

DON'T LEAVE THEM BEHIND: ELL STUDENTS  
IN THE WAKE OF NCLB

By

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To my parents, who have supported and encouraged me all along the way.

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Throughout its history, the United States has been a nation replete with immigrants, and people whose native language is not English. One of the central concerns of the country has been to educate and assimilate these linguistic and cultural minorities into American society. With respect to English Language Learners (ELLs), educational and language policies have fluctuated between laissez-faire, permissive policies and restrictive policies. With the passing of the United States federal education policy, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), this nation has seen a return to restrictive policies, where bilingual education programs are often replaced with English-only initiatives and programs. NCLB has also placed greater emphasis on assessment and accountability, as measured by students' performance on standardized tests. As a result, a prominent and rapidly-increasing sector of the nation's population, while now more visible as a subgroup due to their inadequate progress in school, is being left behind by the very legislation that was passed in an effort to target all students and keep them from falling through the cracks.

ELL students, when they lack the necessary linguistic repertoires and communicative competence for taking the standardized tests in their L2 (any language subsequent to the first language), find themselves falling short of the standards determined for them by their local and state authorities, when these standards are measured by adequate performance on a standardized

test in English, these students' L2. As a result, standardized tests become language proficiency tests for this sector of society, rather than the content tests they are meant to be.

This paper considers the conversations and attitudes of both teachers and students from the same school system, and what these reveal about the effect NCLB has had on classroom instruction and ELL students' progress, as well as how these two groups' conversations reveal opposing stances on language attitudes, and even classroom practices.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The United States has always had a varied population. Whether culturally, linguistically, or ethnically, the United States seems to pride itself on being a melting pot. However, over the course of its history, the United States' views and policies on the education of linguistic minorities has fluctuated, often due to foreign and domestic unrest and change. Since the founding of the republic, the demographic landscape of the United States has included many different languages. In fact, the first census in 1790 revealed that approximately 25% of the population spoke languages other than English (Wiley and Wright, 2004).

It is not disputed that linguistic minorities have been a part of this nation since its beginnings. Due to this fact, education of these minorities has been (though not always remained) a primary concern of educators' and policymakers' agendas. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which Congress signed in 2002, ELLs—as a population—have become more visible (Abedi, 2004; Black, 2006; Cummins, Bismilla, et al. 2005; Wiley and Wright, 2004). However, they have also been affected adversely by NCLB's heavy emphasis on high stakes assessment as a measure of progress and even language proficiency (Abedi, 2004; Harper, de Jong, et al., 2008; Harper, Platt, et al., 2007; Menken 2008a and 2008b).

This thesis will consider and describe the discourse of both fifth grade teachers and fifth grade ELL students in order to establish the themes that permeate their discourse, as it relates to NCLB and its implications for and effects on ELLs. Teachers' voices, and certainly students' voices, are subjects that are decidedly absent from most current research into educational and language policy, and therefore from policy decisions. However, teachers themselves play an integral role in the processes of policy implementation and appropriation, and are therefore important to studies that aim to evaluate policy effects on schools (de Jong, 2008; Stritikus,

2003). In fact, it is widely known that “as teachers interpret and modify received policies, they are, in fact, primary language policymakers” (Evans and Hornberger, 2005: 99). By seeking to ascertain how teachers and students talk about these issues, this study will shed light on how NCLB is, in fact, leaving behind a large and rapidly increasing sector of the United States population.

## CHAPTER 2 BACKGROUND

No Child Left Behind was signed by Congress in 2002. It is the United States' federal education policy, following from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965), where the 1994 reauthorization mandated the "creation and adoption of academic standards and corresponding assessment systems inclusive of ESL students" (Menken, 2008b: 3). The passage of NCLB requires all states to show the federal government that the students in their schools are making "adequate yearly progress" (AYP), which is mostly determined by students' scores on statewide standardized assessments (Abedi, 2004; Menken, 2008a, 2008b). "AYP is defined as the minimum level of improvement school districts must achieve each year with respect to the growth rate in the percentage of students who achieve the state's definition of academic proficiency. Each state will set the AYP targets that every school must meet to reach 100% proficiency at the end of 12 years" (Fusarelli, 2004: 73). Schools who fail to meet AYP risk sanctions such as closure, and even removal of federal funds (Menken, 2008a).

In a time when the United States educational system is often compared to other highly industrialized nations and found lacking, NCLB places even more emphasis on assessments. Unfortunately, it is widely believed that the ideology of assessments seems to override both their practicality and informative nature, especially with respect to ELLs. Although NCLB was conceptualized as educational policy "with the official goal of increasing student achievement, ... it was in effect operationalized as *de facto* language policy" (Harper, de Jong, et al., 2008: 268), because of its involvement of ELLs.

Aside from focusing unbalanced attention on standardized test scores, both as a barometer for teachers' performance and students' progress through school (Intercultural Development Research Association, 2003; Sadowski, 2004), NCLB has made the United States a

testing culture; a culture where standardized tests are used to describe and determine learners' achievement, success, and assimilation into society. "NCLB" has become synonymous with "standardized tests". While there are certainly other provisions and stipulations of the legislation, testing is the buzzword that the nation's public—educators, parents, and even citizens who have minimal claim to stake on education—closely associates with NCLB. In her 2007, interview with Mr. Jonathan Kozol (writer, former educator in New York City schools, and activist), Anna Mindow (literary columnist for the Boston Globe) received this response when she asked him why NCLB is so destructive: "NCLB widens the gap between races more than any piece of educational legislation I've seen in 40 years... NCLB's [grade level] gains aren't learning gains, they're testing gains. That's why they don't last" (Mindow, 2007).

The population of ELL students in the nation's public schools is at an all-time high: with more than five million ELL students, speaking more than 460 languages (Kindler, 2002). However, this subgroup of the nation's population continues to score low on standardized assessments. Their low scores often prohibit their schools from meeting AYP, which subjects these schools to sanctions and often removal of government funding (Abedi, 2004; Wright and Choi, 2006).

There is much debate about the inequity and effectiveness of high stakes testing (Abedi, 2004; Black, 2006; Cummins, 1982; Hakuta 1986; Menken, 2008b; Platt, de Jong, et al., 2008; Harper, Platt, et al., 2007; Wright and Choi, 2006), especially as it relates to ELLs. However there is a wide variety of current research that suggests both the inequity and ineffectiveness of high stakes testing. In fact, studies show that the gap that exists between ELLs and native speakers of English on assessments "may *not* be due mainly to lack of content knowledge. [ELL] students may possess the content knowledge but may not be at the level of English language

proficiency necessary to understand the linguistic structure of assessment tools” (Abedi, 2004: 11). Herein lies the problem: ELL students’ language proficiency mediates their performance on standardized tests. The standardized tests favored and used by most states were created for students whose native language is English (Cummins, 1982). These tests do not consider the student’s L1 (native, or first language), and certainly ignore the fact that language acquisition and communicative competence—whether in L1 or L2 (any language subsequent to first)—takes years to develop (Hakuta, Butler, et al., 2000; Hymes, 1972).

Since this is the case, standardized tests become language proficiency exams, not simply a means of measuring mastery or understanding of content (Garcia and Menken, 2006; Menken, 2000). Additionally, use of assessments such as statewide, standardized tests makes language a liability for ELL students, where “test results are the primary criteria for high stakes decisions” (Menken, 2008b: 3), like promotion to the next grade, retention in the current grade, and even graduation from high school.

### **ELLs Through United States History**

Historically, there have been several groups who were able to maintain their linguistic diversity even in light of American conquest and colonization. There were also several groups whose cultural and linguistic diversity was not maintained. On the whole, the United States policies toward languages other than English, and toward the groups who spoke these languages, have been unofficial, and sometimes off-the-record. As mentioned in section one, policies directed at these groups fluctuated and changed, often in response to changes in social climate both at home and abroad. These fluctuations often vacillated back and forth between restrictive policies and permissive policies.

Since the founding of the United States, the demography has been varied, with many groups “attempting to maintain their native languages even as they learned English” (Wiley and

Wright, 2004: 143). Mostly, these linguistic minorities were able to maintain their identities without too much resistance, until World Wars I and II brought about a wave of xenophobia, where patriotism (as demonstrated by speaking a common language) was all but required, and anti-German sentiment prevailed (Ovando, 2003; Wiley and Wright, 2004).

However, prior to the World Wars, there was a fair amount of tolerance toward the many languages that existed in the new republic. “As various groups established homesteads in U.S. territory, a general sense of geographical and psychological openness existed” (Ovando, 2003: 4), since there was enough space for people to move and get away from any individual or group with whom they may not agree. And in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many states passed laws that authorized bilingual education, which illustrates not only a tolerance for linguistic minorities, but also a recognition of their value. However, this should not be construed as efforts to actively promote bilingualism; “rather, [it was] a policy of linguistic assimilation without coercion” (Ovando, 2003: 4).

The 1880s mark a time in United States history where many restrictive and repressive policies were enacted. The reasons for these policies were varied, and were motivated by such needs as to “civilize” Indians (repressive Indian language policies), evangelize Indians (furthering these repressive policies), and separate from the dominant German belief in Catholicism (Ovando, 2003). European nationalism began to assert itself during this period. This was met by efforts by the United States to assimilate all immigrants into the same cultural and linguistic mold: that of English-speaking United States citizens. The country eventually passed the Naturalization Act of 1906, which required all immigrants interested in becoming naturalized U. S. citizens to speak English (Ovando, 2003). The prospective citizen was required to have the ability to read, write, and speak ordinary English. Testing by an immigration examiner

determined (and still does determine) the prospective citizen's abilities in English. The portion of the English language requirement dealing with understanding and the ability to speak the language was determined by the prospective citizen's responses to questions asked by the immigration officer during the naturalization interview. The participant's reading and writing proficiency was tested by written examination (Detailed Requirements of Naturalization, 2009).

World Wars I and II caused the United States to push for monolingualism, where not speaking English was seen as un-American. This push for monolingualism became a well-established pattern throughout schools during the course of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The previously held laissez-faire attitudes toward linguistic minorities were quickly replaced by efforts to acculturate and assimilate ELLs into mainstream American and school societies. Beyond Americanization classes, which meant to present U. S. culture and language as more desirable than those of the immigrants, schools adopted the submersion method of educating ELLs (Ovando, 2003). Also known as the sink-or-swim method, educators and policymakers did nothing out of the ordinary to accommodate these students; rather, it was up to the language-minority students "to make the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive adjustments necessary to achieve assimilation into American society" (Ovando, 2003: 6). However, even in light of these policies, the debate over the use of students' L1 in education continued. While this is the case, and while some strides toward at least recognition and consideration of immigrants' L1s were made (*Meyer v. Nebraska (1923)*), these strides seemed to be what Crawford calls "instrumental and symbolic politics" (Ovando, 2003). Ricento and Hornberger also assert "when governments or states decide to intervene in areas involving language, they usually have primarily nonlinguistic agendas" (1996: 404). This evaluation certainly pertains to the United States' stance on linguistic and cultural minorities during this time, as well as at other times in history.

The period from the 1960s to the 1980s can be seen as a time during which the United States educational policies seemed to be more enlightened by the goings-on around the world and at home. For instance, the Russian's launch of Sputnik in 1957, sparked much change and concentration on reforming U. S. educational policies in science, mathematics, and foreign language instruction. Furthermore, the Civil Rights movement brought about change in the degree to which linguistic diversity was nurtured. Federal legislation, such as the National Defense Education Act (1958), The Civil Rights Act (1964), and the Bilingual Education Act (1968), highlighted this change in attitudes and marked significant first steps in moving away from the sink-or-swim methods of education (Ovando, 2003).

Following these important pieces of legislation came the Supreme Court decisions of *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) (whereby the court maintained that equality in the education of English-speaking and non-English speaking students does not constitute equity, and non-English speaking students' civil rights were ruled as being violated), and *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981) (which further developed the *Lau* decision). *Lau v. Nichols* has been called the most important and enduring legal symbol through which the civil rights of language-minority students will continue to be deliberated in the years to come (Hakuta, 1986; Ovando, 2003). Out of this Supreme Court decision came the implementation of *Lau* remedies (1975), which specified federal requirements for identifying ELLs and determining their language proficiency (Ovando, 2003). The *Castañeda* decision gave the public even more specific guidelines for identifying and evaluating ELLs' language proficiency, as well as guidelines for meeting these students' needs (Ovando, 2003; Wiley and Wright, 2004).

