THE DIALOGIC CONSTRUCTION OF BILINGUAL LITERACIES, DISABILITY, AND INCLUSION BY CONTENT-AREA TEACHERS

A Dissertation in
Curriculum & Instruction
By
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ABSTRACT

This design research study explores the evolution of four rural Pennsylvanian education professionals' discourse about their Emergent Bilingual (EB) students over the duration of an eight-week professional development (PD) course. The participants were asked to attend seven meetings, keep weekly reflective blogs, and incorporate the various pedagogical strategies and methods learned during the course into their classrooms. Viewed through the multiple lenses of sociocultural theory (SCT), positioning theory, and Disability Studies in Education (DSE), the data suggest that targeted PD courses may enable teachers to move the location of perceived problems out of the children and into their pedagogical strategies and curricula, both of which are areas that teachers generally feel empowered to change. Likewise, while teachers who have not been provided with appropriate PD opportunities may conflate disability and English language learning, thereby giving credence to the notion of an “English-Language Learning Disability,” this study provides evidence that teachers enrolled in PD courses begin to demonstrate an understanding of the role that a lack of appropriate linguistic supports plays in poor academic and behavioral outcomes. Finally, in order to provide a concrete example of how a teacher may move from believing his or her student is problematic and disabled to believing the student is capable, this study presents the telling case of Lucy and her student Alma. At the beginning of the study, Lucy and Alma are dis/abled by the discourse of the “Wild Child” which is perpetuated in the discourse of the school’s administration and faculty. While enrolled in the PD course, however, Lucy is able to transition from seeing Alma as a Wild Child to recognizing Alma as a student whose learning has been severely delayed by inappropriate pedagogical practices and an unsupportive learning environment, but who nonetheless has clear abilities that signal her capability to succeed in the proper learning context.
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<td>Community of Practice</td>
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<td>Disability Studies in Education</td>
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<td>EB</td>
<td>Emergent Bilingual</td>
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<td>ELL</td>
<td>English Language Learner</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELP</td>
<td>English Language Proficiency</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language (program)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individualized Education Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>LD</td>
<td>Learning Dis/abled</td>
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<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development (course)</td>
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<td>PLC</td>
<td>Professional Learning Community</td>
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<td>SCT</td>
<td>Sociocultural Theory</td>
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<td>SI</td>
<td>Sheltered Instruction</td>
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<td>SIOP</td>
<td>Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol</td>
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<td>WIDA</td>
<td>refers to the WIDA consortium, publishers of the WIDA ELD Standards and the ACCESS for ELLs ELP test. WIDA is not an acronym, but is listed here because it may appear to the reader as one.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZPD</td>
<td>Zone of Proximal Development</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As McDermott says, “inarticulateness is endemic to the human species” (1993, p. 294) so I cannot hope to get this acknowledgement right, but know that it is written with great love and respect. I acknowledge with gratitude the crucial role of:

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~*~

The absolute truth is I would not have accomplished this life-long goal without the loving support of Chris, my spouse, and Max, Ben, and Milo, my funny and affectionate teenagers. Thank you for accepting, and even celebrating, all that I have to give—and forgiving me for all that I do not. You have my profound gratitude.

~*~

(And Emily. Good dog.)
DEDICATION

This Dissertation is dedicated to:

PAST GENERATIONS OF BLACK, HUDSON, & HULTS TEACHERS

And

OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS

May you partake of the many languages available to you.
Chapter 1
Context and Overview

The question of who is learning what and how much is essentially a question of what conversations they are a part of, and this question is a subset of the more powerful questions of what conversations are around to be had in a given culture (Goodwin, 1991). To answer these questions, we must give up our preoccupation with individual performance and examine instead the structure of resources and disappointments made available to people in various institutions.


For over 40 years children of color in the United States (U.S.) have been placed in special-education (SPED) settings in public schools at rates disproportionate to their representation in the same schools (Artiles, 2011). Specifically, most of these students are considered to have “high-incidence or subjective disabilities”: intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, speech and language impairments, and emotional and behavioral disorders (Artiles, 2011). In spite of four decades of research into this curiosity, no simple explanations have emerged. In fact, more recently, it has become clear that students who are linguistic and cultural minorities are also being placed into SPED settings at rates disproportionate to their representation in schools (Ibid.). This phenomenon merits our careful investigation because outcomes for students in SPED settings are extremely poor when compared to outcomes for students in typical classroom settings (Ibid.).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, while the past several decades have witnessed minority
students shuffled into SPED settings, they have also seen a decrease in professional development (PD) instruction for teachers. Even as emergent bilingual (EB) students’ presence in U.S. schools has increased to nearly 25% of the school population (Williams, 2014), teachers remain largely unprepared to work with such students (Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003). Such teachers face a related challenge in the high percentage of students (approximately 10%) enrolled in English-Language (ELD) programs of various formats (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 2015). Many of these students are concurrently enrolled in mainstream content-area classrooms and require specific linguistic supports to acquire the fluency with academic language that their same-age peers are acquiring.

This study aimed to provide volunteer participants with professional development in teaching EB students in such mainstream content-area classrooms. To that end, the study relied on design research, with teacher discourse in PD meetings and in private written blogs constituting the two primary forms of data. Adopting a semantic (content-focused) approach to discourse analysis, this study ultimately sought to explore the effect of short-term explicit sociocultural mediation on the discourse of teachers when characterizing EB learners in their classrooms.

**Context**

Authored by The U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, the recent “Letter to
Colleagues” (2015)—a document that reports on the state of education, including its related laws and guidelines, for students formally identified as requiring English as a Second Language (ESL) services—addresses two of the most significant and pervasive problems of identifying culturally and linguistically diverse students as disabled. The first of these problems is that school districts often fail to determine “the appropriate assessments and other evaluation materials to be used” (p. 24). The second is that some school districts do not provide language services to students who qualify for them, regardless of whether the students qualify as disabled. The letter goes on to say specifically:

The Departments are aware that some school districts have a formal or informal policy of “no dual services,” i.e., a policy of allowing students to receive either [ESL] services or special education services, but not both. p. 25

The authors also remind the districts that this policy is illegal. Yet the very inclusion of the acknowledgement and the corresponding admonition to follow the law indicates the pervasiveness of the problem.

SPED settings for students who do not need them are an expensive alternative to traditional schooling, both in terms of administrative costs and costs to the student in terms of lost opportunities for a more challenging curriculum and better educational outcomes. When language support services are also removed upon diagnosis of a disability, the opportunities for a more challenging curriculum and better educational outcomes are further reduced.

Yet opportunities for EB Students—also known as English Learners (ELs) or...

---

1 Classified as a “Significant Guidance Document.”
English Language Learners (ELLs)—to develop full language proficiency in the regular classroom are limited by the fact that the majority of U.S. teachers have had no formal instruction in second-language acquisition (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll, 2005). They receive little to no professional development (Ibid.) regarding the role of culture in schools, the difference between basic communicative language (social language) and academic language (the language of content-area instruction) (Cummins, 2008), pedagogical strategies that can support the acquisition of academic language, or the importance of creating warm, welcoming classroom environments for children with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzales, 2008). As a result, teachers in rapid-influx schools—schools that have experienced dramatic increases in EB student enrollment in relatively short periods of time—report greatly increased stress and feelings of frustration, inadequacy, and even anger (Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004).

In addition to managing their emotional responses in the absence of sustained high-quality professional development, these teachers are forced to depend on what they hear in the media, and from the surrounding community, as well as their own “common sense.” For this reason, members of the school system conflate differences in learning needs with disability (or deny disabled children services because of beliefs about the capabilities of particular linguistic, cultural, and racial groups). Perhaps this is why the aforementioned “Letter to Colleagues” specifically mandates that school districts must never classify students as disabled “because of their limited English language proficiency” (p. 24). This conflation leads teachers, administrators, and other members of Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams to recommend that accommodations for students’ perceived disabilities take the
place of appropriate linguistic instruction and support.

As mentioned in the opening paragraph of this chapter, there are two significant facts related to the identification of CLD students as dis/abled that should be alarming to educators. The first is the disproportionality of CLD students identified in a cluster of disability categories (Artiles, 2011; Artiles, Rueda, Salazar & Higareda, 2002) and the second is that the disabilities in that cluster feature subjective definitions.

The categories to which EB students specifically are most likely to be assigned are mental retardation (MR), specific learning disability (SLD), and language and speech impairment (LAS) (Artiles, 2011; Artiles, Rueda, Salazar & Higareda, 2002). While a category like LAS might seem less subjective, when it comes to students learning a second language, it is not. Martin (2009) points out that EB students are particularly vulnerable to being labeled LAS because of the very nature of language differences and language learning. In order to determine that a speech difference is more than typical variation in second language acquisition, that difference should exist and persist in across of the student’s languages for which that sound exists (Ibid.). Sometimes this comparison cannot be made because the problematic sound does not exist in both languages. While time spent on specific pronunciation instruction might be useful, the very nature of the problem (the sound does not exist in the first language) should be a sign that designation of a speech disability would be inappropriate. As discussed in Chapter 5, the category of LD is even more subjective, defined primarily as an unexplained failure to progress as expected academically—which can be influenced by any number of factors, including poor linguistic supports or inappropriate instruction for EB students. Christine Sleeter (1987) was not the first scholar to point out
the socially constructed nature of disabilities (Connor & Ferri, 2010), but her careful chronicling of the “birth” of the category of learning disability and the ways in which race and class played key roles was an important critique of the medical model (see Chapter 2) and played a role in the emergence of the scholarship of Disability Studies in Education (Ibid.). Sleeter (1987) points out, “Learning disabilities in the US was constructed as a way of understanding certain kinds of low achieving children by those who accepted the need to push children to achieve in specific areas at increasingly high levels” (p. 234).

Yet, problems endemic to the process of identifying culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students as disabled frequently mean that appropriate testing procedures—and before that—instructional methods, are not followed as part of the identification of disabilities, either (Carrasqillo & Rodriguez, 1997; Flugum & Reschly, 1994). Klinger and Harry (2006) identify just some of the challenges inherent in distinguishing between typical English Language Development (ELD) variations and learning disabilities (LD). In addition to the fluidity of the characteristics defining some dis/ability labels (as discussed above), Klinger and Harry explain that no test yet exists that can accurately determine when a student is ready to be tested exclusively in English (p. 2248). Although tests like WIDA’s ACCESS for ELLs may form part of a larger set of data about the language development of a particular student, it cannot determine when the student has achieved a level of English language development that would render a test normed for native-English speaking students valid for that student. A related issue seems to be a lack of appropriate training on the part of school psychologists in appropriate testing procedures for EB students. While practices specific to the needs of CLD students have been developed for mutli-tier intervention
programs like Response to Intervention, it is common for schools and teachers to fail to implement them (Klinger & Harry, 2006).

In addition, researchers still have no consensus of what typical bilingual language development looks like in a school context, in part because there is no such thing as a typical bilingual language learner in the U.S. While the number of Spanish-speaking children born in the U.S. outnumber all other categories (Ryan, 2013), the socio-historical backgrounds of these students can vary greatly. Students who are immigrants from countries where they attended excellent public schools and were exposed to print literacy from a young age tend to have a different academic profile than students who immigrated to the U.S. without much formal school experience or exposure to print literacy. Students who are refugees may come with strong academic histories or not. They may come with memories of significant trauma or not. CLD students are part of a rich fabric of diversity that defies easy categorization—and easy understanding of what normal bilingual/biliteracy development in a monolingual school setting might look like. Without that picture, it is challenging to accurately identify what a significant departure from a “typical” language learning trajectory might look like for students who vary so much in cultural and linguistic “distance” from their monolingual-English peers.

