing on reading identity construction in the English language arts classroom, where students think critically about literary texts and write about those texts, means the ELA classroom becomes a space for identity construction as readers and writers.

In this section I explore literature that demonstrates how an ELA classroom can provide space for identity construction of ELLs.

Language instruction includes "the intersection of language and identity, enabling students to communicate ideas of personal significance to achieve what is important to them" (Wilson, Chaves, & Anders, 2012, p. 374). Therefore, it can be argued that language and literacy coexist, each complementing each other to provide literacy experiences and literacy instruction. It is through well planned literacy instruction that students can begin to form an identity. For ELLs literacy instruction must take into account the native languages of students. Gonzalez (2012) states that "Students' L1 is connected to their personal and cultural identity, to the expression of their learning styles and temperament, self-concept, and self-esteem, all factors very much connected to the cultural expression of their cognitive and academic skills" (p. 293). In agreement, Coady and Escamilla (2005) argue that "language and literacy are deeply intertwined with the complex constructs of identity and the social contexts of students' lives" (p.462). Furthermore, Early and Norton (2012) argue that time and space are two factors that contribute to changing identities. For example, a student's academic identity is created and validated by the spaces immersed at school, either positively or negatively affecting academic growth (Gibson, Gándara, & Koyama, 2004). One example of positive positioning is that of Molly, a high school English language arts teacher of minority students, primarily Latinos, who positioned her students as experts by making her students' outside of school literacies, part of the curriculum (Skerrett & Bomer, 2011).

Undeniably language, literacy, and identity are inseparable. In some cases, it is the loss of a language that also identifies individuals by others. In an ethnography, in an inner city high school, predominantly serving Mexican youth, Valenzuela (1999) found that those students who

were children of immigrants, born in the US, and attending US schools, losing their native language as Spanish were often referred to by terms highlighting their language loss by others. It was apparent that language became and identifier and provided a label for youth.

For Norton and Toohey (2011) identity formation is complicated when one is a language learner. To describe what ELLs experience Norton and Toohey (2011) use the term "investment" (p.420). The language learner invests in learning a language in exchange for cultural capital (Norton & Toohey, 2011). This means that the amount of investment is flexible and dependent on different social factors. Literacy instruction that fosters investment promotes learning and provides a link to outside school literacies. Garcia (2009) highlights the importance of bridging home and school languages, calling for the convergence of language identities so as to promote bilingualism that is not subtractive, but additive and dynamic. One way to promote bilingualism dynamically is through classroom interaction.

Transformative Pedagogical Approaches

In this section I explore transformative pedagogical approaches in different contexts including middle school and studies that focus on ELLs. I conclude the section with an overview of suggestions of what transformative pedagogy should look and sound like for students, emphasizing how transformative pedagogy may impact ELLs.

In a qualitative study of middle school ELLs, Ajayi (2009) found that using multimedia literacies including engaging students in an analysis of advertisements, created the "potential to help English learners create new worlds, take on different identities, and challenge the taken-for-granted views about their worlds" (p. 591). This means that the instructional approaches and curriculum afforded to ELLs has the potential to invite reinventions and reimaginations of self and how others view self. Likewise, in a qualitative study of high school students, Fránquiz and

Salazar (2004) showed how carefully selected texts allow students, in particular minority students to discuss contradictions and potential misconceptions about groups. Similarly, Choi (2013) found that teachers are monumental in creating opportunities for students to develop the necessary critical thinking skills when engaged in a culturally responsive curriculum. In this case Mr. Moon, an 8th grade social studies teacher created a curriculum centered around one topic, religion, that was designed to develop awareness and critical thinking about world views and perceptions. Through the use of various texts, and multi-media including online videos, Mr. Moon was able to invite conversations about social injustice, captivating interest of newly-arrived ELLs.

Worth noting is that despite the important role of a teacher in engaging in transformative pedagogy, the teacher's own culture does not have to be the same as that of the students. In one case study of a new teacher, whose cultural background differed from that of her students a classroom community was created that allowed for students to use their own native language, work cooperatively with peers if needed, and encouraged self-selection of texts read (Bergeron, 2008).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I provide a description of the theoretical framework and I include a literature I use to guide my throughout the study. Three main concepts in the theoretical framework include identity, identity negotiation, and transformative pedagogy. In the literature review I explored topics including a definition of ELLs in which I address different types of ELLs and a closer look at LTELs in particular. I then explored literature that discussed the literacy development of ELLs and LTELs and ELLs' and LTELs' identity. I conclude the literature review with a discussion of the English language arts classroom as a space for identity

construction and transformative pedagogical approaches. In the next chapter I will discuss the

methodology used for this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative action research study is to explore how ELLs' identities are negotiated in the context of an English language arts classroom. As a practitioner researcher, I believe that a better understanding of this process can provide educators with different possibilities that can serve to empower ELLs who have struggled with academic English in the content area classroom. In order to understand the process of identity negotiation of ELLs, this study attempts to answer an overarching research question:

> How do ELLs negotiate identities as learners in a sixth grade English language arts classroom?

Other sub-questions I seek to answer in order to help understand how ELLs negotiate identities as learners include:

> (a) How do ELLs view themselves as readers and writers in a middle school English language arts classroom?
>
> (b) How is the process of identity negotiation different for different types of ELLs?
>
> (c) How do instructional activities in a Language Arts' unit on identity foster identity negotiation in ELLs?

In this chapter I describe the methodology I used and include a discussion of the following areas: (a) an overview of the research design, (b) the role of the researcher (c) a description of the study's context and background, (d) description of the research participants, I the methods of data collection, (f) data analysis, (g) limitations of the study, (h) and conclude with a chapter summary.

Overview of Research Design

For this qualitative study I employ an action research approach. I use my own English language arts classroom as a case study to understand how ELLs negotiate identities as learners, readers, and writers.

Rationale for a Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research is defined as "emergent, inductive, interpretive, and naturalistic approach to the study of people, cases, phenomena, social situations and processes in their natural settings in order to reveal in descriptive term the meanings that people attach to their experiences of the world" (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 312). Others like Lichtman (2010) define qualitative research as "research about humans in which the researcher is key to all" (p. 3). Following the definitions offered by Yilmaz (2013) and Lichtman (2010), this study can be defined as qualitative because the research is naturalistic in that it occurs in a middle school English language arts classroom. In addition, as qualitative inquiry design is emergent and flexible I made the necessary adjustments to meet the demands of the everyday context in which the research is occurring by adjusting the scope and sequence of the lessons conducted. Third, the research includes purposeful sampling as my ELL students are the participants in my study. (Patton, 2002). Embedded in the overall qualitative design is action research.

Action Research

Action research is defined by Altricher, Posch, & Somekn, (1993) as a "continuing effort to closely interlink, relate and confront action and reflection, to reflect upon one's conscious and unconscious doings in order to develop one's actions, and to act reflectively in order to develop one's knowledge" (p. 6). This means that I do "not accept blindly" the struggles of teaching every day, but instead employ my own "professional competency" (Altricher et al., 1993, p. 4) to

contribute to the knowledge of ELLs and the emerging knowledge of LTELs, specifically, how they negotiate identities as learners in the context of an English language arts classroom.

Creswell (2006) explains the importance of research that pursues advocacy, including "an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants" (p. 21). In this study the action agenda consist of an extended unit on identity that invites students to explore their own identities as readers, writers, and learners through identity related texts that provide learning opportunities that engage students in identity negotiation. Drawing from the work of Campano (2007) who proposes using literature and writing to help foster "personal transformation" (p. 43), I have designed an instructional unit on identity that allows students to explore their own identities and provides opportunities to reflect on predominant ELLs' perceptions, in particular LTELs as readers, writers, and learners (See Description of Identity Unit, p. 81).

I reflect on my own practice to "strengthen and develop its positive features", while overcoming my areas of weakness and experimenting "with new ideas and strategies, rather than letting [my own] practice petrify" (Altricher et al., 1993, p. 4). Altricher et al. (1993) have developed a set of key characteristics that classify action research has been developed (Altricher et al., 1993). These include: an educator taking responsibility for what occurs in the classroom, a research question emerging from everyday teaching practices, and research that follows the primary values and conditions of the school with an aim to improve and further develop such values and conditions. As an action researcher, I intend to experience empowerment from taking action, while potentially helping my students feel empowered (Esposito & Smith, 2006) in an educational system where accountability and measurement prevail.

A Case Study of my English Language Arts Classroom

Through action research I will conduct a case study of my own classroom. Yin (2009), defines a case study as having the "ability to examine, in depth, a 'case' within its "real life" context" (p.111). Yin (2009) recognizes that case study may be used as an approach including multiple methods of research. For me, case study is one approach I combine with action research to answer the research questions presented. The result is to produce a "firsthand understanding of people and events" (Yin, 2009, p. 112) in my own classroom to understand the process of identity negotiation in ELLs. The case is my sixth grade English language arts classroom and the embedded subcases are the emerging profiles of different ELLs who represent varying and in some cases contrasting representations the multiple pathways of identity negotiation.

Role of the Researcher

In this study I assumed the dual role of teacher and researcher. As a teacher researcher, I was personally engaged in the everyday lives of my students in an English Language Arts classroom. As a teacher and researcher, I worked to improve my own practice, while understanding the process of identity negotiation ELLs experienced upon entering the academic classroom. My "biographic situation" (Pinar, 2004, p. 36) is one of a critical educator who understands that some problems require the use of critical theory to "focus simultaneously on both sides of a social contradiction" (McLaren, 2009, p. 61). As an action researcher seeking social justice and empowerment for the ELLs in my classroom, I assumed the role of responsibility to practice my own teacher agency (Bell, 2007) exposing what may be my vulnerabilities and weaknesses, but using reflection to learn, grown, and improve my practice, to afford all ELLs the experience of classroom success.

Accountability leaves educators searching for innovative ways of finding a voice to avoid the silencing of ELLs, understanding who they are and the process of identity negotiation in which they engage. Aguirre (2005) writes, "One is thus silenced by a practice that denies one the ability to establish presence" (p. 155). In order to avoid silencing, I use action research as a teacher researcher so that it becomes one of the "transformative vehicles" which brings change (Aguirre, 2005, p. 158). I hope to challenge the discourse that constructs ELLs as victims and instead choose to be an energetic scholar and practitioner who critically examines the process of identity negotiation through transformative pedagogy. It is my goal to embrace the use of culturally relevant curriculum to promote action, change, and social justice in students amidst the world of accountability, and through such pedagogical stance come to understand how ELLs in my classroom negotiate identities as readers, writers, and ultimately learners.

As an emerging scholar I understand the need for social justice in education, primarily for language minority students, including ELLs. Social justice is defined as, the process by which all members of a society or community are provided equal opportunities to participate, equal access to resources, in which all members feel safe physically and psychologically (Bell, 2007). It is through curriculum and pedagogy with an aim of social justice through culturally relevant texts, that I seek to understand how ELLs negotiate identities as learners in the academic classroom.

My role as a teacher researcher highlights the dichotomy presented by Padilla's (2004/2010) concepts of the culture of measurement and the culture engagement. As an emerging scholar, I gravitate toward the "culture of engagement" as the main way to engage diverse learners in a truly culturally relevant curriculum. As a practitioner, who is measured on the success of second language learners on standardized tests, I remain immersed in the "culture of measurement" (Padilla, 2004/2010). Consequently, I am engulfed in numerous contradictions

between theory and practice and I recognize that such contradictions are multidimensional (McLaren, 2009). It is through this study that I can explore in depth how ELLs negotiate identities as learners, readers and writers in the English language arts classroom.

Context and Background

This study was conducted in a public middle school serving grades 6 through 8, in a predominantly Mexican-American community in deep South Texas on the US-Mexico border. In this study, I refer to the research site as Cavazos Middle School. Cavazos Middle School is serves 837 students. Below I include a brief overview of campus demographics as it relates to ELLs and sixth grade reading accountability ratings.

Nearly one-fifth of the student population are English language learners, accounting for 19.6% of all students. Furthermore, 19.6% of the ELL population at Cavazos accounts for 164 students, of which 153 are enrolled in bilingual/ESL programs within the school. Those students who are ELL and are not serviced through a bilingual/ESL program are students who are referred to as "denials" in that parents have elected not to allow students to participate in a bilingual/ESL program. Worth noting is that the attendance for ELLs is 0.5% below the school average at 95.4% as reported in the Texas Education Agency 2012-2013 School Report Card for Cavazos Middle School.

Worth noting is the high mobility rate noted for the campus in the same year of 2011-2012. The mobility rate at Cavazos Middle School was 25.4%, while the district average mobility rate was 20.1 % and the state average mobility rate was 17.9%. A summary of demographics at Cavazos Middle School can also be found on table 1 below.

	Campus	District	State
Attendance Rate	95.7%	95.9%	95.9%
Hispanic Enrollment	98.6%	98.2%	51.3%
Economically	89.0%	85.7%	60.4%
ELLs	19.6%	26.6%	17.1%
Mobility Rate	25.4%	20.1%	17.9%
Class Sizes (Grade 6)	20	23.9	21.1

Table 1. Cavazos Middle School Demographics

The 2013 accountability rating assigned by the Texas Education Agency for Cavazos Middle School was categorized as "Met Standard". Met standard means that the campus met or surpassed all cut off indexes in three areas including: student achievement, student progress, and closing performance gaps. Index 1, student achievement, was 66, 16 points above the target score of 50 required. Index 2, student progress was 35, only 6 points above the target score of 29. Last, index 3, closing performance gaps, was at 65, 10 points above the target score of 55. The following information is found in Figure 2.
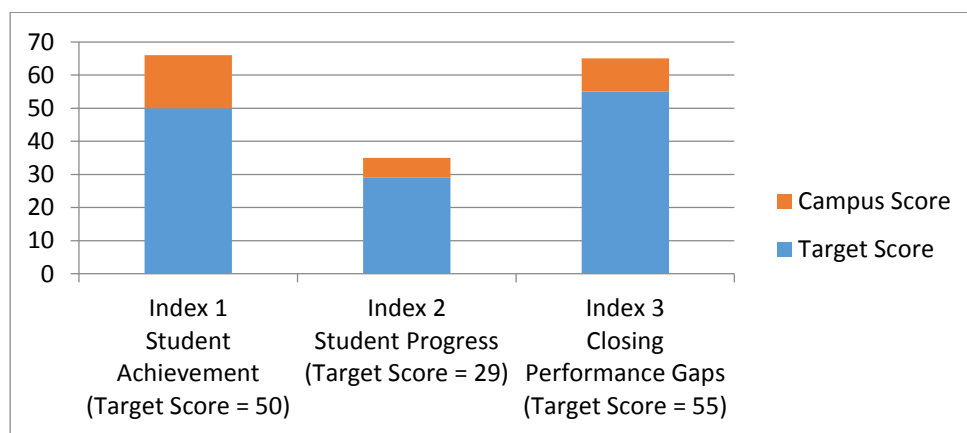
Figure 2. Cavazos Middle School Accountability Ratings

Sixth graders at Cavazos compose the largest class size in the school accounting for 296 of the 837 students enrolled, or 35.4 % of the student population. In addition, the average class size in grade 6 is below the district and state average at 20 students. In the year 2013, only 27%

of all ELLs in the sixth grade met the minimum standard on the annual STAAR exam in reading. This result shows a significant drop in the passing rate from 2012, when 36% of ELLs passed the STAAR reading test.

Participants

The participants were ELLs in the four sixth grade English Language Arts classes I taught during the 2014-2015 school year. The following criteria was used to select the purposive sampling for this qualitative study.

1. The student was enrolled in one of four English language arts classes I taught.

2. The student was labeled LEP, a term still used in schools, based on a language assessment administered by the school district, OR

1. The student had recently been reclassified as non-ELL and was currently being monitored as required through state accountability standards.

LEP, limited English proficient, students are those whose first language is not English, and have not yet met district mandated criteria to be reclassified as non-LEP, or non- English language learners. I included one student who had recently been reclassified as non-ELLs, and was still monitored for two years as mandated by state accountability standards. Only one student met the criteria as a recently reclassified non-ELL. I included the recently reclassified non-ELL in this qualitative study because of the arbitrary language proficiency levels many have argued exist (Durán 2008, Garcia & Kleifgen 2010; Solórzano, 2008). The ELLs in my classroom and the recently reclassified as non-ELL served can be defined as a purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002). This means only ELLs and the recently reclassified non-ELL met criteria as participants for the study.

To identify my participants, first, I reviewed district created cumulative folders of students to identify students which students were labeled as limited-English proficient or had been recently reclassified as non-ELL. I identified 18 students who qualified for participation in this research study, however I only obtained 16 consents and assents. Of the 16 total participants, a total of three students withdrew from the study.

I obtained parent consent and student assent for all participants. I sent letters home to all parents explaining the research study for their review. Parents returned signed consent forms and I proceeded to speak to ELLs in my class who had returned parental consent forms. I informed ELLs of the research study, explaining the process, while providing an assent form for their review. I then obtained student assent forms from all participating ELL research participants.

Data Collection

Methods

This qualitative action research case study involved multiple sources of data collection. Table 2 below provides an overview of the research questions and the data sources collected to answer each question.

Research Question	Data Collection/Sources
SUB QUESTION: How do ELLs view themselves as readers and writers?	Artifacts (Student work produced as result of the unit's activities) Observations: field notes in researcher journal Pre and Post audio recorded interviews Pre and post interest inventory Pre and post written student interview
SUB QUESTION: How is the process of identity negotiation different for different types of ELLs?	Pre and post interviews Artifacts (student work) Observations: field notes in researcher journal
SUB QUESTION: How do instructional activities in a Language Arts' unit on identity foster identity negotiation in ELLs?	Artifacts (student work) Observations: field notes in researcher journal Semi-structured interview (2nd face to face interview)

Table 2. Research Questions and Data Sources

Following is a description of the data collection process and sources used throughout the study. First, I obtained archival records of research participants. Collecting the archival data occurred over the course of two weeks during teacher conference periods. During the archival data collection period I also administered an initial reading inventory and student written interview to all research participants. After both administrations I began the identity unit by having students create a journal for the main text, Becoming Naomi León. I had students complete a teacher created anticipation guide for the unit. I also had students engage in initial reading response journal entries. I also had students create a booklet titled, "Identity Unit". Students engaged in an initial reading of "Invisible" by Medina (1999) and wrote a letter to me as the teacher. The reading response journal created for the main text and the identity unit booklet were part of the initial student work collected. I reviewed the data collected and labeled the data as pre-unit data collection. All data collected listed above was collected over one month and was used to help select the ten students from the purposive sampling for in depth analysis of the process of identity negotiation each student undergoes through criterion sampling.

I found it necessary to also categorize the data as pre unit, during unit, and conclusion of unit. Segmenting the data into different periods within the study helped me keep track of any changes among the multiple cases. Below is a table that indicates how I organized the data collected into different time periods.

Time periods	Data Collected
Pre unit	Pre unit interest inventory Pre written student interview Archival records Observations in researcher journal
Initial unit	First student written letter to teacher Anticipation Guide for *Becoming Naomi León* First 7 journal entries in reading response journal to *Becoming Naomi León*

During Unit	First audio recorded interview (immediately after focal participant selection)
	Journal entries to *Becoming Naomi León*
	Double entry diary
	Identity Unit Text Responses:
	  1. The Real Me
	  2. If I were Ramiro…
	  3. Cesar Chavez Video Reflection
	  4. "Those Who Don't Know" response
	  5. Hope for my Future as a Reader & Writer
	Observations recorded in researcher journal

Conclusion of Unit	Second set of responses to anticipation guide for *Becoming Naomi León* Self-Reflection I Am poem Second student letter written to teacher Second audio recorded interview Post unit interest inventory Post written student interview Observations recorded in researcher journal

Table 3. Time Periods of Data Collected

The following is a description of each data collection source for all participants during the pre-unit and initial unit data phase of data collection.

Data Collected from All Participants

Archival Records (pre-unit): Initially, I reviewed district cumulative folders to understand the educational history of each ELL and each recently reclassified non-ELL student participating in the study. The academic records provided information on students prior success and, or struggles in the academic classroom and state assessments including STAAR and TELPAS. This process took two weeks and occurred during my teacher conference period.

Reading Interest Inventory (pre unit): Each student participant responded to a student reading interest inventory created by Opitz and Ford (2001). The purpose of this data source was to collect initial thoughts from participants about prior reading experiences. The Reading Interest Inventory is an assessment I regularly use in my class to "get to know" my students and understand the types of genres students enjoy reading most. The inventory asks for students to describe reading preferences including, genres of interest, favorite book titles and authors, and tell how books are selected for reading. The inventory was completed in class and took students approximately ten minutes to complete. Participants were allowed to respond in Spanish if needed.

Student Interview written format (pre unit): Each participant responded in writing to a brief student interview protocol. This interview was designed by Opitz and Ford (2001) to determine student perceptions of reading, strategies used during reading. The interview is designed as an aid to help teachers plan reading instruction. In this study, this written interview allowed to gaining initial insights into the general attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions ELLs and recently reclassified non-ELLs have about previous reading experiences in the classroom. Participants responded to 7 questions regarding what they felt was important about reading, an explanation of what they were doing while reading, a definition of reading, fix up strategies used

with unfamiliar words, importance of reading accuracy, characteristics of good readers, and what

fix up strategies they believed good readers use with unfamiliar words (Opitz and Ford, 2001).

Responses to the written interview informed me of each participant's overall experience and

comfort level with reading in the classroom. This student interview was also conducted during

class and took each student approximately ten minutes to complete.

Participants were allowed to respond in Spanish if needed.

Researcher Journal (pre and initial): Throughout the implementation of the unit on

identity, I took anecdotal field notes of my daily observations of all ELLs and recently classified

non-ELLs in my classroom as they completed and participated of the activities. The field notes

were recorded in my action researcher journal and served as the most current understanding of

each student's situation in the academic English language arts classroom. I organized this

journal by creating two columns: action and reflection. In one column I wrote the actions of

others students observed, or the actions I took throughout the study. In the second column I

reflected on the actions as potential insight to how students view themselves as learners, readers,

and writers. I also included reflections on how identity negotiation was occurring through the

actions observed. (See Appendix C for examples of field notes).

Initial Identity Unit Student Work (initial): As part of the unit on identity that I

developed and implemented during the data collection period, students participated in initial

activities that helped understand student's identity as learners, readers, and writers. The initial

activities included a letter written to the teacher at the commencement of the study and reading

response journal entries to the main text read throughout the study, *Becoming Naomi León*.

Data Collected from Focal Participants

Ten focal participants were selected to be described following Creswell's (2006) suggestion to provide a maximum variation in the sampling strategy. The students selected represented different ways in which ELLs negotiate identities while identifying common patterns. The selection of the ten participants for in depth analysis followed the following criteria:

2. Boys and girls.

3. Represented different types of ELLs in the classroom. To identify the different types of ELLs I considered the following dimensions: academic history, reading and writing struggles, language history, and the way participants viewed themselves as readers and writers.

I included 10 focal participants instead of all 16 to make in depth data collection doable in the time frame of the unit implementation and because the selected students best matched different categories of ELLs. The following data sources were collected for the ten selected participants.