The period from the 1980s to the Present has been called "The Dismissive Period" (Ovando, 2003). The Reagan administration (which undid the Carter administration's *Lau*

regulations), coupled with the George H. W. Bush administration, “provided the context for the anti-bilingualism seeds that were sown during the 1980s and continued into the 1990s” (Ovando, 2003: 12). Politicians, activists, and others began to push for a return to the restrictive period’s support of the sink-or-swim educational methods. Even the shift in funds that had been earmarked for bilingual education programs to instead supporting English-only programs reflected a “growing opposition to education through children’s native languages” (Ovando, 2003: 12). Ron Unz’s initiation of California’s Proposition 227 in 1998, as well as funding cutbacks and proposed stipulations by the Clinton administration that ELLs be given only two years to learn English, have contributed to the current climate in the United States where English-only policies are on the rise (Abedi, 2004; Black, 2006; Harper, de Jong, et al., 2008; Harper, Platt , et al., 2007; Menken 2008a and 2008b; Ovando, 2003; Wiley and Wright, 2006).

### **NCLB and ELLs**

While the “dismissive period” is marked by several pieces of legislation with serious consequences for ELLs (Proposition 203 in Arizona, Proposition 227 in California, and Question 2 in Massachusetts), the most prominent is NCLB. NCLB is the legislation that systematically removed all previous legislation enacted to work in favor of bilingual education (i.e. Bilingual Education Act, 1968, and subsequent reauthorizations), by removing all language of bilingualism from the policy (Gándara and Baca, 2008), where the implication is that schools must “quickly develop students’ English language proficiency and move them to English-only classrooms” (Evans and Hornberger, 2005: 88).

NCLB sets as one of its purposes, “to assist all limited English proficient children to achieve at high levels in the core academic subjects so that those children can meet the same challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet” (NCLB, Title III, section 3102). English Language Learner provisions are

included under Title I and Title III of NCLB. Title I outlines the state standards, assessment, AYP and other measures of accountability for ELLs, and Title III outlines the funding provided to state and local education agencies who are obligated by NCLB to increase the English proficiency and academic content knowledge of LEP students (NCLB uses “LEP”—Limited English Proficiency over “ELL”). Under this stipulation, these state and local education agencies may decide on their method of instruction to teach English to ELLs, but they are all held to the same national level of effectiveness (determined by students’ performance on standardized assessments) (NCLB, Title I, section 1112; Title III, sections 3113, 3212, 3213, 3247, 3302).

NCLB defines LEP (or ELL) students as (a) being 3 to 21 years of age, (b) enrolled or preparing to enroll in elementary or secondary school, (c) either not born in the United States or speaking a language other than English, and (d) owing to difficulty in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding English, not meeting the states’ proficient level of achievement to successfully achieve in English-only classrooms. (Abedi, 2004: 5)

NCLB requires that all ELL students be included in the state assessments that all other students participate in and meet the same academic content and achievement standards as all other children, and that inclusion of ELLs in these assessments must begin immediately when the students enroll in school with few to none exemptions for limited English proficiency. (NCLB, Title 1, section 1112). However, when achievement or meeting standards is defined as scoring at the same levels as native English speakers for all the same academic content standards, standardized tests put ELLs at an extremely unfair disadvantage since the language used on these tests is often completely foreign to these students, and can often take up to nine years to acquire (de Jong, 2008; Hakuta, Butler, et al. 2000; Hornberger, 2006).

While it is ideologically sound that limited English proficient students do need assistance in meeting content and academic standards, NCLB also means that practically (upon implementation) ELL students are made to take these high stakes assessments often within weeks of starting school. Furthermore, in grades where assessment scores serve as the gateway to

promotion to the next grade or even a high school diploma, ELL students' scores put them at an unfair disadvantage. The obstacles they encounter in the United States' testing environment include unfamiliarity with the testing language, content, and vocabulary, as well as the cultural orientation of the test. If the nation truly wants to exercise the ideology of assisting ELL students, then we need to craft assessments that yield equitable and meaningful results (TESOL, 2000).

Assisting ELL students in reaching "high levels in the core academic subjects" implies a marked distinction between helping students acquire pragmatic understanding of and conversational functionality in their L2, English, and acquiring understanding of academic language. These distinctions, named by Cummins (1979) as BICS (basic interpersonal communication skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency), are important and should not only be acknowledged, but also considered as an important factor in assessing ELL students. While Cummins has been criticized for these distinctions, he argues that while they are not absolute, the BICS/CALP distinction "represents *one way* of interpreting and communicating the research data to policymakers and practitioners with the goal of improving educational experiences and outcomes for bilingual students" (2003: 327). In other words, these distinctions can and do serve as one lens through which to observe SLA data, as well as a framework for explaining the same data.

If one of the stated goals of NCLB is to evaluate ELL students' understanding of core academic subjects, why do we use assessments written for students with a fairly high working knowledge of English, for students whose L1 is not English (Cummins, 1982)? The nature of these standardized tests is to use academic, high-level vocabulary. While it is true that L2 learners of English can (and do) progress quickly, most of their early acquisition of the language

is limited to conversational skills. By insisting that ELL students are ready to take English content tests, and to have their future progress in school be determined by the scores they receive, we ignore the fact that language acquisition in general, whether L1 or L2, takes time; native English speakers do not even reach communicative competence until their late teens and early twenties (Hymes, 2001). It seems counterintuitive to expect that L2 speakers of English have reached the level of communicative competence, and acquired the academic language proficiency, necessary for taking standardized tests, often within months of arriving in the United States.

Historically, policymakers in the United States ignore the implications of state-mandated tests for ELL students until given reason to consider these implications. “This reflects the marginal status generally accorded to linguistic and cultural diversity issues in educational reform efforts in most educational jurisdictions” (Cummins, 2000: 145). In fact, it is this marginalization that prompted the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE) to argue “from the outset, high stakes assessments should be developed with ELL students in mind” (NCBE, 1997: 6). ELL students should be considered at all levels of development of assessments: from the test construct and framework, and language/vocabulary used, to being represented in the sample used to norm the instruments (NCBE, 1997).

While policymakers may contend that language policy’s aims are to teach English to bilingual children so that they can make their way in society and have equal opportunities, it seems that policymakers actually view the linguistic and cultural diversity of bilingual children as a threat to social harmony and cohesion (Cummins, 2001; Evans and Hornberger, 2005). Many politicians prefer monolingualism to bilingualism, where the overriding desire and preference is for the “assimilation of minority language communities into a more standardized,

monochrome language world” (Baker, 2006: 48). Either way, whether the idea is to teach English to ELLs to ensure their progress in and assimilation into United States society, or whether it is to squelch the variety and diversity of languages and cultures brought into the United States by immigrants, the use of standardized tests to assess these linguistic minorities is not only inequitable, it also gives an unclear and often false picture as to what these students actually know (in terms of both language and content).

### **Georgia and NCLB**

While NCLB is a federal education policy—one that has been criticized as the “most invasive federal education policy in U. S. history” (Menken, 2008a: 191)—it must be implemented at the state level. Each state must fully comply with all mandates of NCLB in order to receive federal funding for education (Menken, 2008a). As stated in section 2.2, state education agencies, school districts and schools are required by NCLB to educate all ELL students to the same national level of proficiency and effectiveness. However, NCLB does give these entities freedom in choosing their methods of instruction (NCLB, Title III).

Since I collected the data from a school in the Fulton County School System in Atlanta, Georgia, it is necessary to give context to my data, and to how NCLB is interpreted and implemented at the state and school system level in Georgia. As stated in section 1, I collected data from both teachers and students, in the form ethnographic interviews.

The state of Georgia is a combination of urban, large metropolitan cities and rural, agricultural small towns. Like every state in the union, the state’s demographics are varied across the board, in terms of race, socioeconomic status, and level of education. Georgia does have a rather large population of ELLs in its schools (School Data Direct, Georgia, State Overview). In fact, Georgia’s concentration of immigrant populations is one of the fastest growing in the United States. Of all 50 states, thirteen have shown tremendous growth in terms of number of

immigrants. The states given this status of “fastest growing immigrant populations” had 200 percent or higher growth in the years of 1990-2007. Georgia ranked second on this list of thirteen states (Migration Policy Institute, map). In real numbers, Georgia’s student population for the 2007-2008, school year was 1,629,157; of this number, 5.5% (approximately 89,603 students) were classified as LEP students (School Data Direct, Georgia, State Overview).

In response to NCLB’s passage and implementation, Georgia has moved its curriculum standards from Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) to Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) in all core subjects (reading, language arts, mathematics, science and social studies). The new standards (GPS) were written and adopted as a result of both NCLB and the new state superintendent of education’s focus on quality instruction and desire to place Georgia’s educational system at the forefront of innovation and quality. Since their implementation GPS have helped Georgia to see continued improvement on almost every state and federal education assessment. The focus of the GPS is to incorporate the content standards and improve student achievement by providing a viable curriculum that provides “clear expectations for instruction, assessment and student work” (GeorgiaStandards.Org, Georgia Performance Standards).

Assessments in Georgia are varied, and much of the school year is spent in the testing environment. Tests that are given over the course of every year, are the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) in early Fall, and the CRCT (Criterion Referenced Competency Test), which is Georgia’s statewide, high stakes assessment, given in the Spring. Additionally, third, fifth, and eighth graders are tested on their writing skills and ability by the Georgia Writing Test. ELLs are tested annually for language proficiency with the use of Georgia’s ACCESS for ELLs, standards-based criterion referenced measure (Georgia Department of Education, Assessments). Additionally, county superintendents mandate testing of students at least twice a year, to evaluate their

acquisition of knowledge over the course of a single semester (Fulton County BOE, and personal experience). These tests, specifically the CRCT, are used to measure and determine students' progress through school, and schools' attainment (or lack thereof) of AYP.

## CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I analyzed and described the data from both the teachers and the students with respect to Ruiz's Language Orientation Model, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT).

### **Language Orientation Model**

Ruiz's Language Orientation Model was proposed as a means for describing and evaluating the role of attitudes, whether conscious or unconscious, toward language learning, with implications for the effect of L1 on L2 (Ruiz, 1984). This model is a three-pronged framework for viewing language issues and policies implemented as a result of how language is perceived: (1) language as problem, where language is seen as an obstacle to assimilation, socialization, inculcation of societal norms, and social mobility; (2) language as right, where language is seen as a right to be maintained and preserved; (3) language as resource, where development of languages as linguistic resources is emphasized (Ricento and Hornberger, 1996).

I used this framework to partially constrain my evaluation and description of both groups of participants' discourse around NCLB and its consequences for ELLs. Hornberger says that any or all of these orientations may be present in language planning and policy, and at state and local levels of policy implementation, but they are not mutually exclusive (Hornberger, 1990; Ricento and Hornberger, 1996). Hornberger also states "decisions as to language planning goals will necessarily be influenced by the orientations held by decision makers" (1990: 24).

Unfortunately, the *language as problem* orientation has been the dominant view of language in the public sphere. However, Hornberger also highlights the fact that the *language as right* orientation operates on some of the same assumptions as language as problem; specifically, a desire for national unity, that individuals' rights be protected, that a common language is

necessary, that schools are the medium for socialization—both linguistically otherwise, and that the language use mediates between civic and economic success and failure (Hornberger, 1990).

Given these assumptions, Hornberger calls for decision-makers and policymakers to adopt the *language as resource* orientation, where languages are seen as resources not only for those who speak them, but also for the nation as a whole (Hornberger, 1990). The *language as resource* orientation draws attention to the fact that students' L1 aids in their acquisition of an L2; as they make connections and understandings in their L1 they can transfer that to their L2 (Cummins 1979, 1982, 2000, 2001; Baker, 2006; Lightbrown and Spada, 2006).

Unfortunately, the discourse of Title III of NCLB reflects a language as problem orientation, with no references to bilinguals or bilingualism, and certainly no acknowledgement of multilingualism as a resource or right (Evans and Hornberger, 2005). Evans and Hornberger go on to say that “attitudes toward languages and their speakers are deeply embedded in institutional structures and practices and these attitudes are transmitted to and influence agents and processes at [other levels]” (2005: 93). When these deeply embedded attitudes toward language are exclusionary and ignore theoretically sound and empirically based research (as NCLB does), linguistic minorities suffer the consequences (Cummins, 1982; Evans and Hornberger, 2005).