**Significance**

The problem that this study thus seeks to address is the over-representation of EB students in SPED settings. The response this study provides is to intervene in the instructional practices and professional knowledge of willing volunteer teachers by providing
professional development in the essential knowledge of mainstream teachers of ELLs that is targeted to the participants’ specific questions and concerns. More specifically, as a design research study inclusive of a professional development course for practicing teachers of content-area classrooms that included one or more students learning English as a second or additional language (EB Students), the study aims to answer the following question: “In what ways does short-term explicit sociocultural mediation of the essential understandings (see p. 46) of teachers of emergent bilingual students affect the discourse of teachers when characterizing Emergent Bilingual learners in their classrooms?” Throughout the professional development course, I mediated the teachers’ discussions, providing tools to bring about new understandings. I also supported the relationships between the willing teachers and their EB students. For this reason, I stand as both participant and observer.

**Overview of the Dissertation**

This study is organized in the following manner. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the sociocultural theory (SCT) of learning, as well as related scholarship regarding positioning theory and professional development. I also consider scholarship taken from Disability Studies in Education (DSE). Bringing the context of Chapter 1 and the theoretical framework of Chapter 2 together, I conclude Chapter 2 with a discussion of the study’s rationale. This is followed by Chapter 3, in which I explain the methodology of design research as it relates to this particular study. I outline the design of the research, including its procedures, participants, and setting. I then explain the method of analysis and briefly introduce the primary themes that emerged in the study’s results.
In chapters 4 and 5, I present and analyze the data collected during the study. In Chapter 4, I consider how ideas of “difference as problems,” and the location of those problems, first became evident in the words of the teachers. I go on to demonstrate how the teachers ultimately were able to move the location of the perceived problems out of the children and into curriculum and/or instruction—areas they felt empowered to change. In chapter 5, I explore the tendency of the teacher-participants to conflate disability and English-language learning, thereby creating a new idea that could be called “ELL Disability.” I provide evidence that the participants came to understand the role that a lack of appropriate linguistic supports plays in poor academic and behavioral outcomes. I also suggest that they demonstrated early investment in a discourse of capability.

In Chapter 6 I move to the illustrative case of teacher Lucy and her student, Alma. When I first met Lucy and Alma, they are trapped in the “Wild/Feral Child” discourse that has been used by the school’s administration and faculty to define Alma. Exposing the dangers of this Wild/Feral Child discourse, I reveal how Lucy is able to transition from seeing Alma as a notorious, uneducable student to a student whose learning has been severely delayed by an unsupportive learning environment and inappropriate instructional pedagogy, but who nonetheless has clear abilities that signal her capability to succeed if placed in the proper learning context.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I discuss conclusions drawn from the results, including a brief discussion of changes planned for the next cycle of this ongoing study.
Chapter 2
Theoretical Framework: A Sociocultural Perspective

This study is predicated on Sociocultural Theory (SCT), as well as positioning theory and Disability Studies in Education (DSE). In this chapter, I present an overview of the key tenets of SCT including learning, development, and mediation. I then introduce positioning theory, DSE, and recent thinking on professional development within the SCT framework. Finally, I conclude with a rationale for the study.

Introduction

This research project was grounded in sociocultural understandings of learning, development, mediation, and disability or dis/ability. While the objective of this project was pragmatic, seeking to uncover ways to help teachers develop and implement inclusive practices in real-world classrooms, this pragmatic objective was achieved only as the theories upon which the study were predicated were considered and refined. Put differently, in order to understand what it means for the study’s professional development (PD) intervention to have accomplished its goals, it is necessary to understand sociocultural notions of learning and development.

Generally speaking, SCT suggests that ability is fluid—contextualized and mediated by tools. As Cole (2005) has argued, abilities that are evident in one cultural context may appear or disappear in others. Wertsch has observed that this may be a function of whether a given person is able to apply his or her knowledge to novel situations, a cognitive skill that
formal schooling fills in myriad cultural contexts (2005). Indeed, the role of school in developing various higher-order thinking skills is a common theme in SCT scholarship (Ibid.). As the chapter’s subsequent discussion of scholarship from DSE suggests, however, the extent to which schools actually perform this function varies, and varies even more for students perceived by administrators and teachers as “different.”

Abilities such as those described by Cole and Wertsch are typically assessed within schools using standardized and normed tests such as IQ tests, content-area exams, or literacy and mathematical reasoning exams. SCT scholars tend to regard these types of assessments as highly problematic (Lidz & Gindis, 2003). Generally speaking, SCT holds that these tests are constructed on the assumption that a person’s ability in a particular area is best measured in a context in which the person is working alone on a problem. These tests also presume that students have static or fixed ability in a given area (Chaiklin, 2003; Lidz & Gindis, 2003). The SCT field of dynamic assessment seeks to address these issues regarding traditional school assessment by having teachers engage their test-takers in dialogue about the test questions and answers in order to try to discover the reasoning behind both correct and incorrect answers. Doing so sometimes reveals students’ developing abilities and may challenge students to further develop those abilities (Poehner, 2010).

This emphasis on uncovering exactly what students can do at a given point in time, with the expectation that effective instruction will enable the students to grow in their ability beyond the given point in time, meshes well with the DSE goal of building on students’ capabilities. According to DSE, it is capabilities on which teachers should build their next lessons, and it is an awareness of the developing abilities across all students and within
individual students upon which differentiated lessons should be crafted. This understanding of instructional practices is thus inclusive in nature: it presumes that all students in the classroom are always developing new abilities, and that all can be supported in that development in various and individual ways (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985b).

This chapter is arranged in such a manner as to provide the reader with the background necessary to understand each successive section and the chapters of the study that follow. A map indicating the chapter’s organization is below.

![Map of the Theoretical Framework Chapter](image)

**Figure 2.1: Map of the Theoretical Framework Chapter**

**Sociocultural Theory and Learning**

Vygotsky’s scholarly work forms the foundation of SCT. Heavily influenced by both Karl Marx and Baruch Spinoza, Vygotsky sought to successfully bring children of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds into the post-revolution Russian public school system. Vygotsky was not concerned about preserving the students’ home languages or cultures; rather, he sought to uncover efficient, effective ways to acculturate the students to Russian schools. In the process, however, Vygotsky recognized the need to find ways to obtain an
accurate picture of what each student knew and could do when coming into the school. Therefore, his work was motivated by a desire to understand cognitive development for the purpose of designing effective instructional and assessment practices with diverse student populations.

**Learning**

Learning and development are perhaps the primary activities of human beings (Vygotsky, 1978). These activities begin at birth, as babies learn the meanings of the symbolic systems in use by others (e.g., gestures, facial expression, tones of voice, language) as well as how to use tools (e.g., using one toy to get another that is just out of reach) (Vygotsky, 1986). Human beings also acquire an understanding of the localized knowledge that is woven into daily life (e.g., the hierarchy of classes, castes, or races and one’s own position in that hierarchy; the value of local, regional, and national languages; the use and meaning of specific types of clothing). They even acquire an understanding of some of the history behind that knowledge. Humans then use this understanding to learn how to learn, how to remember, how to organize their thoughts, how to attend to some sounds and not to others, and what to expect at specific times of the day—even when to be hungry and when to sleep. This learning is called appropriation and it is central to the experience of human development (Leont’ev, 1951/1989; Tolman, 1999).

Within SCT, the terms learning and development are conceptualized differently. While learning is the internalization of knowledge and experiential skills particular to a given context, development is the process of cognitive transformation whereby learned knowledge
and skills grow to a level where they may be transferred to novel situations, and through application, transformed in return. Learning, then, is about social, concrete experiences and knowledge acquired in everyday contexts, whereas development refers to the ability to think in various ways about abstract ideas present in a given social-historical context. In order to transfer their learning to novel situations, individuals require a blend of concrete and abstract knowledge. Abstract knowledge of the boiling temperature of water will not make lunch. Likewise, the causes and cures for many illnesses remained a mystery until Louis Pasteur changed medical science with his ideas about the role of microorganisms in disease. From a sociocultural standpoint, the purpose of cognitive development is the development of skills and knowledge that is then able to be transferred from a specific sociocultural context at a particular historical moment to multiple other sociocultural contexts and other moments in time. Such learning and development necessarily unfolds over a period of time.

Just as they are not instantaneous, learning and development are neither irreversible nor unidirectional processes. Indeed, it is possible to forget what one once knew when removed from the localized knowledge of a particular society. Eva Hoffman’s (1990) memoir, *Lost in Translation*, contains a particularly compelling account of her experience unlearning Polish when removed to in a society in which the old words had no meanings. Faced with the loss of her native tongue, Hoffman describes the feelings of emptiness she encountered when she did not yet have the English words to explain the new experiences she was having. While it possible for learning to be reversed, it is likewise possible for it to be reciprocally transformative: transformative for both the learners and the teachers (Johnson, 2009). Transformation is not usually about changing society, culture, or history. It
is about changing internal and social activity—the way one thinks and the manner in which one acts. It is never just about changing the activity.

This understanding of learning and development as transformative is key because it moves learning and development from that which is limited in application and depth to that which is available as a psychological tool for a variety of novel problem-solving situations. Individuals learn how to learn more and more things so well that the use of these psychological tools seems innate, when in fact the use of these tools has only become intrinsic. Individuals also tend to feel that learning is personal unless or until a sudden loss of context—as in Eva Hoffman’s experience—makes apparent that what has been learned is, in fact, entirely social (cultural). The next section thus looks closely at the concept of mediation, or the process of using tools to learn.

**Mediation**

Mediation is the use of a given tool to achieve certain objectives. Culture refers to the socially created fabric of knowledge, interaction, skills, and objectives—the means for solving problems created by previous and current generations (Engeström, 1999). Cole (1999) has said that culture is the “medium that acts as both a constraint on and the resource for human action” (p. 90). Human beings are so adept at using the tools they have acquired from the culture and those acting around them in order to mediate that they come to internalize the tools. Using artifacts, texts in auditory and visual forms, and other tools such as signs of approval and disapproval, humans mediate themselves and others without having to consciously choose to do so. In this way, humans are able to regulate everything from
behavior towards strangers, to when to pay attention, to what to eat (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

**Disability Studies in Education**

DSE is a subfield of disability studies that is specifically situated in the educational context. Like disability studies, DSE is concerned with the culturally constructed nature of disability and normality, but DSE closely attends to how these constructs play out in the school and its attendant administration, policies, and practices. In both cases, dis/ability is not considered a pre-existing condition; there are only the inevitable differences that are part and parcel of the human condition and that cultures have responded to and labeled in various ways. As a result of these various responses, disability scholars generally suggest, the rights and duties of people positioned as disabled have varied over time and place. This study is concerned with the deeply entrenched social context that produces dis/ability in Western society, and the rights and duties of people positioned accordingly.