Face to face interviews (during unit): Selected participants were interviewed twice throughout the data collection period using an open-ended interview format. This interview format allowed participants to give background information of themselves including who they are, hobbies, dreams, and expectations for the school year.

Following Brenner (2009) I used the first interview to build rapport with the participant, creating a space of trust and acceptance to help eliminate the power issues, in particular differences between teacher as interviewer, and student as interviewee (See Appendix A for interview questions). The open-ended questions focused on how and what questions to cue the student participant to "give their perspective in their own words" (Brenner, 2009, p. 363) and

aimed to be more of a natural conversation. The second interview was conducted in a semi-structured format toward the latter part of data collection (See Appendix B for interview questions). I asked specific questions about the schooling experience of students, including the English language arts classroom, how they view themselves as reader, writers, and overall learners. The questions were adjusted based on my preliminary analysis of the reading interest inventories, student written interview responses, and reading response journal entries to *Becoming Naomi León* to include specific questions for each participant. Interviews were conducted over a three and a half-month period, once at the beginning of data collection and a final time toward the latter part of data collection. The interviews occurred during school hours in the classroom, during my conference period and took approximately 15 minutes. Each interview was audio recorded, upon the interviewee's assent and transcribed by the interviewer. In addition, participants had the option to be interviewed in either English or Spanish. Newly arrived ELLs chose to be interviewed in Spanish, therefore, their interviews were transcribed in Spanish. Selected segments were later translated into English by myself. The translation was reviewed by my dissertation chair whose first language is Spanish. Throughout the translation process I took into account my knowledge of the culture of the participants to best determine the "full implications that a term carries" (Birbili, 2000, p. 3).

In addition, toward the latter part of the data collection students selected for the in-depth study retook the reading interest inventory and responded to the written interview questions to determine if and how the identity unit has impacted the negotiation of identity as learners, readers, and writers (See description of instruments, p. 76).

Student Work Identity Unit (during): As part of the unit on identity I developed and implemented during the data collection period, students participated in different activities and

completed different tasks. I collected physical artifacts produced during these tasks that provided

information on each individual student. Anderson-Levitt (2009) describes artifacts as products

that are created by people. In this study, artifacts were student produced work including: two

letters written to the teacher, numerous reading response journal entries, 2 sets of anticipation

guide responses, one double entry journal, and 10 reading responses to unit texts in identity

booklet. Students engaged in specific activities designed to elicit an understanding of their

identity as learners, readers, and writers. For example, participants engaged in letter writing early

on in data collection, detailing what they would like the most help with in reading and writing.

Please see Description of Identity Unit (p.81) that follows for a detailed description of reading

and writing assignments.

Figure 3 summarizes the purposeful sampling and criterion sampling of participants at

each level of research and the data sources for each.
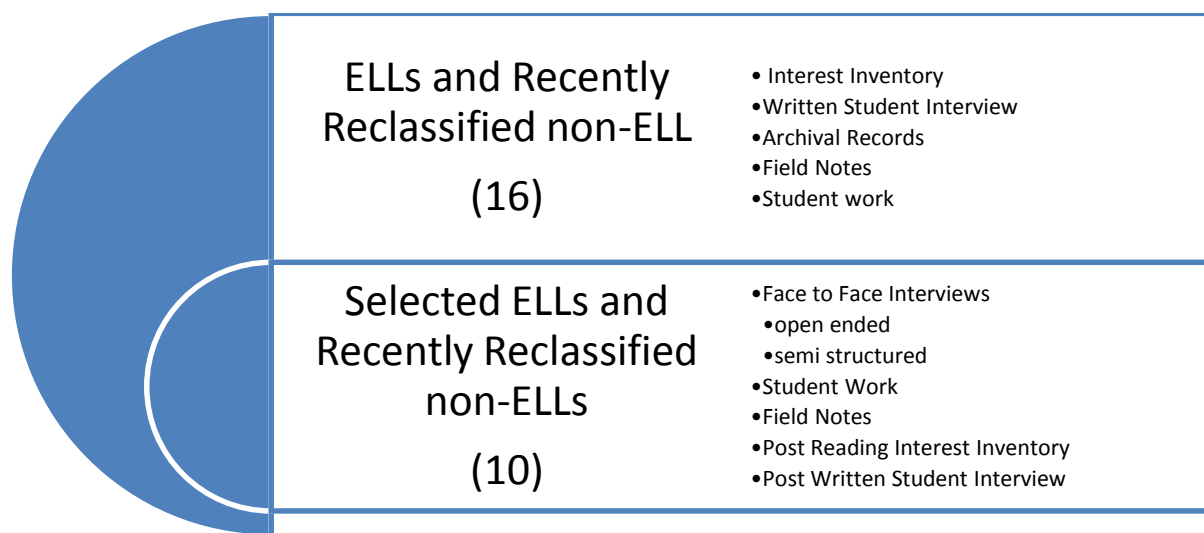
Figure 3. Participants and Data Collection

Together archival records, written interview responses, interest inventory responses,

observations, researcher journaling, face to face interviews, and collecting student work, are all

representative of the nature of data collection and fieldwork strategies that are evident in qualitative inquiry.

Description of Identity Unit

The process of data collection took place during the implementation of a unit on identity that occurred over approximately three and a half months. I designed the unit to elicit responses about participant identities as learners, readers, and writers, and provide learning opportunities that would potentially provide insight into how ELLs negotiate identities. The unit included reading and writing activities that were aligned to state mandated sixth grade English Language Arts curriculum including letter writing, poetry writing, written responses to literary texts, character analysis, plot analysis, making connections within and across texts.

The identity unit included several literary selections, including one main text that was used to connect all other literary selections. The main text was the novel, *Becoming Naomi León* Ryan (2004). The novel is about a young girl who embarks on a journey to Mexico in search of her father. I selected this text because it addresses issues of identity and finding one's voice amidst adversity. The novel reading required students to maintain a double entry journal where students reflected on the daily readings and included a reflection of their inner and outer voices while engaged in the text. The double entry journal was introduced to students after reading several chapters of the novel, where participants learned that Naomi, the main character, often whispers asides to herself. These whispers were equated to her inner voice, or innermost, secret thoughts, while her outer voice was described as the actual words she produced to communicate to others. Participants became vigilant of their own voices throughout the reading of the novel by making note of any contrasts they found in their double entry diary of inner and outer voices.

The following is a description of the identity unit I developed and the activities students engaged in throughout the study.

There were a total of 10 different readings throughout the unit (see Appendix D p.201) including a table I used to plan specific activities described within the unit.

Identity Unit Texts
"My Name" from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros
"My Name is Jorge" from *My Name is Jorge and Other Poems* by Jane Medina
"Invisible" from *My Name is Jorge and Other Poems* by Jane Medina
"Those Who Don't Know" from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros
"La Mariposa" from *The Circuit* by Francisco Jimenez
"The Circuit" by Francisco Jimenez
"Inside Out" by Francisco Jimenez
***Becoming Naomi Leon* by Pam Munoz Ryan**
***¡Si Se Puede! Yes, We Can!: Janitor Strike in L.A.* by Diana Cohn**
"Death of a Writer" by David Rice
***Harvesting Hope* by Kathleen Krull**

Table 4. Identity Unit Texts

The first reading included the main text of the unit, *Becoming Naomi León* by Pam Muñoz Ryan (2004). The purpose of starting with the main text was to introduce participants to the main character, Naomi. Naomi's character served as a platform to engage participants in a discussion of the concept of identity. I engaged students in a discussion of possible definitions for the term identity. As a class participants agreed to define identity as "who I am". Participants then created a booklet titled, "Identity Unit" and decorated the cover with

illustrations that represented themselves. On the first page of the booklet participants wrote the agreed upon definition of identity, "who I am". The second page included a list of "What I Read" where participants were instructed to log all of the identity related readings. All other pages in the booklet were designated for writing assignments related to the texts read throughout the unit. The only writings related to identity that were not kept in the identity booklets participants created were in a participant created reading response journal exclusively for *Becoming Naomi León.* The reading response journal created for the anchor text of the unit included a teacher created anticipation guide before reading the text, student responses to open-ended teacher created questions, an after-reading anticipation guide, and a double-entry journal toward the latter part of the journal. *Becoming Naomi León* was read daily during the first few minutes of class followed by response journal writing for the first half of class meetings. The remainder of class time was spent reading different texts in the unit on identity.

The unit began with the reading of "Invisible" a poem by Jane Medina (1999) that depicts the feelings of a student in a classroom, to determine if participants may have felt the same way. After a class discussion participants were invited to write a letter to me informing me of what they wanted to accomplish in the ELA course this year. Participants then read "My Name", a short vignette Cisneros (1984) from *The House on Mango Street,* where a young girl reflects on her own identity as it relates to her name. I selected this text to determine if students experienced contradictions and elicit thought about identity. After a class discussion students were asked to respond to the phrase "the real me" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 11) as used in the text to complete the following sentences starters:

- The real student in me is-
- The real learner in me is-

- The real reader in me is-

- The real writer in me is-

The purpose of this assignment was to have participants think about their identity in the classroom in terms of learners, readers, and writers.

After reading participant responses, and in an effort to provide the transformative pedagogy described in the theoretical framework of this study, I proceeded to read *íSi, Se Puede! Yes We Can!: Janitor Strike in L.A.* by Cohn (2002), a bilingual picture book about a janitor strike in Los Angeles and the short story, "Death of a Writer" by Rice (2011), in which a young boy is sent to the principal's office after completing a writing assignment. Cohn's (2002) picture book provided an example of courage for the participants, while Rice's (2011) provided an example of what can easily happen in a classroom to young writers. After the reading of *íSi, Se Puede! Yes We Can!: Janitor Strike in L.A.* participants used a strategy known as "Fleshing out a Character" by Allen (2001, p.44) to analyze Carlitos in the story. The intention was to have students understand the courage Carlitos displayed as he participated in the strike. Participants then wrote their own personal definitions of courage. The responses allowed me to understand each participants' conceptualization of courage. It was important to understand each participant's understanding of courage before reading "Death of a Writer" by David Rice (2011).

After reading "Death of a Writer" I asked participants to create a plot diagram to make sure all students understood the text. I then asked students to create a connection chart between texts. To assist each participant I provided three thematic links between texts: courage, freedom, and justice. I asked participants how each theme was displayed through Carlitos from *íSi, Se Puede! Yes We Can!: Janitor Strike in L.A.* and Ramiro, the main character in "Death of a Writer". Participants were then given the opportunity to write about what they would do if they

were Ramiro in an assignment titled, "If I were Ramiro…". These texts provided the frame for

participants to then read about the life of Cesar Chavez.

To introduce Cesar Chavez to participants I showed students a brief video on you-tube

about his life, asking students to reflect on their own lives as potential dream followers like

Cesar. Participants then listened to a read aloud of *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez*

by Kathleen Krull (2003), a picture books that tells about the life and struggles of Cesar Chavez.

After the reading participants then engaged in a discussion of hope and the power of hope itself.

As a response, participants wrote about their hopes as readers and writers. The hopes

participants wrote about prompted me to have students read, "Those Who Don't", another

vignette by Cisneros (1984) next, a selection that describes the stereotypes a young girl rejects,

and a selection that Campano (2007) has used in his own practice with young children as a tool

to help students reflect on their own situation. After the reading students reflected on what

others do not know about them.

After several readings throughout the identity unit I wanted participants to think about the

concept of change and how it related to the different texts read in the unit thus far. After some

discussion I asked students to reflect and respond to the following three questions:

- How have you changed as a student this year?

- How have you changed as a reader this year?

- How have you changed as a writer this year?

After the self-reflection, participants read "Inside Out" a story in the novel *The Circuit: Stories*

from the life of a migrant child by Jimenez (1997).   The story that tells about a young boy

struggling to learn English in his first year of school. In addition, I used a Spanish version of the

chapter, created into a picture book titled, *La Mariposa,* to show the participants the

accompanying illustrations and make available for any student wishing to read the picture book in Spanish. The purpose of reading "Inside Out" was for participants to read about the changes Francisco underwent as a student in an all English classroom.

To conclude the unit the students read the poem "My Name is Jorge" by Medina (1999) and "The Circuit", the short story in Jimenez's (1997), book. After reading the poem by Medina (1999) students wrote their own autobiographical poem, an assignment titled, "I Am". After reading "The Circuit", I asked students to imagine they were in Francisco's situation, moving away, and write me a letter telling me whatever they felt I needed to know before their departure. The purpose of these last two assignments was to determine the impact from the unit on identity.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis is an inductive process where the researcher synthesizes the data using a holistic perspective to reflect on the data and use voice (Patton, 2002). In addition, I used a holistic perspective by using my classroom as the complex, and overarching case, with focal participants, while accounting for the specific context in which students learned. Most importantly, I was mindful of my own voice, perspective, and reflection to creating a balanced portrait of how different types of ELLs negotiate identities as reflected in my action researcher journal.

Yin (2009) suggests that analysis and data collection be done together in part so that the researcher can make adjustments to data collection plans to resolve any issues encountered. This means that data collection and analysis were recursive, with an opportunity for myself as the action researcher to move back and forth between data collection and data analysis. This process allowed me to make adjustments to lessons, and include specific questions during audio recorded interviews so as to obtain the necessary data to confirm or disconfirm potential assumptions

made during prior analysis. Following the suggestion Yin (2009) proposes, I used "*pattern-matching* [italics in original] " (p. 118). Pattern-matching involved collecting data to determine if any assumptions made about how students negotiate identities in an academic classroom has occurred and the degree in which identity negotiation has occurred. To approach data analysis, I created a schedule to systematically read and analyze the data collected. Table 5 summarizes the timeline in which the data was collected and analyzed.

Month	Data Collected	Analysis
October	Archival Records	Participant Categories
	Reading Interest Inventory	Categorical aggregation of reading interest inventories, holistic analysis
	Student Written Interview	Initial open coding of student written interview protocol, holistic analysis
	Student Work: Letter writing, Initial journal entries, pre anticipation guide	Coding of student work, ongoing analysis of themes
	Reflective researcher journal	Coding of student and teacher actions
End of October	Selection of 10 participants for in depth data collection and analysis	Preliminary analysis considering of dimensions of academic history, reading and writing struggles, language history, and the way participants see themselves as readers and writers.
November	Open-Ended Interviews	Transcription and initial open coding of interviews,
	Student Work: Reading Response Entries, double entry journal, journal entries	Coding of student work, ongoing analysis of themes
	Reflective Researcher journal	Multiple readings, coding
December	Student Work during unit	Coding of student work, identifying themes, Multiple readings, coding
	Reflective Researcher Journal	
January	Student Work: letter writing, I Am (Autobiographical) poem,	Coding of student work, ongoing analysis of themes
	Reflective Researcher Journal	Multiple readings, coding
February	Semi Structured Interviews	Coding of student work, ongoing analysis of themes, embedded analysis
	Reflective Researcher Journal 2nd Administration of Reading Inventory	Recoding of reading interest inventory
	2nd Administration of Student Written Interview	Recoding of student written interview

Table 5. Data Collection Schedule

There are several techniques that I used to help me analyze the raw data. These techniques included using open coding, and clustering of codes into categories to develop emerging themes (Merriam, 1998) to then build an understanding of identity negotiation in the ELA classroom.

Following is a description of the different moments in the analysis:

1. Systematic organization of raw data: For this study I organized the data collected by participant and chronologically as suggested by Merriam, 1998). The data collected was coded as pre, initial, during, and conclusion of unit data. Raw data from interview transcripts was organized by research participant.

2. Coding process: I began analysis following the suggestion of Dyson and Genishi (2005) by looking each data set unit individually to find overall patterns within each category of ELLs. Data were read multiple times. Open coding was used to identify patterns in raw data of how ELLs view themselves as learners, readers, writers, including instances of identity negotiation. For the reading inventories I used the following codes: student descriptions of their enjoyment of reading, if they were able to name either a favorite book or author, and the strategies they used to select books to read. For the written student interview I used the following codes: ELLs' reading conceptualization, strategies used when meaning breaks down, and strategies participants believe good readers use. For the audio recorded interviews I used the following codes: participant interest, learner identity/negotiation descriptors, reading identity descriptors, and writing identity descriptors. For the responses to the identity unit I used the following codes: learner identity and negotiation descriptors, reading identity descriptors, and writing identity descriptors. The research journal was coded

for instances of teacher reflection, reflective planning, and instances of identity

negotiation in action. Because of the vast amount of journal entries in the reading

response journal for *Becoming Naomi León* and the double entry journal, I treated

these data sources differently including additional, more specific codes than

exclusively learner identity and negotiation, and reading and writing identity

descriptors, including instances where students described change, control of their own

identity, used metaphors, referenced power and voice, identity construction, teacher

identity, and personal descriptions of self, such as goals and worries.

3. Emerging themes: The last level of analysis included clustering codes into categories

and finding emerging themes from all of the data sets to develop findings that were

most consistent with the data collected. I identified the emerging themes by

clustering codes into categories. The categories were analyzed across all participants

as I looked for common patterns for all ELLs and specifically for patterns within

different types of ELLs.

Data from archival records and initial unit implementation were read multiple times and

categorized into different types of ELLs. I then used the data collected from all 16 archival

records to categorize the ELLs into four main categories: Recently reclassified non ELLs, ELLs

with consistent academic achievement, Newly Arrived ELLs, and Long-term ELLs. The nature

of the study on identity, required organization that categorized participants due to the impact

labeling has on one's identity (Gee, 2000). The 10 participants selected had academic histories

that best matched the four emerging categories of recently reclassified non-ELLs, ELLs with

consistent academic achievement, Newly Arrived ELLs, and Long-Term ELs. In this

exploratory, qualitative study only one research participant met the criteria for recently

reclassified non ELL. This means that only one students had recently been reclassified as a non-ELL and is under state mandated monitoring for two years. The second category, successful ELLs, included ELLs who have successful academic histories. These ELLs scored either Advanced or Advanced High on TELPAS (Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System) and, or were successful on the state mandated assessment of STAAR (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) in prior years. The third category, Newly Arrived ELLs, included students who had 0 to 3 years of schooling in US schools. The final category of ELLs, LTELs, included ELLs with unsuccessful academic histories who have attended US schools for more than 7 years. These students although may have scored Advanced on TELPAS failed in context reduced and cognitively demanding assessments including the STAAR. These four emerging categories of ELLs became the basis in which I began to understand and research different types of ELLs in the classroom.

Trustworthiness

Yin (2009) suggests that "good case studies benefit from having '*multiple sources of evidence*' " (p. 115). In research, reflexivity is defined as a writer's consciousness of the "biases, values, and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative research study" (Creswell, 2006, p. 243). I used triangulation by analyzing different data collected including student produced work including reading response journals and double entry diaries, interviews, reading inventories, and my researcher journal, to ensure that the findings were consistent among the different types of data collected. In post interviews I also asked specific questions to each participant regarding artifacts produced throughout the unit on identity to clarify meanings. I also used member checks by having participants read transcriptions of pre and post audio recorded interviews. Through triangulation and reflexivity I seek to create trustworthiness in this qualitative study,

making explicit my own role as teacher researcher and the different perspectives I bring to this study that may influence the social construction of knowledge. Patton (2002) writes,

> Social constructivists' case studies, findings, and reports are explicitly informed by attention to praxis and reflexivity, that is, understanding how one's own experiences and background affect what one understands and how one acts in the world, including acts of inquiry," (p. 546).

Patton (2002) suggests that social construction and constructivist criteria be used to measure the quality and ultimately trustworthiness of qualitative research. I intend not to seek "one singular truth", but rather "encourage dialogue among perspectives" (Patton, 2002 p. 546) and in doing so build trustworthiness in this qualitative study by closely examining the data within the specific context of my own English language arts classroom. In addition, I provide a detailed description of the different steps taken and methodological decisions made during the analysis in order to construct an "audit trail" (Merriam, 1988, p. 172) of the research process so to allow others to assess the relevance and rigor of the research process.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. The data collected in this study is exclusive to the small number of research participants in my classroom, and my own practice alone. The data collected provides a look at one English Language Arts course, specifically at a group of ELLs as they engage in negotiating identities. This means that the generalizations drawn from this type of study are naturalistic generalizations (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Patton, 2002; Stake as cited in Merriam, 1988). In naturalistic generalizations the researcher identifies patterns that explain the lived experiences (Merriam, 1988). In order to look for the patterns the researcher must provide "readers a sense of 'being there'" (p. 115) in a way that readers have the ability to generalize from the experience that may require modification and adaptation to be generalizable

to the world (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). The lived experiences described are those of a small group of student research participants and myself as teacher researcher.

There is a limitation related to the dual role as full participant and observer, or insider, while describing the case as an outsider (Patton, 2002). This particular challenge meant that I, as a teacher researcher needed to maintain a researcher's voice, and avoid my own teacher voice while collecting data. Avoiding my teacher voice was the most challenging in the study, as I was analyzing my own practice in the classroom, where being a teacher is my primary role while serving ELLs.

Chapter Summary

Using a qualitative design and case study as a method, I used my own classroom as an action researcher to understand how ELLs negotiate identities. In this chapter I include a description of the method including: a description of the setting, participant selection, a time frame in which data was collected, data collection sources, data collection organization, and how the data was analyzed. Through participant observation, field notes taken in a researcher journal, audio recorded interviews and artifacts including student produced work I analyzed how identity negotiation among ELLs occurs by using techniques including organization of the raw data collected, open coding of data, and clustering codes into categories to determine emerging themes. The result is a qualitative action research study that provides a rich account of ELLs' identity negotiation in an English language arts classroom. A qualitative action research approach is well suited to explore the ways that different types of ELLs represent multiple paths toward identity negotiation in the classroom.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this case study is to understand how different ELLs view their own academic identity in an English language arts classroom and how their views impact the process of negotiating identities as readers and writers. In this chapter, first I start by providing a detailed description of a typical day in my classroom and a brief review of the identity unit including how it was constructed. As this study integrates an action research approach, an overview of a typical day in my classroom and the identity unit implemented is important to contextualize the findings later discussed in the chapter. I also include a description of focal participants selected for in depth study. There were several key findings. First, diversity exists among the academic trajectories of ELLs. Second, ELLs' perceptions as readers and writers is defined by their experiences in reading and writing instruction. Third, identity negotiation is ongoing and continually changes. Fourth, through designed units of instruction coupled with purposeful teaching, teachers can foster identity negotiation in the ELA classroom. Finally, I include a brief review of other insightful and unexpected findings that are not directly related to the research questions but contribute to understanding aspects of schooling that ELLs enjoy, and how they interpret the actions of teachers. I conclude with a chapter summary.

A Day in my Sixth Grade ELA Classroom

The study took place in three different 6th grade English language arts classrooms. Two of the class periods are approximately 74 minutes long, while the third class was 111 minutes long as scheduled by the campus principal. Classes meet five times a week. During class, students participate in daily reading and writing assignments to cover sixth grade English language arts curriculum as mandated by the state of Texas.