Drawing on my own experiences as a former educator, coupled with my own intuitions and insight into education, I was confident that I would find varied orientations toward language in analyzing and describing my data. I chose to use Ruiz's Language Orientation Model as a framework because I wanted to see whether, and to what extent, the dominant view of language as a problem permeated the discourse of teachers of ELLs and ELLs themselves

### **Sociocultural Theory**

Sociocultural Theory (SCT), as proposed by Vygotsky in 1934, explores the fundamental tenet that human cognition is “mediated in various ways—through tools, semiotic systems

(especially language), and social interactions” (Kasper and Rose, 2002: 33). SCT was borne out of the belief that language learning has a distinctively social foundation, which is why it was appropriated for second language learning (Kasper and Rose, 2002; Lantolf, 2000).

In his 1978 work on SCT, Vygotsky states:

Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (Stritikus, 2003, p. 35)

SCT clearly rejects the notion that thinking and speaking are one and the same thing, and even completely eliminates the notion that the individual and the social are distinct, choosing instead to view the individual and the social as two sides of the same coin. Instead, thinking and speaking—while separate—are interrelated, in that output, or public speech, is derived from and completes competence and private thought (Lantolf, 2000). Lantolf goes on to explain that “thought cannot be explained without taking account of how it is made manifest through linguistic means, and linguistic activities, in turn, cannot be understood fully without seeing them as manifestations of thought” (2000: 7).

From the perspective of SCT, cognitive development manifests in one’s ability to use language. Garcia states that: “if the relationship between language and cognitive development operates as Vygotsky and later theorists claim, educational practices that ignore or negatively regard a student’s native language and culture could have negative effects on the student’s cognitive development” (2000: 33). It is from this perspective that I evaluated both teachers’ and students’ discourse: if the students are made to think that their L1 language and culture are valuable and important, then their cognitive development would be positively affected, and both sets of participants (teachers and students) should be able to speak to that success. Additionally, by employing SCT as a theoretical framework to constrain my analyses and description, I was

able to use my participants' language to draw conclusions about their thoughts and attitudes toward NCLB and ELLs.

In applying both of these frameworks to my research findings, the goal was to gain a clear picture of educators' and students' thoughts, reactions, responses, interpretations and implementation of NCLB with respect to ELL students.

The broader implications of this study are to enlighten and inform the pedagogical practices used for L2 instruction, as well as the writing and implementation of educational policy and specifically, language policy. Since orientation plays a significant role in affecting the acquisition of a second language, this research will consider the interface between current research in LPP and how teachers and students view and respond to the orientations fueling these policies.

The proposed research ought to have several, far-reaching implications. First, in evaluating educators' attitudes toward and implementation of NCLB with specific regard to ELL students, I will supplement the study of LPP with a qualitative, *emic* perspective. This perspective should inform the continued research in LPP, as it pertains to pedagogy and policy aimed at ELLs, and call for educational and language policies that are based on research rather than ideology. I anticipate that the proposed research will have implications for teachers, students, policymakers, curriculum and textbook writers, and other researchers.

## CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

To evaluate and describe educators' discourse around ELL students and the ways in which they interpret and implement NCLB, as well as the data from ELL students themselves, I based my methodology around Spradley's (1979) The Ethnographic Interview. Just as he approached his interviews as a "friendly conversation", I conducted my interview as casually as possible, in order to promote openness and frank dialogue (Hymes, 1962; Spradley, 1979). I also chose this method because I wanted to use a qualitative method in order to gain an *emic* perspective on specific phenomena. My preference for this methodology comes from Boxer (1993) where in her own study she found that allowing the participants to speak extemporaneously during their ethnographic interviews yielded more useful data. I recorded the interview on a digital audio recorder, and was especially careful to let my questions emanate from the interview. I certainly did not go into these interviews with an "unmotivated looking", since I wanted educators and students to talk about specific things. However, I felt confident that my participants would talk easily and freely about ELL students, assessments, and NCLB, as they are currently all very prominent and controversial issues in education.

The school I recruited my participants from is in the Fulton County School System (Atlanta, GA area). The school population is extremely diverse, with students coming from low income, government-subsidized housing, as well as multi-million dollar homes, and everywhere in between. The race and ethnic distribution of students is also widely varied, with 60% of the students enrolled (total enrollment, 2008/09 school year was 851) falling into the category of "minority". Within this category, the distribution of students is: 40% Black, 30% Hispanic, 20% Multi-Racial, and 10% Asian. Sixteen percent of students enrolled at this school are ELL students (approximately 136 students).

Since I wanted to capture conversation and the natural discourse of educators, I modified the ethnographic interview in the sense that rather than conducting interviews with each individual participant, I had a focus group discussion, with all five teachers participating in the discourse at will. The teachers' conversation amounted to two hours and twenty minutes of data. I interviewed a mix of educators: two general education classroom teachers, one ESOL teacher, one inclusion teacher (who team teaches with a special education teacher in a mixed class of students with special needs and mainstream students), and a special education teacher. All participants were female, and ranged in age between 30 and 60. Of the two general classroom teachers, one has her master's degree in curriculum and instruction, the inclusion teacher has her master's degree in curriculum and instruction, and the special education teacher has her master's degree in special education. The ESOL teacher was in the process of completing her master's degree in bilingual education. It was my intent that this varied population of participants would give a more comprehensive picture of the discourse surrounding NCLB and ELL students. For instance, how and to what extent do educators' views of and attitudes toward ELL students differ from their attitudes toward native speakers of English? How do these educators individually and collectively talk about and implement NCLB, and how are its goals implemented in the mainstream and ESOL classrooms?

All of my eight student participants were fifth grade students at the same school where I collected the educators' data; there were 4 male students and 4 female students. As fifth-graders, they were all 10 and 11, and they were from a variety of L1 backgrounds (Spanish, Korean, and Arabic; 6 Spanish, 1 Korean, and 1 Arabic). All students had just been exited from their ESOL program, and the recorded data I collected from them equaled closed to an hour and forty-five minutes. In addition to the ethnographic interviews, I used language surveys with the students. I

felt that this combination of methods would give me better access to these ELL students' feelings about and attitudes toward standardized tests and learning English. The students who participated in this study were eager to talk and share their experiences, even when those experiences were less than positive.

From the recorded data, I have transcribed and included those narratives that shed light on my topic. I have used a modified version of Jefferson's (1974) transcription system to highlight how educators orient toward ELL students and NCLB in their conversations about these topics. I used the same system to highlight the student data. In including and describing this data as group data, I believe that I have uncovered certain patterns and themes (conversation topics, vocabulary, etc.), that enable a weaving together of these common threads to give a more comprehensive description of their collective experience (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998).

Since I transcribed both sets of data using a modified version Jefferson's CA (Conversation Analysis) transcription style, I coded the data for the specific themes that I found. In the teachers' discourse, I found that three themes emerged, each with subsequent subthemes: (1) teachers' desire to reach and intervene on behalf of the ELLs, (2) the testing pressures invoked by NCLB, and how those pressures affect the curriculum, and (3) the need for students' literacy in L1 in order for success in L2. In the students' discourse, I found three recurring themes, also with resulting subthemes: (1) students' difficulties in taking (and doing well on) the Georgia statewide assessment (the CRCT), (2) students' use of and perceptions and feelings toward their L1 and their L2, and (3) students' thoughts about their teachers' perception of their L1.

CHAPTER 5  
DATA ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

**Educators' Data**

Table 5-1 provides a summary of the themes that emerged from the educators' conversation:

Table 5-1. Themes emerging from educators' data

Theme	Sub-theme
1. reach and intervene on behalf of ELL students	1a. types of intervention(s) 1b. effectiveness of intervention(s)
2. testing pressures invoked by NCLB	2a. effect of testing pressures on curriculum
3. need for students' literacy in L1 to be grounded in order for success in L2	3a. transfer from L1 to L2 3b. teachers' acknowledgement of transfer from L1 to L2 3c. teachers' practices regarding students' use of L1 in the classroom

As stated in section 4, I interviewed all five of my participants at one time.

For the purposes of anonymity, I have changed the names of all participants. The names and positions of the five participants are as follows: Leigh, an ESOL teacher; Kate, a special education teacher; Ellen, an inclusion teacher; Anne, a mainstream classroom teacher; and Meg, a mainstream classroom teacher. I kept my name, as the interviewer, the same. Table 5-2 summarizes the characteristics of the teachers I interviewed:

Table 5-2. Teacher participants

Teacher name	Type of teacher	Age	Highest degree
Leigh	ESOL	41	Bachelor's (working on MA)
Kate	Special Education	49	Master's
Ellen	Inclusion	54	Master's
Anne	General Education	62	Master's
Meg	General Education	31	Bachelor's

The first theme that surfaced several times during the course of the 2.5 hour conversation was that of ELL students' difficulties in school. Whether discussing students' L1 and how it

affects their acquisition of English, or the fact that NCLB's emphasis on standardized tests has isolated and even served to discriminate against L2 learners of English, this group of teachers talked candidly about this particular group of students. In analyzing the conversational data, I discovered that no member of this focus group seemed to orient herself toward ELL students' L1s as a problem. On the contrary, each teacher seemed to recognize or at least agree with the fact that successful learning in an L2, as well as acquisition of that L2, are enhanced and even dependent on students' L1 experiences and the transfers they make from their L1 into their L2. The following narrative excerpt highlights how these teachers talked about ELLs' L1 transfer to L2 (underlined portions of the narrative are the key passages):

**Narrative 1:**

Kate: (88) Yes so she's very literate in Spanish so she's had some schooling  
 Leigh: (89) See that's another thing that I've been finding so interesting you know the  
 (90) fact that so many teachers you know this English only idea like if they can  
 (91) make the transfer [from their first language into their second language then=  
 Kate: (92) [mm hmm  
 Leigh: (93) =they're much better off  
 Kate: (94) It should be they should be stronger [students I would thi[nk  
 Leigh: (95) [right  
 Ellen: (96) [it's almost  
 (97) to me like in kindergarten [ when you have children who've only spoken=  
 Kate: (98) [mm hmm  
 Ellen: (99) =Spanish they need to get that sound letter correspondence in Spanish=  
 Meg: (100) mm hmm  
 Anne: (101) right  
 Ellen: (102) =to be able to trans[fer [it to English and I'm thinkin' they'll be stronger=  
 Leigh: (103) [mm hmm  
 Meg: (104) [mm hmm  
 Ellen: (105) =students it's almost like they need to be learning to read two languages at  
 (106) one time and I don't know [if they can do that

Narrative two deals with the second prominent theme in the data, where these educators talk about their ELLs and the effect of NCLB's assessment-driven accountability measures on this student population (again, underlined portions are key):

## Narrative 2:

- Leigh: (1) What about the fact that for instance English Language Learners or ESOL  
(2) students are in an ESOL program for (.) 5 and 6 years and [still=  
Kate: (3) [mmm  
Leigh: (4) =don't have the same linguistic capacity [that =  
Ellen: (5) [mm hmm  
Leigh: (6) =y' [know the native speakers do =  
Kate: (7) [the native mm hmm  
Leigh: (8) =and and are required to have in order to take our assess[ments=  
Anne: (9) [right  
Leigh: (10) =and that are required to take high stakes assessments and then those [those=  
Kate: (11) [mmm  
Leigh: (12) =grades promote them or keep them from being [promoted  
Ellen: (13) [which is really a form of  
(14) discrimination  
Leigh: (15) It is: [but  
Anne: (16) [and it burns me up  
Kate: (17) Well it (.) and it's really not just for the student but with the whole No Child  
(18) Left Behind the schools are getting dinged for that because [that's one of =  
Anne: (19) [mm hmm  
Kate: (20) =the subgroups that we're targeting this year [because=  
Ellen: (21) [that's our lowest subgroup

While it was the ESOL teacher (Leigh) who advocates on behalf of the ELL students in the second excerpt, the other teachers do the primary talking in Narrative 1. The special education (Kate) and inclusion (Ellen) teachers speak about their first-hand experiences in seeing their students transfer learning and literacy from their L1 into their L2 learning of English. It is widely known that this first-hand experience, and the success they see these students having when they are given opportunities to use their L1 to inform their L2 acquisition, is necessary in furthering the cause of educating ELLs.