In this section, I explain the concept of disability\(^2\) as that which is socially constructed. I subsequently discuss human variety and the social construction of ‘normal.’ I close with an in-depth look at these constructs in educational settings.

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\(^2\) I use the verb “dis/able” to refer to social actions that limit an individual in some way. See p. 120 for a more detailed explanation of the rationale for using terms in particular ways.
Disability as Culturally Constructed

McDermott and Varenne (1995) asserted that there are three ways of thinking about how the cultural activities of learning and mediation negotiate the relationship between culture and identity. Since ability is conceived of as what a person can do and how a person thinks—and since what a person can do is a combination of biological and social development—then ability is a version of cultural competence. Therefore, disability is defined by what a person cannot do in his or her existing cultural context. Disability is likewise diagnosed using a variety of test instruments and medical observations. In DSE, this is known as the Medical Model of Disability. According to this perspective, a dis/abled person is placed outside the range of normal, and by extension, outside his or her society (p. 334). He or she also is “unsusceptible to transformation through interaction,” or suffers limitations of development, and has reduced rights and responsibilities (Ibid.) This Medical Model of Disability is the predominant view of disability in Western culture.

The Medical Model has its historical roots in shifting notions about what it meant to be human. These shifting notions had their origins in Darwin’s work on plant and animal evolution, which other researchers then extended to include human beings. The eugenics movement, for instance, was borne of the assumption that some people had superior genes while others were representative of less evolved forms of humanity. Africans, Native Americans, and other aboriginal societies were placed in this latter category, thereby inaugurating the idea that disability could be extended to specific races or cultural groups (Gelb, 2010). Those groups positioned as dis/abled, or less human, were given fewer rights
within the dominant culture. Likewise, the broader culture was thought to have fewer duties toward the dis/abled populations they had constructed through pseudoscience and oppression.

In contrast to the Medical Model of Disability, the Difference Approach begins with the assumption that human beings are equally capable of participating in day-to-day cultural tasks (McDermott & Varenne, 1995). In some social contexts, this may mean that a person with mild to moderate differences takes on a role that is appropriate for that person’s strengths, and for those around him or her to believe it is natural and reasonable for those differences to exist. While this is the second most common theory yoking dis/ability to culture, this approach is vulnerable to instability in application. This is especially true in the context of cultural and linguistic minorities, as there is frequently correlation between poverty and other forms of deprivation for these groups—a problem that is often ‘resolved’ in the literature by slipping back into deficit discourses.

The third approach to culture and disability—the culture-as-disability approach—acknowledges that every society offers roles with different types and degrees of rights and duties, and that these roles are embedded within a hierarchy of value and power (McDermott & Varenne, 1995). The sorting of people within this hierarchy is determined by an individual’s characteristics (randomly constructed over generations) as compared to those of other individuals in that society. The position assigned to a person determines how he or she is treated by others in the society (his or her rights and duties). For example, buildings

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3 See p. 32 for discussion of the terms pseudoscience and oppression under Richard Valencia’s (2010) framework of deficit thinking.
typically have stairs, ramps, or street level entrances (or a combination of any of these) as a means for people to enter. The ability to enter a building is a completely arbitrary task, but individuals who cannot enter a building using the stairs are positioned as dis/abled due to human variations in mobility. If the culture did not construct a particular way of being mobile as ‘normal’ (and by extension, a particular way of moving as ‘abnormal’), however, it would not build buildings that prevent individuals with differences in mobility from entering. The deficit does not lie in the person, in other words; it lies in the culture’s decision to use stairs as a sorting tool for normal and dis/abled bodies.

As in the Medical Model and the Difference Approach, this third model assigns negative connotations to disability: this third model is a model of what is, not what should be. This means that individuals with invisible differences that are constructed as disabilities (e.g., mental illness, mild hearing loss) will often attempt to pass as ‘not different’ in order to avoid the negative social consequences or oppressive behaviors of others (stigma) associated with their hidden disabilities. Individuals with visible differences that are constructed as disabilities do not have the same degree of agency, however. While individuals with visible differences who are wealthy or have premium health benefits may be able to purchase their own accommodations that give them access to the resources denied others with similar differences, even this does not usually restore them to full rights and duties of the ‘non-disabled.’

Both disability and normalcy are determined by arbitrary standards. Within the framework of the Medical Model of Disability, for example, performance on tasks is considered the primary measurement of disability, while other data, such as the observations
of caregivers (non-objective people without formal medical training), are devalued. While “normal” scores are those scores that occur commonly, scores that occur rarely are considered outside the range of “normal”—which may be constructed as disability depending on the characteristic. Per Gelb (2010), “Too much of some things (e.g., activity level) or too little of others (e.g., intelligence) is deemed to be bad” (p. 72). Exactly where too much and too little reside is arbitrary, yet educability is determined every day in schools across the country based on the outcomes of these tests. This is in spite of the fact that the human variety involved is sometimes not visible and therefore it is unknown to the evaluator whether the test has any validity at all.

An example of this is people who have a rare form of communicative difference that limits their ability to participate in speech acts (Kliewer & Biklen, 2015). Because only the lack of speech is visible, it is not possible without the use of visible language—or sometimes technology—for the person to communicate with others. Therefore, tests requiring any form of communication—especially when visible language instruction has not been provided or is not useful, and technology has not been provided or is not appropriately supported—are invalid. Recent evidence⁴ suggests that sometimes the expression of language is not related to the reception of it, and that children who are provided with other means of communication are able to reveal rich internal thoughts capable of transformative learning once others learn to communicate appropriately with them.

As this discovery about others’ learning capabilities is made, it transforms our understanding of the cultural community that is special education. Yet social change is slow

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⁴ For example, see Biklen, D. (2005) and Kliewer & Biklen, 2015.
and stereotypes tend to shift, not disappear. For most of the educational community, disability is still constructed through the Medical Model.

**The Social Construction of Difference, Deficit, and Dis/ability in Schools**

The United States places what most would argue is a disproportionate number of students from minority ethnicities and cultures in special education programs (Artiles, 1998; Artiles, 2011; Chamberlain, 2006; Martin, 2009). Interestingly, however, it is the individual states that are allowed to determine what actually constitutes disproportionate representation (Ibid.). Of the 39 states reporting in 2011, 20 indicated that they set their disproportionality ratios at 3 or higher. In other words, these states do not consider children from ethnic minorities or cultures to be over-represented in special education until the rates exceed 300% (thirteen states), 350% (two states), 400% (four states), or 500% (one state) of their representation in a given school district as a whole (Ibid., p. 439).

By manipulating the acceptable thresholds of representation, our culture constructs a space in which it is acceptable to label children from cultural and linguistic minorities as dis/abled at significantly higher rates than the rates at which it labels middle-class, white, native English-speaking children as dis/abled. While some might assume that the additional resources available to students in special education programs constitutes an advantage for these students, in fact, the programs often prove a hindrance. Minority students placed in special education tend not to have improved academic outcomes; rather, they are more likely to drop out and/or end up in prison than their peers, and they tend to be unable to access well-paying jobs (Artiles, 2011).
Neither are mainstream classrooms a panacea. When special-education students and EB students are placed in undifferentiated groups, Martin (2009) has argued, all of their “needs are glossed, and group needs are not individualized” (p. 51). For many teachers, the problems with literacy that are common to culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students are often indistinguishable from the problems with literacy that are due to cognitive, learning, or emotional disabilities. Teachers who work with CLD students and who have not received instruction in the essential understandings (see p. 46) of ELL students thus risk misinterpreting student responses to common assessments, resulting in ineffective interventions. This eventually leads to incorrect diagnoses of students’ learning problems and a lack of consideration that the problem may in fact be the instruction—and not the student.

Part of the problem is in the way that educational professionals may view learning and/or “ability.” In considering the learning “ability” of a student, educational professionals tend to have a static view of learning as fixed performance or a dynamic view of learning. In Opening Minds (2012), Peter Johnston explains the difference between fixed performance frameworks and dynamic learning frameworks. Simply put, in fixed performance frameworks, student performance is viewed as a static characteristic that essentially locks a student into a particular track. Labels related to race, gender, attention differences, or behavioral variations mediate the student’s identity and position the student in relation to others. This framework affects how the student approaches schoolwork and learning in general (Ibid.).

In contrast, when learning is looked at from the dynamic learning framework, performance is seen as a point on a longer journey towards mastery of skills and knowledge.
When EB students are perceived as students in the process of developing proficiency (e.g., by the framework of the WIDA consortium), they are then cast as dynamic learners with the potential to achieve full fluency.

Using Johnston’s terminology, the discourse of ability can be accordingly thought of as x/y axes intersecting in a Cartesian plane, where the x-axis stretches outward from the center towards an ever-more-fixed notion of ability or an infinitely-dynamic one. The y-axis moves outward from the center towards exceptionally-strong ability or towards no ability at all.

Figure 2.2: Ability, Fixed Performance, and Dynamic Learning Concepts

In considering the above figure, it is important to note that people are unlikely to think of themselves and others—people whom they know well—as being positioned entirely in one quadrant or the other. Rather, people tend to have some areas that they think of as fixed and others they think of as dynamic. For example, I might think of myself as having a fixed characteristic of abysmal tennis ability (point T), but picking up the bassoon again (point B) after 20 years has strengthened my understanding of myself as a dynamic learner as a result.
of working very, very hard to regain skills I once took for granted. Finally, I have changed my opinion of myself as a poor (fixed) language learner to a dynamic learner of additional languages (albeit not entirely successfully—yet—point L2) as my understanding of second-language learning has improved and I have been inspired to add new language skills.

For this reason, when providing the participants of this study with mediation, I have not attempted to assess the students myself. In order for participants to perceive their students as having capabilities that can be further developed, they must first move their perceptions from fixed quadrants to dynamic quadrants.

This shift from fixed to dynamic quadrants proves especially difficult when the word disability comes into play. Teacher perceptions of disability are powerful influences on the placement of students in the school system (Collins, 2013; Klingner & Harry, 2006; Rogers, 2003). For example, Algozine, Christenson, & Ysseldyke (1982) followed two large school districts and found that about 90% of students initially identified by teachers as having learning difficulties were given formal psychological testing. Approximately 90% of the students tested qualified for special education (Ibid.). In other words, only 1 out of 5 students referred by teachers for SPED testing do not qualify for services. This astonishingly high rate leaves room to question the process. In a related study, Flugum and Reschly (1994) report that when teachers were taught new teaching strategies to try with the children they perceived as struggling, they found that few of the strategies were used in practice. When viewed in the context of Collins (2013) and Rogers work (2003), in which teachers in two separate case studies relied on stereotypes and pseudoscience deficit discourses to ability profile (Collins, 2013) their students, it is reasonable to question whether perceptions of
disability are sometimes rooted in preconceived notions about particular student groups. In a related study, Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (1997) reported that when new instructional strategies were used prior to referral for SPED testing, they were often implemented incorrectly or poorly. On the other hand, Flugum and Reschly (1994) found that most of the pre-referral interventions were of poor quality, but where high quality interventions were implemented, there were more positive student outcomes. For EB students, high-quality interventions must be predicated on the same essential understandings as those that are required in the mainstream classroom.