Usually, a daily class period begin with a brief teacher read aloud from the class shared reading novel, followed by independent, silent reading. Immediately after independent reading students responded to an open-ended teacher created question about the reading of the day in their reading response journals. Students were encouraged to orally share their responses during whole class discussion. Afterwards, I proceeded with a quick whole group mini-lesson for the day where students used an interactive journal to take notes and create manipulatives intended to help students retain new information. The remainder of the class period was spent in small group learning opportunities. Students worked in small groups either on a computer based reading program or Google classroom, reading and or writing with the teacher, or completing independent learning tasks including reading and writing assignments. Although the independent learning tasks were completed individually, students were encouraged to seek assistance and ask for feedback from other peers in their assigned small group. A short five minutes was often left to reconvene as a whole group for students to share their progress and/or expectations for the next day.

Identity Unit Implementation

I drew on my researcher journal to describe the implementation of the unit. My intent was to understand how the ELLs in my classroom viewed themselves as readers, writers, and learners, and how they negotiated identities. It was also my intent to understand how a unit specifically designed to gain insight on student perceptions could possibly impact identity negotiation.

The unit on identity I created began with the reading of a main text, Becoming Naomi León, by Ryan (2004). The main text served as an anchor for discussion on identity. Participants created a reading response journal exclusively for writings related to the text. After

daily readings I asked students to respond daily to an open ended question connected to the reading. For example, in one journal prompt I asked participants to describe their everyday worries on the day we read about the main character's description of her own daily worries. Toward the latter part of the journal participants included a double entry journal where students logged their inner and outer voices looking for contrasts, a concept introduced through the main character, Naomi's practice of whispering to herself. For example, in the inner voice column participants wrote what they were thinking or whispered to themselves, while in their outer voice column students wrote the words that actually came out of their mouth for others to hear.

Participants also read a series of short stories and picture books related to issues of identity and social justice such as *íSí, Se Puede! Yes We Can!* by Cohn (2002) *La Mariposa* by Jimenez (1998), and *Harvesting Hope* by Krull (2003). The assignments related to these readings were kept in a participant created identity booklet where students responded to open-ended prompts to readings that called for reflection and personal connections to text. For instance, when students read about the life of Cesar Chavez in Krull's (2003) picture book, I asked students to think about Chavez's feelings about his educational experiences, specifically his situation as a bilingual student, and reflect on their on hopes and dreams as readers and writers.

As I read and analyzed participants' initial responses to the unit's activities and considering the purpose of the unit, I made adjustments to the original unit planning. (See Appendix D for original unit plan)   The changes included some additional readings. I included a reading by Cohn (2002) and Krull (2003). I included the Cohn (2002) and Krull (2003) reading because I wanted students to make a connection between the concept of seeking social justice outside of the classroom and how a call for social justice can also apply in a classroom setting. I

paired the readings for one week so that one reading would be about a call for justice outside the classroom and another in the classroom. In some cases, due to time, participants read about social justice outside the classroom one week, and another week about social justice in the classroom. I wanted to ensure that students could explicitly make the connections.

Focal Participants

A total of 16 research participants agreed to participate in the study through parental consent and student assent. Ten students were selected to focus the data collection after the academic histories for all 16 research participants were examined (See Appendix E). As described in the methodology section, for each participant, I examined the number of years in US schools, including pre-K and kindergarten, the grade first enrolled, the number of elementary schools attended prior to attending middle school in the sixth grade, initial TELPAS scores upon entry in schools, and TELPAS and STAAR scores for third, fourth, and fifth grade. In addition, I also included notes to indicate if the student had ever been retained. See Appendix E for tables that document the data collected for each research participant regarding language and state content assessments.

After reviewing archival records and observing participants in the classroom the diversity among ELLs became evident. Although ELLs are often referred to as one whole group, a close look at ELLs reveals that ELLs are indeed a very diverse group with different academic histories, language, and academic needs (Solórzano, 2008). There are different types of ELLs who can be categorized based on their academic trajectories.

As explained in the previous chapter, I identified four groups of ELLs in my classroom: ELLs recently reclassified, ELLs with a history of consistent academic achievement, newly

arrived ELLs, and LTELs (see Data Analysis, p. 86). Of the sixteen research participants, there

were a total of 10 participants that best fit the above mentioned categories of ELLs:

1. One student recently reclassified as non-ELL was automatically included to represent

   this population of ELLs.

2. All three newly arrived ELLs were selected because of their histories of high

   mobility. In the event that one newly arrived ELL withdrew from the study, there

   would still be other newly-arrived non-ELLs remaining.

3. All three ELLs with consistent levels of academic achievement on state assessments

   and class work were included to represent this group.

4. Although there were more than three LTELs to select for in depth participation I

   selected only three so as not to over represent this population in the study. I selected

   these participants based on classroom observations that indicated diverse

   circumstances even within this group.

Table 6 lists the 10 research participants selected for the in depth portion of this study.

Participant	Sex	Type
Oralia	Female	Recently Reclassified non-ELL
Valeria	Female	ELL with consistent academic achievement
Patricia	Female	ELL with consistent academic achievement
Jesse	Male	ELL with consistent academic achievement
Rolando	Male	Newly-Arrived ELL
Jaime	Male	Newly Arrived ELL
Pedro	Male	Newly Arrived ELL
Raul	Male	LTEL
Katia	Female	LTEL
Javier	Male	LTEL

Table 6. Focal Participants

Recently reclassified non-ELL. Recently reclassified non-ELLs are students who have

been exited from a bilingual and or ESL program and are monitored for two years upon exit.

Districts use different exit criteria to determine the eligibility for exit from a bilingual and or ESL program. In the district participants currently attend the following criteria is used to determine eligibility for exit of a bilingual and or ESL program:

- A score of 4 or higher on the LAS Links assessment

- Pass STAAR reading and writing

- An Advanced High rating on TELPAS in reading and writing

Oralia. Only one student had been recently reclassified non-ELL student by their former school district. I will refer to this research participant as Oralia. Oralia was currently being monitored for a second year after being exited from a bilingual and or ESL program in the fourth grade. This was also Oralia's first year in the district and the exit criteria used to determine her eligibility for exit of a bilingual and or ESL program was not in her academic records. Therefore, it is unknown what criteria her previous district used to exit her from an ESL program. A number of items may have been reviewed by her former district to determine her eligibility for exit including results on a district administered language assessment such as LAS Links, STAAR reading and writing scores, TELPAS ratings in reading and writing, and possibly her report card grades in the core content areas. Past district language assessment results were not in her current district's archival academic record. However, a review of Oralia's academic records revealed that she did pass STAAR reading and writing in the fourth grade. She also scored an advanced high in both reading and writing on TELPAS in the fourth grade, with an overall composite score of advanced high. Worth noting is Oralia's bilingualism. Oralia describes herself as a student who can read, write, and speak in her native language of Spanish.

Oralia has experienced success this school year, receiving passing marks in her ELA class by completing all class requirements. Since this school year was her first year in the school

district, she did not know many of her peers on the first day of school. However, her easy going

nature allowed her to quickly make friends. She is quiet, soft spoken, yet determined to excel in

all that she does. She enters the classroom each day with a smile, utilizing her time wisely to

absorb new information and complete the day's task. Each time she is praised she bows her head

down, leans it against her shoulder, and smiles, as if trying to hide the excitement she feels to

have obtained the teacher's recognition. Over the course of the school year Oralia has also

demonstrated that she has a keen memory. She often refers to examples used in class discussions

and lectures to help her complete assignments. She is an active listener and never hesitates to

participate in class discussions. Her writing assignments are nearly flawless and demonstrate a

genuine understanding of the content delivered. Although Oralia is no longer labeled an ELL, her

recently reclassified status as a non-ELL merits monitoring from the state, and this is why I

chose Oralia as a participant to further investigate. Below is a table with Oralia's academic

history. In the table I indicate whether Oralia passed or failed a state assessment. I also indicated

TELPAS composite I scores, including TELPAS ratings. TELPAS ratings are assigned as

follows: advanced high (AH), advanced (A), intermediate (I), and beginning (B). I also

indicated her ELL status as a non-ELL in her second year of monitoring after exiting from a

bilingual/ESL program. Based on Oralia's archival record on state assessments, she has received

passing marks. Table 7 outlines Oralia's academic history.

Student	ELL Status	# of years in US Schools	Grade first enrolled	# of US Schools Attended in Elem.	Initial TELPAS Scores Rdg., Wtg, Spk, Lis	5th grade STAAR Reading	5th Grade TELPAS	4th grade STAAR Reading	4th grade STAAR Writing	4th grade TELPAS	3rd Grade STAAR Reading	3rd Grade TELPAS
Oralia	Non-ELL Yr. 2	7	K	3	Gr: K C: B Rdg: B Wtg: B Spk: B Lis: B	Pass	C: AH Rdg: A Wtg: AH Spk: AH Lis: AH	Pass	Pass	C: AH Rdg:AH Wtg: AH Spk-: AH Lis-: AH	Pass	C: AH Rdg:AH Wtg: A Spk: A Lis: A

Table 7. Grouping of Recently Reclassified Non-ELL

ELLs with consistent academic achievement. A review of ELLs' archival records shows that a three ELLs consistently scored high on language and state content assessments. Data showed that this group of ELLs had experienced academic achievement while being labeled as limited-English proficient. For example, all three students have successfully passed all state assessments in reading and writing. In addition, based on my anecdotal notes from observations during the first stages of data collection, this group of ELLs had been performing at levels equivalent to their non-ELL peers in the language arts classroom. For instance, high levels of classroom participation in discussions, computer based reading assessments, and class work submitted indicated that these types of ELLs were performing well in the class. I refer to these students as Valeria, Patricia, and Jesse. Table 8 shows the consistent academic achievement of these types of ELLs as noted in their state assessments and TELPAS scores. It is worth noting Patricia's repetition of kindergarten and Jesse's retention in first grade that could be a factor contributing to their academic achievement. Even though Jesse had one failing score in writing, this is a challenging test even for non-ELLs. Based on notes in my researcher journal, both Jesse and Patricia are high achievers, excelling in their classwork, and consistently performing in the ELA classroom daily. For this reason I chose to include them among ELLs with consistent

academic achievement. Table 8 shows the academic histories of ELLs with consistent academic

achievement.

Student	ELL Status	# of years in US Schools	Grade first enrolled	# of US Schools Attended in Elem.	Initial TELPAS Scores Rdg., Wtg, Spk, Lis	5th grade STAAR Reading %	5th Grade TELPAS %	4th grade STAAR Reading	4th grade STAAR Writing	4th grade TELPAS	3rd Grade STAAR Reading	3rd Grade TELPAS
Patricia (Repeated K)	LEP	7	K	4	Gr: 3 C: A Rdg: A Wtg: A Spk: A Lis-A	Pass	C: AH Rdg: AH Wtg: AH Spk: AH Lis: AH	Pass	Pass	C: AH Rdg: AH Wtg: AH Spk: AH Lis: AH	Pass	C: A Rdg: A Wtg: A Spk: A Lis: A
Jesse (Retained in 1st)	LEP	8	K	2	Gr: K C: K Rdg: B Wtg: B Spk: B Lis: B	Pass[a]	C: AH Rdg: AH Wtg: AH Spk: AH Lis: AH	Pass	Fail	C- AH Rdg-AH Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis-AH	Pass	C: AH Rdg: AH Wtg: AH Spk: AH Lis: AH
Valeria	LEP	8	PK	3	Gr: K C: I Rdg: I Wtg: I Spk: I Lis : A	Pass	C: AH Rdg: AH Wtg: AH Spk: AH Lis: AH	Pass	Pass	C- AH Rdg- AH Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis –AH	Pass	C: AH Rdg: AH Wtg: AH Spk: A Lis: A

Table 8. Grouping of ELLs with consistent academic achievement
Note. *a* Commended performance rating

   Valeria. Valeria was a late enrollee, enrolling after two weeks after the start of the

school year. Valeria is absent frequently, however these absences do not affect her achievement.

In her writings she describes how being one of the older siblings, she is expected to help her

mother with the younger siblings. She is very responsible, always asking for missed assignments

and completing her work efficiently. Over the course of the school year Valeria has

demonstrated her meticulous nature. She does not rush through her work, and instead is one of

the last students to complete assignments. However, time spent completing assignments should

not be confused for academic struggles. Instead, Valeria is somewhat of a perfectionist, looking

at every little detail, trying to make sure that the work she completes is not less than worthy of an A. In addition, Valeria, understands and speaks fluently in her native language of Spanish, but uses only English in the classroom.

   Patricia. Patricia is very helpful in the classroom, especially with her peers. She is always "looking out" for other students, often times newly arrived ELLs, to help guide them with assignment directions and the assignment itself. She is highly concerned with her own academic standing often times staying after class or visiting in between classes to ask about her average in English language arts. When she is not helping another student, she is rather quiet in the classroom and somewhat apprehensive about sharing her thoughts orally. However, Patricia does have a way with words, and often expresses herself clearly through her writing. Patricia repeated kindergarten and when enrolled in second grade she was at one point promoted to third grade mid-year. Like Valeria, Patricia can understand and speak her native language of Spanish, but in the classroom only speaks in English, unless she is working with a newly arrived ELL on a cooperative learning assignment.

   Jesse. Jesse is very animated in the classroom, displaying a sense of confidence in himself as a student, and always demonstrating the utmost respect for the teacher and his peers. Undoubtedly, his personable nature has earned him numerous friends and given him the ability to capture everyone's attention. He describes himself as someone who understands there is a time for everything and that means that there are times when one must learn and others when one can play. He also has clearly articulated his ability to find a fine balance between both to get the most out of his classroom experience. In his interview Jesse made the following statement:

   Jesse: I do like okay. All my classes-

   I'm passing all of my classes. I get 80's. And higher in all of my classes.
   Sometimes I get 70s but I try to pick them up. By the time the report card comes
   in I have picked it up to an 80 or 90 probably.

Later in this same interview I asked him how his classmates felt he did as a student. In his

response he describes the balance he is able to maintain stating:

> Researcher: Okay. I see. And how do you think that your classmates in our-
> In our class think that you do?
> Jesse: I think they-
> They-
> Think about me like-
> Um-
> I'm not very like-
> Um-
> Focused, but at the same time I get my work done and I have fun in the class at the same time. Not like other people that fun, fun, and no grades, or like grades, grades and they have no friends. (student interview, April, 4, 2015)

His ability to be a master in the social arena is evident in the many friends he has and the

attention he commands from the classroom when he speaks. In addition, his ability to be a

master in the academic arena is evident in his "Commended" performance on the state STAAR

assessment last year in the fifth grade, a feat that is difficult for even non-ELL students.

Interestingly, a review of his archival records also indicates that Jesse was retained in the first

grade. He actively participates in class and contributes with personal stories that relate to course

content and captivates his audience. Unlike Valeria and Patricia, Jesse will occasionally use his

native language of Spanish in the classroom for social purposes such as greetings or when he is

interacting with a newly arrived ELL.

      Valeria, Patricia, and Jesse represent a group of ELLs that I describe as those with

consistent academic achievement. Each has consistently performed in a satisfactory manner and

in some cases, excelling, on state assessments, maintaining sustained levels of academic

achievement. In addition, each successful ELL performs at levels comparable to their non-ELL

peers in the English language arts classroom and this is why I selected Valeria, Patricia, and

Jesse for an in depth study to understand how ELLs negotiate identities in the English language arts classroom.

   Newly arrived ELLs. The review of archival records also indicated that there was a small group of students who best met the criteria as newly arrived ELLs. Among the ELLs I service, three ELLs had attended US schools for less than three years. Although all three newly arrived ELLs each came from the same home country of Mexico, each had various academic backgrounds. The newly arrived ELLs were all boys. I will refer to these three newly arrived ELL boys as Rolando, Jaime, and Pedro. Table 9 shows the academic histories of these types of ELLs. Due to recent arrival in this country, this was limited data in their archival records. If the participant was administered a Spanish version of a state assessment, I indicated with a (S).

Student	ELL Status	# of years in US Schools	Grade first enrolled	# of US Schools Attended in Elem.	Initial TELPAS Scores Rdg., Wtg, Spk, Lis	5th grade STAAR Reading %	5th Grade TELPAS	4th grade STAAR Reading	4th grade STAAR Writing	4th grade TELPAS	3rd Grade STAAR Reading	3rd Grade TELPAS
Rolando	LEP	2	5	1	No data	(S) Pass	No data	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jaime	LEP	1	6	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Pedro	LEP	3	PK	2	Gd: 5 C: I Rdg: I Wtg: B Spk: B Lis: B	(S) Pass	C- I Rdg: I Wtg: B Spk: B Lis: B	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Table 9. Grouping of Newly-Arrived ELLs

   Rolando. The first newly arrived ELL, Rolando, is highly competitive in the classroom. He enrolled in US schools toward the latter part of the fifth grade. In fact, he enrolled in the fifth grade the same week that students were to take STAAR assessments. He took the STAAR reading assessment in Spanish in the fifth grade and met the state required standard. He has

formal schooling in his native country of Mexico and hopes to one day go to college. Despite his limited English proficiency he is highly motivated and participates daily in class discussions, often being the first one to raise his hand. Once selected to respond, he often struggles to find the words to express himself, squinting his eyes shut and grabbing his forehead trying to think of the right word. Although he is encouraged to participate speaking in Spanish he forces himself to use English only in the classroom. His vocabulary and class work indicate that he has a strong foundation in Spanish and that he understands the academic content. He can read and write fluently in Spanish. Right now Rolando is progressing as he overcomes the transfer of knowledge from his first language to his second language.

Jaime. Jaime is also a newly arrived ELL. He enrolled after the first six weeks of the school year. He had never before attended US schools and was attending US schools for the first time in the sixth grade. Jaime is also from Mexico and had formal schooling in his native country. Jaime's reading and writing skills in Spanish were not on grade level. His Spanish writing was often below sixth grade level demonstrating inaccuracies in grammatical structures and poor writing conventions. In addition, Jaime was absent frequently, and therefore missed some learning opportunities this school year. Despite the struggles, Jaime always greeted me, his teacher, and his peers with a smile. His greetings started in Spanish as "Buenos dias," and his strong desire to learn English was evident when he began to greet me over the course of the year with "Good morning," despite my greeting in Spanish.

Pedro. Although a newly arrived ELL, Pedro has a different academic history than Rolando and Jaime. Pedro first attended US schools when he was in pre-K. However he soon moved to Mexico and was not enrolled in US school for a period of time. Instead Pedro attended formal schooling in Mexico without interruptions. He reenrolled in US school in the fifth grade.

While in the fifth grade he took the STAAR reading assessment in Spanish and passed well above the state mandated standard. It is obvious that Pedro has a strong foundation in Spanish allowing him to read and write on grade level in the Spanish language. Like Rolando, Pedro understands the academic content and is currently in the process of transferring his knowledge from Spanish to English. However, unlike Rolando, Pedro is extremely shy. He rarely, if ever, raises his hand to participate in class discussions, and only answers when called upon. Pedro will speak in the language he is spoken to. If I speak to him in English his response will be in English, and if I speak to him in Spanish he will use Spanish. He is extremely soft spoken and has shared that he is self-conscious of his oral language abilities in English, fearing that he will not be understood by his peers.

Rolando, Jaime, and Pedro, all match the description of newly-arrived ELLs. Each have varying academic histories that tell the story of different academic paths. Although ELLs may be categorized into different types, within each category each ELL brings their own unique set of characteristics that factor into their abilities in the classroom. This is why I have selected Rolando, Jaime, and Pedro, as participants for the in depth portion of this study.

LTELs. I selected three participants to represent LTELs. I refer to these participants as Raul, Katia, and Javier. Their academic histories of failure as noted in Table 10, placed these students in a three period language arts class designed to provide intensive instruction for students in need of remediation. Multiple scores are noted if participant took assessment more than once. Interestingly, none of the LTELs recognize their Spanish language abilities. All three participants have shared in oral discussions throughout the semester that they do not know Spanish other than enough to participate in informal conversations. When I have asked them to

read or write something in Spanish informally, all three have shared that they do not know how
to read or write in Spanish.

Student	ELL Status	# of years in US Schools	Grade first enrolled	# of US Schools Attended in Elem.	Initial TELPAS Scores Rdg., Wtg, Spk, Lis	5th grade STAAR Reading %	5th Grade TELPAS	4th grade STAAR Reading	4th grade STAAR Writing	4th grade TELPAS	3rd Grade STAAR Reading	3rd Grade TELPAS
Raul (Retained in 2nd)	LEP	9	K	1	Gd: K C: I Rdg: I Wtg: B Spk: I Lis: I	Fail Fail Fail	C: A Rdg: I Wtg: A Spk: A Lis: A	Fail	Fail	C: I Rdg:I Wtg:A Spk: A Lis:A	Fail	C:A Rdg: H Wtg:I Spk:I Lis:I
Katia	LEP	6	1	1	No data	Fail Pass	C: AH Rdg: A Wtg: AH Spk:AH Lis-AH	Fail	Pass	C: A Rdg: A Wtg:AH Spk: AH Lis: AH	Fail	C- no data Rdg: I Wtg: AH Spk: AH Lis-AH
Javier (Retained in 5th gd)	LEP	9	PK	3	Gd.1 C: I Rdg: I Wtg: I Spk: I Lis: I	Yr1 Yr 2 F F F F F P	C: A Rdg: A Wtg: A Spk: A Lis: A	Fail	Fail	C: A Rdg: A Wtg: A Spk: A Lis: A	Fail	C: A Rdg: A Wtg: I Spk: I Lis: A

Table 10. Grouping of LTELs

Raul. Raul has attended US schools since he was in kindergarten. Archival records
indicate he was retained in second grade. His state assessment scores in reading and writing on
STAAR indicate that he has performed significantly lower than the rest of his peers. Raul is
quiet in the classroom, but when given the opportunity to speak, speaks in a loud and clear voice
that demands attention. His academic struggles have made him very insecure and he has shared
his reluctance to participate in class discussions, rarely, if ever raising his hand to answer a
question. He is most comfortable in small group learning opportunities and often participates
more in that setting. Despite his struggles he has never displayed a sign of surrendering, or
giving up. He completes each assignment without hesitation or reluctance. He is often one of

the last students to complete his assignments, yet he never asks for help. He has a good disposition in class, and has shared that he hopes to one day go to college.

Katia. Katia has been in US schools for six years. Her archival records indicate that she never attended kindergarten. She was first enrolled in the first grade. She has struggled over the years failing reading STAAR assessments in third through fifth grade. However, her archival records indicate that she did experience some success in the fourth grade when she passed the writing portion of the STAAR. Katia seems to have a positive attitude toward learning, she embraces the activities. She enters the classroom asking about the activities of the day, as if assessing if she will have a good or bad day in class. Over the school year Katia has demonstrated that she is outspoken, being very clear about what she likes and does not like about class.   Although this is her first year in the school district, she is very sociable and has easily made new friends.