Narrative 2 sheds light on the assumption that NCLB's creation of a testing environment in our public schools has served to isolate many of our students. In this case, standardized tests—whether the statewide, high stakes assessments, or county-mandated tests—become the tool (and often the only tool given any credence) for promotion and retention of students. In this way,

standardized tests put ELL students at an unfair disadvantage, and become the barometer by which their acquisition of English is measured. However, these tests are not language tests; they are content tests. We see from Leigh's turns (starting in line 1, and ending in line 12) that she is sensitive to the fact that ESOL students are not acquiring what they need from their ESOL classes in order to meet or exceed expectations on high stakes assessments. While Leigh is the ESOL teacher in this group, the others' comments show their understanding and sensitivity to this plight.

Falling under the second theme that emerged from the data is the excerpt in Narrative 3. In talking about NCLB, and what it looks like to implement this legislation at the school level, the focus group of teachers expressed individual and collective pressure to perform, and to ensure that their students perform. However, in all their efforts to target specific student subgroups in order to ensure acquisition of knowledge, these teachers' discourse betrays the feelings that as much time as they spend targeting these subgroups (whether to guarantee meeting the government's mandate that each school show Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), or to make certain that their students are gaining mastery of the curriculum), it is not enough time. In reference to the particular subgroup this school has chosen to target this year for their AYP (the subgroup being ESOL students, because this subgroup caused the school to fall short of AYP last year), this focus group of teachers feels their efforts will not garner the kind of success necessary to ensure this subgroup meets AYP demands (Narrative 3). This attitude is made explicit by Ellen's comments (lines 57, 59, 61 and 64) that while this subgroup has shown some improvement, the improvement is not substantial enough to cause them to pass the CRCT (Georgia's statewide standardized assessment, Criterion Referenced Competency Test).

### Narrative 3:

Melissa:(40) So do you feel pressure to get these kids up to a  
Kate: (41) I'm feeling more pressure this year than I ever have before  
Melissa:(42) Why  
Ellen: (43) mm hmm  
Kate: (44) Uh the stakes are higher [because we are in danger [of  
Ellen: (45) [yeah  
Anne: (46) [mmm  
Ellen: (47) [we almost did not make=  
Anne: (48) [AYP  
Ellen: (49) =we had to go to the second leve[1: to make AYP we did not make it on the=  
Kate: (50) [mm hmm  
Ellen: (51) =first go round  
Kate: (52) And because such effort is being put into [providing things for these kids=  
Ellen: (53) [mm hmm  
Kate: (54) =like 3 teachers in the math class extended day [2 days a week parent=  
Meg: (55) [mm hmm  
Kate: (56) =tutors for these kids that's starting up soon and you know  
Ellen: (57) They've pulled out all the stops [and are expecting to see results and at this=  
Kate: (58) [yeah  
Ellen: (59) =point when we reported our data there are no results  
Kate: (60) Some improvement but not up to the  
Ellen: (61) Some improvement but [not  
Melissa:(62) [not where it [needs to be  
Kate: (63) [where it needs to be  
Ellen: (64) They're not gonna pass the test  
Melissa:(65) The: what test  
Kate: (66) CR|CT

The previous narrative shows these teachers' thoughts about testing under NCLB, and the pressures that are stemming from the policy. Their talk also betrays the underlying attitude that perhaps the reason to focus on ELLs' achievement is motivated more by the fact that this subgroup caused this school to fall short of meeting AYP, than the attitude that intervention on behalf of these students is necessary just for the sake of their needs. That the stakes are higher, and that this school's most recent data show negligible improvement in terms of meeting AYP for the year, begs the question how is NCLB ensuring that children are not being left behind? In its unrelenting emphasis on national and state test scores—as barometers of both teachers' and

students' success—NCLB is leaving children behind, while at the same time raising the stakes for teachers, and perhaps distracting them from focusing their concern on their students, rather than on meeting AYP.

The following excerpt from the conversation confirms that to most educators, implementing NCLB into their classrooms usually takes the form of intense preparation for statewide, standardized assessments:

**Narrative 4:**

Melissa:(1) And so when do you begin prep for the CRCT  
Kate: (2) We've started CRCT practice already (in October; the test is in April)  
Melissa:(3) You're already practicing for it=  
Anne: (4) Yes  
Melissa:(5) =how are you practicing for it  
Kate: (6) Tho:se practice tests  
Ellen: (7) The the math series has a CRCT book and they have written a que quest 5-7 (8)  
questions per lesson bubble in that er follow GPS  
Melissa:(9) If you cou[ld  
Anne: (10) [that look like what they're gonna see same verbiage  
Kate: (11) How much do y'all go over those  
Ellen: (12) I'm spending too much time going over them  
Melissa:(13) You're [spending too much time  
Anne: (14) [I go over them every day  
Kate: (15) But how much ti:me  
Melissa:(16) If you could quantify it  
Anne: (17) It depends hhh (1.5) time  
Melissa:(18) Could you put a time on it like each [day even not just in math but each=  
Ellen: (19) [I spend I spend  
Melissa:(20) =day how long would you say you spend preparing for tests like a  
(21) standard]ized assessment  
Anne: (22) [for that one that particular [assessment  
Ellen: (23) [probably at least 30 minutes a day  
Anne: (24) I spend more like close to an hour spread out across the day but an hour  
Melissa:(25) Really [out of 4 hours of teaching [time

In some cases (lines 23 and 24), one quarter of the day's total instructional time is spent in test preparation, or as educators say, "teaching to the test". While it is necessary to ensure that students are not blindsided by the type of language (highly academic) used on standardized tests

by exposing them to this language, spending one quarter—or even one eighth—of the day’s instructional time is too much. Test preparation should come in the form of teaching the curriculum, since the assessments test the students’ understanding of that curriculum. Even preparing students for the kind of language they will encounter on these tests should be embedded in the presentation of the curriculum, rather than taught in isolation.

The final excerpt from teachers’ data follows from section 2.3, where I mention that school system superintendents often enforce additional testing on students and teachers. So, in addition to spending three weeks in testing with their fifth graders (ITBS, one week; CRCT, one and a half weeks; Georgia writing test, one half week), these teachers must make room in their schedules, schedules which are already disproportionately devoted to testing and test preparation, to give their students pre- and post-tests twice per semester:

#### **Narrative 5:**

Melissa:(1) So you’ve had the ITBS when’s the CRCT

Ellen: (2) Apri[l but (.)=

Kate: (3) [April

Ellen: (4) =between now and Christmas we have to have this new superintendent is very  
(5) into that came from Gwinette is real into pre- post- so we’re going to take a  
(6) reading test and a math test on next semester a pretest of all the curriculum

Kate: (7) A pretest of everything we’ll be teaching second curriculum I mean second  
(8) semes[ter

Melissa:(9) [What do they expect that to show

Kate: (10) Growth hopefully

Ellen: (11) Growth and where you need to really focus ‘cause we’re having a mandatory  
(12) meeting on our workday after Christmas to find out how to use this new data  
(13) (2.0) so one week they do the pretest for second semester and the next week  
(14) they do a posttest for first semester in reading science and math

Since their new superintendent is “real into pre- post- [tests]”, they will spend four additional weeks in testing; two weeks per semester for pre-tests, and two weeks per semester for post-tests. Thus, in addition to “NCLB” becoming synonymous with “standardized tests”, its assessment-driven accountability measures have also affected policy at the local school district

level. The testing atmosphere that has come to prevail in the United States reaches far and wide, and those most central to our nation’s educational success—both students and teachers—are negatively affected by it, as exhibited by the teachers’ narratives.

### **ELL Students’ Data**

Table 5-3 summarizes the themes that emerged from the students’ data:

Table 5-3. Themes emerging from students’ data

Theme	Sub-theme
1. difficulties in taking the CRCT	1a. difficulties in general 1b. difficulties with language of the test
2. use of, and perceptions and feelings toward language	2a. toward L1 2b. toward L2
3. thoughts about teachers’ perceptions of their L1	3a. teachers’ use of students’ L2 3b. teachers’ stance on students’ use of L1

In the process of gathering information from my student participants, I asked them to fill out a language use survey, to ascertain their home languages and nationalities, their family makeup (brothers, sisters), and to determine their comfort with speaking/using English in each of their classes. These helped me obtain background on each student, and gave me a good point from which to start each interview. Table 5-4 gives a closer look at the student participants and the data I collected from the home language surveys:

Table 5-4. Student participants

Student	Gender	Nationality	Home language	L2 comfort (on scale of 1 – 10)
Student1	Male	Puerto Rican	Spanish	6
Student2	Female	Mexican	Spanish	10
Student3	Female	Mexican	Spanish and English	10
Student4	Male	Mexican	Spanish and English	8
Student5	Female	Korean	Korean and English	9
Student6	Male	Mexican	Spanish	7
Student7	Male	Mexican	Spanish	10
Student8	Female	Omani	Arabic and English	10

The questions I asked were basically all the same for each student, although I did try to let the flow of the conversation and the answers the students gave direct my line of questioning.

In contrast to the teachers' discourse, these interviews with the students are much more question and answer sessions, than natural free-flowing discourse. Part of this was due to the fact that these children did not know me (I lacked the same rapport I had with the teachers), and part of it was due to the fact that given the chance to talk to me about anything, I am sure the students would not choose to talk about standardized testing. Therefore, I had to direct the interview more than I needed to with the teachers.

Just as the data I transcribed from the teachers' discourse generated certain prevalent themes, I found that in transcribing the students' data, three themes emerged. These themes are stated in section 4, but I have included a summary here for reference: (1) students' difficulties in taking (and doing well on) the Georgia statewide assessment (the CRCT), (2) students' use of and perceptions and feelings toward their L1 and their L2, and (3) students' thoughts about their teachers' perception of their L1.

Each of the eight students described their comfort-level in using English on a scale of one to ten, where one was the least comfortable, and ten was the most. All interviewees placed themselves on the scale between five and ten. They each described feeling that while they felt somewhat to extremely comfortable using English in communication, they experienced difficulty with the language as it is used on their standardized test. Recall that, in Georgia, the statewide assessment is the CRCT—the Criterion Referenced Competency Test.

All of the eight students who participated in the study were able to determine and articulate that they felt their difficulties on the CRCT came not from the content being assessed, but the use of language; "big words", as most of the students called them.

Narratives 6, 7 and 8 highlight this theme (theme 1), with key comments underlined:

### **Narrative 6:**

Melissa: (27) Do you know the test the CRCT

Student1: (28) Yes

Melissa: (29) How many times have you had to take that test

Student1: (30) Uh every year First second third fourth and fi fi (1.5) then I have to take=  
(31) =it this year

Melissa: (32) Does it make you nervous do you feel like it's hard

Student1: (33) Yes

Melissa: (34) Why is it hard

Student1: (35) Because some of it the stuff when I take it I don't know it

Melissa: (36) Ok is it the questions that are hard like is it the content that's=  
(37) =asked or is it the fact that it's in English that makes it hard

Student1: (38) Uh the fact like I can read the words but I don't understand what they're  
(39) asking

Melissa: (40) Ok so you don't understand what the test is asking

Student1: (41) Yeah

### **Narrative 7:**

Melissa: (24) Since you go to school in Georgia you take the CRCT every year

Student5: (25) Yeah

Melissa: (26) How do you feel about having to take that test

Student5: (27) Uh (2.0) I feel nervous but also comfortable because I've been taking it=  
(28) =so long

Melissa: (29) Do you remember taking it when you were first in ESOL

Student5: (30) Yes I do it was so:oo hard then when I didn't know English

Melissa: (31) But it's gotten easier

Student5: (32) Yes

Melissa: (33) Why

Student5: (34) Because I feel like I know the language now

### **Narrative 8:**

Melissa: (25) Do you remember how many times you've taken the CRCT

Student7: (26) Since 1<sup>st</sup> grade

Melissa: (27) So you had to take it as soon as you started in school

Student7: (28) Yes

Melissa: (29) And was the CRCT hard for you is it still hard for you

Student7: (30) It was hard but it's gotten easier

Melissa: (31) Why is it easier

Student7: (32) Because I start knowing more English

Melissa: (33) Ok so knowing English is what helped make it easier

Student7: (34) mm hmmm

That the students I interviewed consistently commented on and described their ability to speak and understand English, coupled with their inability to perform well on the CRCT due to their being ELLs, suggests that while they may have acquired the language skills described by BICS, they were still a far cry from those skills described by CALP—the skills necessary for success on the standardized tests.

Of the students I interviewed, even the one who had the greatest command of English—having been raised in a home where both Arabic and English were used—expressed having trouble with the CRCT. During the interview, she used such communication strategies as self-correction, self-monitoring, and clarification questions. Overall, she negotiated her way through the interview very close to the way native speakers do. The only thing nonnative-like about her use of English was her accent. But even her accent was inconsistent in its manifestation.