The disabilities attached to minority students tend to be those that are most popular at a given time. For example, in the 1980s, it was common for students to be labeled as learning dis/abled (LD) (to have a learning disability) in the United States. In the first part of the twenty-first century, however, students are more typically being labeled emotionally or behaviorally impaired (Martin, 2009). Most of these students are considered to have “high-incidence or subjective disabilities”—that is, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, speech and language impairments, and emotional and behavioral disorders (Artiles, 2011).

Drawing from Bourdieus’s notions of human and social capital, where human capital is a person’s level of education as demonstrated by the skills, capabilities, and knowledge he or she possesses and social capital is the community and family resources available to a person (Martin, 2009), disability studies scholarship suggests that the role of the teacher is not as a fixer-of-persons but as an expert provider of social capital. In finding the contexts in which the learner is able to best demonstrate his or her literacy skills, the teacher may look at how the learner engages with literacy practices in various contexts in which school and home
are on equal footing (Flewitt, Nind, & Payler, 2009). If the learner engages with a variety of texts at home but practices avoidance behaviors at school, the teacher may use the capability approach to ask what about the home environment invites engagement while the school environment does not. He or she may then find ways to create a similar environment in the school context. In this way, the locus of the problem moves from the child to the learning environment. Capability is about noting what resources each student brings to the classroom and finding ways to develop the class’s new knowledge and skills from that base of abilities.

Positioning

In this section, I explain positioning theory (Collins, 2011; Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré, 2008; Harré & Moghaddam, 2014; Harré & van Langenhove, 1991, 1999; Van Langenhove & Harré 1994), mooring it to sociocultural notions of mediation and interpsychological and intrapsychological planes, which relate both to the nature of stereotypes and to the question of whether stereotypes can be shifted. In order to understand positioning theory, it is necessary to recognize that one of the primary psychological tools individuals use to achieve certain objectives is dialogue with others. Within these conversations, speakers discursively position themselves and others through the use of storylines. These storylines follow local cultural models. A cultural model includes ways of thinking about a given topic, activities based on that thinking, ways of talking about the topic, and the underlying ideology reflected in those thoughts, activities, and talk. In other words, a cultural model is the discourse and ideology enacted by a group of people who share that ideology. Shifts in cultural models may occur when new ways to think about
the topic, new ways to talk about it, and new activities to enact are offered. Even something
as simple as “Can I?” “No.” tells a story when the listener knows that the first speaker is a
son and the second is his mother, and there is a cookie on the table. Note that for it to tell
the story intended by the speakers, the listener must share or understand the same cultural
models as the speakers.

During this conversation, the son positions himself as subordinated to his mother’s
authority. The mother positions herself as the authority over both her son and the cookie.
To understand more of the story, it helps to have other information that completes the
‘symbolic interaction.’ This information may include details about the two speakers’
movements, gestures, facial expressions, or eye gazes, as represented below:

**Son:** ((approaches table and stops with his shoulder against his seated mother’s
shoulder. Eye gaze is on the text on the computer screen.))

Mom?

**Mother:** ((stops typing and puts her right arm around the boy’s waist. Gaze shifts to his
face.))

Mmm?

**Son:** ((gaze shifts to cookie on table, eyebrows lift))

Can I?

**Mother:** ((follows gaze to cookie))

*heh heh*. No.

((gives son brief squeeze, releases boy and returns to typing.))

**Boy:** ((smiles and walks back to couch))

In examining the above dialogue, it is possible to better grasp the storyline. The son
begins by positioning himself as an affectionate son by employing shoulder-to-shoulder
contact. He does not look his mother in the eye and instead gazes in the same direction as
her. With this action, the son avoids putting himself in a position of direct confrontation with his mother. The mother subsequently stops typing and responds to her son with a gesture and gaze that position her as an affectionate mother. Arching his eyebrows and gesturing towards the subject with his eye gaze, the son positions himself as subordinate and asks, “Can I?” His mother’s quiet laugh positions her as the kind of mother who appreciates a good effort. The son smiles. He recognizes it was a good try. She has positioned him as someone for whom it is okay to ask these kinds of questions. In walking away without further pleading, the son maintains his position relative to her.

As the above storyline suggests, positioning is part of a discursive triangle (see Figure 2.3 below5) in which there is an intention (expressed in some form of language—gestures, body positions, facial expressions, oral or visual language, or written or coded language) that is expressed through the action of positioning (which may shift within or across conversations). The intention and positioning are then contextualized within a storyline that is crafted by the speakers,6 regardless of whether the speakers are present or not (Ibid.).


6 This dialogue can be direct face-to-face conversation or other forms of literacies such as writing, in which there is always a presumed reader to answer back to the writer, even in the most private of writings.
According to Harré and Moghaddam (2014), positioning theory is useful for examining discourse that situates the speaker and others in specific ways according to a particular “system of rights and duties” and its correspondent “shared assumptions.” Through the lens of positioning theory, it is possible to discover how positions are discursively co-constructed, influenced, and characterized. For example, as participants in this study discursively reposition themselves and their students, this has the effect of assigning them new rights and duties.

Although Harré is careful to note that positioning theory “is to be seen in contrast to the older framework of Role Theory,” as I explain later (see p. 110) some scholars, such as Varenne and McDermott (1999; McDermott & Varenne, 1995; 1996) argued that there are preexisting roles in schools, including the roles of SUCCESS and FAILURE, and that students step into these roles when they enter the classroom on the first day of school. However,

I use small caps from this point forward to indicate the roles in which others are positioned or position themselves. As any actor or director knows, roles shift depending on the actor. Roles may also be played by more than one actor over the course of the same production and sometimes in the same show. Therefore, I have adopted a font style that is used in some script formats to signal the manner in which the role shapes the actor, and in turn, the actor shapes the role. In other words, the actor determines the objective and performs actions within the constraints of the role.
these roles may vary according to context (i.e., what constitutes SUCCESS in a particular school community). In this study, I use the term role to refer to the stigma and stereotypes attached to those roles as suggested by Varenne and McDermott above. These roles fit within positioning theory because their dynamic nature can be modified according to the agency and social interactions of a given individual. In this way, the roles I reference deviate from Role Theory, which stipulates that roles are immutable.

Positioning theory concerns itself with the “moment-by-moment significance of utterances” (Harré & Moghaddam, 2014, p. 133) within meaningful moments of symbolic interactions. There are three aspects that make a symbolic interaction meaningful and that therefore can be analyzed according to positioning theory. The first is that there is an illocutionary force that is recognizable according to local norms, values, and conventions (Ibid.). In other words, the intent of an utterance has social significance because it is recognizable to the other interlocutors. Because illocutionary force (intent) is a key aspect of meaningful symbolic interaction, it is a valid unit of analysis when performing discourse analysis using a positioning theory lens.

The second condition of meaningfulness is an underlying pattern of rights and duties of the speakers to use whatever discourse is available to convey illocutionary force using the various symbolic means (e.g., language, gestures, eye gaze) available in the local discourse community (Ibid., p. 133). Every time participants in a given dialogue (e.g., the interlocutors, artists, audience members, readers, and writers) draw from the symbolic resources available to them to exercise rights or duties as determined by the local culture, the participants adopt positions.
The third condition of meaningfulness, according to Harré & Moghaddam (2014), is that the symbolic interaction can be shaped by storylines that are unquestioned and regarded as truthful by the other members of the interaction (p. 134). If the storyline is questioned by one of the participants, the underlying assumptions of the speakers may be brought to the surface and negotiated until a common storyline is achieved. If a common storyline is not achieved, this produces unresolved conflict. An example of this can be found in Collins’ (2013) ethnographic study of a fifth-grade boy named Jay who was positioned as emotionally and behaviorally disordered by his fifth-grade teacher, Laura. When Jay displayed behaviors that were not in alignment with the positioning Laura had offered Jay, Laura either dismissed them as outliers or refused to acknowledge them at all. Collins, who was a participant-observer in the research, made numerous attempts to call Laura’s attention to the counterevidence for her claims, using both video and Jay’s work with from his tutoring sessions with Collins, but Laura either did not accept this counterevidence or used it to reinforce preexisting deficit notions about Jay. Collins calls the particular kind of positioning in which Laura engages in ability profiling.

While Collins and Laura are both English-speaking white women from middle-class backgrounds who have taught for extended periods of time in public school settings and are graduates of United States-based teacher-education programs, thus giving them similar local understandings, they did not share the same storyline about Jay and could not resolve their different versions of the storyline. Indeed, Collins demonstrates in her analysis of Laura’s thinking about Jay that Laura’s underlying beliefs about her student—and children she considered like him—made it difficult for her to shift her personal stereotypes, which she
had inherited from the local social community. These underlying beliefs ultimately resulted in Laura’s internalizing most of Valencia’s (2010) characteristics of deficit thinking, as outlined below.

**Valencia’s Characteristics of Deficit Thinking About Children of Color**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valencia’s Characteristic</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victim-Blaming</td>
<td>Problems with the student are located in the cognition or character of the student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppression</td>
<td>Responses to perceived deficits in the child or children lead to policies, programs, and individual instructional decisions that further reduce opportunities for learning and development on the part of the child or children perceived as deficient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudoscience</td>
<td>Evidence for deficits are based on preconceived notions of Children of Color based on hearsay and cultural stereotypes. Data are consciously or unconsciously selectively chosen as evidence to support the preconceived notions and stereotypes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal Changes</td>
<td>Pseudoscience given to support cultural claims of inferiority of Children of Color (and in the case of this study, ELLs) change over time. Some explanations (e.g., genetic inferiority, cultural poverty) may resurface under new names at a later period in history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educability</td>
<td>Collins (2013) calls this ability profiling—the belief that a student is not educable based on the above reasoning—and frequently, that resources spent attempting to do so would be poorly spent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterodoxy</td>
<td>The connection between school deficit thinking and the overall preconceived notions about Children of Color based in the larger community ideology: stereotypes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Valencia’s (2010) Characteristics of Deficit Thinking

When considering Laura’s words and actions through the lens of Valencia’s (2010)

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8 Valencia’s work focuses on deficit thinking about Children of Color, a descriptor that applies to most of the Latino/a children at this study’s research site.
characteristics of deficit thinking, it becomes apparent that Laura was interpreting Jay’s behavior through the local community’s beliefs about Children of Color being “thugs” (Laura’s word) from the city, or in the case of younger children, on the road to being “thugs”—a cultural stereotype. She believed the way to prevent Jay from “going down that road” was to use oppressive teaching practices, including Jay’s frequent separation from his peers (whether through seating arrangements, being required to work on his own when his peers were in small groups, or sending him out of the classroom). Although Collins provided Laura with evidence that Jay could comprehend classroom content and was developing literacy skills across multiple literacies, Laura positioned Collins as “that researcher,” a phrase that indicated that she did not necessarily consider Collins a member of the same local social community.

When interlocutors do not share the same storyline, the positioning triangle is broken, and the positioning claims of the other speakers appear to be false. In fact, as each speaker’s attempts to back up his or her position fail to convince the other, the speakers develop perceptions of one another as morally corrupt (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1994, p. 368). Laura questioned Collins’ objectivity as a researcher. Collins’ questioned Laura’s dependence on deficit thinking and common racial stereotypes of young black boys. Writing for an audience that shares her rules and discursive conventions, Collins successfully positions Jay as a curious, literate, and capable boy, but Jay had to continue his schooling in an educational community that positioned him as TROUBLE and FAILURE.