Javier. Lastly, Javier, also displays the characteristics of an LTEL. Javier has attended US schools for nine years. He first enrolled in pre-k and was retained in the fifth grade. As a result, Javier took the 5th grade STAAR reading assessment six times. In fifth grade if students do not pass the state assessment they are required to retake the assessment two more times, providing a total of three administrations of the assessment in the fifth grade. Since Javier was retained in 5th grade, he continued to take the STAAR reading assessment until he passed. Javier passed the sixth and final opportunity he had to take the test. Javier is quiet student in the classroom. However, he has managed to create a "bad boy" image for himself, by getting involved with trouble outside of the classroom including during lunch periods and dismissal time. Javier is outspoken, explicitly sharing that he does not know Spanish, and has laughed when I have called on him to help me translate a word from English to Spanish, stating that he

doesn't know any Spanish. It is clear that he unwilling to even speak in Spanish in the classroom. Although he does not speak often, he will share his opinion without hesitation if asked. Despite his academic struggles, and behavior outside of the classroom, Javier says he enjoys science and would one day like to pursue a career in that field.

Raul, Katia, and Javier each represent the category or LTELs in this research study. I chose these research participants for an in depth study because they each have different ways of coping with their academic struggles in the classroom.

ELLs' Perceptions as Readers and Writers

In order to answer this main research question of how ELLs negotiate identities in the classroom it is important to understand how ELLs view themselves as readers and writers in the classroom. I define "views" in terms of students' self-perceptions as readers and writers, specifically considering how students described their ability as readers and writers (Skerret, 2012; Alvermann, 2001; Hall, 2012), and whether or not students actually enjoyed participating in reading and writing activities. I considered constructions of a reading identity as defined by Compton-Lilly (2009) and Alvermann (2001) who define a reading identity as how students perceive themselves as readers. In addition, I considered constructions of a writing identity as defined by Fernsten (2008) who describes writing identities that are constructed by students as a result of their acceptance of how others view them as writers. In the interviews and student work, I looked for words that students used to describe their overall abilities and their enjoyment or lack of enjoyment while reading and writing and also considered how participants believed others viewed their own identities as readers and writers.

The findings indicate that participants' perceptions as readers and writers were constructed through their definitions of good reading and writing and were influenced by previous reading and writing experiences.

Reading and Writing Identity Construction

Participants defined their identities as readers and writers based on their perceptions of what good reading and writing should look and sound like. Different types of ELLs had different types of understandings of good reading and writing. The data on how participants viewed reading is noted in their responses to the reading inventory and written student interview. I analyzed three main components: how the student described their enjoyment of reading, if they were able to name either a favorite book or author, and the strategies they used to select books to read. When coding the strategies used to select a book I examined motivations for selecting a book as either intrinsic, meaning participants included factors such as summaries on the back of the book, title, pictures, topics, etc. I coded any extrinsic motivational factors like being able to test on the book through a computer software program and earn points, as "response to a reward." Table 11 shows student interest inventory responses and the coding of the types of responses.

Data Source: Reading Interest Inventory	Pre-Unit (Frequency)			Post-Unit (Frequency)		
Codes	Enjoys Reading	Able to name favorite book or author	Strategies for choosing a book	Enjoys Reading	Able to name favorite book or author	Strategies for choosing a book
Recently Reclassified Non-ELL (1)	Yes: 1	Yes: 1	Intrinsically motivated: 1	Yes: 1	Yes: 1	Intrinsically motivated: 1
ELLs with consistent academic achievement (3)	Yes- 1 Some-times: 2	Yes- 3	Intrinsically motivated: 3	Yes: 1 Some-times- 2	Yes: 3	Intrinsically motivated: 3
Newly-Arrived ELLs (3)	Yes: 1 Some-times: 2	Yes- 2 N: 1	Intrinsically motivated: 2 Response to a reward: 1	Yes: 1 Some-times: 1	Yes: 2	Intrinsically motivated: 2
LTELS (3)	Some-times: 3	Yes- 2 No: 1	Intrinsically motivated: 2 Response to a reward: 1	Yes: 1 Some-times: 2	Yes: 3	Intrinsically motivated: 3

Table11. Pre and Post Reading Interest Inventory Data
Note. N does not = 10 for the post unit results due to one participant withdrawing from the study during the unit.

In Table 11 I show the codes I used to analyze responses. For the first code I indicated how

participants described their enjoyment when reading. Participants selected between: yes, no, or

sometimes. For the second code I analyzed whether participants could identity a favorite author

and or book title. In the last category I looked at strategies participants used to select a book to

read. I defined intrinsically motivated as reasons that were associated with a reference to an

interesting topic or simply wanting to know more about the subject matter. While I defined

response to a reward as reasons that referenced reading software where students earn point, and ultimately rewards for the number of points accumulated.

In Table 12 I analyzed the responses to the written interview. I looked at three main components: participants' conceptualization of reading, strategies participants use when meaning breaks down, and strategies participants believe that good readers employ.

Data Source: Written student interview	Pre-Unit (Frequency)			Post-Unit (Frequency)		
Codes	Reading Conceptualization	Strategies used when meaning breaks down	Strategies participants believe good readers use	Reading Conceptualization	Strategies used when meaning breaks down	Strategies participants believe good readers use
Recently Reclassified Non-ELL(1)	CM: 1	CS: 1	B: 1	CM: 1	CS: 1	CS: 1
ELLs with consistent academic achievement (3)	CM: 3	CS: 2 DS: 1	B: 1 NM: 2	CM: 3	CS: 2 DS: 1	CS: 2 DS: 1
Newly-Arrived ELLs (3)	CM: 2 D: 1	CS: 1 DS: 2	B: 2 NM: 1	CM:1 Comb.:1	CS: 2	CS: 2
LTELS (3)	CM: 3	DS: 3	DS: 2 B: 1	CM:1 Comb.:2	DS: 2 B: 1	CS: 1 DS: 2

Table 12. Written Student Interview Data

Note. N does not equal 10 in post unit result, due to one student withdrawing from the study.

Categories: CM- Reading as a process of constructing meaning, D- Reading as a process of decoding text, Comb- Reading as a process of constructing meaning and decoding text ,CS- Comprehension strategies, DS- Decoding strategies, B- Use of both comprehension and decoding strategies, NM- no strategies mentioned

In Table 13 I display the results of the pre and post unit audio recorded interviews. In the initial-unit interviews I coded participant interests and goals, under the code named "Participant Interests." I also used the codes learner identity/negotiation, reading identity, and writing identity, to analyze instances where participants described learner, reader, and writer identities. I then used the codes to determine different categories within each code. I included the frequency in which the descriptors were mentioned by students. Some participants mentioned the same descriptor more than once.

In the post unit interviews I did not include a "Participant Interests" code, and instead included a code labeled, "Identity unit impact." To examine how students were impacted by the unit, I created categories within each code to account for number of instances where the participant mentioned enjoying the unit (UE), feeling better as a reader or writer through the unit (FB), and any changes undergone about their own identity as a reader or writer after the unit (CU). In some instances the same participant expressed the same thought on more than one occasion. Below is a table displaying the results of the interviews.

Data Source: Audio Recorded Interview	Initial-Unit (Frequency)				Post-Unit (Frequency)			
Codes	Participant Interest	Learner Identity/ Negotiation Descriptors	Reading Identity Descriptors	Writing Identity Descriptors	Learner Identity/ Negotiation Descriptors	Reading Identity Descriptors	Writing Identity Descriptors	Identity Unit Impact
Recently Reclassified Non-ELL	SG: 1 AI: 1	SE: 1 AC: 0 S: 1	S: 2 NI: 1	S: 1 NIS: 1	S: 4	S: 1	S: 2	UE: 1 FB: 1 CU: 2
ELLs with consistent academic achievement	SG:2 AI: 1	SE: 2 AC: 1 S: 3	S: 2 NI: 2 AC: 1	S: 2 NI: 1 NIS: 2	S: 10 AC: 2	S: 4 NI: 2	S: 2 NI: 2	UE: 7 FB: 2 CU: 1
Newly-Arrived ELLs	SG: 0 AI: 3	SE: 3 AC: 2 S: 1 NI: 1	NI: 6	S: 2 NI: 1 NIS: 2	S: 4 NI: 2	S-:2 NI: 2 AC: 1	S: 2	UE: 4 FB: 2 CU: 1
LTELS	SG: 3 AI: 0	SE: 3 AC: 2 S: 2 NI: 4	S: 2 NI: 3	S: 3 NIS: 2	S: 5 NI: 1	S: 2 NI: 2	S: 3 NI: 2	UE: 3 FB: 2 CU: 1

Table 13. Initial and Post-Unit Audio Recorded Interview Data

Note. Categories: SG- Participant mentioned going to college or any other school related goal , AI- Participant mentioned an academic interest in reading and writing, SE- Participant mentioned overall school enjoyment AC- Participant expressed academic concerns or worries related to reading and writing, S- Participant expressed overall satisfactory academic performance, NI- Participant expressed a need to improve academic performance NIS- Participant expressed a need to improve spelling skills, UE- Participant expressed enjoying activities in the unit FB- Participant expressed specific activity made him or her feel better as a reader or writer, CU- Participant expressed change in personal beliefs about in own reading and/or writing identity.

In table 13 I explain how I analyzed the initial and post audio recorded interviews transcribed. I make note of the codes used for initial and post unit audio recorded data, indicating how I specifically looked for any potential changes expressed by participants after the

conclusion of the unit. I also list the categories used within each code and the frequency in which each category was noted.

Recently Reclassified Non-ELL and ELLs with consistent academic achievement as Readers and Writers. For these types of ELLS reading was a process of constructing meaning. In reading inventories I checked to see which responses indicated that students were intrinsically motivated to select books for reading. Among intrinsically motivated strategies for selecting book students listed, book titles, looking at pictures, reading summaries on the back cover, and topics of interest as instruments used to evaluate whether to read books. In addition, in written student interviews the recently reclassified non-ELL and ELLs with consistent academic achievement described comprehension as the most important thing about reading. Reading invited possibilities other than merely completing a task such as decoding text, and included concepts that indicated students constructed meaning. For example, on the written student interview participants defined reading as the possibility of imagination. When asked to define reading Oralia wrote, "It is going to other worlds and exploring everything you can." Valeria wrote, "Reading is something that gives people expression and curiosity". Patricia described reading as the act of understanding, while Jesse simply stated that reading is "on another world."

The definitions of reading that these students provided indicate their understanding that readers construct meaning from text. This view of reading also shaped their own perceptions as readers. A portion of the written interview asked students to describe any strategies they use when they are having difficulty reading. ELLs in this category described the same strategies that they believe good readers use, including using context clues and making inferences. The following is an excerpt from Valeria's pre identity unit interview:

Researcher: Okay, and how do you think that you do as a reader?

Valeria:	Um. I think I do good, but at the same times uh, I don't know how to spell out-
	Like I mean how to spell out a word and I get it wrong. Yeah.
Researcher:	And what do you think you do well when you read?
Valeria:	Like when I am going to have to figure out a word, I have to go back to the sentence and look for clues to know what it is about. (student interview, November 19, 2014)

In this excerpt Valeria defines herself as a good reader, commenting on how she can figure out word meanings based on context clues. She identifies that she can use the same strategies that good readers use, evident that she has an understanding of what good readers do. However, she indicates that she does not know how to spell. As will be noted later, spelling is a skill that all types of ELLs weigh heavily when describing their identities as writers in the classroom.

Patricia, a successful ELL also made note of her own monitoring comprehension strategies when she wrote in her double entry diary:

Inner Voice	Outer Voice
Careful do it slow an [*sic*] reread 3 times.	I am so scared.

Table 14. Patricia's Inner and Outer Voice

For Patricia rereading was a powerful tool she used to help her be a good reader.

ELLs with proven consistent academic achievement including a recently reclassified non-ELL, view themselves as successful readers who are also functional readers. I use functional to describe the idea that many of these ELLs engage in reading because it is a course requirement. In the audio recorded post unit interview, ELLs admitted that they only read and write because they have to in order to get good grades and pass state assessments in the post unit interview. Jesse's post unit interview demonstrates how successful ELLs have coped with reading in the classroom.

Jesse: Like for example when we do all the STAAR practices, I'm good grades, good grades, but when it comes to the STAAR everything just comes down. And I get a bad grade, and then I don't get to pass, and I think all the hard work for nothing. And I didn't get to pass so I am going to have to do sixth grade again, that's why sometimes I think I am not capable of doing it.

Researcher: Oh, okay. I see. Um, but you do say that you are a good learner. And so what are some of those good learner habits that you have?

Jesse: For example, when you guys give us the reading log, I-

I go home and I don't read.

I-

I just don't read at home. Um but here, when I'm at class, I read. I'm-

I'm doing my work, getting my work done, sometimes I turn it in late, but it's worth it cause if I have turned it in at that time, I wouldn't have just guessed and probably would have got a worse grade than I would have got later so when I don't finish it I take it home and I have a longer period of time of focusing on that paper and getting done. (student interview, February 4, 2015)

In this excerpt it is evident that Jesse feels that results on a state reading assessment overwrite all of his efforts in class. He also indicates that he understand he sometimes needs more time to complete his work, opting at times to take his assignments as homework. Jesse is not alone. Others including Oralia and Patricia have shared the same sentiments. In a unit assignment Oralia wrote, "The real reader in me is boing [*sic* boring] to read chapter books." In her autobiographical poem, Patricia ended with, "I hope reading will fall into my hands one day." When I asked Valeria about her statement in her post unit interview what she meant by that statement she said, "That I will enjoy reading and that- that I will do it more often."

Oralia, Patricia and Jesse viewed writing as a set of skills, primarily spelling, that shaped their views as a writer. In her pre unit interview Oralia indicated that she was a good writer that knew how to organize her papers but needed help with spelling. Valeria could not identify

anything she did well as a writer, but repeatedly mentioned that she needed help with spelling instead. Patricia felt she was a good writer, but admitted that she needed help with capital letters, periods, and how to write words. Jesse was the only ELL with consistent academic achievement who did not mention spelling when describing his perception as a writer. Instead, he mentioned a need for neater penmanship and more details in his stories, making note that he does everything the teacher asks of him in writing including "….onomatopoeia, similes, and stuff like that."

Newly arrived ELLs as readers and writers. As indicated on the reading inventories, newly arrived ELLs view reading as a task and set of behaviors. For example, when asked to describe how they selected books to read students listed characteristics such as books that were testable on computer based reading programs, reading level, and the number of points a reader can earn from passing a computerized assessment on the book as indicators for books to read. For newly arrived ELLs reading was a mode of expressing accuracy in the English language. For example, Rolando wrote that reading "is a form to speak lagaunges [*sic*]" and that one must "speak English very well" to read accurately because the most important thing about reading is "to speak more english [*sic*]." These types of responses indicate that students view themselves as readers based on how they gauged their own accuracy abilities.

Such perceptions of reading based on accuracy fostered newly arrived ELLs' view of themselves as weak readers and writers who do not know enough English to be considered a good reader. The following excerpt from Pedro's pre unit interview demonstrates his perception as a reader.

Researcher:	¿Cómo piensas que tu haces como un lector? *(How do you think you do as a reader?)*
Pedro:	(1 second pause)
	Pues no hago muy bien pero- *(Well, I don't do very well but-)* *[1 second pause]*

	Pero si le intento *(But I do try.)*
Researcher:	¿Por qué dices que no haces muy bien? *(Why do you say that you don't do well?)*
Pedro:	Porque no se- *(Because I don't know-)*
	[1 second pause]
	No sé mucho el inglés y batallo. (*I don't know much English and I struggle*.)
Researcher:	Y me dices que tú le haces un intento. ¿Me puedes dar un ejemplo de una vez que tu haz hecho un intento? *(And you tell me that you give it a try. May you give me an example of one time that you have tried?)*
Pedro:	Pues *(Well)*
	[1 second pause]
	¿Intento así como de- de lectura, o?
	(I try like in- in reading, or?)
Researcher:	De lectura sí. *(In Reading, yes.)*
Pedro:	Como [2 second pause]
	(Like)
	Cuando estábamos leyendo y- y intente- me esforcé para poder que los demás compañeros me entendieran cuando estaba leyendo. *(When we were Reading and- and I tried- I strive so that the rest of the peer would understand me when I was reading.)* (student interview, November, 20, 2014)

Newly arrived ELLs assumed weak reading identities in the ELA classroom as based on their perceptions of accuracy in the English language when reading, including pronunciation, as noted by Pedro's interview above. In addition, in his letter to me at the commencement of the unit Pedro wrote, "…help me in reading and *lectura* (reading) because I don't know inglish [*sic*] and that affect me in Reading." Here Pedro recognizes that he is a reader, but also understands that reading is difficult for him because he feels he does not know the language. For newly arrived ELLs reading is a concrete action of visiting the library, picking up a book and reading, or

simply reading a paragraph. They did not identify reading as a venue to exercise one's

imagination and visit places around the world.

Newly arrived ELLs were able to list some strengths when describing their own writing

identities including ability to write in English and be understood, and the ability to take their

time when thinking and planning their own writing assignments. For newly arrived ELLs

writing is viewed as a way of communicating thoughts to others and, as a result they view

themselves as good writers when the written text is understood by others. Although spelling was

mentioned as a weakness by only one newly-arrived ELL, Pedro, lack of spelling proficiency in

English was not weighed as heavily for newly arrived ELLs. Instead, newly arrived ELLs

assumed a writing identity based on their ability to be understood through written

communication. The following is an excerpt of Pedro's post unit interview where he explains

how he defines his writing identity based on his own perception of how well others can

understand what he writes.

Mrs. López:	*Okay. ¿Y cómo piensas que tú haces en escritura? (And how do you think you do in writing?)*
Pedro:	En escritura se me hace que si voy bien. Pero, pues no sé, yo pienso que voy bien. *(In writing I think I am doing well. But, well I don't know, I think I am doing well.)*
Mrs. López:	*Okay. ¿Y por qué dices que vas bien?*
Pedro:	Um-
	[2 second pause]
	Por qué escribe como en inglés y a mis amigos entienden así lo que escribo y pues eso, eso. *(Because I write like in English and my friends understand it like that what I write and that's why, why.)* (student interview, February, 5, 2015]

In this excerpt Pedro shows that he sees himself as a good writer because others can understand

him when he reads. Rolando, another newly arrived ELL, also views himself as a good writer.

This was evident in a unit assignment when he wrote, "The real writer in me is I write good in project or something special." Here, Rolando indicates he sees himself as capable of good writing, providing evidence when necessary on special assignments like projects.

LTELs as readers and writers. LTELs also view reading as a process of accurately recognizing words, describing fix up strategies to include spelling, pronunciation, and practice as important skills for reading. LTELs views of reading as a measure of accuracy is used to describe their own reading identities as those in need of learning how to pronounce words, obtain more vocabulary, and in some cases simply try harder. In his pre unit interview Raul shared that he doesn't do good in reading "cause I mess up on words." Although he can sometimes read fast. In his letter to me, prior to beginning the unit, Raul wrote, "…help me with reading. That is the only thing I can't say it right." Accuracy and speed are key factors that LTELs use to shape their own reading identities.

In an interview, Javier, an LTEL, described what he did not enjoy about school stating, "Reading because it sucks sometimes and it just gets boring." Here Javier did not hesitate to describe his dislike for reading. In his second interview I asked him about a statement he had made in an assignment about reading 24/7. He shared:

Researcher:	(smiling) What do-
	What do you read 24/7? I'm curious.
Javier:	I'll read-
	I'll like-
	I wish like I would read 24-7, like but-
Researcher:	Oh you wish you could read?
Javier:	Yes
Researcher:	Oh okay.
Javier:	So I could like be a better reader, but I can't. (student interview, February 4, 2015)

In this excerpt Javier expresses his desire to be a better reader, but concludes that he simply cannot be one. His acceptance of not being able to be a better reader is a reflection of his internalization of a deficit model that places blame on students' lack of capacity. In addition, his own reading identity mirrors the standardized results of low test scores on state assessments he has received. It can be argued that such a deficit view of self as a reader is a consequence of his educational experience and, or lack of opportunities.

LTELs also assumed more positive identities as writers in the classroom, expressing their enjoyment of writing and their ability to write extensively on assignments. Raul, was the only LTEL who did not view himself as a good writer other than the ability to write fast, although often filled with errors. Raul also felt like he was a weak writer primarily because of his lack of spelling proficiency.

In the findings it is clear that different types of ELLs have different perceptions as readers and writers. For a recently reclassified non-ELL and ELLs with consistent academic achievement, their perceptions as readers and writers were a reflection of their own experiences in reading and writing. These types of ELLs viewed reading as a process of constructing meaning and as a result, viewed themselves as readers based on their ability to construct meaning. Writing as viewed as a set of skills, one in which spelling was extremely important. Therefore, these types of ELLs viewed themselves as writers based on their lack of spelling skills. Newly arrived ELLs viewed themselves as readers and writers based on their English language proficiency and as a result constructed identities as readers and writers based on this standard. LTELs constructed identities as readers and writers based on their accuracy while reading and writing. In addition, LTELs constructed identities as readers and writers based on

their own acceptance of incompetence as indicated on state assessments and an internalization of deficiency over the course of their educational experience.

Exploring Identity Negotiation: Changing and Ongoing

This section focuses on describing the findings related to the second research question: How is the process of identity negotiation different for different types of ELLs? I draw on Cummins's (2001) definition of identity negotiation. He explains how language learners' sense of self is impacted by the "messages communicated to students regarding their identities- who they are in their teacher's eyes and who they are capable of becoming" (Cummins, 2001 p. 21). To describe the process of identity negotiation for ELLs in my classroom,   I analyzed all data sets including unit artifacts: anticipation guides, journal entries, double entry journal, student reflective writing, I Am poem, and pre and post teacher letters (see Description of Identity Unit, p. 81). For the unit artifacts I used codes that included reading identity descriptors, writing identity descriptors, learner identity descriptors, and negotiation in action. I also analyzed anecdotal notes recorded in the researcher journal applying the following codes: teacher reflection of participant actions, instances of reflective planning, and instances where identity negotiation was fostered.

The pre-unit data information provided findings on how ELLs have negotiated identities prior to the beginning of the unit. In addition, the unit artifacts provided data that revealed how ELLs were currently negotiating identities in the sixth grade ELA classroom. Furthermore comparing the pre and post unit data allowed for me as a researcher to look for patterns that were most consistent in how ELLs were negotiating identities. The pre and post unit interviews allowed for me ask students any clarifying questions regarding the data collected thus far. Using a variety of data collected was imperative for the second sub-question because identity

negotiation is a dynamic, ever evolving, continuous process in the academic identity construction

of ELLs as learners, readers and writers. The messages ELLs receive and interpret about

themselves constitutes the process of negotiation. I used codes such as teacher, parent, peers,

and grades to code instances where and how identity negotiation was occurring for students as

reflected in the writings they produced and the interviews conducted. The responses to unit

artifacts and pre and post unit interviews indicates how ELLs negotiate their own identities in an

ELA classroom.