However, even with her command of English in both speaking and understanding, she expressed difficulty with the language of the standardized test:

**Narrative 9:**

Melissa: (26) Ok so do you read and write more in Arabic or in English

Student8: (27) I read and write more in English

Melissa: (28) How many times have you taken the CRCT

Student8: (29) Ever since I was here

Melissa: (30) Ok so 1<sup>st</sup> grade was your first year taking it

Student8: (31) Yes

Melissa: (32) Do you feel like the CRCT is a hard test

Student8: (33) My mom told me that I did pretty good on the test last year

Melissa: (34) Good, so you do really well on it (1.5) does it make you nervous

Student8: (35) Yes I get really nervous

Melissa: (36) Do you know why you get nervous

Student8: (37) Uh sometimes I don't know the I (1.5) I have a hard time with the words

Melissa: (38) Do you feel like you would do better on the test if it was in Arabic or in=

(39) =English

Student8: (40) English, because I can't really read that much in Arabic

Narratives 6, 7, 8, and 9 illustrate that the more advanced vocabulary, the academic words or the lack of CALP proficiency, is what made the ESOL students struggle with the CRCT. I do not ignore the fact that the content may have also caused problems for these students, but when asked to clarify what about the CRCT was difficult—the content or the language—they all confidently asserted that it was the language.

Not one of the students I interviewed conveyed the feeling that their L1 is an obstacle to their acquisition of English. Every one of the eight students interviewed seemed to orient themselves toward their L1 from the perspective that their L1 is a right and/or a resource, and something that makes them who they are. Many of the students use their L1 just as often as their L2, whether in a code-switching scenario to identify with their friends and in-group at school, or because their teachers explain new concepts in their L1, or because their parents do not speak English. Narratives 10 and 11 highlight some of these scenarios, with key comments underlined:

**Narrative 10:**

Melissa: (3) At home do your parents speak Spanish or English to you

Student3: (4) My mom sometimes English, my dad Spanish

Melissa: (5) Ok does your mom mix Spanish and English

Student3: (6) Yes

Melissa: (7) Does your mom understand a lot of English

Student3: (8) Yes, but we use both at home

Melissa: (9) What about with your brothers and sisters

Student3: (10) I speak both

Melissa: (11) Do you ever start out speaking in Spanish and then switch to English

Student3: (12) Yes

Melissa: (13) Do you know why you do that

Student3: (14) I don't know (2.5) it just happens

Melissa: (15) Do you feel comfortable speaking both lan[guages

Student3: (16) [yeah

**Narrative 11:**

Melissa: (5) Mexico ok when you're at home do you speak Spanish or English

Student4: (6) Both

Melissa: (7) You speak both do you mix the two languages

Student4: (8) Yes  
Melissa: (9) Do you speak only Spanish with certain people or do you just mix  
(10) whenever  
Student4: (11) With certain people  
Melissa: (12) Will you tell me who you speak the languages with  
Student4: (13) Uh with my brothers and my dad I speak English  
Melissa: (14) Ok  
Student4: (15) And with my mom I speak Spanish  
Melissa: (16) Why do you speak English with your dad and brothers  
Student4: (17) It's just easier to talk to all of them  
Melissa: (18) Does your mom understand English  
Student4: (19) A little bit  
Melissa: (20) Ok but she's better at Spanish  
Student4: (21) Yes  
Melissa: (22) Is that the reason you speak Spanish with her then  
Student4: (23) Mmm hmm

Since none of the students viewed their L1 as a problem to be overcome in order to acquire their L2, educators and policymakers have an important opportunity on which to capitalize: in spite of the fact that many in power favor monolingual education and a monolingual society, the fact that the ELLs are not (yet) viewing their own language as an obstacle means their orientation toward and identity with learning English is positive. This positive orientation yields more success and more motivation in learning English. Where language is viewed as a problem, there are often negative attitudes and consequences toward both L1 and L2, yielding hurdles to overcome (since success and motivation decrease) in order to teach and learn a second language (Ricento and Hornberger, 1996; Snow, 1990).

The final theme that emerged from my student data deals with students' perceptions of their teachers' views and orientations toward the ELLs' L1. Specifically, I asked each student if their teachers allow them to use their L1 in the classroom. All students answered in the negative, though there were a few who answered that if they were translating for another student they could use their L1, as in the case where a newly arrived ELL is in the classroom and the teacher can not communicate with her or him. Even in the ESOL class, students were not allowed to use

or refer to their L1 in learning English. See Narratives 12, 13, and 14. Again, key passages and comments are underlined.

### **Narrative 12:**

Melissa: (21) Good when you're at school do you ever speak Spanish

Student2: (22) Yes

Melissa: (23) When do you do that

Student2: (24) Mostly with my friends

Melissa: (25) Do your teachers let you speak Spanish in the classroom

Student2: (26) Only if I'm translating for someone

### **Narrative 13:**

Melissa: (26) Did you like ESOL

Student3: (27) Sometimes

Melissa: (28) How come you didn't like it

Student3: (29) Um eh (2.5) because I just didn't want to go out of my room for ESOL=

(30) =and it was hard for me

Melissa: (31) Why was it hard for you

Student3: (32) I didn't understand it all the time and the work was all in English

Melissa: (33) Was it really hard at first and then it got easier as you learned English

Student3: (34) Yes

Melissa: (35) Do you remember if you were allowed to speak Spanish in ESOL

Student3: (36) I think I did but we weren't supposed to only the teacher could use

(37) Spanish to explain something I didn't understand

### **Narrative 14:**

Melissa: (24) When you first came to this school were you in an ESOL class

Student4: (25) Yes

Melissa: (26) For how long?

Student4: (27) two years

Melissa: (28) And after that you were in an English classroom all the time

Student4: (29) Yes

Melissa: (30) Do you remember having to learn English in ESOL how was that

Student4: (31) It was um difficult because I couldn't understand anything=

(32) =and my ESOL teacher didn't let me use Spanish (1.5) but it got easier

Melissa: (33) Ok so as you understood the language it got easier

From these last three narratives, we see that teachers of these students, both previous and current, do not seem to draw on the sensitivities that they displayed in my interview with them: that students' L1 influences and helps ensure successful transfer and learning of an L2. From this, it is clear that these teachers are succumbing to the influence of policy when it comes to ELLs' use of their L1; while teachers' intuitions may tell them that students' success in acquiring an L2 depends on their being able to access and use their L1 in a variety of contexts, the monolingualistic discourse of the policy which governs their methods and practices seems to be dominating in the classroom.

## CHAPTER 6 IMPLICATIONS

Since standardized tests carry with them high stakes consequences, particularly for unsuccessful students such as ELL students who consistently score lower than native speakers of English, the tests impact the instruction, expectations, and educational experiences of ELLs. “Specifically, tests shape what content is taught in school, how it is taught, by whom it is taught, and in what language(s) it is taught. In this way, tests have become *de facto* language policy in schools” (Menken, 2008b: 4-5). Typically, when governments (state and/or federal) attempt to intervene where language is concerned, they have agendas that are not concerned with language; rather, the agendas have socialization as their goal. However, when the United States has lacked a consciously planned language policy, unofficial or *de facto* policies—policies created in response to political needs—spring up and carry with them serious consequences (Menken, 2000). This is the case with NCLB; it was created in response to the United States’ need to change education for the better. While it has brought about some positive outcomes, the negative consequences seem to greatly overshadow any good that is being done. Since its inception, NCLB has received popular support. However, those who are most directly affected by the policy and its consequences for ELLs (both educators and institutions) are extremely wary of the legislation.

The interview I conducted with educators sheds light on the use of standardized tests as performance and proficiency measures of ELL students. Particularly since the teachers acknowledge the fact that even native speakers of English struggled with the language on the tests (see Appendix A, lines 24-48). Garcia confirms this observation: “one of the most important yet difficult aspects of English-language development for students from non-English backgrounds... is the development of English in academic contexts... English academic

proficiency among all U. S. students is generally low” (2005: 54). If this is the case, it is certainly possible to claim that ELL students may have significant problems with the language of standardized tests. However, in seeking to confine my description to ELL students, the data collected suggests what educators and educational advocates have been asserting for years: standardized testing damages education (FairTest, 2007) and NCLB’s focus on standardized tests is therefore, destructive (Mundow, 2007). If ELLs do not perform well on standardized tests, their progress through school is interrupted, and they are often retained. But where standardized tests are meant to measure students’ knowledge of content, they become a measure of language acquisition in that students who do not know the language (ELL students) are left to the mercy of a test that uses CALP. If ELL students do not perform well on standardized tests, it is because they have not acquired the language, not because they do not know the content.

Additionally, NCLB claims to mandate that all students meet the same academic and proficiency standards, but measures all students with the same instruments. So, whereas conceptually, NCLB means to improve the education of all students, including ELLs, it is operationalized by the use of standardized assessments and even, in the case of the school where I collected my data, standardized interventions. If they are a specific subgroup of focus for this school, does lumping them all into the same remediation and intervention classes as the special education students account for their specific needs? Here again, it seems that the inordinate amount of pressure on schools to meet AYP (a stipulation of NCLB) by making sure their students demonstrate high levels of proficiency and mastery on standardized tests, causes ELLs to miss out on necessary and equitable pedagogical practices.

While I did not find that any of these teachers viewed their students’ L1s as a problem to be overcome in order to acquire their L2, I would not say that they do orient themselves to their

students' L1 from the language as resource orientation, in reference to Ruiz's orientation model. Since they do not talk about students actually using their L1 in their classrooms, I would not say that these educators are necessarily proponents of the language as resource orientation. However, since they do not view L1 knowledge as an obstacle to educating and socializing their students, and since they are at least sensitive to the fact that students' L1s play an integral role in their acquisition of English as their L2, I do expect that they would be open to bilingual education (whether transitional bilingual education or two-way immersion programs) or native-language instruction. Where language is viewed as a problem, there are often negative attitudes and consequences toward both L1 and L2, yielding hurdles to overcome (since success and motivation decrease) in order to teach and learn a second language (Ricento and Hornberger, 1996; Snow, 1990).

Drawing from SCT, I would also suspect that since these students are not given opportunities to use their L1 in their acquisition and development, and since they are even discouraged from doing so, their linguistic and cognitive development has and will continue to suffer. By not allowing ELLs to use their L1, which is often the linguistic repertoire through which they have constructed their understanding of the world and that which mediates their expression of their cognitive abilities, NCLB and standardized tests not only ignore, but also misrepresent ELLs' cognition and understanding of curriculum content.

Although I am unsure if this group of teachers was influenced by the ESOL teacher's views and sensitivities, whereby without Leigh's remarks and even presence in the focus group they may have expressed different opinions, I do know this group of educators personally. I know that they are all at the forefront of their field in terms of accepting each individual student's differences, working to accommodate those differences in their instruction, and

validating those differences as part of what makes each student who they are. I also know that these teachers all strive to provide an environment where their students can acquire and construct their own understandings of the content they teach, and that these teachers ascribe and aspire to what are considered “best practices” within the field of education.

However, in realizing that Leigh’s presence in the group may have yielded skewed results, I removed all of her commentary from my transcripts to see whether, and to what extent the other teachers talked about some of the same issues. First, out of 295 lines of recorded data, only 34 of them belonged to Leigh (this is approximately 12%). Second, of her 34 conversational turns, seven of them were minimal responses (mm hmm, yes, right, etc...); this means that the substantial commentary she made was only about 9% of the entire 2.5 hours of data. From this, I would argue that these teachers’ conversation would still have concentrated heavily on the two themes that emerged, even without Leigh’s presence. For, as I stated in section 4, ELLs and NCLB are currently very prominent and controversial issues in education.

From this data, and how it makes clear the fact that NCLB’s assessment-driven accountability measures for both students and teachers are actually leaving ELLs behind, I would argue that it is necessary that steps to correct or at least alleviate the nation’s tendency to problematize language should be taken. Tollefson (1991) criticizes monolingualism, describing it as an ideology that justifies and sustains unequal and exclusionary policies:

The policy of requiring everyone to learn a single dominant language is widely seen as a common-sense solution to the communication problems of multilingual societies. The appeal of this assumption is such that monolingualism is seen as a solution to linguistic inequality. If linguistic minorities learn the dominant language, so the argument goes, then they will not suffer economic and social inequality. (1991: 10)

In this light, using the ideology of monolingualism to problematize language contributes to, justifies, and sustains unequal and exclusionary policies, and causes language learners to fall significantly behind. It seems strange that policymakers seek to solve minorities’ problems with

regard to socialization and equal opportunity, yet the policies they write, advocate, and implement do just the opposite.