In this study the participants sought new ways to understand and teach their EB students. Although the participants began the PD course with varying dependency on a
deficit discourses, they were open to my storyline from the beginning. Although Lucy struggled to reconcile the material of the course with the socially-constructed Wild Child in her class, as demonstrated in Chapter 6, she was able to construct her own storyline about Alma by the end of the PD course. The conversations that took place in Week 1 were not resolved that week. Indeed, Lucy and I were not able to reconcile our respective storylines that first week, but she remained engaged and willing to consider alternative positioning for Alma and we were able to resolve the conflicting discourse by the end of the PD course within the context of the supportive and trusting environment of the PLC. The credit for the resolution of the storyline—and the preservation of the positioning triangle—should be given to Lucy.

In this study, discussions consisted primarily of storylines told by participants to each other and to me about students the participants knew well. These storylines were told using language, gestures, and ways of speaking that were considered acceptable and appropriate in the context of the Riverview school district.

The language used in telling stories is about much more than grammar, knowing when and how to use specific vocabulary in specific patterns of speech (registers), the topics acceptable in a given context, or the way people gesture and behave in those contexts. Therefore, changing individuals’ repertoire of acceptable actions and introducing discourse to accompany those actions opens up new possibilities for shifting the way individuals think and act in the new context. This combination of lexicon, grammar use, actions, and the underlying understandings they represent (ideology) is Discourse, whereas the language or conversations alone are discourse (Gee, 2012). Thus, the participants of this study were
considered to be part of the Riverton schools’ Discourse community while engaging with me in discourse each week, and my mediation was intended to shift the overall Discourse through changes in instructional activities as well as discourse about EB students and the instruction they require.

The mediation I provided in the form of explicit instruction, guided conversations, external reading, and blog responses introduced new storylines, new language, gestures, and ways of speaking (discourse) that I suggested could also be considered acceptable and appropriate in the Riverview school district. The illocutionary force of my mediation was intended to change the way the teacher-participants thought about their own teaching and the opportunities students had for learning in the teachers’ own classrooms. Some of this discourse was taken up by the participants, and some of it was not. The illocutionary force of their own discourse shifted over the duration of the PD course, seemingly to convey the seriousness of the situation early on, and then the promise of it later.

In addition to offering new discourse to participants, I offered new rights and duties to them as professionals and to their students as second-language learners. Some of these rights and duties were appropriated, and some of them were not. When rights, duties, and discourses change, the potential for individuals to change previously held beliefs about a particular group of people is introduced (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1994). In other words, some stereotypes are challenged. Ultimately, these new rights and duties combine with shifting illocutionary force and storylines to create a shift in the teachers’ positioning of their students and of the teachers in relationship to their students. Looking at how students are positioned thus becomes a means of identifying benchmarks and milestones in the teachers’
understandings of their EB students.

In Chapters 4-6, I often refer to the idea of teachers discursively locating a perceived problem in a “place.” This is an element of the previously discussed deficit discourse in which deficits are described as being caused by something that is either internal to the child or cast as a fixed characteristic of the child, such as the child’s family and cultural background. When the perceived problem is moved out of the child and into something in his or her context (e.g., the curriculum or inappropriate instructional accommodations), this signals the end of deficit thinking, because the child ceases to be deficient—rather, the context is.

Stereotypes

According to Vygotsky (1978), mediation (see above, p. 15) is a psychological tool by which ideas and skills are internalized. Moreover, as individuals mediate the understandings of those around them, such ideas and skills are modified to greater or lesser degrees. Central to this process of mediation are psychological tools, including symbolic systems such as language. At any given time, human beings have private (intrapersonal) ways of thinking and social (interpersonal) ways of thinking. The intrapersonal ways of thinking always start on the interpersonal plane, however. The relationship between interpersonal and intrapersonal thinking is a dynamic one, with the social and private planes in constant contact (Harré and Moghaddam, 2014; Vygotsky, 1986). It is out of this relationship that stereotypes are formed, and out of this relationship that stereotypes may be influenced to shift or change.

Stereotypes are widely considered an inevitable part of human thinking. Wray (2006)
has argued that stereotypes have their roots in the creation of categories that humans once used to determine which foods were safe to eat. Then as now, stereotypes provide a way of making sense of a world where it is impossible to know every item in a given category well. Yet stereotypes are also harmful, with perhaps the most harmful being those that include stigma. Goffman (1963) has identified three types of stigma inherent to stereotypes. The first is associated with (commonly) visible differences perceived as disabilities, such as spina bifida. The second is associated with so-called invisible differences perceived as disabilities, such as mental illness. The third is associated with groups of people who have characteristics that mark them as different from the dominant society. These different types of stigma can, of course, be layered on top of one another. A Native American male with a missing limb and an addiction to alcohol may be more highly stigmatized than a middle-class white male with a missing limb and an addiction to cocaine, for example, because of the influence of both race and wealth.

Stigma affects the persons who assign the stereotypes by convincing them to limit their understanding of a person to the characteristics that are presumed to correspond to that stigma. For teachers, this leads to frequently misreading the illocutionary force of the speech of their stigmatized students. It also makes it difficult to see the capabilities of the stigmatized students, especially if those capabilities contradict the presumed characteristics of the stigma. An example of this is when eighth-grade teacher Ellen initially reports that her focus student, Amos, has problems with attention—what she calls “part of his diagnosis”—but over time is able to provide examples of him working well with others, staying on task, and being engaged in class. In fact, Ellen never reports behavior that supports the notion
that Amos has a problem with attention. This suggests that she has assumed that because he has been labeled LD that he must have a problem with attention, an assumption explicitly provided to her by a member of Amos’s IEP team.

Because of others’ inability to see characteristics that contradict a given stigma, stigmatized individuals may begin to adopt the characteristics that are expected of them. This is called stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Stereotype threat refers to a process by which a stigmatized individual is aware of the negative characteristics of the stigma and stereotypes attributed to his or her group and becomes concerned that he or she will act in ways that affirm these stereotypes to the group with power. In the process, the individual experiences stress, depression, and decreasing self-esteem, all of which cause changes in the way the individual behaves and eventually results in the fulfillment of the stereotypes. In students stigmatized by disability labels and stereotypes about their particular cultural and linguistic backgrounds, for example, an awareness of low expectations may be internalized to such a degree that it affects the students’ self-esteem and performances in school.

Van Langenhove and Harré (1994) argued that positioning theory offers a way to change such stereotypes in a local community. Since stereotypes are used by individuals in discursive contexts in order to position themselves and/or other human beings in relation to one another, stereotypes tend to be used in ways that match the speaker’s understanding of the generally accepted ways of speaking and acting in regards to the discourse participants. When listeners do not accept the speaker’s positioning, the speaker must decide whether to adjust his or her discourse and accept the ‘corrected’ positioning or to defend his or her original ideas. Within the context of this study, the PD course allowed for participants to be
mediated in ways that intentionally addressed some of the participants’ stereotypes. For example, enabling participants to move beyond a deficit discourse necessitated deflecting attention away from the focus students’ perceived (lack of) educability and towards the students’ inherent capabilities. As a result, the students came to be positioned in ways that reduced stigma, restored some of their rights, and expanded the participant-teachers’ duties towards them—or in other words, challenged existing stereotype notions.

A related notion is what Gee (2012) has called a “master myth.” Master myths provide a seemingly natural and reasonable cultural structure for a way of thinking about a particular topic (e.g., attention) that is powerful enough to obscure other ways of talking or thinking about that topic. A master myth is a stereotype that is so widely believed that it can persist in the face of direct evidence to the contrary. For example, one master myth is that the most effective method of English language acquisition is submersion in English, when in fact, the evidence overwhelmingly points to the superiority of a bilingual (dual language) approach (Thomas & Collier, 2004).

While Van Langenhove and Harré have identified positioning theory as a means of challenging stereotypes at the level of the individual, they have acknowledged that it is not currently clear how to move stereotypes that are shifting at the individual level into the broader social community, thereby effecting similar change in the stigmas and stereotypes located there. In a smaller school community like the three Riverton schools in which this study is situated, however, if interest in the PD course continued to develop, it could hypothetically be possible to shift stigmas and stereotypes in that particular setting.
Professional Development and Professional Learning Communities

Research has shown that the most effective PD programs are long-term, mediated programs that make use of professional learning communities (PLC), observations, feedback from PLC peers, and/or the use of experienced mentors. These elements are all supported by SCT concepts of learning. Additional time and explicit mediation are an important part of effective instruction and learning.

In a speech to a group that focused on educating students with special needs, Vygotsky described the learning activity that would assess and address the developing or “ripening” (Vygotsky, 1956, pp. 447-448 as cited in Wertsch, 1985a) skills and/or concepts as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). He defined the ZPD metaphorically as the distance between what a given student could do independently and what he or she could do with help. Unfortunately, this metaphor may be easily misinterpreted as a quantifiable place students may be in relationship to the targeted skill or knowledge. In fact, the metaphor is meant to describe the activity of mediated learning (Newman & Holzman, 1993).

Each time students—in this case, study participants—engage in a social learning activity (be it with an author of a text or a group of peers exploring the same author’s text) a new ZPD is created and the opportunity for new developmental leaps of understanding in the skill or concept is created within the negotiated meaning of the new, unique learning context. Johnson (2009) has observed that for SCT scholars, this activity gives learners agency. That is, the learners can choose whether to engage in the activity of learning. This
choice is typically referred to as learner reciprocity, with the learner’s choice being signaled by culturally appropriate behaviors within a given cultural context. The most common ways that teacher-participants signaled their engagement in the learning activities of the PD course were by frequently engaging in the discussions, speaking from the knowledge they had gained in the readings, and reflecting on their learning in the blog entries.

Lave and Wenger (1991) explored how learning occurs as a result of mutually constitutive relationships among an individual (agent), the activities in which the individual is engaged (including the goals of those activities), and the world in which the individual lives and acts. From this work they have theorized that learning often takes place in a community of practice (COP). They define a COP as “participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities” (p. 98). COPs are real-world constructions that are made up of real people who are complex in nature. Each agent is at a different place in his or her education, holds ideologies that may conflict with those of other agents in his or her given community, and has individual goals that he or she brings to the community. Nevertheless, what makes each agent a member of the community is his or her participation in the shared purposes, tools, and discourse of that COP.

The study participants and I may have had differing views on the role of public healthcare in the United States, but we shared a belief in the importance of thinking critically about one’s instructional practices. Perhaps we differed in our opinion of the importance of explicitly teaching English grammar to young emergent bilingual students, but we shared a common understanding of the importance of continued learning throughout our years as
teachers. We certainly shared an understanding of the importance of our work to the children and parents of Pennsylvania. In this way, we formed a COP, and in fact, a very particular kind of a COP—a PLC—or a COP that is specific to a PD course.