Students' responses in interview data, unit artifacts, and journal entries make numerous

mention of STAAR assessments and grades as the sole indicator of academic success. These

references indicate that all types of ELLs fear academic failure as evident in numerous journal

entries. Valeria explained her worries in one journal entry when she wrote, "When I look at my

average I get really nervous and I wonder if I get a good or bad grade." In her journal Katia

wrote, "When the teacher is gonna give me my STAAR scores I feel so nervous inside because I

am scared I don't pass. Pedro, who has limited experience taking STAAR assessments due to his

status as a newly arrived ELL wrote in one journal entry, "Every year I sou [*sic*] nervous because

if I don't pass the star." Patricia's, an ELL with a proven successful academic track wrote about

her growing fear in an excerpt of her I AM poem below:

> I want to pass my reading STAAR test.
> I pretend to be listening in reading class, but I actually day dream.
> I feel that I might not pass my reading STAAR test.

Oralia, a recently reclassified non-ELL wrote in one journal entry, "What if the star test comes I

flunk the test and grade. That is what makes me feel like I am on a 3 story building." For all

ELLs report card grades and the upcoming STAAR assessment were sources of stress and worry.

Although ELLs experienced fears and worries related to report card grades and state

assessments, all had academic goals including success on state assessments, passing report card grades, and ultimately passing to the next grade. However, their identities as learners still seem to be primarily negotiated based on the outcomes to these goals. ELLs' identities were being negotiated by the messages they received from those around them. Different types of ELLs negotiated identities differently.

Recently reclassified non-ELL. Oralia words shows how she negotiates her own identity through the language that she speaks and the grades she earns. In one journal entry she wrote:

> People used to look at me and think I speek [*sic*] only Spanish. I would always tell them that I speak Spanish but I don't speak all Spanish. I speak English too. I tell them that if they feel more comfortable with me speaking more English than Spanish I would speak English.

Here, Oralia is aware of her bilingualism. She is also willing to speak her second language if it means that those around her would rather her speak in English. Oralia is interpreting the messages of those around her as one who should speak English, but acknowledges her bilingualism and in doing so negotiates her identity as one who is capable of speaking all English.

Cummins (2001) describes identity negotiation as one in which the teacher helps the student come to understand their potential. Oralia demonstrates how she negotiates her identity in her I Am poem by writing about what she is capable of becoming. Although Oralia makes the following admission toward the end of her I Am poem, "I understand that learning is not easy". She concludes her poem as follows:

> I say anything is possible
> I dream there will be a better life for me

Statements such as those in Oralia's I Am poem, indicate that she negotiates her identity in the classroom as capable of doing well despite her worries of the STAAR as indicated on other occasions. This means she has received the message that she is capable of anything. The internalization of her potential is also noted in her desire to write a book as stated in a written response to a reading of Krull's (2003) *Harvesting Hope*.

ELLs with consistent academic achievement. These types of ELLs experience tension as they negotiate identities in the classroom. Throughout the identity negotiation process tension can exist (Hafner, 2013; McCarthey, 2001; Norton Peirce, 1995). Jesse's I Am poem revealed his own feelings of contradiction when he wrote:

> I think that I am dumb but yet I am a good learner.
> I try my best in all that why
> I am a good learner.

Patricia, another ELL with consistent academic achievement wrote in her response to "Those Who Don't" by Cisneros (1984):

> Those who don't know me probably think that I am dumb….That's why they might think. But the truth is that inside of me I am smart and maybe talented.

The contradictory messages or tensions experienced between the way they believe they are perceived by others and their own sense of self, were not limited to ELLs with consistent academic achievement.

For ELLs with consistent academic achievement identities are also negotiated through teacher feedback, and good behavior in the classroom. These negotiations were coded to distinguish between messages received and source of messages. Although these types of ELLs are successful and have assumed high self-efficacy as learners they often feel as if their academic achievement is "not good enough".

In the first audio recorded interviews successful ELLs mentioned that they believe they

do well in school because they behave and know how to pay attention in class to the teacher. In

the journal entries and double entry journal, these types of ELLs repeatedly referred to grades

and behavior as indicators of academic success and in one case, Jesse, compared himself to a

Puma because he never gives up demonstrating his efforts to always succeed despite the

challenge. Worth noting is how successful ELLs include the teacher as a form of support in the

learning process as indicated in post unit letters. An excerpt from Jesse's post unit letter reads:

> Dear Mrs. López,
>
> Mrs. Lopez I really want to thank you for making me a much better reading and
> writing student than when I first walk in your room.

Jesse who was already a successful reader and writer before entering my classroom shares that

he still feels he has improved, depicting the notion of there always being room for improvement.

One key insight from Jesse came in his post unit interview when he shared exactly how he knew

he did well in school. The following is an excerpt from his interview:

> Researcher: And um is there anything else maybe besides the report card that
> kinda lets you know how you are doing?
>
> Jesse: How the teachers tell you how to do your work. Like for example,
> if I am getting good grades and they tell someone else that is not
> getting good grades, well they are going to do this, and the ones
> that are not getting good grades, they are going to do this, that's
> much more your level than the ones that are not passing. (student
> interview, February 4, 2015).

Jesse's words indicate the potential impact of teachers' actions. ELLs pay attention to

the details, as far as assessing the type of work that others are doing compared to their own, in

order to make a determination of their own academic identity in the classroom. Also, here Jesse

indicates the impact that teacher actions have on how ELLs perceive themselves in comparison

to others and how teacher actions are loaded with meaning in terms of adequacy and achievement.

Patricia's post unit interview, much like Jesse, also reveals some insecurities despite success on previous state assessments. In her interview Patricia shared that her STAAR score last year, although passing was not good enough. She indicated that she would have preferred to receive a higher mark. Jesse also mentioned that he worries he will fail the STAAR test and think "all that hard work for nothing", despite receiving commended performance last year on the reading state assessment. Clearly this group of ELLs relies on teacher feedback and classroom performance when negotiating their identity in the classroom. High stakes assessments and teacher actions are factors that influence their identity negotiation in the classroom.

Newly arrived ELLs. Newly arrived ELLs also experience contradiction and tension as they struggle with negotiating their own identity as learners in the classroom. In one journal entry Rolando wrote:

> I want to speak up about some types of reading and writing above I know. I don't speak up because I feel embarrising [*sic*] and im [*sic*] scared about some people tell me stuff.

For Pedro, his struggle is between his own desire to seek help and awareness of what those around him my think of his academic identity if he acts on his own academic needs.

For newly arrived ELLs lack of English language proficiency, accuracy, and assignment completion is also part of the identity negotiation process. Overall these types of ELLs have assumed low-self efficacy as learners. Rolando mentioned that he feels invisible in class because he can't participate as much as he would like. Rolando had shared in his pre unit letter to me that he felt invisible when our class read a short story titled "Eleven" also by Cisneros (1992) prior to beginning the unit.

Rolando: Porque como la niña tenía once yo en la escuela me sentía invisible porque yo tenía once. Yo no sé si alguien más pueda tener once como yo, como la niña del cuento. Y tal vez en algunas actividades durante eso me sentí invisible como ella tuvo una experiencia mala en el −en su escuela, en el cuento- yo también tal vez me pueda sentir así. *(Because like the girl was eleven in school and I felt invisible because I was eleven. I don't know if anyone else is eleven like me, like the girl from the story. And maybe in some activities during that I felt invisible like she had a bad experience in, in school, in the story- I also may feel that way.)*

Researcher: ¿Y te has sentido también así en la escuela entonces? *(And so have you felt like that in school before?)*

Rolando: Algunas veces. No muchas. *Sometimes. Not a lot of times.)*

Researcher: ¿En el salón de lectura te has sentido así? *(Have you felt like that in Reading class?)*

Rolando: Mmmm. No. Como unas cinco veces. *(Mmmm. No. Like five times.)*

Researcher: ¿Algunas cinco veces? *Okay.* ¿Y por qué es que a veces te sientes invisible así? *(Like five times? Okay. And why is it that you sometimes feel invisible?)*

Rolando: Por qué a veces como yo no sé cómo hacer respuestas o algo y usted está participando niños no obligatoriamente yo me siento invisible para que no puedo participarme y no se la respuesta. *(Because like sometimes I don't know how to make answers or something and you are asking other children to participate without obligation [to do so] then I feel invisible because I can't participate and I don't know the answer.)* [student interview, November 18, 2014]

In this interview excerpt it is evident that the message Rolando was receiving during the discussion of Cisneros's (1992) "Eleven" was that his input in the class discussion did not matter because I engaged other students who responded without raising their hand in a conversation before he could collect his thoughts and transfer his thoughts into oral communication. In addition to feelings of invisibility in the classroom some newly arrived ELLs begin to equate lack of English language proficiency with incapable academic identities. Such was the case with

Jaime who mentioned that he needed helping learning how to try to learn, as oppose to learning itself. For Jaime, not being English proficient began to blur his own view of himself as learner. In interviews Rolando and Jaime shared that they do not do that well in school.

Jaime believes that he is defined by his lack of English proficiency and his inability to write in English, choosing to write all assignments in Spanish. Interestingly, on one occasion Jaime was embarrassed to read something in Spanish when I sat with him for individualized reading instruction. As noted in my action researcher journal I recalled the incident as an example of the message Jaime was receiving regarding the Spanish language.

Action	Reflection
11-6-14 Today I provided Jaime some one-on-one instruction, and I could tell he was super excited. I asked him to read aloud his written summary of the Jackie Robinson selection. He told me, "Me da pena."	It was obvious that Jaime was excited to have exclusive undivided attention from myself. At first I couldn't understand why he would be embarrassed to read something in Spanish, but after some thinking I decided that it might be that he did not want other kids in the room to listen and perhaps laugh at him.

Table 15. Researcher Journal Excerpt 1

For newly arrived ELLs like Jaime, actively participating in a community of learners was difficult. The messages Jaime received was that only English mattered. The week before my Spanish reading request of Jaime two incidents had occurred that seemed to help reinforce that Spanish reading was not that important. First, I had noted Jaime drawing on the cover of his reading journal while students were supposed to be engaged in journal writing. When I noticed his off task behavior I redirected him by asking if he understood the assigned task, at which point he responded that he did, but nonetheless continued drawing. The following day was Halloween and I read a Halloween poem in English, inadvertently failing to select one in Spanish for his enjoyment. After the reading, he shared with me in Spanish that he did not understand what he read. I realized the extent to what my actions and classroom context was impacting Jaime, who

was now beginning to value the English language more than his Spanish language abilities. I was reminded of this new acceptance each time I greeted him in Spanish as he entered my room and he responded with a greeting in English.

On the contrary, Pedro mentioned that he needed help because he did not know any English and in his interview outlined what he understood to be a distinction between his own academic abilities and his English language proficiency. Below is an excerpt where Pedro distinguishes between English language proficiency and his own academic abilities as it relates to the STAAR reading assessment.

Pedro:	Porque nada más está en inglés y este necesito esforzarme mucho para pasarlo. *(Because it is only in English and I need to make a big effort (work a lot) to try to pass it.)*
Researcher:	¿Y te preocupa el de lectura? *(And are you worried about the Reading [test]?)*
Pedro:	Si también. *(Yes also.)*
Researcher:	¿Que es tu opinión de ese examen? *(What is your opinion about that test?*
Pedro:	Pues no creo que está muy difícil, pero pues ha- como tengo- pues como yo no sé inglés, se me va complicar más. *(Well I don't think that it is too difficult, but well it- like I have-well I don't know English, it is going to be harder for me.)* [student interview, November 24, 2014]

Pedro recognizes his ability to read, but feels that he cannot ignore his English language barrier when assessing how he does as a reader. Although newly arrived ELLs do not feel competent in the ELA classroom, they do feel a sense of satisfaction from knowing that they have managed to complete assignments. Pedro shared that he completes his assignments to make his mom happy. Jaime also mentioned that he thinks he is a good student because he manages to get his assignments done.

LTELs. LTELs, like all other sub-groups of ELLs, also experienced tension while negotiating identities. Katia and Javier responded explaining their own academic identities as they are misunderstood by those around them. Katia wrote:

> Those who don't know me they might think I'm not going to college just because I don't get very good grades and that I am not gonna be somebody in life. What people don't know is that I am going to college and graduate and have a good job where I can get paid a lot of money and make a family because I want to make my mom and dad proud of me.

For LTELs peers and their own personal attitudes are an integral part of the identity negotiation process. In addition, the long term academic struggles of LTELs translate to messages that inhibit positive self-image as learners. Javier mentioned in his first interview that he simply would not try as much, sometimes echoing those same sentiments in his letter at the beginning of the unit. Figure 4 is a copy of Javier's letter to me at the beginning of the unit that illustrates his awareness with his reading and writing difficulties and how he translates these difficulties as laziness, perhaps an indication of how he interprets others' views of him.

Figure 4. Javier's first letter to teacher

In his letter Javier displays his resistance, but also indicates his desire to learn. Although

he does consider himself a "smart and ghetto kid" by the end of the identity unit Javier shared the

following explanation for his academic struggles:

Javier:	Cause I don't like- I don't like want to be a smart, smart kid, cause then I look all- I'm gonna be all weird and everything like when I am smart.
Researcher:	Oh okay, what do you think is going to make you weird when you are smart?
Javier:	Well cause like when I am getting smart it like- Other people tell me stuff and I am all like-

Like I don't even know what they was talking about or something.
(student interview, February 4, 2015)

Here Javier equates being weird with being told remarks that are unwelcomed. Javier instead

describes how he chooses not to be smart to avoid remarks from others. Javier's admission that

he chooses not be smart is a resistance to accept failure, but is also an admission of his potential,

an indication that he experiences tension as he negotiates his identity in the ELA classroom.

Much like Javier, Katia shared in her post interview she admitted that what her peers

thought was very important, going as far as stating in her letter to me at the commencement of

the unit that she did not need any help in reading. In her double entry diary her inner and outer

voices displayed the struggle Katia experiences, not wanting to admit that she liked reading class

because she didn't want her peers to think she was weird. In addition, her I Am poem resonated

with the theme of "pretending" not to like reading. When I asked Katia about the contradiction

in her post unit interview she shared that she pretends not to like reading "Cause maybe the kids

are going to make fun of me." Katia's autobiographical poem reveals that she "pretends" by

displaying an identity that will be welcomed by her teachers, parents, and peers. For these

LTELs pretending was one way of coping with their academic struggles. For Raul, his

mechanism with coping with the endless messages of failure on report card grades and past state

assessments, including this year's benchmark assessment, included voluntarily disengaging in

classroom discussions. Raul compared himself to the speaker of the poem, "Invisible" by Jane

Medina (1999) in his post interview because he chooses not to speak like the speaker who

doesn't want to say something wrong in the classroom.

All types of ELLs demonstrated that they actively engaged in interpreting the meaning of

different teacher actions. In terms of identity negotiation this means that ELLs are highly

influenced by the actions of teachers and in some cases their own peers, and that these actions

relay messages that are interpreted by ELLs (Cummins, 2001). ELLs also understood the need

to "fit" as a student using different coping mechanisms. For ELLs with consistent academic

achievement working harder to push academic limits is one mechanism. For newly arrived ELLs

disengaging and or focusing all attention on acquiring English is one way of negotiating identity

in the classroom. For LTELs voluntarily disengaging in class work and or discussions and

creating a façade of disinterest in learning activities including reading and writing despite

enjoying the activities is yet another form of identity negotiation.

Fostering Identity Negotiation through Teacher Actions

In this section, I present the findings to the third research question: How do instructional

activities in a Language Art's unit on identity foster identity negotiation in ELLs. I approached

the analysis of the data from an action research perspective focusing on exploring my practice,

and how my actions and decision making fostered identity negotiation in the classroom. I used

the following data sets: unit artifacts including all journal entries, anecdotal notes from

observations recorded in a teacher-researcher reflective journal, and post unit interviews. The

data collected from these sources was then compared to the data collected before the unit and at

the commencement of the unit to look for differences. See Appendix D for a description of the

unit, goals, and content. In this section I examine how my own planning, decision making, and

lessons impacted identity negotiation for participants. I looked for instances where ELLs

negotiated identities as learners, readers, and or writers as they engaged in readings and writing

related to the unit providing evidence to demonstrate identity negotiation.

Data shows the unit on identity provided a venue for ELLs to explore their own academic

identities including issues of personal transformation and contradictory feelings of identity. As

demonstrated in journal entries, reading *Becoming Naomi León*. The novel is about a young girl

struggling to accept and rediscover her own identity and I selected this text because it lent itself

to classroom discussions and writings about identity. In reading response journal entries

participants reflected on their own identities in terms of who they are inside and outside of the

classroom, which they define through language and culture. In one journal entry Oralia wrote

about her bilingualism and how it allowed her two speak a language of her choice among friends.

For Oralia her bilingualism is part of her identity, whether she is in or outside of the classroom.

Here Oralia clearly understands that her bilingualism is not only an advantage, but makes her

unique and different in the classroom. For Oralia, the language she speaks is part of her identity

negotiation in the classroom. In yet another reading response to *Becoming Naomi León* from

Jesse, his culture is part of his identity. Jesse wrote:

> I have the heart of a Mexican because I am wild and like to be myself there reason
> I am a Mexican is because I was raised by them my family talk, cook, and act like
> them I love having a heart of Mexican. awwwwwyyyyYYYY!!!!!

Beginning with the anchor text of *Becoming Naomi León* engaged students in thinking about

their own identity, a line of thinking that was necessary for students to also engage in the identity

unit throughout the course.

In addition, as noted in journal entries ELLs began thinking about the identities that they

would like to assume in the classroom.   Patricia wrote the following in one of her reading

response journal entries for *Becoming Naomi León:*

> Well I want everybody to think good about me, not only in my reading and
> writing class in all my classes. I want my friends to think of me as a good friend.
> For the teachers to think of me as a good student. Everyone has the chance to be
> the best. To myself I think that I'm good at what I do. My hope of 2015 is for me
> to continue a path till I graduate. For me to leave room 202 knowing that I am a
> better reader and writer. For my teachers to be happy for having me as a student.
> To move on to 7th grade with skills that I learned in 6th grade with my teachers.

Worth noting is Patricia's repetition of being a good student, clearly a label she values. Pedro, a

newly arrived ELL responded in his journal entry:

> My only hope this school year is to the nest [best] year be in 7th grade to prove to
> me teachers that I am doing my best. I must listen to me teacher in the classroom
> and do all me assignments to get good grades.

Like Patricia, for Pedro being a good student is important, an indication of a label he hopes

teachers have of him, and possibly a label that both feel they may not have had at one time or

another. Katia responded that she wanted people to know "that I am smart and can read pretty,"

adding in her reading response journal:

> My only hope this year as a 6th grader is to pass to 7th grade commended I want to
> pass with an 80% or above. To make my hope comet true is practice at home, do
> all of my homework they give me, do my best in all the classes, and participate.

In this entry Katia sets her own academic goals and outlines the academic identity she would like

to assume. Perhaps the most affirmative declaration is that of Raul in his autobiographical poem

where he declares that he wants to be the "biggest lion". When I asked Raul what he meant

about being the biggest lion, he simply stated that he meant the best reader. Raul, an LTEL, who

had experienced years of academic failures, was speaking metaphorically and used his own

connection to Naomi, from Becoming Naomi Leon, who compared herself to lion because of her

courageous spirit.

Autobiographical poems produced by the students throughout the unit revealed that

students often "pretend" to display identities that are pleasing or appealing to their peers, parents

and teachers. In the poems students were able to explore their own identity including the

tensions experienced throughout the process of identity negotiation. Javier shared in his poet

unit interview that this particular assignment made him feel better as a reader and writer

"because it like matches and everything and it pro-, proves you things that you do and who you

are." The "pretending" exposed by participants reveals the contradictions and struggles with

identity that ELLs encounter.   The contradictions are also noted through unit artifacts, journal

entries, and post unit interviews. Table 16 shows the identities participants "pretend" to be.

Autobiographical Poems	
Participant	**"Pretend" Identity Displayed**
Oralia	I pretend to be the best of the best
Valeria	I pretend to not care but I do
Patricia	I pretend to be listening in reading class, but I actually daydream
Rolando	I pretend to be a good math teacher
Raul	I pretend to go on a reading adventure
Katia	I pretend I don't like reading
Javier	I pretend not to work.

Table 16. Autobiographical Poem Excerpts

The responses of the LTELs, Raul, Katia, and Javier, demonstrate that each pretend to display an

identity that is pleasing to the teacher and their peers. Katia's autobiographical poem was

perhaps the most revealing, sharing that she feels she is "a special students that like to read", but

admitting, "I pretend I don't like reading." In her double entry journal of her inner and outer

voice the struggle is also evident. As part of her inner voice she shared, that she really enjoyed

her reading class, noting that her outer voice said the opposite, saying the class was boring.

When I asked Katia about this contrast she admitted in her post unit interview that she could not

dare admit that she really liked reading in class because of what her peers might think stating,

"Cause maybe kids are going to make fun of me." Despite such contradictory feelings, deep

inside ELLs there is a desire to engage in reading and in some cases, like Raul, strive to be good

readers. In his post interview Raul explained that he knew reading was supposed to be like going

on an adventure and as a result he pretended that he did just that when he read, although he did

not feel as if reading was an adventure. Katia, chose to pretend she did not like reading so as not

to draw attention from her peers. Javier masked his academic struggles by revealing that he

merely pretends not to work, but is fully capable or working in the classroom. For these LTELs

displaying such identities is easier, since it is the only one they have known after years of academic failure.

Furthermore, the unit on identity provided a venue for ELLs to reflect to the ways in which their identities have been negotiated through academic achievement assessments like STAAR and institutional identities created through the label of being limited- English proficient. These reactions were most evident in the written response to "Those Who Don't" by Cisneros (1984) where students had an opportunity to share what others do not know about them. Patricia wrote:

> Those who don't know me probably think that I am dumb…That's what they might think. But the truth is that in the inside of me I am smart maybe talented.

Katia went as far as writing that she knew some thought she may never make it to college, although she had every intention of not only going, but graduating and living with a successful career.

By the end of the unit ELLs were writing with conviction, recognizing their academic identities as learners, readers and writers in the classroom. Katia's autobiographical poem is indicative of such conviction. Figure 5 is of Katia's poem.

Figure 5: Katia's Poem

ELLs drew strength from my own stories of personal growth and bilingualism to remain

determined as learners. I shared with ELLs a writing journal give to me by my fifth grade

teacher at the end of the school year. I shared with students my own handwritten sample the

summer before my sixth grade year. In the sample I wrote about my plans for my future. I chose

to do this because I wanted ELLs to understand that I also make mistakes, and that my writing is

not perfect. Table 17 is an excerpt from my researcher journal.

Action	Reflection
01-08-15 Today I had students look at their list of books read in their identity unit booklets to find common themes. I also showed students a sample of my own writing as an 11 year old.	I felt like I needed to allow some class time for discussion and reflection of all the books we have read. I wanted the students to see that all the books we have been reading are connected in some way. As we talked about the books we discussed themes like hopes, dreams, change, and seeking justice. I used the classroom discussion to bridge students into writing about their own hopes and dreams as a writer. Before I had students do this, I shared with them a personal story of how my 5th grade teacher had given me a book for Christmas called "My Book of Writing". I shared my original thoughts about the books and mentioned how I never really thought that I would grow up to be a writer. I shared a selection I had written at age 11 when I wrote that I wanted to be a lawyer. I could tell that the students were excited to see their own teacher's writing as an 11 year old. I think this humanized me in a way and gave me some credibility that I don't know everything, and that I too like them, have walked in their shoes. I then explained that I was writing a book and that today I enjoy writing my thoughts on paper for others to read. I wrote about my own future as a reader and writer. I asked students to do the same. It will be interesting to see what they have written.