The United States is the only economically advanced nation that uses standardized tests to evaluate its students. Other nations use performance-based assessments. “Ironically, because these other nations do not focus on teaching to multiple-choice tests, they score even higher than the U.S. students on those same kinds of tests” (FairTest, 2007). However, while standardized tests have come under great criticism especially (but not limited to) since the legislation of No Child Left Behind, in reality most teachers are not opposed to testing. As long as it is testing that is “genuinely diagnostic” and helps teachers to see where their individual students have the greatest gaps. But this is not the case with standardized tests, “which tell us almost nothing that’s directly relevant and helpful to an individual child but are used instead to paste a retroactive label of ‘success’ or ‘failure’ on a child, class, or an entire school collectively” (Kozol, 2007: 123-124).

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

Around the world, and throughout history, language and literacy have been used as a means for social control; the United States is no different in its use of educational policies to exert power and control over linguistic minorities.

English has been imposed on all groups, regardless of whether the ideological rationale was to ‘civilize’, ‘domesticate’, ‘raise’, ‘tutor’, or ‘assimilate’. However, once the tenets of English monolingualism as a defining characteristic of citizenship and American identity had been incorporated into the dominant ideology, proficiency in standard English became much more important in rationalizing the extent to which various groups would be provided access to an equitable education (Wiley, 2000: 85).

Due to these faulty ideologies, and the orientation of federal policy which sees languages other than English as a problem in the assimilation and socialization of ELLs, NCLB is perpetuating a situation where English Language Learners will consistently be left behind, unless we see change in how these students are taught and assessed.

It is difficult to argue that the language on standardized tests is easy and straightforward. Rather, it is often significantly more official and academic than even the everyday classroom language used in teaching and learning. Students taking standardized tests encounter more polysyllabic words used in place of more simple and clear vocabulary. Former teacher and leading educational and social advocate Jonathan Kozol speaks out against this official language of the state on standardized test: “You can’t say *use* you have to say *utilize*; you don’t *copy*, you *replicate*; you don’t *start*, you *initiate*; you don’t just *do* it, you *implement* it” (Mundow, 2007).

Language learners—whether learners of L1 or L2—need multiple contexts and experiences through which to build and mediate their linguistic repertoires (Douglas, 2004). Sociocultural Theory assumes that these contexts and experiences are necessary to the formation and maintenance of language at the individual, cognitive level. When it is assumed that ELLs’ proficiency in basic communication skills marks their subsequent and equal proficiency in

academic language, proven scientific findings get ignored. These findings relate to the fact that L2 learners' knowledge and skills in their L1 are available to the L2—and should be made available to the L2 (Cummins, 1984, 1992), and that the more contexts and content which allow ELLs to draw from all their language competencies (in both L1 and L2) ensures greater development and success in their L2 (Evans and Hornberger, 2005). Without giving ELLs access to their L1, we set them up for failure.

If the language of the test is more difficult for native speakers of English, it follows that ELLs would experience even more difficulty. NCLB's Title III provisions and mandates are based on the assumption that ELLs can reach native-like academic language proficiency within three years. However, while research on how long it takes a student to develop basic interpersonal communication proficiency in a second language has determined that it takes two to three years (Hakuta, Butler, et al., 2000), it can take as many as ten years for ELLs to acquire the academic language proficiency required for success on standardized tests (Cummins, 1979; Evans and Hornberger, 2005; Snow, 1990). This is especially true for children who are taught in English-only classrooms (Evans and Hornberger, 2005). Yet ELLs are held to the same standards for achievement, performance, and proficiency as native English speakers, when they do not know English as their L2.

Students' success should be what drives policy and instruction. If students' (any students') needs are not being met, then changes need to occur. And while educational policymakers, teachers, legislators, test-writers, and parents all interact to affect the educational environment and experiences of the nation's children, the underlying belief in the United States is that any language other than English is a problem to be solved, rather than a right or a resource to be protected, valued and drawn upon. Due to this faulty ideology, ELLs will continue to be

left behind, even as they continue to be a growing and primary community in our nation's schools.

APPENDIX A  
EDUCATORS' DATA

The data I transcribed from the focus group ethnographic interview with the teachers follows. While the entire conversation is not transcribed here, this does include all parts of the conversation that related at all to my research, and all narratives that I included in my analysis/description.

**Excerpt 1**

- Leigh: (1) What about the fact that for instance English Language Learners or ESOL  
(2) students are in an ESOL program fo:r (.) 5 and 6 years and [still=  
Kate: (3) [mmm  
Leigh: (4) =don't have the same linguistic capacity [that =  
Ellen: (5) [mm hmm  
Leigh: (6) =y' [know the native speakers do =  
Kate: (7) [the native mm hmm  
Leigh: (8) =and and are required to have in order to take our assess[ments=  
Anne: (9) [right  
Leigh: (10) =and that are required to take high stakes assessments and then those [those=  
Kate: (11) [mmm  
Leigh: (12) =grades promote them or keep them from being [promoted  
Ellen: (13) [which is really a form of  
(14) discrimination  
Leigh: (15) It is: [but  
Anne: (16) [and it burns me up  
Kate: (17) Well it (.) and it's really not just for the student but with the whole No Child  
(18) Left Behind the schools are getting dinged for that because [that's one of =  
Anne: (19) [mm hmm  
Kate: (20) =the subgroups that we're targeting this year [because=  
Ellen: (21) [that's our lowest subgroup  
Kate: (22) =we're in danger of not meeting AYP for some of our ESOL students  
Melissa: (23) So how are you targeting them what does that look like  
Kate: (24) Wel:l part of our strategic pla:n [uh (2.0)  
Ellen: (25) [well we had when the leadership (team) met  
(26) this week you had to bring whatever data you had collected for your goal and  
(27) we broke it down to (how) your subgroups doing which three subgroups  
(28) have given us trouble special ed. African Americans Hispan[ic=  
Anne: (29) [wait  
Ellen: (30) =I was wrong it's not all of ESOL it's [just Hispanic=  
Kate: (31) [Hispanic Hispanic right  
Ellen: (32) =um: which we'll have better scores [when we break that back down  
Kate: (33) [so you have you recalculated those yet  
Ellen: (34) No  
Kate: (35) Ok (.) 'cause what we're doing especially targeting just the (2.5) the  
(36) assessments from Fulton County uh in math and that's what we're uh 'cause  
(37) math is one of our strategic goals [too and then

Anne: (38) [yes  
 Ellen: (39) [we had 29 children that came to us in fifth  
 (40) grade that failed the math portion of the CRCT in fourth grade=  
 Anne: (41) (laughing) [whoops  
 Melissa: (42) [oh my goodness [really  
 Kate: (43) [yes yes  
 Meg: (44) [mm hmm mm hmm  
 Ellen: (45) =so to help meet that goal in fifth grade in math we put all of the non-special  
 (46) ed (.) kids who failed the test in one class and we put an ESOL teacher in  
 (47) there so ESOL EIP and a regular ed teacher so for(.) there's 3 teachers to 25  
 (48) 26 ki:[ds  
 Kate: (49) 25 students  
 Melissa:(50) So the teacher student (.) student tea[cher ratio  
 Ellen: (51) [ratio so they tried pulling them into=  
 Kate: (52) [mm hmm  
 Ellen: (53) =three groups to really give 'em more one on one but then the ESOL teacher  
 (54) really wanted to pull her caseload well they have nothing to role model for  
 (55) them I mean it was ju[s:t flat=  
 Melissa:(56) [oh:  
 Kate: (57) mm hmm  
 Ellen: (58) =so now the y'all have sort of mixed 'cause Kate's the EIP teacher in the  
 (59) group so y'all have changed it in the last two weeks  
 Kate: (60) Since (laughing) mm hmm  
 Melissa:(61) So what did you mean when you said they don't have role models  
 Ellen: (62) I'm saying [you have a group of 6=  
 Kate: (63) [well there's nobody  
 Ellen: (64) =ESOL children who were not performing well [in one group  
 Kate: (65) [part of the problem is  
 (66) because of [the language barrier=  
 Ellen: (67) [and they were the lowest of the low  
 Kate: (68) =you know Helen doesn't speak Spanish so there wasn't anyone that could  
 (69) sort of tran:sla[te and say this is what (she) percentage means blah blah blah=  
 Ellen: (70) [mm hmm  
 Melissa:(71) [in Spanish  
 Kate: (72) =in Spanish and plus there were all sort of low performing and there was no  
 (73) I mean you know Helen kept going oh my gosh they're all failing they're all (74)  
 failing so we tossed them back into the whole mix [  
 Ellen: (75) [and beha:viors were  
 (76) getting [in the way=  
 Kate: (77) [behaviors were getting in the way  
 Ellen: (78) =because when you underperfrom underperform you act out  
 Meg: (79) mm hmm  
 Kate: (80) So we put them all back in the big mix now separated some of the [(2.0)=  
 Ellen: (81) [right  
 Kate: (82) =although we partnered up one girl with another brand new (1.5) girl who  
 (83) doesn't speak hardly any English but she's very good in math [and so

Ellen: (84) [and she  
 (85) was very literate in [Spanish=  
 Kate: (86) [yes yes  
 Ellen: (87) =talking about uh, Nancy  
 Kate: (88) Yes so she's very literate in Spanish so she's had some schooling  
 Leigh: (89) See that's another thing that I've been finding so interesting you know the  
 (90) fact that so many teachers you know this English only idea like if they can  
 (91) make the transfer [from their first language into their second language then=  
 Kate: (92) [mm hmm  
 Leigh: (93) =they're much better off  
 Kate: (94) It should be they should be stronger [students I would thi[nk  
 Leigh: (95) [right  
 Ellen: (96) [it's almost  
 (97) to me like in kindergarten [ when you have children who've only spoken=  
 Kate: (98) [mm hmm  
 Ellen: (99) =Spanish they need to get that sound letter correspondence in Spanish=  
 Meg: (100) mm hmm  
 Anne: (101) right  
 Ellen: (102) =to be able to trans[fer [it to English and I'm thinkin' they'll be stronger=  
 Leigh: (103) [mm hmm  
 Meg: (104) [mm hmm  
 Ellen: (105) =students it's almost like they need to be learning to read two languages at  
 (106) one time and I don't know [if they can do that  
 Kate: (107) [truly bilingual  
 Ellen: (108) Truly  
 Leigh: (109) Well [bilingual education is the way to go actually  
 Kate: (110) [And bi bilingual literate

### Excerpt 2

Ellen: (1) It's like Nancy came to us in fifth grade and apparently from her records did  
 (2) quite well in Mexico versus Guadalupe has been here since (2.0) I wanna say  
 (3) since second grade in America and so (.) she was just staffed into special ed  
 (4) this year and (3.5) I think she's bright but there's definitely glitches there she  
 (5) um: (2.5) she still speaks very broken [um she doesn't read she's so fifth=  
 Kate: (6) [mm hmm  
 Ellen: (7) =grade now in special ed she's getting basic phonics like consonant vowel  
 (8) consonant [an:d basic=  
 Anne: (9) [basic  
 Ellen: (10) =so I was asking her did you go to school in Mexico did you go to  
 (11) kindergarten did you go to first grade and she said yes and I said did  
 (12) you learn to read in Mexico and she said no (.) I said were other children in  
 (13) your class reading and she said yes [so she her problems were in Spanish=  
 Anne: (14) [mmm  
 Leigh: (15) [o.k.  
 Ellen: (16) =and they're in [English so she truly is an LD child (1.5)=