Raphael, Vasquez, Fortune, Gavelek, and Au (2014) identified 5 tenets of PD, all of which are grounded in SCT. The first is a belief in teacher agency, as described above. The second is application within the professional contexts of the participants. This means that Kiera, the only guidance counselor who participated in the study, discussed course concepts from the perspective of a guidance counselor and applied them as a guidance counselor—not as a content-area teacher. The other participants applied the course concepts in their classrooms, each of which was very different from the others. The third tenet is the incorporation of a dialogic component. This may be met through face-to-face meetings, group Skype sessions, shared blog posts (with the expectation that members read and respond to each other), or a common discussion board. Because illocutionary force is harder to read without the additional cues of facial expression, intonation, gestures, and body language, relying solely on written discussions is less effective than taking into account the full spectrum of expression. The fourth tenet is that skills taught should be founded on systematic and generalizable concepts—that is, there must be both a solid theoretical base to the course, and a structure that is sustainable and applied with fidelity. Finally, the activities of the course must be sustainable over time, given the rights and duties of the participants within their professional and personal settings.

SCT-based PD learning also has direct connections to Harré & Moghaddam’s (2014) work on the learning that occurs as part of stereotype shifts (see also Raphael et al., 2014).
Drawing on Vygotsky’s notion of internalization, Harré & Moghaddam (2014) have created a grid where the y-axis represents the shift from knowledge at the social level to knowledge at the private level (receptive), and the x-axis represents the shift of action or display of knowledge at the public level to the private level (expressive). Evidence of these shifts is in the activity and language (symbolic systems) of the learner. In this way, Harré & Moghaddam’s work supports the assertion of Vygotsky’s ZPD as an activity, because individual learning takes place in the interaction with social knowledge.

Figure 2.4: Vygotskian Learning Model (adapted from Raphael, et al., 2014 and Van Langenhove & Harré, 1994)
Design research utilizes an intervention (Reinking & Bradley, 2008) based on a theory and is motivated by a rationale grounded in actual practices that occur in real learning contexts. The intervention of this design research study is its PD course, the rationale for which is derived from a number of fundamental shifts in the United States’ elementary educational culture over the past several decades. More specifically, in the last few decades, the number of students living in the United States and attending American schools yet speaking languages other than English at home has grown significantly. Current estimates place the percentage of students for whom this is the case at close to 25%, with the percentage predicted to increase to 30% by 2025 (García & Kleifgen, 2010). Most of these students were born in the United States, and over 60% speak Spanish at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011; Ryan, 2013). A failure to educate such a significant percentage of the national student population represents a massive failure on the part of the entire U.S. education system.

Teachers are generally underprepared to work with this changing student population (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). Although one out of every five people in the United States now speaks a language other than English as his or her home language, an enduring belief of the dominant culture in the United States is that monolingualism is still the norm. For most of the world, however, this is not the case. In the European Union alone, the percentage of people who are fluent in three or more languages is 40%. Compounding this problem is the fact that the knowledge scholars have about effective
educational practices is growing faster than teacher-training programs can incorporate it. As a result, school districts must provide ongoing and effective professional development to teachers, as well as support for teachers to implement the new knowledge and skills. Given the shifting demographics of the school system, such professional development must necessarily include how to teach content-area literacy to EB students, as well as an understanding of multi-language literacy development.

Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005) have observed that teachers “with all kinds of certification at all grade levels” (p. 18) cite professional development that focuses on understanding second-language literacy development, English-language development, and specific teaching strategies as important to them. The teachers also suggest that they would like the opportunity to see an experienced ESL professional teach real students in a real classroom, and then to co-teach alongside them (Ibid.). These aspects of professional development (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll, 2005) do not significantly differ from the skills that have been identified as necessary in the last approximately 15 years of educational research in this area (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008).

Despite this agreement, however, few of the recommendations made by academics in the field have made it into actual teacher-training programs (Ibid.). Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) have hypothesized that this gap between research and practice may stem from the fact that much of the research comes from the applied linguistics community, whose approaches and terminology are unfamiliar to educators of mainstream elementary and secondary content-area teachers. The authors have also hypothesized that the volume of information provided by applied linguistics researchers may seem impossible
to accommodate in education programs which are already required by state legislatures and accrediting agencies to include courses in other areas. The authors thus list the following essential understandings\(^9\) for *mainstream* teachers of ELLs:

1. Conversational-language proficiency is fundamentally different from academic-language proficiency (Cummins, 1981; 2000), and it can take many more years for an ELL to become fluent in the latter than in the former (Cummins, 2008).

2. Second-language learners must have access to comprehensible input that is just beyond their current level of competence (Krashen, 1982; 2003), and they must have opportunities to produce output for meaningful purposes (Swain, 1995).

3. Social interactions in which ELLs actively participate fosters the development of conversational and academic English (Gass, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978; Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2005).

4. ELLs with strong native language skills are more likely to achieve parity with their native English-speaking peers than are those with weak native-language skills (Cummins, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

5. A safe, welcoming classroom environment that engenders minimal anxiety about performing in a second language is essential for ELLs to learn (Krashen, 2003; Pappamihiel, 2002; Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008).

6. Explicit attention to linguistic form and function is essential to second-language learning (Gass, 1997; Schleppegrell, 2004; Swain, 1995).

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\(^9\) This is the term I will use throughout the study to refer to this specific list in its entirety. The list is meant to imply that a mainstream classroom teacher’s understanding of his or her ELL/EB student is not complete until the teacher recognizes all of these concepts.
Interestingly, there is significant overlap in the Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) list and the skills required by the Pennsylvania State Legislature for all university students seeking teaching credentials (22 PA Code). Due to the short duration of most teacher-training programs, however, there may not be enough opportunities for pre-service teachers to fully understand each of these concepts and acquire the teaching strategies appropriate based on these understandings to their content areas, especially among pre-service teachers who have not yet had any experience in the classroom. Perhaps the ideal situation for pre-service teachers, then, would be for teacher-training programs to interweave the concepts and methods of universal design and inclusive education through all their education courses, with an emphasis on teaching in ways that allow for the expression of learned skills and knowledge regardless of learning differences.

Of course, a different solution is necessary for in-service teachers who are no longer enrolled in school full-time. More specifically, it is necessary to provide in-service teachers of EB students (and those who may one day have EB students) with professional development opportunities that help them not only gain necessary understandings of their students but also learn appropriate inclusive practices that are grounded in these understandings. Inclusive practices are those that engage all students fully in the learning objectives, activities, and assessments of the mainstream classroom, rather than practices that sort students by, for example, age or perceived abilities (e.g., reading level, writing proficiency, math skills). Inclusive practices represent a belief system in which difference and diversity are viewed as welcome resources.

Without these key understandings on the part of their teachers, many ELLs fail to
progress past a “developing level”\textsuperscript{10} of English proficiency. This level is characterized by the ability to participate meaningfully in lessons, use the English language to achieve most objectives, and read and write longer sentences and paragraphs. However, at this level, students’ work is typically less complex than English-fluent peers and is not yet reflective of the expected depth of understanding of content-area material. Though they do not interfere with meaning, the work also usually includes errors. While much has been accomplished, there is room for much development.

Situated within the mainstream classroom, students at the “developing” level of ELL proficiency are frequently expected to work in class independently, but continue to require significant scaffolding. The risk of being educationally abandoned at this level of literacy development is high (Fairborn & Jones-Vo, 2010, p. 175), as teachers who have not received specific instruction in the inclusion of EB students in their classrooms frequently are unable to (a) recognize the need for scaffolding as a language-learning issue versus a behavioral or learning disability and/or (b) provide the appropriate scaffolding for a given academic task. Consequently, both teachers and students end up in seemingly unresolvable situations. Teachers experience significant barriers in understanding the nature of the problem; students experience significant barriers in either engaging with the lesson content or in expressing what they have learned. Neither is able to move ahead meaningfully to a level at which they can both be said to have full agency in the classroom.

\textsuperscript{10} As indicated by Level 3 scores on the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners test (ACCESS for ELLs, or simply ACCESS). This standardized test is given annually in the WIDA Consortium member states to monitor students’ progress in acquiring academic English. ACCESS scores are frequently used in order to determine eligibility for ESL services (Fairborn & Jones-Vo, 2010).
The education of EB students, or ELLs, is a highly complex context consisting of clashing ideologies, contested language (lexical) and languages, contested spaces, contested cultural values, and contested content. The deficit discourse that pervades the education of emergent bilingual students parallels that of the deficit discourse that pervades special education. Emergent bilingual students are dis/abled by particular ideologies that manifest themselves in local and federal laws and school policies, as well as the meaning of particular words in the conversations about and around them, the opportunities given or taken away for the use of the home language in school, the physical placement of emergent bilingual students in particular types of classrooms, the expectations of assimilation, and the lack of appropriately trained teachers.

This study intervenes in the understandings of—and instructional practices related to—EB students of four willing education professionals’ through the implementation of a PD course that is focused on the specific questions and concerns of the participants and that includes a discussion of the essential understandings that pertain to those specific questions and concerns. I elaborate on the methodology of the study in the next chapter.
Chapter 3
Methods

This chapter outlines the design research methods and intervention protocol that guided this critical pragmatic study. My own background is as a public-school teacher of elementary-aged students. I completed my student teaching in a Bureau of Indian Affairs Navajo school using a multi-cultural and holistic pedagogical approach. This experience eventually helped me to obtain a position as a fourth-grade teacher in a public school that served the same geographic area. Long before I ever began teaching in the heart of the Navajo Nation, however, I had heard the term “wild Indian” used among acquaintances. This is likely the source of my sensitivity to the term “Wild Child.” As a teacher at the Navajo school in particular, I felt frustrated by the implication that wild children were simply waiting to emerge from the shadows of my classroom. In fact, I found that my classes were full of the same quirky, sweet, funny, bright, and complex children that I would later teach far from the Navajo Nation’s reservation lands—but they spoke Navajo at home and throughout the day and delighted in teaching me Navajo, too.

My family was an academic family and one deeply invested in civil rights—and in particular, the rights of all students to an equal and affordable education. My experiences in Arizona—and later in urban Californian schools with children from multiple cultures, speaking multiple languages—helped to solidify my understanding of the unequal learning contexts that exist for marginalized students and the teachers who teach them. I left the classroom shortly before NCLB was passed. For a number of years I worked in educational
publishing and witnessed firsthand the new curriculum’s inadequate linguistic supports for Emergent Bilingual students as well as the inadequate scaffolding for teacher understanding of those linguistic supports. Deeply concerned about the educational “reforms” being implemented and their negative effect on the education of Emergent Bilingual learners, I returned to the classroom, this time as a student rather than a teacher. As a doctoral student at The Pennsylvania State University, I drew on my extensive educational background in order to help address social injustices inherent to both the new curriculum and the support for teacher learning.

While a doctoral student, I taught undergraduate and graduate courses to pre-service teachers. Some courses provided an overview of culture, language, and instructional pedagogy in Emergent Bilingual classrooms. In others, I offered elementary second-language instruction to pre-service teachers of world languages and supervised the pre-service teachers’ elementary field experiences. These teaching experiences, coupled with an advanced education in theories of second-language acquisition, socio-cultural theory, and disability studies in education, together played an instrumental role in shaping the direction of my research project. These experiences guided the questions I asked and structured the design of the study— influencing everything from my desire to ask teachers what they felt they needed to learn in order to address the needs of a specific student, to the resources upon which I drew, to the critical stance I brought to my work.