Table 17. Researcher Journal Excerpt 2

Throughout different journal entries students made references to going to college and in some cases becoming a writer. Oralia shared the following as a response to her hopes and dreams for her future after reading Krull's (2003) picture book, *Harvesting Hope*:

> I dream to one day be able to write a book because I used to be writing a book about a girl that found a land that was beond [*sic*] her imagination but then one day I lost it, so I didn't continue writing. But I hope that one day to find a new idea for a book and this time finish the hole [*sic*] book. Then maybe one day I might even publish it!

Valeria shared her own confidence in her autobiographical poem when she wrote, "I feel that I can reach for the stars and make my dreams come true. I try to have hope and trust in myself."

Throughout the unit there were transformative pedagogical practices that helped ELLs reflect on their own identity. One practice was purposeful text selection. Reading *Becoming Naomi León* enabled ELLs to reflect on their own identities and determine how they could help construct their own identity. For example, early on in the unit some ELLs noted that speaking up was a sign of disrespect and inappropriate behavior as noted in the pre reading anticipation guide and several journal entries. However, by the end of the unit, ELLs understood that finding and using voice may be appropriate at times. A collaborative relationship between teacher and participants was fostered when ELLs began sharing their thoughts about reading and writing in the classroom. This was especially true in the written assignment for Cisneros's (1984) "My Name" where participants described "The real me…". In addition, on the day participants read Cisneros's (1984) vignette, "Those Who Don't" I wrote in my researcher journal.

Action	Reflection
Today I read "Those Who Don't". We also read "Inside Out" from *The Circuit.*	I started off the day's reading by talking about stereotypes. Together in class we discussed what a stereotype is. After the reading I had students write their own version of "Those Who Don't". I told them this was their opportunity to speak to the world and let the world know who they really are. I could see it in the students' faces that they were eager to write. They seemed to have a lot to say and immediately stated writing instead of sitting and thinking before writing. I really do think that I need to give these students opportunities to speak to the world more often in this sense. I could also tell that the students enjoyed listening to the short story from Jimenez's book. It was an easy read and it connected well with the concept we had explored just last week with farmworkers. Plus, I think that this task will get students to start thinking about speaking up for themselves if they need to, and that one way they can do that is through writing.

Table 18. Researcher Journal Excerpt 3

Students themselves began to find their own voice sharing what may otherwise have never shared. For example, Valeria admitted that she pretended not to care, and knew that she could be a little "lazy" sometimes when it came to school work. ELLs with consistent academic achievement and Oralia, a recently reclassified ELL admit that they know what they need to do to be successful, and do it because they have to, not because they want to. Jesse shared that he does not read at home simply because he doesn't do so. LTELs responded with resilience expressing their genuine concern to do well, despite the tough personas portrayed. In his autobiographical poem Javier stated, "I want to pass real bad," and "I hope I never stop trying," indicating in a previous journal entry that he fears one day he will not graduate from high school. Last, newly arrived ELLs have an intrinsic desire to be viewed as readers and writers and active participants of a learning community. Newly arrived ELLs highlighted their efforts when describing their identities as limited English proficient. Such desires are evidenced in their

repeated declarations to learn English. Jaime, a newly arrived ELL, requested I send sight words home with him daily and requested that I administer weekly oral quizzes on the sight words. I was reminded of his desire to learn English each time he greeted me in English when he arrived to class after I greeted him in Spanish. For Jaime, any use of English meant that he was a participant in the ELA classroom.

Although some of the transformative pedagogy practices like repeated teacher affirmations of fighting for what one believes in through readings of *Harvesting Hope* by Krull (2003), and *¡Si Se Puede! Yes, We Can!: Janitor Strike in L.A.* by Cohn (2002) some participants continued to express their struggles. Javier expressed in an interview that he wants to read but simply "can't." Raul also remained unconvinced that he was a proficient reader, concluding his autobiographical poem with his dream of becoming the best reader one day. After the unit on identity most ELLs felt they had not changed as students, but had grown as readers or writers. A close examination of before and after unit interviews, reading interest inventories, pre and post student written interviews, and before and after unit letters help support this finding. Valeria admitted that she finds herself reading more while Patricia wrote that she is has been "more carefully and slower". For Rolando, it was different reading strategies in class that he credits to making him a better reader. Pedro also shared in his post unit letter that he feels he is reading and writing a little better this year. Oralia also wrote in her post unit letter that she feels that her comprehension of text has improved this year, admitting that she wants to be a writer and hopefully publish her own books one day. However, the most interesting revelation is that of Javier, the reluctant ELL who is a self-described "smart and ghetto kid" who doesn't always "make the right choices." In his post unit interview he shared that his compositions this year have been more interesting and that his interest in writing has taken him to keeping his own

journal at home. Javier was writing, by choice now, and using writing as a tool to help him reflect on his own life.

As is common to qualitative research there are always other findings that are not directly related to the research questions, but still worthy of noting because they are unexpected outcomes. First, all types of ELLs mentioned a desire to lead a better life, and understood that education was one way to do that. Often ELLs' performance on academic assessments is mistaken for apathy, when the truth is that ELLs do have a deep desire to do well. Javier expressed in one of his writings that he wanted to pass "real bad" and in his autobiographical poem stated, "I say give it my all….I hope I never stop trying." Clearly, Javier, although an LTEL, has not surrendered to the system that has deemed him an incompetent reader, and learner.

Second, a recently reclassified ELL, newly arrived ELLs, and ELLs with consistent academic achievement expressed how they enjoyed school because they had opportunities to learn many new things. This was especially true for newly-arrived ELLs who expressed their desire to learn English and use the language to live a better life. Oralia, a recently reclassified non-ELL described school as "comfortable", a place where teachers were helpful. Interestingly, LTELs were the only research participants to mention non-academic aspects of school like lunch, recess, and gym as the most enjoyable aspect of school, an indication that perhaps they feel out of place in the classroom.

Third, ELLs value teachers who share identity traits with them, like being bilingual, and demonstrating a sense of caring. In journal entries ELLs wrote about their ELA teacher. For Jesse it was important that I knew English and Spanish, echoing the sentiments of Rolando who wrote:

> When we don't understand, she helps us, she now [*sic*] the English, Spanish language, when a kid no not understand English, she help the kid in the English activity.

In addition to valuing the teacher's bilingualism, students valued caring. Oralia wrote, "She wants us to pass to 7th grade. My ELA teacher cares about us." Javier felt the same way describing me, his ELA teacher, as someone who is a "sweet sensitive teacher, nice to talk to." Noddings (2012) highlights the importance of caring in teaching and how caring is and should be "*underneath* [italics in original] all we do as teachers" (p. 777). Oralia and Javier's statements indicate a spirit of resilience that can be supported through acts of caring and a teacher who can understand the bilingual lives of ELLs.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have provided a general description of a typical day in my classroom, a detailed description of the identity unit I implemented as an action researcher, a brief description of the research participants selected for the in depth study, and a description of the findings for each research subquestion intended to contribute to answering the main research question: How do ELLs negotiate identities in a sixth grade ELA classroom?

The research findings indicate that ELLs are diverse. ELLs are heterogeneous in that there are varying degrees of schooling, academic achievement, and social and academic language proficiency. The findings indicate that all types of ELLs view themselves as readers and writers based on their own perceptions of what reading and writing should look like, sound like, and ultimately accomplish. Recently reclassified non-ELLs and ELLs with passing test scores internalized a sense of being a satisfactory reader, writer, and learner, while newly arrived ELLs viewed themselves as lacking proficiency as readers and writers. LTELs demonstrated different views of themselves as readers and writers including descriptors like "okay" and "good" to "not

good" to describe their abilities as readers and writers. These descriptors are rooted in the reading identities described by Skerrett (2012) and Alvermann (2001), and writing identities described by Fernsten (2008), who note that such identities are the result of student interpretations of how others, including teachers view students' own reading and writing proficiency.

The findings indicate that identity negotiation for ELLs is highly influenced by report card grades and high stakes assessments like the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). In addition, all types of ELLs negotiate identities through their peers and the messages received from the teacher including feedback on class assignments, the instructional experiences offered, the curriculum or texts read and written about in class, and the institution's label as limited-English proficient. The messages received by the students revealed a process of identity negotiation filled with tensions ELLs experience between how they view themselves and how they perceive others to view them.

There are some slight differences in how different types of ELLs negotiate identities. First, ELLs with successful academic records and a recently reclassified ELLs are also negotiated through teacher feedback. Although these types of ELLs are successful and have expressed their self-perceptions as proficient learners they often feel as if their academic achievement is "not good enough". Second, for newly arrived ELLs lack of English language proficiency, accuracy, and assignment completion is also part of the identity negotiation process. Overall these types of ELLs describe themselves as struggling learners. Third, for LTELs peers and their reactions to coping with repeated years of academic failure, either through "pretending" to assume different identities in the classroom as learners, readers, and writers, are an integral part of the identity negotiation process.

The findings indicate that the unit on identity provided a venue for ELLs to explore their own academic identities including contradictory feelings of identity as learners, readers, and writers. In addition, the unit on identity provided a venue for ELLs to respond to the ways in which their identities have been negotiated through academic achievement assessments like STAAR. Furthermore, after the unit on identity ELLs expressed their growth as readers and writers in the classroom, with one ELL using writing outside of the classroom as a form of reflection.

The findings indicate that students' perceptions as readers and writers are constructed based on their own experiences reading and writing that have influenced their views of reading and writing. In addition, different types of ELLs negotiate identities differently, each receiving different messages from the teacher and their peers in the classroom, creating opportunities for participants to develop mechanisms to respond to the messages received differently. Last, the unit on identity provided a venue for all types of ELLs to explore their own identities and reaffirm their academic goals and voice. In the next chapter I will discuss what the findings mean for educators and administrators.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this exploratory, qualitative case study is to understand how middle school English language learners negotiate identities in a sixth grade English language arts classroom. In this chapter I discuss the lessons learned through this study by elaborating on the meaning of the findings and providing interpretations using the literature and theoretical framework discussed in chapter 2 as a lens. I also highlight implications for practice as they relate to the theoretical framework and literature, and implications for further research. I end with a discussion of conclusions derived from the lessons learned.

In this study I sought to understand how ELLs view themselves as readers and writers. As the findings indicate ELLs base their perceptions as readers and writers based on their previous experiences in reading and writing. Second, I sought to understand how different types of ELLs negotiate identities. I found that ELLs negotiate identities differently through language, teacher actions, peers, and high stakes testing like STAAR. In addition, I found that the paths different ELLs take toward negotiating identities is complex, constantly evolving in the classroom, demonstrating the dynamic nature of identity negotiation. I also found that for ELLs the multiple paths of identity negotiation often includes a contradiction between the perception of self as learners, readers, and writers, from that of others. Third, I sought to understand how a unit on identity could potentially foster identity negotiation for ELLs. I found that carefully, and purposefully planned lessons, can encourage identity negotiation for different types of ELLs.

ELLs' Perceptions as Readers and Writers

In this section I begin by highlighting the nuances in the perceptions of different types of ELLs as readers and writers. I contrast the differences in perceptions among different types of ELLs. In the second section I demonstrate the how the nuances in the differences between

perceptions of different types of ELLs contribute to the literature of how ELLs negotiate identities.

Nuances in the Perceptions of Different Types of ELLs

The findings for the first research question: How do ELLs view themselves as readers and writers, indicates that participants evaluated their own reading and writing abilities in conjunction with how they view the practice of reading and writing itself. ELLs' views of themselves as readers and writers differed among different types of ELLs. For a recently reclassified non-ELL and ELLs with consistent academic achievement, reading was a process of constructing meaning, and based on this assumption participants described their own reading identities as their ability to comprehend text.

On the contrary, for newly arrived ELLs reading was the process of sounding out words accurately and reading fluently, and as a result their reading and writing identity was constructed based on their perceived deficiency in the English language. In several instances newly arrived ELLs described their intent, and highlighted their efforts to learn the English language. For these types of ELLs, their efforts accompanied perceived inabilities as noted in Pedro's first interview, where he repeatedly shared that although he did not do well he tried. Pedro's imposition of English as the main sole source for learning is indicative of the subtractive approaches that follow a monoglossic ideology (Garcia, 2009) preventing ELLs from tapping into all their linguistic resources (Ruiz, 1984). Newly arrived ELLs' statements about language highlight opportunities for learning, what Valdés (1996) describes as "*life chances* [italics in original]" (p.170) that these types of ELLs need. Pedro's self-perception as a reader and writer as one who tries can be interpreted as a result of the policies and hegemonic ideologies found in critical

pedagogy (McLaren, 2009). In addition, his self-perception demonstrates his own understanding of his emerging bilingualism, or as Garcia (2009) would refer to as an emergent bilingual.

LTELs constructed their own views as readers and writers based on their previous failure in reading and writing. However, unlike newly-arrived ELLs, LTELs reading and writing identity constructions were accepted as part of their own perceived deficiency, and, or lack of opportunities explaining at times that although they had a desire to be good readers and writers, they simply could not. Javier and Raul demonstrated their acceptance on different occasions. Javier admitted in his post unit interview that as much as he wanted to be a reader, someone who read, as he described, "24/7" he simply "can't," while Raul expressed that he did not know what a lot of words meant.

An important point worth noting is the differences in how different types of ELLs perceived others' views of themselves as readers and writers. Oralia, a recently reclassified non ELL, and ELLs with consistent academic achievement, confidently spoke of their abilities to read and write, sharing an understanding that those around them, including parents, teachers, and peers, also believed that they were strong readers and writers. Newly arrived ELLs shared the perceptions they believed others had of them as struggling students, who although are not proficient in the English language make every effort to overcome the language barrier.

For LETLs, there was a clear tension (Hafner 2013; Norton Peirce, 1995) in their own perception as readers and writers. LTELs saw themselves as readers and writers, however believed their struggles meant they could not be successful. For example, Javier's first letter to the teacher demonstrates his resistance, but also a desire to become a better readers and writers, ultimately accepting his perceived deficiency as laziness and a reason why he simply could not be a better reader and writer. The findings indicate that it is important to help ELLs understand

that their own perceptions as readers and writers are influenced in part by their perceptions of what others may have of them. Hall (2009) argues that helping students become better readers includes helping students come to understand how their identity, the identity they believe others have of them, and the identity they place on others, influences their own reading development. The same can be argued about language development. The labels assigned to students by institution such as that of LEP, ELL, or emergent bilingual can either highlight a deficiency or showcase bilingualism as an advantage. In some cases assuming renegotiation of their identity is an admission of their past identity as a reader (Hall, 2009). This was true for Katia, an LTEL, who at the beginning of the unit mentioned she was a great reader, and did not need any help in reading and writing as indicated in her pre-unit letter to me.

There were also some slight differences in the overall perceptions of ELLs as writers. Interestingly, for Oralia, a recently reclassified non-ELL and ELLs with consistent academic achievement, perceptions as writers were constructed based on their beliefs of what good writing should look like. These types of ELLs mentioned that they were writers because of their ability to organize content and use figurative language. However, Valeria could not identify anything specifically she did well as a writer. Valeria's inability to describe one thing she did well as a writer demonstrates diversity exits not only between types of ELLs, but even within groups of ELLs, highlighting their often unique academic trajectories. In addition, Valeria's inability to describe one strength as a writer indicates what Adams (2009) describes as ELLs' struggle to see themselves as writers, in part because of limited writing experiences in the classroom.

Newly-arrived ELLs' perceptions as writers were based on the ability for others to understand their written text. For example, Pedro indicated in his post unit interview that he knew he did well in writing because others could understand his writing. For Pedro, his ability

to communicate, despite some misspellings meant that he was a good writer. This is indicative

of the experiences he has had with writing, where conventions have not been the only focus of

his writing instruction, and instead he has come to understand that writing is a way of

communicating messages for others to interpret. Pedro's ideology, that although his writing may

have errors it still has value and meaning, is indicative of Padilla's (2004/2010) description of a

culture of engagement, where students are invited to actively engage in meaningful learning

experiences.

An interesting finding was the perception LTELs had of themselves as writers. As the

first and second audio recorded interviews demonstrate, these types of ELLs felt an overall

satisfaction with their ability to write. In one instance Javier noted that he could write because

he often wrote even when he was not required to do so such as when he shared that he kept a

journal where he wrote his inner most thoughts to get him through trying times. For Javier, the

use of writing outside of class, highlights the outside home literacy practices (Greenleaf &

Hinchman 2009; Jiménez, 2000) that can easily go unnoticed in the classroom.

One important note that cannot be overlooked is the finding that despite diversity among

perceptions as writers for different types of ELLs, it was clear that for all ELLs writing meant

expressing oneself with correctly spelled words. Spelling was noted as an integral factor in self-

perceptions as writers for all types of ELLs, with the exception of only one ELL, Jesse, an ELL

with consistent academic achievement. It can be argued that for many of the ELLs in this study,

previous writing instruction focused on written conventions. Other features of writing included

the ability to develop ideas, sentence structure, and mechanics, however, they were not as highly

valued as the ability to be a good speller. Turkan and Da Silva Iddings (2012) note how writing

instruction can translate to a set of procedures for ELLs, losing the focus of writing as a way of

expressing ideas. For teachers of ELLs, these findings are critical. Curriculum and instruction offered to ELLs will eventually impact their own academic identities as readers and writers, and should therefore be of utmost importance during the planning and implementation phase of the teaching cycle. Based on the findings I argue that ELLs' views of themselves as readers and writers are influenced by the type of instruction most have experienced. This means that the instruction delivered to ELLs has lasting impacts on their own academic identities as learners, readers, and writers.

Learning from the Differences

It is the nuances in the self-perceptions of different types of ELLs as readers and writers that contribute to the conceptualization that diversity exists among ELLs, and that through an understanding of differences between types of ELLs, educators can best serve their needs in the classroom. The curriculum offered to ELLs must be well balanced, offering learning opportunities for all components of reading and writing and account for the diversity among ELLs. The instruction offered to ELLs must include a variety of opportunities for students to interact with texts in ways that promote comprehension of text, and provide a risk free environment that recognizes content in writing. If students measure their own reading abilities in terms of reading all words accurately, then their identities as strong readers are at stake, since it is virtually impossible to read accurately 100% of the time. Calderon, Slavin, and Sanchez (2011) suggest that "Teachers must thus give equal attention to decoding, or word recognition, and comprehension," (p. 111). Reading instruction for ELLs must be provided in a way that encourages learning from miscues while reading with an emphasis on constructing meaning. Writing instruction should encourage learning from communicating thoughts in writing, and revising ideas rather than solely focusing on written conventions (Adams, 2009; Spence, 2010).

Understanding how different types of ELLs view themselves as readers and writers, helps teachers understand the monumental impact types of reading and writing instruction has on ELLs. For example, Valeria wrote in her written interview, "Reading is something that gives people expression and curiosity." Valeria's statement indicates that her previous schooling experiences have included reading and writing activities that have allowed her to express herself and invite questions about the world around her. Valeria has clearly been impacted by the reading and writing instruction she has received. In addition, teachers of ELLs must provide opportunities for ELLs to develop their identity as readers and writers through experiences rich with interactions (Skerrett, 2012). Throughout the unit on identity there were instances where participants and I engaged in dialogue that fostered reading and writing identity development. For example, after the reading of *Harvesting Hope* by Krull (2003) I invited participants to think and write about their own dreams for the future as readers and writers, allowing them the opportunity to imagine their potential. In addition, I engaged participants in a double entry diary where students wrote their inner most thoughts in one column, and the actual words that that they stated for themselves. This particular type of interaction invited participants to reflect on their identities as readers, writers, and learners in the ELA classroom.

It can be argued that reading and writing experiences in the English Language Arts classroom often occur together. Therefore, in this section I will discuss how reading and writing experiences can help potentially foster identity negotiation for all types of ELLs. Based on the findings, it is evident that diversity among different types of ELLs' views of themselves as readers is in part based on the experiences they have had reading, particularly with their experiences engaged in reading instruction. For newly arrived ELLs and LTELs in this study, the emphasis on accuracy in reading, and or writing is indicative that the participants have

primarily been engaged in reading and writing experiences that value accuracy. LTELs in this study valued word accuracy when reading and expressed concerns with knowing words, particularly pronunciation. In addition, all types of ELLs were concerned with their overall spelling ability and indicated their need to improve as writers by becoming better at spelling. These types of responses indicate that ELLs' instruction was primarily founded on the word recognition model of reading that has permeated throughout their schooling. The word recognition model focuses on teaching students a set of skills, where students primarily learn to decode, or sound out words, with an emphasis on accuracy, rather than meaning (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2005). Emphasis of accuracy in reading can translate to emphasis in accuracy in writing.

ELLs who have experienced writing instruction that emphasizes written conventions rather than content use written conventions to measure their own writing abilities, thus constructing writing identities based on their own proficiency in conventions (Spence, 2010). Yi (2013) warns of the effects on writing identity construction when ELLs are enrolled in courses that emphasize conventions rather than content. In some cases ELLs strive tirelessly to meet the academic writing demands of the classrooms that in doing so further complicate their own writing. When this occurs ELLs begin to construct identities as poor writers (Yi, 2013), despite being able to communicate quite complex ideas (Adams, 2009). As noted earlier, the one commonality among different types of ELLs in this study was a reference to spelling when describing self-perceptions as writers. It can be argued that writing instruction has often been procedural in nature, indicative of policy and curriculum implementation. For example, Javier, indicated that he was a good writer because he could write a lot. These types of comments indicate that Javier's ideology that writing more means writing better. In procedural forms of

writing teachers often stress conventions and at time even indicate the number of paragraphs and or sentences in paragraphs (Turkan & Da Silva Iddings, 2012). For ELLs like Javier, writing is viewed as a format, and such views of writing translate to ELLs as focal points when evaluating their own writing abilities.

Based on the findings I contend that educators must reconceptualize their views of ELLs from one large group of students with language needs, to a diverse population of ELLs that includes different types of ELLs with unique language needs and academic histories (Solórzano, 2008). A reconceptualization of ELLs calls for an understanding of labels and how labels impact students, inviting caution when using terms to describe linguistically diverse children, and instead viewing language on a continuum as suggested by Garcia (2009) with the term emergent bilingual. Understanding the diverse academic trajectories among ELLs highlights the nuances in the differences among types of ELLs to better understand ELLs' identities as readers, writers, and learners. It is through understanding the nuances that educators can potentially contribute to better meeting the needs of different ELLs, particularly in an English language arts classroom.