Meg: (17) [mm hmm  
 Ellen: (18) =[who has been passed along grade after grade after grade because [oh it's=  
 Kate: (19) [yeah [they  
 Ellen: (20) = the lan[guage=  
 Kate: (21) [it's the language  
 Meg: (22) [it's all language  
 Ellen: (23) =but it but it wasn't  
 Leigh: (24) Well but even with that it can be a little tricky because conversational skills  
 (25) are completely different from academic skills [you know and [the=  
 Ellen: (26) [mm hmm  
 Kate: (27) [mmm  
 Leigh: (28) =languages that are [used on our assessments=  
 Anne: (29) [that's a great point  
 Leigh: (30) =not just standardized assessments but the languages we use the language  
 (31) that we use for math that's academic and that requires academic proficiency  
 (32) in that area [and  
 Ellen: (33) [and that even bumfuzzles [our native speakers  
 Leigh: (34) [some of our na[tive speakers  
 Kate: (35) [native speakers  
 Anne: (36) [mm hmm  
 Meg: (37) [right  
 Ellen: (38) It is a whole different language  
 Leigh: (39) mm hmmm  
 Melissa:(40) So do you feel pressure to get these kids up to a  
 Kate: (41) I'm feeling more pressure this year than I ever have before  
 Melissa:(42) Why  
 Ellen: (43) mm hmm  
 Kate: (44) Uh the stakes are higher [because we are in danger [of  
 Ellen: (45) [yeah  
 Anne: (46) [mmm  
 Ellen: (47) [we almost did not make=  
 Anne: (48) [AYP  
 Ellen: (49) =we had to go to the second leve[1: to make AYP we did not make it on the=  
 Kate: (50) [mm hmm  
 Ellen: (51) =first go round  
 Kate: (52) And because such effort is being put into [providing things for these kids=  
 Ellen: (53) [mm hmm  
 Kate: (54) =like 3 teachers in the math class extended day [2 days a week parent=  
 Meg: (55) [mm hmm  
 Kate: (56) =tutors for these kids that's starting up soon and you know  
 Ellen: (57) They've pulled out all the stops [and are expecting to see results and at this=  
 Kate: (58) [yeah  
 Ellen: (59) =point when we reported our data there are no results  
 Kate: (60) Some improvement but not up to the  
 Ellen: (61) Some improvement but [not  
 Melissa:(62) [not where it [needs to be

Kate: (63) [where it needs to be  
 Ellen: (64) They're not gonna pass the test  
 Melissa:(65) The: what test  
 Kate: (66) CR[CT  
 Ellen: (67) [CRCT  
 Melissa:(68) The CRCT wow  
 Anne: (69) Yes  
 Meg: (70) mm [hmm  
 Leigh: (71) [yes mm hmm  
 Melissa:(72) So (1.5) do you feel like (3.5) do you feel like uh there's as much pressure  
 (73) does maybe maybe not maybe dealing with just regular na:tive speakers  
  
 Anne: (74) I always feel pressure I mean uh I always feel pressured as a teacher but  
 (75) but I also know on some level or it would drive me crazy that I can only  
 (76) do the best [I can do every day=  
 Meg: (77) [mm hmm  
 Kate: (78) [mm hmm  
 Anne: (79) = that's all I can [do:=  
 Melissa:(80) [yeah  
 Anne: (81) =and I feel like I'm pulled 12 ways from Sunday (.) um not only by the kids  
 (82) in my class in my different class:[es but (3.0) also life[ I mean I don't want=  
 Ellen: (83) [mm hmm [mm hmm  
 Leigh: (84) [yes  
 Meg: (85) [right  
 Kate: (86) [mm hmm  
 Melissa: (87) [yeah  
 Anne: (88) =my whole life to be that [school but  
 Ellen: (89) [right

### Excerpt 3

Melissa:(1) So you've had the ITBS when's the CRCT  
 Ellen: (2) Apri[l but (.)=  
 Kate: (3) [April  
 Ellen: (4) =between now and Christmas we have to have this new superintendent is very  
 (5) into that came from Gwinette is real into pre- post- so we're going to take a (6)  
 reading test and a math test on next semester a pretest of all the curriculum  
 Kate: (7) A pretest of everything we'll be teaching second curriculum I mean second  
 (8) semes[ter  
 Melissa:(9) [What do they expect that to show  
 Kate: (10) Growth hopefully  
 Ellen: (11) Growth and where you need to really focus 'cause we're having a mandatory  
 (12) meeting on our workday after Christmas to find out how to use this new data  
 (13) (2.0) so one week they do the pretest for second semester and the next week  
 (14) they do a posttest for first semester in reading science and math  
 Melissa:(15) Oh wow (2.5) ok

Kate: (16) Did we ever give a pretest [for first semester  
 Anne: (17) [not social studies  
 Ellen: (18) No no  
 Kate: (19) Well what good is that gonna be=  
 Ellen: (20) Um  
 Kate: (21) =you can't compare data ['cause  
 Ellen: (22) [to see where you where your children are and how  
 (23) well you have taught and how well they have learned  
 Leigh: (24) But isn't that something that you can why does it hhh why does everything (25)  
 have to be: [(1.5) a test=  
 Ellen: (26) [a bubble in test  
 Leigh: (27) =like that[ because you're doing [assessment constantly[=  
 Ellen: (28) [I know [exactly  
 Anne: (29) [it's such a sad sad thing  
 Ellen: (30) So not only is this new superintendent big into that uh she came in and said  
 (31) on report cards you know we always did on above or below well we're all on  
 (32) advanced which means you're on grade level but a little higher so you get a (33)  
 little bit of the curriculum above or accelerated you're a full year ahead  
 Melissa:(34) What do you do with the kids who are no:[t any of those  
 Ellen: (35) [there are no be[low level children  
 Kate: (36) [there are none  
 (37) Didn't you just hea:r what[ she sai:d  
 Leigh: (38) [so but then how do you teach to that if you don't (39)  
 even acknowledge that they exist  
 Ellen: (40) We're using on level curriculum and good teachers support wherever their (41)  
 children are bu:[t  
 Leigh: (42) [but we're not gonna acknowledge that they're  
 Ellen: (43) I have a little boy that was adopted from Russia (.) fetal alcohol syndrome (44)  
 has an IQ of 80 um he does resource math a functional curriculum telling (45) time money you  
 [know  
 Kate: (46) [uses a calculator for everything  
 Ellen: (47) Yeah um and we just had a meeting with his mother and his report card had (48)  
 come home that said on grade level on and his mother and father wanted to (49) know  
 what's this obviously he is no:t (2.0) on grade level  
 (51) on down the road that cannot read cannot do ma[th [and they're gonna=  
 Anne: (52) [right  
 Leigh: (53) [but they're on grade  
 Ellen: (54) =produce all these report cards that say [you said I was on grade level but I=  
 Kate: (55) [you said  
 Ellen: (56) =graduated from high school and I can't read  
 Kate: (57) mm hmm  
 Ellen: (58) And they're gonna sue and they're gonna win  
 Leigh: (59) Yeah they will  
 Anne: (60) You bet they're gonna win

#### Excerpt 4

Ellen: (1) So this is the first thing that we just got of schedule that we give a pretest for (2) next (1.0) which I understand pretest posttest but when you do it for an hour (3) two or three days to me what that does is tell children you don't know this (4) you're not gonna know this take your best guess and then on the real test what (5) do they do=  
 Anne: (6) They're gonna guess  
 Ellen: (7) =I don't know this (.) take my best guess  
 Leigh: (8) But this testing environment is gonna help  
 Ellen: (9) mm hmm

### Excerpt 5

Melissa:(1) And so when do you begin prep for the CRCT  
 Kate: (2) We've started CRCT practice already  
 Melissa:(3) You're already practicing for it=  
 Anne: (4) Yes  
 Melissa:(5) =how are you practicing for it  
 Kate: (6) Tho:se practice tests  
 Ellen: (7) The the math series has a CRCT book and they have written a que quest 5-7 (8) questions per lesson bubble in that er follow GPS  
 Melissa:(9) If you cou[ld  
 Anne: (10) [that look like what they're gonna see same verbiage  
 Kate: (11) How much do y'all go over those  
 Ellen: (12) I'm spending too much time going over them  
 Melissa:(13) You're [spending too much time  
 Anne: (14) [I go over them every day  
 Kate: (15) But how much ti:me  
 Melissa:(16) If you could quantify it  
 Anne: (17) It depends hhh (1.5) time  
 Melissa:(18) Could you put a time on it like each [day even not just in math but each=  
 Ellen: (19) [I spend I spend  
 Melissa:(20) =day how long would you say you spend preparing for tests like a  
 (21) standard[ized assessment  
 Anne: (22) [for that one that particular [assessment  
 Ellen: (23) [probably at least 30 minutes a day  
 Anne: (24) I spend more like close to an hour spread out across the day but an hour  
 Melissa:(25) Really [out of 4 hours of teaching [time  
 Kate: (26) [so when do you go over that  
 Ellen: (27) [yes

APPENDIX B  
STUDENTS' DATA

The data I transcribed from the students' ethnographic interviews follows. While the entirety of each conversation is not transcribed here, this does include all parts of the conversation that related at all to my research, and all narratives that I included in my analysis/description.

**Excerpt 1**

Melissa: (1) Were you born in the United States  
Student1: (2) Yes  
Melissa: (3) You were ok when you started school did you know English  
Student1: (4) No  
Melissa: (5) When you're at home do you speak English or Spanish  
Student1: (6) Both  
Melissa: (7) Both ok do you speak Spanish with both parents and brothers and sisters=  
(8) =or  
Student1: (9) Yeah  
Melissa: (10) So both your parents unders[tand  
Student1: (11) [some (1.5) a little bit  
Melissa: (12) Ok they understand English  
Student1: (13) Yeah  
Melissa: (14) Ok what about brothers and sisters do you speak just  
Student1: (15) They both speak, we always speak Spanish and English  
Melissa: (16) When you're at school do you speak Spanish  
Student1: (17) Not that much only for translating  
Melissa: (18) OK so you help translate for who  
Student1: (19) For my teachers uh when my teachers don't speak Spanish and someone=  
(20) =needs help  
Melissa: (21) How long were you in an ESOL class  
Student1: (22) I think in first grade I started  
Melissa: (23) Were you in there for just the one year  
Student1: (24) No (3.0) I was in there for second grade and part of third grade  
Melissa: (25) Do you like to come to school  
Student1: (26) Yes  
Melissa: (27) Do you know the test the CRCT  
Student1: (28) Yes  
Melissa: (29) How many times have you had to take that test  
Student1: (30) Uh every year First second third fourth and fi fi (1.5) then I have to take=  
(31) =it this year  
Melissa: (32) Does it make you nervous do you feel like it's hard  
Student1: (33) Yes  
Melissa: (34) Why is it hard  
Student1: (35) Because some of it the stuff when I take it I don't know it  
Melissa: (36) Ok is it the questions that are hard like is it the content that's=  
(37) =asked or is it the fact that it's in English that makes it hard

Student1: (38) Uh the fact like I can read the words but I don't understand what they're=  
(39) =asking

Melissa: (40) Ok so you don't understand what the test is asking

Student1: (41) Yeah

...