This first cycle of research focused on the discursive themes that arose naturally in the context of a professional development course comprised of volunteer education professionals working in a rapid-influx rural Pennsylvania school district. I begin by
explaining the methodology of a design research project. Next, I provide details on the recruitment of the schools and education professionals as well as those who agreed to participate. I outline the protocol of the professional development course in its original form; I also discuss elements that had to be modified or dropped. Finally, I explain how the data were collected, analyzed, and represented in this project. Throughout the analysis, I preview the primary themes and subthemes identified in the discursive data and taken up later in the study in more detail.

Research Design

The professional development11 (PD) course that formed the backbone of the first cycle of this design research project was created to increase the effectiveness of the study participants’ pedagogical practices by providing instruction in new knowledge about EB students. Design research investigates the implementation of particular theories and practices in and around real classrooms in search of those educational practices and theories that succeed in their goals. Therefore, the objectives for a particular project define what it means to “succeed.” For example, in Collins, Shannon, and Shannon’s design research project that was situated in a summer reading camp, the researchers asked how to mediate preservice teacher discourse from deficit discourse to capability discourse. The practices that worked in

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11 I use the term “professional development” to refer to those courses that foster professional learning—the development of educational knowledge and practices over the duration of one’s professional career. I use “professional learning” to refer to the content of the course and the activity of the course.
this learning context are those that result in changes in discourse and refine or support the underlying theory of the research.

On the surface, such design research can look like action research, especially when, as the project suggests, it includes “advancing a social cause, to change existing practices of inequality, discrimination or environmental endangerment” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). However, while design research may not necessarily aim to achieve these goals, it does seek to do more than change immediate practices. Design research attempts to illuminate, elaborate upon, or provide counter-evidence regarding a specific theory or theories. For example, in a conference presentation about one iteration of the summer reading camp (Collins, Hults, Shannon & Shannon, 2013), the authors explore how literacy and capability are constructed by two of the participating pre-service teachers. One of the participants is in the later stages of an integrated undergraduate/graduate program resulting in Special Education and Reading Specialist certification. The other is just beginning a major in World Language Teacher Education as well as coursework for an ESL-certificate. The analysis focuses on the two participants’ development of a capability discourse, with further implications for the role that mediation plays in both individual activity of the ZPD and group activity of the ZPD. In this way, the design promises an important contribution to an understanding of mediation within the ZPD activity.

Like the aforementioned research, this study, too, explores a key “theoretical question about the nature of learning in context” (Collins, Joseph, & Bielaczyc, 2004, p. 16). The guiding question for this project is “In what ways does short-term explicit sociocultural mediation of the essential understandings of teachers of emergent bilingual students affect
the discourse of teachers when characterizing Emergent Bilingual learners in their classrooms?” This question must be answered with the cooperation of practicing teachers who are teaching in their natural classroom settings. It also necessitates the application of sociocultural theories of learning, disability studies in education, and positioning theory, as well as understandings of second-language education within this natural classroom environment. It does not require a control group, because there is sufficient literature on teachers with EB students who are not receiving any kind of professional development. The question can be pursued in a single case study, but it is done so more meaningfully as the first of multiple iterations, whereby each successive research cycle is refined based on the learning from the previous one. Ultimately, the analysis of the data the study produces may further our understanding of the theories upon which the mediating practices are based.

The goals and structure of this project reflect key tenets of design research. Since design research should take place in the classroom, this project requires teachers of EB students to share the research goal of including those students more fully in the activity and learning of their respective classes. Next, this research method invites investigation into the multiple factors that characterize an intervention and its context, without trying to control all of them. As characteristics are identified over time and patterns emerge, these characteristics can be compared to similar work or similar educational sites that might benefit from the conclusions of the study. In the case of this research, it is also possible to look for other PD courses that share similar characteristics. This latter form of connection is especially important given the reduction in the number of PD opportunities offered to teachers over the past two decades as a result of reduced funding and a lack of remaining PD courses that
are high-quality professional development (Reutzal & Clark, 2014).

Finally, while design research encourages particular types of thinking about the research question, it also promotes collaboration. Design research invites the professional learners to participate in the design and implementation of the research. Their participation at the planning level helps mediate the researcher’s understanding of exactly where the participants perceive the areas of greatest need in their relationships with their students and the students’ relationship with their peers.

While this project accordingly can be said to meet the standards for design research, the project also reaps its benefits. First, teachers and other school professionals are more likely to consider the results of a study as applicable to them and/or their schools and classrooms if they recognize the natural setting of the study as being like their own. Second, design research recognizes that participants come into study with significant knowledge of teaching and thus seeks to include them in the design process. In this particular study, participants’ descriptions of their students and their specific questions and concerns about those students determined which of the essential understandings of teachers of ELLs were covered in the PD course. Third, the design of the study and the context in which it takes place create a constantly-negotiated space in which the design itself affects the context and the context acts upon the design. In the process, new design opportunities and characteristics of situated teaching and learning are revealed.

The scholarly benefits produced by design research find their complement in the practical benefits. This reflects the contention that the study’s participants are actual teachers and education professionals working with actual children and the project has an ethical
responsibility to provide the participants with actual benefits, if at all possible. To this end, the project employs no unusual or untested teaching strategies or methods. They are those which have been widely regarded as necessary to working with EB students and which, properly implemented, have the greatest capacity to help EB students build their academic vocabulary and participate in the learning objectives of the regular classroom. In this way, design research yields both scholarly and practical benefits for both its author and its participants.

Despite these many benefits, design research is, of course, not without its challenges. Perhaps more crucially, design research tends to produce “large amounts of ethnographic data—some of which go unanalyzed” (Collins, Joseph, & Bielaczyc, 2004, p. 15). In order to address this concern in the current project I restricted the length of this first cycle to 8 weeks. This is not a long-term solution, however, since the cycle revealed a need on the part of the participant for additional meetings with more time between meetings. Second, I limited the types of data to be collected to oral and written texts produced by the school principals and participants.

Teaching is a complex, fragile, messy business that requires effective teachers to continually adapt in order to find what works for the particular students they have in their given classes. Additionally, teachers must plan with the individual development of each student in those classes in mind within each unit, lesson, or activity. It seems fitting, then, that the research design of this project acknowledge that this is the work and the risk that participants are asked to take. Feelings of frustration and empowerment, despair and hopefulness, are all a normal part of the design and discovery of excellent teaching.
Nevertheless, because design research aims to also produce results that can be used to elaborate, illuminate, or strengthen the understanding of a particular theory or theories, the researcher has an obligation to look beyond the particular local context and generate evidence-based claims about how “humans think, know, act, and learn” (Barab & Squire, 2004, p. 5). Because design research invites analysis both within a cycle and across cycles, the researcher is well-positioned to collect rich data that support the generation of those claims.

For this particular project, the mediation in the form of the PD course was considered to have achieved the intended objectives if there was evidence of a teacher demonstrating development of inclusive discourse and/or practices, instructional pedagogy appropriate for EB students, and capability discourse. I considered changes in discourse over time as evidence of development. In addition, participant behavior that supported the other participants in their understanding of inclusive practices was considered a positive development.

This research is the first cycle with several additional cycles to follow that will be progressively redesigned in response to analysis of the data from each preceding cycle. For example, in this cycle, the participants said that they liked the idea of video-taping their lessons to reflect on later, but that they required user-friendly and highly-portable cameras to do so. This suggestion will be integrated into the next cycle of research. Pragmatic decisions, such as scheduling meetings in a participant’s classroom in order to ensure the participants’ comfort, will further aid in achieving the study’s purpose: to extend the current understanding of how improved instructional techniques alter the pedagogical discourse about classroom identities, locations of problems, and the inclusion of EB students in
participants’ classrooms.

**Design of Professional Development Intervention**

I selected participants by contacting an English as a Second Language (ESL) specialist at the Intermediate Unit that served rural and semi-rural PA districts that included Riverview School District, introduced to me by Assistant Professor and ESL-Specialist Dr. Elizabeth Smolcic, in order to find out which school districts might most benefit from mediation. The specialist was then able to introduce me to the superintendent of Riverview School District, and I met with him the following week. He spoke with the principals at the Riverton schools and wrote me a letter indicating his approval for the research to be undertaken in the area schools (Appendix A). I immediately wrote to the principals to set up a time for us to meet (Appendix B). Two weeks later I met with the principals to listen to their needs and explain the project to them. We agreed at the conclusion of this meeting that I would give a short presentation to teachers at the middle school, high school, and elementary school to solicit participants. At this presentation I distributed a procedures handout (Appendix C) and an informed consent form (Appendix D). One week after these presentations I had collected the names of three teachers and a guidance counselor who wished to serve as participants.

Prior to my first meeting with these four participants, I asked the participants to describe in writing the EB student in their classes about whom they had concerns and for whom they wanted to learn additional inclusive teaching strategies. Because the essential knowledge for educating ELLs identified by applied language theorists overlaps with the
needs expressed by teachers (Youngs & Youngs, 2001; Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Wong-Filmore & Snow, 2005), I analyzed the participants’ descriptions of their students in order to identify themes that matched up with this essential knowledge. I subsequently drafted a course syllabus (Appendix E) and presented it to the participants to demonstrate how their specific concerns had led me to specific course content choices. The following chart briefly outlines the readings and topics for each week.

**Intervention Outline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week/Date</th>
<th>Conceptual Theme</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 4 Feb. 24</td>
<td>Comprehensible Input; Meaningful activities; Activating Prior Knowledge &amp; Building Background</td>
<td>Echevarria, J. Vogt, M. &amp; Short, D. J. (2013). Chapter 4: Comprehensible Input</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Intervention Outline
Over the course of the project, the participants and I met each week to discuss how the students responded to any strategies that the participants had tested out that week or had decided to implement long-term in their classes. I also introduced new topics for which the participants prepared by reading an article, chapter, or both that I had given them at the end of the previous week’s meeting (Appendix H). These weekly meetings lasted for just over an hour each time and took place during the third marking period of the participants’ school year. They also took place in a COP in order to take advantage of the existing knowledge-base of the group and to try to prevent any given participant from feeling singled out.

Initially the participants were asked to videotape lessons in which they used a strategy or
strategies from the training and submit a small section of one of the videos to me every other week (for a total of 3-4 videos). However, this requirement was dropped when it because evident that the cameras were simply of too poor quality to capture recordings that could be instructive.

While the video requirement was eventually omitted, protected, private blogs were used by participants throughout the course to share short (3-4 paragraph) personal reflections about the events of the week that seemed relevant to our discussions. In doing so, the participants were able to receive ongoing feedback from me (Appendix F).

In keeping with best practices, the content of the PD course was sketched out prior to meeting with the participants and solidified during our time together. For example, the participants assisted in setting the days and locations for the meetings as well as determining when and what to film in the classrooms. These “common-sense” modifications are integral to design research, which values collaboration with, rather than domination over, one’s participants. By involving the participants in the design process, a PLC was established. That is, the involvement of participants utilized their existing professional knowledge to set learning goals for the PD course and mediated their understanding of themselves as contributors rather than passive learners.