In agreement with other literature language should be at the core of literacy development (Gee, 2001; Jiménez, 2000; McCarthey & Moje, 2002) if ELLs are to develop identities in the English Language Arts classroom. Throughout the study it was evident that Jaime, a newly arrived ELL, perceived himself as a reader and writer defined by his lack of proficiency in English. Slowly, Jaime began to value his English ability more than his Spanish language abilities as noted in his greetings to me in English when I greeted him in Spanish. Worth noting is how newly arrived ELLs were the only group of ELLs to explicitly reference their lack of proficiency in English as a factor in describing their views as readers and writers. LTELs described self-perceptions as readers and writers based on a lack of proficiency in understanding

different words rather than the English language itself. In one instance, Raul, an LTEL, shared in an interview that there were too many words that were hard for him. He never referenced his inability to comprehend the English language, but rather comprehend unfamiliar words. Hall et al. (2010) explains that it is through language that students communicate and it is through interactions that students develop identities. It can be argued, that allowing ELLs, especially newly arrived ELLs, to communicate in their native language will help develop identities as bilingual individuals that can potentially help eliminate valuing one language over the other. By allowing native language communication a bilingual individual can access a vocabulary repertoire that is composed of two languages. This means that a bilingual individual may not know a word in one language but may know it another. With reading and writing experiences rich in dialogue and different types of interactions, it is important that language as it relates to literacy development remain at the core of identity negotiation as learners, readers, and writers. ELLs' bilingualism must be valued, and one way is by allowing ELLs to communicate in Spanish if need be even in an English language program. Jaime, a newly arrived ELL exemplifies the importance of allowing ELLs to use their native language during reading and writing experiences (Coady & Escamilla, 2005).

In addition, the findings suggest that there is an important relevance in considering identity in designing instruction. McCarthey and Moje (2002) describe the importance of considering issues of identity because it is through literacy that students make sense of the world. Literacy experiences should emphasize content and meaning to provide an opportunity for ELLs to construct identities as readers, writers, and learners. Literacy experiences can help foster discourse identities as described by Gee (2000) that characterize all ELLs as learners, readers, and writers in a learning community who have an important story to tell.

I conclude this section highlighting the relevance of considering identity in understanding ELLs' achievement in reading and writing. Throughout this study I focused on better understanding the identities of participants as readers and writers, and in the process came to understand that their identity is one way for me, as a teacher researcher, to understand their achievement. As I have previously mentioned, ELLs are a diverse population, and it is the undeniable diversity that calls for consideration of identity when discussing and understanding the achievement of ELLs. For example, I learned that for ELLs with consistent academic achievement their identities as readers and writers were shaped by the expectations of them. Jesse, an ELL with consistent academic achievement demonstrated this when he shared in an interview that he really did not like to read and chose not to read when it was not required of him, like when he was at home. An important outcome was considering identity as an effective way to understand the achievement of ELLs and LTELs. I learned that by considering the identities of LTELs I can come to understand their achievement for more than a scale score or percentage, but rather an indication of how institutions have contributed to their own perceptions as readers and writers. More importantly, I understand that considering identity as it relates to the academic achievement of ELLs encourages opportunities for teachers to invite ELLs to renegotiate their identities through reading and writing in a social context (Hafner, 2013).

In addition, there is the undeniable notion of reconceptualization of labels as a possibility for identity renegotiation. By carefully selecting a term to describe language diverse students, institutions, including practitioners like myself, impact the identity negotiation of students. From terms such as LEP and ELL, to new terms like emergent bilingual practitioners have an opportunity to impact the identity of students through the assigned labels (Garcia, 2009).

Identity Negotiation: Language, High Stakes Tests, Peers, and Teacher Actions

The findings for the second research question: How do different types of ELLs negotiate identities, confirms what the literature already says about the process of identity negotiation as one that is constantly changing and ongoing (Norton Peirce, 1995). In addition, the findings confirm that during identity negotiation students continually receive feedback, or messages of their academic standing and possible potential in the classroom (Cummins, 2001). However, the findings in this study contribute to the literature by highlighting the nuances of how different types of ELLs negotiate identities, particularly in a sixth grade English language arts classroom where language is critical to literacy development. The nuances in the differences of identity negotiation include messages interpreted through language, high stakes assessments like the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and teacher actions. In this section I will discuss the nuances in the differences of how different types of ELLs negotiate identities. I will also include a discussion of some of the commonalities in the process of identity negotiation among ELLs.

Differences in Identity Negotiation

For Oralia, a recently reclassified non ELL her identity was negotiated through her peers and teacher actions. In one journal entry Oralia referred to her bilingualism as an advantage stating that because she can speak two languages she can choose what language to speak in. Oralia rejects a monoglossic ideology and instead illustrates how a heteroglossic view (Garcia, 2009) of her own bilingualism facilitates her socialization in the classroom when she describes her bilingualism as an advantage of selecting a language of her choice to speak in. In addition, Oralia demonstrates that she negotiates her identity through the teacher feedback she receives via her grades and the internalization of messages about her potential. At the conclusion of the unit

on identity Oralia admits that learning is hard for her, but concludes with an affirmation that

anything is possible in her autobiographical poem. Cummins (2001) describes students'

interpretation of their potential as a direct result of identity negotiation, and as the evidence

indicates Oralia believes that all possibilities are an option. Worth noting is Oralia's reflection to

Krull's (2003) reading of *Harvesting Hope*, where she shares her goals of becoming a writer one

day. I had previously shared with the class a piece of my own fifth grade writing, where I wrote

about my dreams for the future. Oralia interpreted this teacher action of sharing a personal story,

as one that meant she also could realize her dreams.

Unlike Oralia who displayed a strong sense of confidence in her own abilities including

her bilingualism, ELLs with consistent academic achievement experienced tensions as they

negotiated identities in the classroom. In particular, Jesse and Patricia demonstrated on more

than one occasion their tensions in their autobiographical poems. At one point, Jesse, wrote that

he was dumb and smart at the same time in his poem. Such tensions are described in the

literature (Hafner, 2013; Norton Peirce, 1995), and can be attributed to the interaction between

multiple identities (McCarthey & Moje, 2002). Gee (2000) describes how institutional identities

can often conflict with one's discourse and affinity identity. Like Jesse, Patricia was caught in a

struggle, believing that her efforts in reading and writing were not good enough. The conflicts

between the identities indicate struggles of power and language that intersect creating the tension

ELLs with consistent academic achievement feel.

Newly arrived ELLs negotiated identities in response to their perceived lack of English

language proficiency. For example, as demonstrated in the findings Jaime began to equate his

lack of English language proficiency with his ability to learn when he described himself as

someone who needed to learn how to try to learn. In addition, unlike other types of ELLs, newly

arrived ELLs described an internalization of invisibility in the classroom. Rolando shared in his pre unit interview that he often felt excluded from whole class conversations because he was unable to respond quickly in English to teacher questions. He described a feeling of helplessness because other students quickly responded without being called on and their responses were acknowledged. He interpreted his inability to respond to being invisible in the classroom. Rolando's frustration illustrates how participation in the English language arts classroom is crucial to identity negotiation. Rolando was not alone in feeling excluded from classroom discussions. At one point Jaime chose to draw on his notebook instead of complete an assignment and willfully admit to his off task behavior, highlighting how he had accepted his identity as one that was not active in the learning community. Gee (2000) highlights the importance of dialogue and discursive practices that help students build their discourse identities. How newly arrived ELLs in my classroom negotiated identities is a reminder of the all English ideology that often permeates schools.

Unlike any other group of ELLs, LTELs experienced resistance while negotiating identities in the ELA classroom. The resistance was evident in the artifacts produced throughout the unit and is addressed in the literature (Faircloth, 2012) as "identity-in practice" (p. 187). Javier demonstrated his resistance to be "smart" sharing his concerns about what others like peers would think of him. Like Javier, Katia showed her resistance when she wrote in her autobiographical poem that pretended she did not like reading, a sentiment that was also expressed through her double entry diary of inner and outer voices. Raul, also demonstrated a sense of resistance when he admitted that he simply "can't" learn new words. Despite the resistance demonstrated by LTELs it is worth noting that LETLs did express an intrinsic desire

to learn. This desire is most evident in Javier's first letter to me and in Raul's autobiographical poem.

Commonalities in Identity Negotiation

Despite the nuances in the differences in how different types of ELLs negotiate identities there are some commonalities that I will explore in this section. Like Oralia, a recently reclassified non- ELLs with consistent academic achievement often referred to teacher actions that are interpreted, facilitating identity negotiation. For example, in an interview, Jesse shared that he knew how he was doing in class simply by the way a teacher spoke to him. This finding highlights the power of teacher actions. Likewise, for a newly arrived ELL, Jaime, my omission of a Spanish poem to read on Halloween unknowingly sent the message that his participation in class did not matter. This means that teacher actions are monumental in the identity negotiation process.

In addition, all types of ELLs often use report card grades and state assessments to evaluate their own academic identities. ELLs experience a certain degree of tension as they negotiate identities in the classroom. This tension was clear when, ELLs minimize their own academic competencies and focus on the fears of academic failure. As part of the theoretical framework of this study, I drew upon the work of Padilla's (2004/2010) dichotomy of two different cultures, one of measurement and one of engagement. I used this framework to help analyze how ELLs negotiate identities when caught between these two cultures. ELLs' academic failures demonstrate how all types of ELLs have come to understand that they are defined by scores, and that these scores outweigh whatever reading and writing abilities they may have. This ideology is a direct result of what Padilla (2004/2010) describes as the culture of measurement, where test scores define students. Garcia and Kleifgen (2010) argue how standardized

assessments often give ELLs unfair labels of incompetence because they do not measure growth. Such practices empower institutions with monoglossic ideologies while disempowering ELLs. Jesse, expressed his sentiments when he shared how all his efforts would be in vain if he did not pass the state assessment in reading. Despite my own efforts to minimize a focus on the state assessment, Jesse still understood that ultimately STAAR was important and that he would unfortunately be defined by his efforts one day of the school year. In the following section I highlight how the identities of ELLs are misunderstood, at times as a result of the institutional identities (Gee, 2000) that conflict with the affinity and discourse identities of ELLs.

Misunderstood Identities

As part of the identity unit I asked ELLs to compare themselves to an animal, like Naomi did, the main character from the novel *Becoming Naomi León,* a novel that served as the main text in the identity unit. The intent was to use this metaphor assignment to provide some insight into their own academic perception. After reading their responses and synthesizing the different data sets I came to understand that their identities are often misunderstood, a result of identity negotiation limited to academic achievement on state assessments. Through messages of academic success or failure from the educational system that was meant to serve their needs and highlight their strengths different types of ELLs were misunderstood. In the following section I use participants' own metaphors to represent their misunderstood identities. I also describe how I, as a teacher researcher, misunderstood their own identities, demonstrating how easily educators can lean toward institutional labels to understand ELLs.

Three of the participants described themselves as lions in the classroom. I learned that Valeria, an ELL with consistent academic achievement, acts "like I don't care," but deep down admits that she truly does care about her school work. She called herself a lion because she is

"lazy and intelligent" at the same time. In this statement Valeria is aware that her perceived laziness can be interpreted as apathy. Pedro, a newly arrived ELL described himself as a lion because he is "not scared of kids" and never gives up. Pedro's metaphor highlights his awareness that his lack of English proficiency may be perceived by those around him as a sign of weakness, adding that he is "not scared" and "I never give up." However, the most powerful of metaphors came from the voice of Raul, an LTEL, who chose to speak very little in class and shared that he connected most with Medina's (1999) poem, "Invisible." In this metaphor assignment Raul initially called himself a Boxer, a breed of dog, because of sibling rivalry at home. However, in his autobiographical poem, Raul called himself a lion because he really wanted to be the best reader in the classroom and for him that meant being the biggest lion in the classroom. My own understanding of Raul's academic struggles over the years had cast a dark shadow over what he meant in his I Am poem when he stated "I am the biggest lion," so much so that I thought he had misunderstood the assignment. I asked Raul what he meant in his post unit interview about being "the biggest lion." I had not realized that Raul had taken his I Am poem writing assignment to a whole new level. He had created a metaphor throughout his entire poem, one in which he was a lion, surrounded by other lions. This researcher revelation, tells how easily the identities of ELLs can be and are often misunderstood, a compelling reason for teachers to provide opportunities for ELLs to reflect on their own academic identities and share with the teacher their own views of self as readers, writers, and learners.

Learning from Misunderstood Identities

As an English Language Arts teacher I came to understand that the perceptions ELLs had in my classroom about their own identities as readers and writers impacted how they negotiated identities in the classroom. Often the identities they described as readers and writers differed

than the perceptions they believed others had of them. This difference impacted their identity negotiation in the classroom and resulted in misunderstood identities.

Oralia, a recently reclassified non-ELL described reading as boring, admitting that she did not always like to read, a characteristic that can be overlooked due to her academic history. In addition, ELLs with consistent academic achievement, shared their honest feelings about literacy, like Jesse who described that does not read at home to complete his reading log. The contrasting views ELLs have of themselves and the identities they have assumed create what Norton Peirce (1995) refers to as a "site of struggle" (p. 15) where ELLs experience "tension" and "cultural conflict" (Hafner, 2013, p. 44) because their identities are contradictory. These "sites of struggle" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p.15) were evident in all types of ELLs.

Oralia shared her willingness to negotiate her identity based on the language she spoke explaining that many around her did not understand her bilingualism and ability to choose which language to speak in. In addition, Javier, an LTEL, expressed on more than one occasion that he had a deep desire to do well, but simply could not, depicting his desire to learn but the contradictory feelings of helplessness he felt when he tried. Katia, another LTEL, also displayed Norton Peirce's (1995) "site of struggle" (p. 15) by sharing her enjoyment while reading and writing, but choosing to display a sense of dislike for the class as noted in her writing about what others expected of her. She wrote about going to college despite what others may think about her inability to go because of bad grades. Such comments indicate that the perceptions ELLs have of themselves as readers and writers and how they perceive others to view their own academic identities is critical in identity negotiation. I argue that it is the contradictory perceptions that foster identity negotiation. ELLs come to understand who they are as writers and readers, and how to respond to the institutional labels bestowed upon them. ELLs'

responses are identity negotiation in action, and how the teacher responds to such responses has the power to influence identity negotiation.

In particular, LTELs slowly found their voice despite feeling disempowered throughout their schooling and challenged mainstream beliefs of their lack of reading and writing by sharing intimate thoughts of their own identities as learners, readers, and writers through unit artifacts. The challenge of mainstream beliefs occurred mostly in their reflection of Cisneros's (1984) "Those Who Don't." In this assignment I asked participants to speak to the world and tell what others do not know about them. Katia's reflection about going to college even though she has bad grades clearly depicts the often negative views of ELLs and their academic achievement. For Katia, accepting this negative view was not an option, instead she chose to use her voice and declare her academic dreams, eventually sharing her true feelings about reading and writing in her I Am poem.

All types ELLs shared their inner voices and in each I heard stories of redemption, overcoming obstacles, fears, and the unlikely admissions of a genuine care for their own schooling, and their practice as readers and writers. I learned that Katia, an LTEL, is an avid reader, but chooses to keep her own personal satisfaction of reading to herself because she doesn't want others to think she is "weird." Javier, another LTEL echoed Katia's sentiments, sharing at one point throughout the identity unit that he had no desire to be smart, yet also sharing that he wanted to pass school "real bad" and hoped that he "never stop trying." Such portrayals of a tough image persona are what Day (2002) describes as the social relationships that are created within a classroom that create multiple identities. These multiple identities can be contradictory, creating the tension experienced by ELLs. For example, through the unit I learned that Javier kept his own journal at home. He had started a journal back in the third grade,

also the first year he took a STAAR assessment. He used this journal as a form of therapy to share his most intimate thoughts and although he had not written in his journal since the third grade, admitted that he had started writing in it once more this school year. Despite Katia being a reader, and Javier being a writer outside of the classroom, these two LTELs struggled with displaying their true academic identities in the classroom.

Throughout the study, Javier renegotiated his identity as a writer when he shared his recent return to writing in a journal he kept at home. Campano (2007) highlights how reflective writing is a tool for personal transformation. For all types of ELLs the transformation occurs when students begin to challenge the labels assigned by institutions, affirming their identities as strong learners, reader, and writers, who are willing to work hard to obtain academic recognition. For example, Javier, who at one point throughout the study fell behind on classwork, worked hard to improve his average, staying in from an elective period for some small group help so he could achieve a passing score, and be recognized not as a failure, but as a student with passing marks for the six weeks. Providing venues like an instructional unit in identity helps counter the labels assigned to students that can inhibit recognition of actual ELL capabilities. In the following section I discuss how the unit was integral in exploring identity negotiation and potential possibilities to foster identity negotiation.

Purposeful Teaching: Identity Unit

The unit on identity was specifically designed to help ELLs reflect on their identities as readers and writers, and in the process help me come to understand how ELLs negotiate identities in the English language arts classroom. The purpose of this section is to discuss how the unit on identity served as purposeful teaching that invited opportunities to foster identity negotiation.

Although I did not know what my findings would be, I knew that I wanted to transmit to all ELLs that within each of them lied a potential and that reading, writing, and learning everyday would help them reach their academic goals. Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri (2002) take note of what teachers of ELLs, in particular those with LTELs in the classroom dedicate class time to helping students learn "to see themselves as successful learners." (p. 10). I propose that one way to do this is by providing a curriculum that invites dialogue on issues of identity, and instruction that demonstrates respect and trust between the teacher and ELL. More importantly, this type of curriculum fosters what Hafner (2013) describes as "renegotiating" identities, inviting ELLs to rewrite their institutional identity as one that values their cultural and language diversity in an English language arts classroom.

Through the unit on identity I sought to build the "collaborative relations of power" afforded to ELLs so that they could "develop the ability, confidence and motivation to succeed academically" (Cummins, 2001, p. 16). The unit on identity was in many ways an invitation for ELLs in my classroom. The unit invited students to explore their own identity as learners, readers, and writers, respond to their misunderstood identities, and share their hopes and dreams for themselves as learners, readers, and writers in an English Language arts classroom. Oralia, shared her hopes and dreams of becoming a writer one day. Many ELLs shared their goals of passing to seventh grade and doing well on the state assessment. Most importantly, the unit transmitted to students that I, as an ELA teacher genuinely cared about their academic identities.

Different types of ELLs sensed teacher actions as a form of caring. Jesse, and ELL with consistent academic achievement shared in one entry that his teacher was helpful and willing to navigate between two languages to help them understand concepts. Oralia, a recently reclassified non ELL, echoed his sentiments sharing in one journal entry that she knew her

teacher wanted her to be successful and pass to seventh grade. Likewise, Javier, an LTEL, shared in a journal entry that he knew his teacher cared about him. Yoon (2008) stresses the importance of transmitting the value of caring to ELLs. This caring was reciprocated by ELLs who shared their own feelings about caring for school work. Valeria shared that she pretends she doesn't care, although she really does, while Javier, an LTEL shared that he desperately wanted to be successful in the classroom. I could have chosen to accept Javier's institutional identity as a an LTEL who has struggled academically for years, and instead I chose to engage him in a dialogue intended to transmit respect and a genuine concern for his own academic standing. Freire (1970/2009) would describe Javier's institutional identity as one that is marginalized, but who can through powerful teaching practices be liberated and empowered. I chose to look past Javier's academic history, and look at him as the student in my class who was simply trying to try despite repeated academic failure. I chose to look beyond the "ghetto kid" image he described, and through the unit saw a kid with dreams and hope, with an unrelenting desire to show the world what he can become. I attempted to provide what Valdés (1996) refers to as "*life chances*[italics in original]*"* (p.170) and he took me up on the offer, by participating each day in the unit ultimately sharing after the unit that he keeps a diary where he writes about his struggles, a habit he had abandoned in the third grade. He came to understand that writing was more than spelling words and writing a lot. A part of him came to understand the genuine power of writing as a tool to help one cope with life situations.

Teachers can empower students to challenge their institutional identity as described by Gee (2000). I argue that educators are critical agents that must find and provide a middle ground between the intersections of cultures Padilla (2004/2010) describes. Through careful and purposeful planning, the intersections, or teaching in the third space (Gutierrez, 2008) invites for

teachable moments that can have lasting impacts on ELLs. For me, in this study, the middle ground, or third space (Gutierrez, 2008) was the unit on identity I designed and implemented with ELLs. It was through this unit that I created a space in my classroom where ELLs' voices were welcomed, acknowledged, and valued and in the process I invited instances of renegotiating identities (Hafner, 2013).

I argue that educators can and should find a way to teach through the intersections of Padilla's (2004/2010) cultures and in doing so be the educator, McLaren (2009) describes, as one who understands that any one problem can have multiple sides. For me the problem was trying to navigate between Padilla's (2004/2010) framework of the culture of measurement and the culture of engagement, and in doing so understood that one way I could address this dilemma was by taking action, through the careful planning and implementation of one instructional unit focused on issues of identity as readers and writers. What I found through this unit was that many ELLs have misunderstood identities, that if left unquestioned are not discussed and worse yet even unnoticed. In the following section I discuss implications from learning about the different ways different ELLs negotiate identities in the ELA classroom.

Implications for Practice

After careful analysis of the research findings in this study, it is evident that there are several implications for educators of ELLs and administrators of schools serving ELLs. In this section I will describe some of these implications. I begin with implications for teachers.

Teachers

First, and perhaps the most important of all implications is the simple fact that teachers must get to know their ELLs. This does not mean that a one day meet and greet session on the first day of school will suffice. What I argue is that teachers take the time to provide

opportunities where students can share their identities as readers and writers in the classroom. This means providing opportunities where students can reflect on their own experiences and provide time to discuss how those experiences have influenced their own views as readers and writers. Often teachers are caught between the cultures Padilla (2004/2010) describes, and little time is left for such exploratory projects. However, the richness of the potential insights into how ELLs view themselves as readers and writers can provide the necessary information a teacher needs to plan purposeful instruction. More importantly, it provides ELLs a venue to respond to the ways they are often categorized by others.

Second, lessons learned from the nuances of how different ELLs negotiate identities indicate teachers must teach in ways that promote reading and writing experiences where mistakes are okay, and used as learning opportunities. For newly arrived ELLs and LTELs accuracy in reading and writing was highly valued. In an effort to avoid the unrealistic assumption that reading is about reading every word correctly, teachers of ELLs must strive to provide a balanced curriculum, one in which all components of reading are integrated, balancing both the linguistics of reading and the comprehension. Alvermann (2001) suggests viewing reading as a "practice that is socially, culturally, and institutionally situated-one that is rarely about just written language." (p. 686). Teaching in a way that sends ELLs the message that reading is more than pronouncing words, but interacting with text, and others, to understand the world around them will help ELLs begin to evaluate their own self perceptions as readers based on constructing meaning.

Third, teachers should employ "generous reading" as recommended by Spence (2010, p. 634) when reading the writing of ELLs. Generous reading is the "act of reading uncritically" the work of ELLs so as to provide a "bridge for English Language Learners (ELLs) when they are

not yet ready for more judgmental reading" (p. 634). For all types of ELLs in this study their own perceived abilities as spellers contributed to their views as writers, with all types of ELLs mentioning that this was one area that they needed help in. This means that educators should read ELLs writing with the understanding of the cultural and linguistic differences that impact writing, but can otherwise communicate meaningfully through written expression. Coady and Escamilla (2005) call this approach "multidimensional" because "it includes looking not only at the mechanics and structure of students' writing but viewing it with a bilingual lens" (p. 463). If teachers employ "generous reading" as one way to evaluate the writing of ELLs, than spelling will not be the sole indicator of writing ability. It can be argued that writing teachers of ELLs must have an understanding of bilingualism as it is demonstrated in the context of students' writing in order to appropriately evaluate ELLs' writing. Appropriate evaluation of ELL writing will encourage ELLs to focus on the content of their writing rather than fixating on minute written conventions that through proper instruction can be addressed. In the following section I will address key implications for administrators of schools serving ELLs.