Melissa: (42) How comfortable are you with speaking English

Student1: (43) Um I speak English more here than at home

Melissa: (44) So would you say you speak English well

Student1: (45) Yes

Melissa: (46) You do speak it well do you ever feel like your English is a problem at=  
(47) =school like if you knew more you'd understand more in school

Student1: (48) Yeah maybe

## Excerpt 2

Melissa: (1) Were you born in the United States

Student2: (2) No

Melissa: (3) Where were you born

Student2: (4) Mexico

Melissa: (5) How long have you lived in the United States

Student2: (6) Six years

Melissa: (7) Do your parents speak English

Student2: (8) Kind of

Melissa: (9) So when you're at home do you speak English or Spanish

Student2: (10) Spanish

Melissa: (11) When you're speaking with your brothers and sisters do you use Spanish

Student2: (12) English and Spanish

Melissa: (13) Both ok so they all understand both languages

Student2: (14) Yes

Melissa: (15) Do you remember how many years you were in an ESOL class

Student2: (16) Until I was in second grade

Melissa: (17) So two years did you like going to your ESOL class to learn English

Student2: (18) mm hmm

Melissa: (19) Do you feel like you learned a lot of English there

Student2: (20) Yes

Melissa: (21) Good when you're at school do you ever speak Spanish

Student2: (22) Yes

Melissa: (23) When do you do that

Student2: (24) Mostly with my friends

Melissa: (25) Do your teachers let you speak Spanish in the classroom

Student2: (26) Only if I'm translating for someone

Melissa: (27) When you speak with your friends do you mix your English and Spanish

Student2: (28) Yes

Melissa: (29) Since you go to school in Georgia I'm sure you've heard of the CRCT

Student2: (30) Yes

Melissa: (31) Ok is that a hard test for you  
Student2: (32) Not really  
Melissa: (33) No good have you ever felt like the test was hard because it was in=  
(34) =English or was it just hard because of the information  
Student2: (35) Hard because it's in English  
Melissa: (36) As you've learned English more, do you feel like the test is just as hard  
(37)Or has it gotten any easier  
Student2: (38) It's easier

### Excerpt 3

Melissa: (1) Were you born in the United States  
Student3: (2) Yes  
Melissa: (3) At home do your parents speak Spanish or English to you  
Student3: (4) My mom sometimes English, my dad Spanish  
Melissa: (5) Ok does your mom mix Spanish and English  
Student3: (6) Yes  
Melissa: (7) Does your mom understand a lot of English  
Student3: (8) Yes, but we use both at home  
Melissa: (9) What about with your brothers and sisters  
Student3: (10) I speak both  
Melissa: (11) Do you ever start out speaking in Spanish and then switch to English  
Student3: (12) Yes  
Melissa: (13) Do you know why you do that  
Student3: (14) I don't know (2.5) it just happens  
Melissa: (15) Do you feel comfortable speaking both lan[guages  
Student3: (16) [yeah  
Melissa: (17) Do you have trouble understanding your teachers when they speak=  
(18)=in English  
Student3: (19) Sometimes  
Melissa: (20) Were you in ESOL class  
Student3: (21) Yes  
Melissa: (22) How long were you in ESOL  
Student3: (23) Like 3 or 4 years  
Melissa: (24) And do you feel like that's where you learned most of your English  
Student3: (25) Yeah  
Melissa: (26) Did you like ESOL  
Student3: (27) Sometimes  
Melissa: (28) How come you didn't like it  
Student3: (29) Um eh (2.5) because I just didn't want to go out of my room for ESOL=  
(30) =and it was hard for me  
Melissa: (31) Why was it hard for you  
Student3: (32) I didn't understand it all the time and the work was all in English  
Melissa: (33) Was it really hard at first and then it got easier as you learned English  
Student3: (34) Yes  
Melissa: (35) Do you remember if you were allowed to speak Spanish in ESOL

Student3: (36) I think I did but we weren't supposed to only the teacher could use=  
(37) =Spanish to explain something I didn't understand.  
Melissa: (38) Since you go to school in Georgia you have to take the CRCT  
Student3: (39) Yeah  
Melissa: (40) How do you feel about having to take that test  
Student3: (41) Um er it's kinda hard because I can't really read it  
Melissa: (42) Why can't you read it is it be[cause  
Student3: (43) [because it has hard words  
Melissa: (44) Is it hard because the words are in English or are they just hard  
Student3: (45) Um some words I can read in English but I don't know what they mean=  
(46)=Some I know and some I don't and it's hard for me to say them

#### Excerpt 4

Melissa: (1) Were you born in the United States  
Student4: (2) No  
Melissa: (3) OK, where were you born  
Student4: (4) Mexico  
Melissa: (5) Mexico ok when you're at home do you speak Spanish or English  
Student4: (6) Both  
Melissa: (7) You speak both do you mix the two languages  
Student4: (8) Yes  
Melissa: (9) Do you speak only Spanish with certain people or do you just mix=  
(10) =whenever  
Student4: (11) With certain people  
Melissa: (12) Will you tell me who you speak the languages with  
Student4: (13) Uh with my brothers and my dad I speak English  
Melissa: (14) Ok  
Student4: (15) And with my mom I speak Spanish  
Melissa: (16) Why do you speak English with your dad and brothers  
Student4: (17) It's just easier to talk to all of them  
Melissa: (18) Does your mom understand English  
Student4: (19) A little bit  
Melissa: (20) Ok but she's better at Spanish  
Student4: (21) Yes  
Melissa: (22) Is that the reason you speak Spanish with her then  
Student4: (23) Mmm hmm  
Melissa: (24) When you first came to this school were you in an ESOL class  
Student4: (25) Yes  
Melissa: (26) For how long?  
Student4: (27) two years  
Melissa: (28) And after that you were in an English classroom all the time  
Student4: (29) Yes  
Melissa: (30) Do you remember having to learn English in ESOL how was that  
Student4: (31) It was um difficult because I couldn't understand anything=  
(32) =and my ESOL teacher didn't let me use Spanish (1.5) but it got easier

Melissa: (33) Ok so as you understood the language it got easier  
Student4: (34) Yes  
Melissa: (35) Do you have friends here at school that you use Spanish with  
Student4: (36) Yes  
Melissa: (37) When you decide to speak Spanish with them why do you choose it over=  
(38) =English do they know English  
Student4: (39) Yes they know English (3.0) well  
Melissa: (40) But you prefer Spanish  
Student4: (41) Well I use both I mix them together  
Melissa: (42) So like if you start out saying a sentence in English do you ever use a=  
(43) =word in Spanish in the middle of it  
Student4: (44) Yes  
Melissa: (45) Why do you do that  
Student4: (45) Sometimes because I don't know the word in English or because my=  
(46) =friends are speaking Spanish.  
Melissa: (47) Ok how do you feel about having to take the CRCT  
Student4: (48) Nervous and sometimes confident  
Melissa: (49) Ok why do you think you feel nervous  
Student4: (50) It's because I might not know the answer to a question  
Melissa: (51) Have you taken the CRCT every year since you've been here  
Student4: (52) Yes  
Melissa: (53) Has the test gotten harder or easier as you've gotten older  
Student4: (54) Easier it was very hard before  
Melissa: (55) Why was it hard  
Student4: (56) Because I couldn't read it  
Melissa: (57) Were the words too hard or was it because the words were in English  
Student4: (58) because they were in English

### Excerpt 5

Melissa: (1) Were you born in the United States  
Student5: (2) Yes  
Melissa: (3) Ok and does your family speak English or Korean  
Student5: (4) Both  
Melissa: (5) Ok when you're at home what language do you speak the most  
Student5: (6) Korean  
Melissa: (7) Why  
Student5: (8) Because my mom is only learning English so at home she wants us to=  
(9) =speak Korean  
Melissa: (10) Would you say you speak more Korean even with your siblings  
Student5: (11) I switch a lot especially with my brother I start out in English but then he=  
(12) =gets mixed up so I have to finish and explain in Korean  
Melissa: (13) What about with your sister  
Student5: (14) We both mix it a lot she'll speak in English and I'll answer in Korean or=  
(15) =the other way  
Melissa: (16) Are you comfortable speaking English

Student5: (17) Yes  
Melissa: (18) Where you in ESOL classes here at school  
Student5: (19) Yes  
Melissa: (20) For how long  
Student5: (21) One year  
Melissa: (22) One year good job you must have learned quickly  
Student5: (23) Yeah  
Melissa: (24) Since you go to school in Georgia you take the CRCT every year  
Student5: (25) Yeah  
Melissa: (26) How do you feel about having to take that test  
Student5: (27) Uh (2.0) I feel nervous but also comfortable because I've been taking it=  
(28) =so long  
Melissa: (29) Do you remember taking it when you were first in ESOL  
Student5: (30) Yes I do it was so:oo hard then when I didn't know English  
Melissa: (31) But it's gotten easier  
Student5: (32) Yes  
Melissa: (33) Why  
Student5: (34) Because I feel like I know the language now

#### **Excerpt 6**

Melissa: (1) Were you born here in the United States  
Student6: (2) No  
Melissa: (3) Where were you born  
Student6: (4) Mexico  
Melissa: (5) Were you in an ESOL class when you got here  
Student6: (6) I was in ESOL until 3<sup>rd</sup> grade  
Melissa: (7) Are you comfortable speaking English  
Student6: (8) Yes  
Melissa: (9) Good you speak it really well did you know very much English when you=  
(10) =started in ESOL  
Student6: (11) No  
Melissa: (13) Do you feel like your ESOL helped you learn English  
Student6: (14) Yeah  
Melissa: (15) Ok so now you're done with ESOL is school ever hard for you  
Student6: (16) A little  
Melissa: (17) Why  
Student6: (18) Sometimes I don't understand things my teachers say  
Melissa: (19) Do you ever speak Spanish at school  
Student6: (20) Yes  
Melissa: (21) What about at home do you use Spanish or English more  
Student6: (22) I use Spanish more  
Melissa: (23) Do you feel like that the CRCT is a hard test  
Student6: (24) Yes  
Melissa: (25) Why is it hard  
Student6: (26) I don't know

Melissa: (27) Is it because you don't know the answers, or are the questions hard to= (28) =understand  
Student6: (28) They're hard to understand

### Excerpt 7

Melissa: (1) What languages do you speak  
Student7: (2) English and Spanish  
Melissa: (3) Were you born in the United States  
Student7: (4) No  
Melissa: (5) Where were you born  
Student7: (6) Mexico  
Melissa: (7) How old were you when you came to the United States  
Student7: (8) I was 8  
Melissa: (9) What language was your first language to learn  
Student7: (10) Spanish  
Melissa: (11) How did you learn English  
Student7: (12) ESOL class  
Melissa: (13) How long were you in ESOL  
Student7: (14) Two years  
Melissa: (15) Do you feel comfortable speaking English  
Student7: (16) Yes  
Melissa: (17) Good you do a good job with it when you're at home do you speak= (18) =Spanish or English  
Student7: (19) Both  
Melissa: (20) So do you speak a mixture of Spanish and English or do you speak= (21) =English with some of your family and Spanish with the rest  
Student7: (22) My dad only kind of understands English but not my mom  
Melissa: (23) Do you ever speak Spanish and then change to English  
Student7: (24) Yes but mostly when my dad doesn't know the English  
Melissa: (25) Do you remember how many times you've taken the CRCT  
Student7: (26) Since 1<sup>st</sup> grade  
Melissa: (27) So you had to take it as soon as you started in school  
Student7: (28) Yes  
Melissa: (29) And was the CRCT hard for you is it still hard for you  
Student7: (30) It was hard but it's gotten easier  
Melissa: (31) Why is it easier  
Student7: (32) Because I start knowing more English  
Melissa: (33) Ok so knowing English is what helped make it easier  
Student7: (34) mm hmm

### Excerpt 8

Melissa: (1) Were you born here in the Unites States

Student8: (2) Yes  
Melissa: (3) Ok where is your family from  
Student8: (4) Oman  
Melissa: (5) So what language did you first learn when you learning to talk  
Student8: (6) Arabic  
Melissa: (7) When you're at home what language do you speak most Arabic or=  
(8) =English  
Student8: (9) I mostly use Arabic but my mom does speak to me in English  
Melissa: (10) So does your mom understand English  
Student8: (11) Yes  
Melissa: (12) And she speaks it really well  
Student8: (13) Yes (2.0) well see she graduated from college in the United States  
Melissa: (14) Are you comfortable speaking in English  
Student8: (15) Yes  
Melissa: (16) Do you have friends who you speak Arabic with  
Student8: (17) Yes some only speak Arabic, but I can still talk to them  
Melissa: (18) When you first started in school were you in ESOL  
Student8: (19) Yes  
Melissa: (20) How long were you in ESOL  
Student8: (21) Just one year  
Melissa: (22) Do you feel like you learned a lot of English in ESOL  
Student8: (23) Well I knew a lot of it when I got here because of my mom  
Melissa: (24) Do you switch back and forth when you're at home  
Student8: (25) My step-dad doesn't speak English so I have to speak Arabic with him  
Melissa: (26) Ok so do you read and write more in Arabic or in English  
Student8: (27) I read and write more in English  
Melissa: (28) How many times have you taken the CRCT  
Student8: (29) Ever since I was here  
Melissa: (30) Ok so 1<sup>st</sup> grade was your first year taking it  
Student8: (31) Yes  
Melissa: (32) Do you feel like the CRCT is a hard test  
Student8: (33) My mom told me that I did pretty good on the test last year  
Melissa: (34) Good, so you do really well on it ( 1.5) does it make you nervous  
Student8: (35) Yes I get really nervous  
Melissa: (36) Do you know why you get nervous  
Student8: (37) Uh sometimes I don't know the I (1.5) I have a hard time with the words  
Melissa: (38) Do you feel like you would do better on the test if it was in Arabic or in=  
(39) =English  
Student8: (40) English, because I can't really read that much in Arabic

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Melissa Tyson (1978 -) received her B.S. in Elementary Education from Middle Tennessee State University in May 2001. She taught fifth grade in Roswell, Georgia for six years, where she was employed by the Fulton County Board of Education. Due to her interests in linguistics and language policy, Melissa worked on her M.A. in linguistics at The University of Florida from August 2007, through April 2009.