Administrators

Lessons learned through the implementation of a unit on identity demonstrate how teachers can create a venue for different types of ELLs to explore their own identity as readers, writers, and learners, and in doing so learn how to address the unique needs of different ELLs. Based on this finding, there are several implications for administrators. First, administrators must be cognizant of the realities of teaching at the intersection of the two cultures described by Padilla (2004/2010). One way that administrators can support teachers of ELLs is by ensuring that reading and writing instruction focuses on content and that evaluation considers the varying levels of English language proficiency for ELLs will help foster identities as strong writers.

Administrators can work closely with ELA teachers of ELLs to create writing rubrics that

considers aspects other than writing conventions alone. By requiring teachers to critically

examine the content of ELLs' writing, teachers will come to understand that the written

expression of ELLs is quite complex. Valuing content will also allow teachers to focus on what

ELLs have to say, and encourage ELLs to continue writing and sharing their thoughts.

Understanding the different ways different types of ELLs negotiate identities highlights

the undeniable presence of high stakes testing. For administrators this means exercising caution

from overemphasizing the culture of high stakes testing versus the culture of engagement as

described by Padilla (2004/2010). This was particularly true with Jesse, and ELL with consistent

academic achievement, who despite a previous score of "Commended Performance" in reading

felt he was dumb as described in his autobiographical poem. The overemphasis of test scores

was also evident in Jesse's description of how all of his hard work would be in vain should he

fail the STAAR reading test. Administrators must convey the message to teachers that ELLs are

not test scores, or a state assigned rating, but instead individuals who merit thoughtful planning

and instruction meant to highlight their genuine identities. This means encouraging Padilla's

(2004/2010) culture of engagement.

Administrators must allow teachers the opportunity to venture beyond the confinement of

test taking skills and remote reading passages, but allow ELLs to tell their own stories. These

stories take the form of narratives in the classroom. Rymes (2009) encourages the use of

narratives in the classroom describing how opportunities for narratives allow students the

opportunity to make sense of the world while sharing their own realities. In the case of ELLs

these realities are the "sites of struggle" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 15) displaying the

"contradictory" (p. 15) nature of identity. Hafner (2013) describes ELLs' multiple identities as a

reflection of the "interplay of participation and resistance of academic tasks" attributed to identified and unidentified learning needs (p. 43). For ELLs the identity negotiation occurring was impacted by their participation as learners, readers, and writers in the ELA classroom, and in some cases their resistance. In the following section I include a brief recommendation for further research.

Implications for Further Research

I recommend that ELLs' perceptions of high stakes testing and how these specific perceptions impact identity negotiation be further investigated. Specifically, an examination of how the perceptions differ among different types of ELLs and how the impacts also differ is important to consider when understanding the academic achievement of ELLs. Throughout the study I could not ignore participants' overwhelming concern for academic achievement on such assessments. As discussed, ELLs came to understand that their academic identities depended on performance of such assessments alone. It is important to further investigate the impact of different types of ELL perceptions of high stakes testing as it relates to identity negotiation. Such insight may potentially help educators understand how to help ELLs recognize and value their already existing knowledge and competencies. Last, I suggest, a closer examination of ELLs with consistent academic achievement to understand the educational context in which these students strive and the characteristics that enable them to experience academic achievement.

Conclusions

Through this study I was able to determine how ELLs perceptions as readers and writers impacts identity negotiation in the classroom. I was also able to critically examine the nuances in the differences in identity negotiation for different types of ELLs. The lessons learned from

the nuances in the multiple paths of identity negotiation contributes to the literature on ELLs'
identity, literacy, and achievement because it is through the nuances that I highlight the
undeniable diversity that exists among ELLs.

First, ELLs need venues to explore their identities as readers and writers. The
pedagogical spaces allowed for ELLs to reflect on their own identities as reader and writers helps
ELLs and teachers understand how identities are constructed in the classroom. Second, a crucial
element in identity negotiation is the undeniable power of caring and how acts of caring are
reciprocated by ELLs. Third, identity negotiation can be fostered when ELLs participate in a
genuine and effective culturally relevant curriculum, inviting interactions between teachers and
students that address issues of social injustice. It is through these types of interactions that
Cummins (2001) refers to as "*micro- interactions* [italics in original]" (p.15) that teachers can
begin to use texts that promote social transformation. Teacher actions and words, that may
otherwise be dismissed as merely part of a typical classroom day, have lasting impacts on the
identity negotiation of students.

Throughout this study I intended to learn primarily about different types of ELLs in my
classroom, and I found myself learning about my own identity as a teacher, displaying my
teacher actions, and at times vulnerabilities. As I conclude this study I realize that I have also
engaged in the dynamic and ongoing process of identity negotiation as teacher, learner, and
researcher to help me understand the ELLs in my classroom. I conclude this study with a deep
understanding of the power of a teacher's actions, how those actions can have lasting impacts on
ELLs, and how teacher reflection can be used as a tool to help understand how ELLs negotiate
identities differently. Most importantly, I understand the importance of rethinking the labels that
institutions, including teachers like myself, use to describe ELLs because the labels impact how

these students view themselves and how others view them. By rethinking the labels, students are invited to endless possibilities that are not limited to what is thought or should be, but rather the potential for each student to imagine and reimagine their future. I take with me the personal stories participants shared with me, including their stories of hopes and dreams, and in doing so understand that through the process of identity negotiation in the ELA classroom participants have come to discover and acknowledge their potential.

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APPENDIX A

First Face- to Face Interview Questions

Getting to know student

1. What are your dreams/goals?

2. What are your hobbies?

3. What is one of the scariest things for you at school?

I. Learning Identity and Negotiation:

1. How you think you do in school? Why?

> Probing questions: What do you think teachers before me thought of you as a student?
>
> What do you think other students think of you as a student?
>
> What do you think your parents think about the way you do at school?

4. If you had to describe school to another kid your age that has never attended school, what would you tell them? Why?

II. Reading Identity:

1. How do you think you do as a reader? Why?

2. What do you do well when you read?

3. What do you need help with in reading?

III. Writing Identity:

1. How do you think you do as a writer? Why?

2. What do you do well when you write?

3. What do you need help with in writing?

APPENDIX B

Second Face-to- Face Student Interview

I. Learning Opportunities (Identity Unit)

1. Describe a learning activity that you enjoyed this year in Language arts.

2. What kinds of activities in Language arts helped you feel good as a reader or writer this year?

3. What kinds of learning activities were boring in Language arts this year?

II. Self-Reading and Writing Identities

1. How do you think you do in reading? Why?

2. How do you think you do in writing? Why?

3. How do you think you do in school? Why?

III. Reading and Writing Identities (Others)

1. How do you think your parents think you do in school?

2. How do you think your classmates think you do in school?

APPENDIX C

Researcher Journal Excerpt

Action	Reflection
12-5-14 Created a detailed plan and timeline of the Identity Unit.	I added several stories to the plan that were not in the original proposal. I think these stories including: Harvesting Hope, Si Se Puede, and La Mariposa. I think that I need to add these texts to bridge me from their current identities as readers, writers, and learners, to the empowerment element of my study. I think these texts will provide the necessary connections they can make into their own lives.
12-15-14 Read *¡Si, Se Puede! Yes, We Can!* By Diana Cohn in class and had students analyze Carlito's character through an activity called "Fleshing out the Character"	This was not in the original proposal, but I did think it was a necessary activity, because I knew that later on I wanted the kids to compare and contrast *Carlitos* to *Ramiro* from "Death of a Writer". I also had students quote a specific Quote from the story about courage, one that the teacher says. Then I had students define courage in their own words. I did this to get them to start thinking about what courage is. It was interesting to see how the different students defined courage. I also did this assignment because I wanted them to know that courage is needed when one is seeking social justice, especially in their situation as ELLs.
12-16-14 I read Death of a Writer to students today.	After the reading I had the students create a plot diagram. The purpose of this assignment, was not only to review a key objective on plot development, but also to make sure that the students understood the story. It also got the students to think about how the author uses plot development to convey a central message or idea (also another tricky objective for students).
12-17-14 I had students create a connection chart with Ramiro and Carlitos.	I was originally going to have students write about their previous experiences with writing when we read about Ramiro in Death of a Writer, but I made an "on the spot" decision

	to change the writing topic to what would they do if they were Ramiro. I figured I already had enough data that gave me a pretty good idea of how different types of ELLs view themselves as writers. I figured that if I asked them to write about what they would do if they were Ramiro, I could get them to start thinking about speaking up for themselves. We had just read, *¡Sí, Se Puede! Yes, We Can!* about the janitor strike and there were clear connections they could make, so I had them make a connection chart in which they compared and contrasted Ramiro from "Death of a Writer" to Carlitos from *¡Sí, Se Puede Yes, We Can!* To do this I presented them with three themes evident in both stories, courage, freedom, and justice. They had to look at Ramiro and Carlitos and determine how these themes were conveyed through each character. I needed the students to do this so that they could think about Ramiro's situation and how he could have responded in such a situation. I was hoping that the reading of *¡Sí, Se Puede Yes, We Can!* would influence what they would write about. I was interesting to see what the different students wrote about.
12-18-14 I observed that Javier was having a hard time with the connection chart between Ramiro and Carlitos.	I will admit that this assignment was difficult because it asked students to make connections across texts, which is also an objective that has proven to be difficult even among nonELLs. When I saw Javier struggling I reminded him to look back at a previous journal entry for the novel Becoming Naomi Leon, the one where he wrote about what he had to do to make his only hope come true. In that journal entry he had written that he knew he had to work hard. When I said that, he smiled and didn't even have to look. He knew what I was talking about and he got right to work.
01-07-15 Today I showed students a short you tube video of Cesar Chavez and read aloud Harvesting Hope by Kathleen Krull.	I enjoyed seeing students' faces as they watched the video. I felt like some students didn't realize that Mexican Americans endured hardships. I was surprised that not

	many of my students had heard of Cesar Chavez.
01-08-15 Today I had students look at their list of books read in their identity unit booklets to find common themes. I also showed students a sample of my own writing as an 11 year old.	I felt like I needed to allow some class time for discussion and reflection of all the books we have read. I wanted the students to see that all the books we have been reading are connected in some way. As we talked about the books we discussed themes like hopes, dreams, change, and seeking justice. I used the classroom discussion to bridge students into writing about their own hopes and dreams as a writer. Before I had students do this, I shared with them a personal story of how my 5th grade teacher had given me a book for Christmas called "My Book of Writing". I shared my original thoughts about the books and mentioned how I never really thought that I would grow up to be a writer. I shared a selection I had written at age 11 when I wrote that I wanted to be a lawyer. I could tell that the students were excited to see their own teacher's writing as an 11 year old. I think this humanized me in a way and gave me some credibility that I don't know everything, and that I too like them, have walked in their shoes. I then explained that I was writing a book and that today I enjoy writing my thoughts on paper for others to read. I wrote about my own future as a reader and writer. I asked students to do the same. It will be interesting to see what they have written.
01-12-15 Today I read "Those Who Don't". We also read "Inside Out" from The Circuit.	I started off the day's reading by talking about stereotypes. Together in class we discussed what a stereotype is. After the reading I had students write their own version of "Those Who Don't". I told them this was their opportunity to speak to the world and let the world know who they really are. I could see it in the students faces that they were eager to write. They seemed to have a lot to say and immediately stated writing instead of sitting and thinking before writing. I really do think that I need to give these students opportunities to speak to the world more often

	in this sense. I could also tell that the students enjoyed listening to the short story from Jimenez's book. It was an easy read and it connected well with the concept we had explored just last week with farmworkers. Plus, I think that this task will get students to start thinking about speaking up for themselves if they need to, and that one way they can do that is through writing.
01-13-15 Today I started class with a discussion of "Inside Out", shared my own story, and asked students to write about their hopes as readers and writers.	I could tell that Javier and Oralia were especially interested in my story. I shared a piece of writing I had done in the 5th grade where I wrote about wanting to be a lawyer. I think it was pretty neat for them to see me as a young writer, complete with errors and see what I have blossomed into. I explained that I was in the process of writing a book, and that although I never thought I was a writer, I am a writer in many ways today. Students were very quiet and still. I could feel the room filled with light bulbs turning on. I am hoping that this discussion prompted ideas of "I can too." I then had students write about their hopes for the future as a reader and writer.
01-16-15 Today I had students write a self-reflection of themselves as readers and writers.	I thought it was appropriate for us to do this now because we are nearing the close of our unit. This means that we have already read some texts that I hope will inspire my students, especially LTELs, to see themselves as readers and writers. I asked them to specifically think about if they have experienced any changes from the beginning of the year, and if so, to explain them. I also mentioned that if they felt they had not changed, it was okay. They could simply state that. I said that because I did not want to influence them either way. I think it is important that I allow students to express themselves in different modes about any changes undergone. This is why I will next week have them express themselves through poetry. I will also have them express themselves artistically, and orally through post unit interviews.

01-19-15	I noticed that when I assigned the I Am
We also read My Name is Jorge by Jane Medina. I shared my own personal story about not liking for me people to call me by my name in English.	Poems the students were eager to write. I made sure to tell them to focus on their identity as a student.
1-26-15 Today we read "The Circuit" in class. I also shared with students that it would be the last reading in our identity unit.	I could tell that the kids were disappointed with the ending. There was an overwhelming "awe" at the end so I knew that they understood Francisco's pain. I think this story was a good way to close the unit. First, it allowed me to teach character, and it would also serve to bridge a new objective I will be touching on, theme. I thought it expressed a healthy relationship between teacher and student that I aimed to foster in the classroom. It also I allowed for me to invite students into a reading response in which they must write a letter to me as if they were in Francisco's same situation and found out they were moving. I asked them to tell me whatever they wanted me to now about them, as if I was never going to see them again. I will add that I could tell that Oralia looked sad when I told her we were closing our unit on identity.

Table C1. Researcher Journal Excerpt

APPENDIX D

Identity Unit Plan

Week of:	Activity	Purpose	Resources/Readings
10-27-14	Begin reading *Becoming Naomi León* and maintaining a reading response journal	Invite discussions about identity and see how students respond to journal entries	*Becoming Naomi León* Student created reading response journal
12-08-14	Draw pictures that best represent you on your identity booklet	Will tell student's current beliefs about self.	Identity Booklet "My Name" (Cisneros)
12-15-14	Reflective writing on prior experiences with writing and what can be done speak up for oneself	Get students thinking about self and how learners are empowered through voice	"Death of a Writer" (Rice) *íSí, Se Puede Yes, We Can.* (Cohn)
1-07-14	Students writing on hope for their futures as readers and writers in school	Remind students of social justice in action and how it can be sought in the classroom.	*Harvesting Hope:The Story of Cesar Chavez* (Krull)
1-14-14	Descriptive Writing About Self	Check for differences and guide students toward thinking about personal transformation	"Those who Don't Know" (Cisneros)
1-21-14	Autobiographical Poem I AM	Check for Impact from Identity Unit	"My Name is Jorge" (Medina)
1-28-14	Letter writing to teacher	Check for Impact from Unit	"The Circuit" (Jimenez)

Table D1. Identity Unit Plan

APPENDIX E

Research Participant Academic Histories

First Class Research Participants 74 min English Language Arts												
Student	**ELL Status**	**# of years in US Schools**	**Grade first enrolled**	**# of US Schools Attended in Elem.**	**Initial TELPAS Scores Rdg., Wtg, Spk, Lis**	**5th grade STAAR Reading %**	**5th Grade TELPAS %**	**4th grade STAAR Reading %**	**4th grade STAAR Writing %**	**4th grade TELPAS %**	**3rd Grade STAAR Reading %**	**3rd Grade TELPAS %**
Jerardo	LEP	8	PK	5	Gr-K C-B Rdg- B Wtg-B Spk-A Lis -A	57 P	C-A Rdg- A Wtg-A Spk-AH Lis -AH	66 P	43F	C-I Rdg- I Wtg-A Spk-A Lis -AH	35 F	C-A Rdg- A Wtg-I Spk-A Lis -A
Valeria	LEP	8	PK	3	Gr- K C-I Rdg- I Wtg-I Spk-I Lis -A	87 P	C- AH Rdg- AH Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis -AH	70 P	82 P	C- AH Rdg- AH Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis -AH	73 P	C-AH Rdg- AH Wtg-AH Spk-A Lis -A
Pedro	LEP	3	PK	2	Gd- 5 C-I Rdg-I Wtg-B Spk-B Lis-B	(S) 83 P	C- I Rdg- I Wtg-B Spk-B Lis -B	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Marcos	LEP	8	PK	6	Gr-K C-I Rdg- I Wtg-I Spk- I Lis- I	54 P	C-AH Rdg- AH Wtg-AH Spk- AH Lis- AH	50 F	59 P	C-AH Rdg- AH Wtg-AH Spk- AH Lis-AH	48 F	C-AH Rdg- AH Wtg-A Spk- A Lis-A

Table E1. First Class Research Participants' Academic Histories

Note. (S) Indicates the student took the test in Spanish
    P indicates students passed, or met the state standard.
    F indicates the student failed, or did not meet standard.
    TELPAS scores are assigned in the domains of reading, writing, speaking and listening. The domains
    are rated as either B-Beginner, I- Intermediate, A- Advanced, or AH- Advanced High

Student	ELL Status	# of years in US Schools	Grade first enrolled	# of US Schools Attended in Elem.	Initial TELPAS Scores Rdg., Wtg, Spk, Lis	5th grade STAAR Reading %	5th Grade TELPAS %	4th grade STAAR Reading %	4th grade STAAR Writing %	4th grade TELPAS %	3rd Grade STAAR Reading	3rd Grade TELPAS %
Patricia (Repeated K)	LEP	7	K	4	Gr-3 C-A Rdg-A Wtg-A Spk-A Lis-A	74 P	C-AH Rdg-AH Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis-AH	61 P	68 P	C-AH Rdg-AH Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis-AH	53 P	C-A Rdg-A Wtg-A Spk-A Lis-A
Oralia	Non-ELL Yr. 2	7	K	3	Gr- K C-B Rdg-B Wtg-B Spk-B Lis-B		C-AH Rdg-A Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis-AH	1723 P 4000 P		C-AH Rdg-AH Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis-AH	1468 P	C-AH Rdg-AH Wtg-A Spk-A Lis-A
Rolando	LEP	2	5	1	No data	(S) 67 P	No data	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jaime	LEP	1	6	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jesse (Retained in 1st)	LEP	8	K	2	Gr-K C-K Rdg-B Wtg-B Spk-B Lis-B	87* P	C- AH Rdg-AH Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis-AH	66 P	43 F	C- AH Rdg-AH Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis-AH	63 P	C-AH Rdg-AH Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis-AH
Roberto (Retained in 2nd)	LEP	9	PK	8	No data	70 P	C-A Rdg-A Wtg-A Spk-AH Lis-AH	30 F	55 P	C-A Rdg-A Wtg-A Spk-AH Lis-AH	43 F	No data

Table E2. Second Class Research Participants' Academic Histories

Note. *Student received academic recognition of "Advanced" on state assessment
(S) Indicates the student took the test in Spanish
P indicates students passed, or met the state standard.
F indicates the student failed, or did not meet standard.
TELPAS scores are assigned in the domains of reading, writing, speaking and listening. The domains
are rated as either B-Beginner, I- Intermediate, A- Advanced, or AH- Advanced High

Third Class Research Participants **Remedial Class- Three Periods** **111 minute English Language Arts**												
Student	**ELL Status**	**# of years in US Schools**	**Grade first enrolled**	**# of Schools**	**Initial TELPAS Scores Rdg., Wtg, Spk, Lis**	***5th grade STAAR Reading %**	**5th Grade TELPAS %**	**4th grade STAAR Reading %**	**4th grade STAAR Writing %**	**4th grade TELPAS %**	**3rd Grade STAAR Reading**	**3rd Grade TELPAS %**
Jose (Retained in 1st)	LEP	9	PK	17	Gr.- 1 C- B Rdg- B Wtg- B Spk- I Lis- I	30 F	C-I Rdg-I Wtg-I Spk-A Lis-AH	37 F	27 F	C-I Rdg-I Wtg-I Spk-A Lis-A	1202 F 2011yr	C-I Rdg-I Wtg-I Spk- Lis-
Raul (Retained in 2nd)	LEP	9	K	1	Gr.-K C- I Rdg- I Wtg-B Spk- I Lis- I	37 F 17 F 26 F	C- A Rdg-I Wtg-A Spk-A Lis-A	18 F	27 F	C-I Rdg-I Wtg-A Spk-A Lis-A	25 F	C-A Rdg-H Wtg-I Spk-I Lis-I
Alberto (Retained in 1st)	LEP	7	K	4	Gr. 1 C-B Rdg-B Wtg-B Spk-B Lis-B	(S) 30 F (S) 48 F (S) 48 F	C-I Rdg-I Wtg-B Spk-B Lis-B	(S) 41 F	(S) 34 F	C-I Rdg-I Wtg-B Spk-B Lis-B	n/a	n/a
Katia	LEP	6	1	1	No data	1441 F Yr14 61 P	C-AH Rdg-A Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis-AH	1308 F yr13	3750 P Yr 13	C-A Rdg-A Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis-AH	1218 F Yr12	C- no data Rdg-I Wtg-AH Spk-AH Lis-AH
Javier (Retained in 5th gd)	LEP	9	PK	3	Gr.1 C-I Rdg-I Wtg-I Spk-I Lis-I	<u>Yr1</u> <u>Yr 2</u> 39 F 46F 30 F 41F 59 P 26F	C-A Rdg-A Wtg-A Spk-A Lis-A	27 F	39 F	C-A Rdg-A Wtg-A Spk-A Lis-A	44 F**	C-A Rdg-A Wtg-I Spk-I Lis-A
Diego (Retained in 2nd)	LEP	10	PK	4	Gr. K C-I Rdg-I Wtg-B Spk-B Lis-B	72 P	C-A Rdg-A Wtg-A Spk-AH Lis-AH	66 P	48 F	C-AH Rdg-AH Wtg- A Spk-A Lis-A	55 F	C-AH Rdg-AH Wtg-A Spk-AH Lis-AH

Table E3. Third Class Research Participants' Academic Histories

Note. *Multiple scores indicates students took the test more than once. A total of 3 opportunities are allowed in grade 5 STAAR Reading

** TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) score, state assessment before STAAR

   (S) Indicates the student took the test in Spanish, P indicates students passed, or met the state standard, F indicates the student failed, or did not meet standard.

TELPAS scores are assigned in the domains of reading, writing, speaking and listening. The domains are rated as either B-Beginner, I- Intermediate, A- Advanced, or AH- Advanced High