Though a PLC is founded on such collaborations, a PLC also requires a well-established curriculum that involves active learning on the part of the teachers and minimal deviation from the original intent of the PLC\textsuperscript{12} (Reutzal & Clark, 2014). Only as learning

\textsuperscript{12}Mentoring may also be a part of a PLC. Although this was not a part of the current cycle’s research, I may incorporate this model into future cycles as a way to include past
goals are achieved may the PLC decide to set new learning objectives. In reality, the PLC is likely to continue to develop an understanding of each of the concepts upon which it chose to focus as it moves on to new objectives; this reflects the understanding that learning is not linear but rather a thickening of concepts as new ideas are encountered and new experiences added (Raphael et al., 2014). This ever-evolving nature of the PLC was exemplified in this study by the participants’ desire to begin a second cycle of research as soon as possible at the start of the following school year.

I tailored the mediation to the learning needs of the teachers and their students, with the goal of initiating the activity of the ZPD. To this end, written texts (i.e., articles and chapters) related to the EB students in the regular classroom were provided to help teachers apply theories about child development, stages of cultural acclimation, stages of second-language development in an immersion setting, and stages of ethnic identity to their work with their students. The inclusive practices came from the essential understandings as outlined by Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) and were informed by DSE scholarship such as *Supporting Inclusive Classrooms: A Resource* (Connor, 2007); *Rethinking Disability: A Disability Studies Approach to Inclusive Practices* (Valle & Connor, 2011); and *Normalizing Difference in Inclusive Teaching* (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004).

While the readings relating to culture or language theory came from different sources, the instructional strategies and methods came from a Sheltered Instruction book, namely the fourth edition of *Making Content Comprehensible for English Language Learners: The*
SIOP Model. I firmly believe in the superior nature of a fully-bilingual instructional program (Thomas & Collier, 2004). Nevertheless, Riverview School District does not have the financial or personnel resources at this time to implement such a program. Recognizing that the participants, too, did not have the PD resources that would make possible the implementation of such a program, I sought out an introductory and highly-accessible core text for this cycle.

A drawback of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)-based text was its tendency to suggest that enacting the activities on its checklist would guarantee student learning. Effective instruction of EB students requires localized knowledge of individual students. Accordingly, it was perhaps to be expected that participants expressed a desire to do a second cycle of research at a more advanced level a few months after the conclusion of our first cycle. The next “level” of PD for these participants would move the participants beyond the checklist nature of the SIOP-based text and into a more refined understanding of second-language acquisition. This understanding is necessary for teachers to become effective curriculum designers in their classrooms, as EB students are often at very different levels of English-language development and it is crucial that teachers learn how to include all of their students in the learning objectives structured by state-mandated learning standards such as the Common Core. School districts like Riverview do, of course, have an ethical obligation to provide an effective form of bilingual instruction for their EB students. However, one of the constraints for the study was that there was one ESL teacher in the elementary grades and one that covers the middle and high school while also teaching high-school Spanish. The classroom teachers with EB students who had exited the ESL
program (which is not a sign of grade-level literacy in English but rather indicates the students had progressed to a level where it was believed they could participate in the mainstream classes with teacher support) were not provided with PD to teach content-area concepts in English to students with varying levels of proficiency across language domains.

In these circumstances, the Sheltered Instruction (SI) methodology offered concrete strategies that the teachers were able to implement the next day. With the support of the weekly discussions, teachers had the opportunity to connect the second-language instruction theories they studied to the practices suggested in the book, and to have enough choice in specific strategies and activities to be able to make meaningful matches within their lesson objectives for the week. I used the book as a practitioner resource, connecting its content to my own knowledge of second-language theory and instructional practice, which is best reflected in the essential understandings of mainstream teachers of ELLs. As one resource among many, it functioned well.

**Participants and Setting**

This research study presumes that teachers are capable professionals with identifiable competencies that continue to develop over their professional lives, so long as they are practicing in supportive teaching contexts that provide them with ongoing PD opportunities. The teachers who indicated a particular desire to develop new competencies in teaching and understanding their students were solicited for study participation at the school sites. In addition, administrative support was obtained to provide participating teachers with Act 48 credit. Factors that excluded teachers from participation included a stated unwillingness to
consider inclusive teaching practices the lack of an EB student enrolled in one of the teacher's classes during the time of the study.

The participants recruited were three full-time teachers and one school counselor. Lucy and Ellen were secondary education teachers in typical single-content-area classrooms. Kiera, on the other hand, was a school counselor. Finally, Rachelle was an elementary ESL specialist who taught a pull-out program full-time. Prior to this position, Rachelle had served as a Spanish teacher at the high school and as an ESL specialist shared by the middle and high schools. The following chart provides detailed information about the study participants and their focus students.
Participants and Focus Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Previous Formal Training in ESL/ELL Education?</th>
<th>Years of Professional Experience</th>
<th>Focus Student</th>
<th>Focus Student Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>9th-grade Science Teacher</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>First year of formal school at age 12, emergent literacy skills in L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>8th-grade Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Amos</td>
<td>Labeled I.D. Enrolled in SPED support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiera</td>
<td>Middle School Guidance Counselor</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mateo</td>
<td>Frequent moves. Age 12. No literacy skills in L1. First time living in rural area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Participants, Principals, and Focus Students

In the next section, I present the setting in which these education professionals worked.
Riverview School District and Riverton Elementary, Middle School, and High School

The site was located in Pennsylvania’s rural Riverview School District. The specific schools that participated were Riverton Elementary School, Middle School, and High School respectively. This school district had experienced ongoing budget woes over the previous four years, resulting in continuing cuts to their ESL program (personal communication 5/12/14 with Ms. Alpha, Ms. Beta, Rachelle). Aside from the budget woes, Riverton has seen relatively stable enrollment over the previous 20 years, with a decrease of fewer than 300 students over the period. At the same time, and particularly during the last decade, the district went from having one student who identified as Hispanic or Latino/a to 142 students who did (U.S. Department of Education, CCD, 2011-2012). Currently, the district identifies 64 of its 3,092 students as enrolled in the ESL program (personal communication 5/12/14 with Ms. Alpha, Ms. Beta, and Rachelle). The vast majority of these students are from North America’s southern regions and Central America (Rachelle, e-mail, 2/10/14) and, according to the participants, require “culturally and linguistically responsive teaching” while meeting the EB student profile (Ellen and Lucy, e-mail, 5/12/14).

In this county, the community of Spanish speakers used to be a migrant population. However, national trends, as well as changes in border management, some state laws, and the hiring practices of various manufacturing and agricultural industries, has resulted in Latino/a migrant populations settling permanently in 20 states that are now known as New Destination states, often in rural areas that may have not experienced a new immigrant population since the early 1920s. In this particular area of Riverton, the permanent settling
of immigrants started about 15 years before the time of this study and became the norm about 8-10 years ago. The school district began changing its approach to students requiring ESL instruction about 8 years ago. Ms. Gamma, the high school principal, asserted that the district’s ACCESS scores had risen during this time. However, the aforementioned major budget cuts 4 years prior had resulted in cuts to personnel and materials, with a resulting decline in student performance on tests.

**Data Collection**

The data for this study consisted primarily of participants’ spoken and written discourse, as collected over 20 hours spent in the field with participants. Participants talked about their students, their classrooms, the community, and their teaching. For the purpose of this cycle, little data were collected about students, as the study did not seek to verify the accuracy of teacher statements, but rather to identify whether the statements would be affected by changes in instructional pedagogy and knowledge about teaching EB students.

The primary form of data collection was in the form of 406 minutes of audio-recorded discussion produced during my weekly meetings with the participants. The audio files of each meeting were professionally transcribed. I then checked each transcription for accuracy, correcting errors and incorporating the correct pseudonyms. Finally, I applied transcription symbols for the excerpts I intended to include in the dissertation. I stored and organized the transcribed sessions and raw audio files in Nvivo10, on two password-protected external hard drives (one Mac, one PC), and as hard copies in a binder.

A secondary form of data was the reflective writing produced by the participants.
Each participant maintained a private password-protected blog during the course. The number of blog entries produced varied by participant. Rachelle produced three blog entries. Kiera produced six blog entries. Lucy produced nine blog entries, and Ellen produced nine entries. The written blog entries were imported into Windows Notebook, which allowed them to be more easily formatted for conversion to PDF. The Notebook pages were then saved as PDFs, entered into Nvivo10, stored on the external hard drives, and printed for the binder.

A third form of data collection was ethnographic field notes (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). I took field notes during the initial meeting I had with the principals and the potential participants. After each subsequent weekly meeting I drove to a gas station about two miles away and wrote detailed additional notes from my memory of the meeting, including my impressions and thoughts during the meeting in response to various questions or the behavior of others. About 15 minutes passed between the end of each meeting and the time that I recorded these thoughts, as the participants and I tended not to linger in conversation and it was easy to leave the school grounds. All of the field notes were kept in a small notebook, while reflective memos were entered directly into Nvivo10.

The fourth type of data included in the analysis consisted of four drawings, which were drawn and described orally by each participant during one of our weekly meetings. Finally, 146 emails were exchanged back and forth. The primary purposes of the emails were either to address procedural details (e.g., rescheduling a meeting cancelled due to weather), or to provide answers to my questions asking for clarity regarding comments made during a discussion.

I made two observations of Ellen and Lucy’s classes and one of Rachelle’s class. The
purpose of the observations was to gain a clear picture of the flow of the lessons in their respective classes. Although I used the SIOP checklist as a tool to help me be more observant of the strategies and methods the participants were using, I did not attempt to evaluate teachers in any way before or after the project. I was looking for ways participants already knew to help students access the materials and content of the lessons, while being mindful of the “snapshot” quality of the observation.

**Data Analysis**

The method of data analysis employed was a thematic analysis of discursive data. Thematic analysis affords the flexibility to produce a thick and complex account of the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). It also involves multiple steps progressing from transcribing verbal data and an initial reading of the data set (or corpus), to closer readings and initial coding, identifying and refining themes, defining the final themes the researcher has identified and refined, and finally, to reporting them (Ibid.).

In line with these steps, I began my analysis by performing an initial reading of all the written data. In the second close reading, I coded the text noting connections to course content, teacher concerns, and other spoken or written selections that related meaningfully to teaching, teachers, learning, and/or students. This included assertions about school and community climates, broad policies regarding testing, administrative concerns with drop-out rates, categories of types of people, and references to differences among these categories of people. From this analysis, I identified themes using axial coding, with each them being named and defined. A timeline was then created to show the location in the data that each
reference occurred so as to be able to better visualize where in the PD course certain themes either came to the foreground or receded into the background.

In conducting my thematic analysis, I utilized a semantic approach to the analysis of the discourse (Schiffrin, 2003) that acknowledges speaker intentions and audience responses in the analysis of the meaning of the given discourse. This approach to discourse analysis considers all speakers as co-constructors of meaning (Norrick, 2003). Much like modern literacy research, it acknowledges that the audience/reader makes meaning from the discourse based on his or her own background knowledge, ideologies, and experiences (Jaworski & Coupland, 2006). Therefore, as I analyzed the data I made inferences about its meaning—both at the surface level and in light of underlying assumptions about the subject of the discourse and the other participants in the conversation that it revealed—as well as the intent and/or objectives of the discursive acts (Ibid.)

Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997) point out that themes do not ‘emerge’ from data any more than they emerge from a novel. Rather, the themes are there in the thinking of the researcher, and are connected by the researcher to distinct points in the data set. When there are enough connections, the researcher determines that there is an argument for the existence of that theme. This is why researchers tend to recognize in their data sets themes with which they are already somewhat familiar. It is also why it is important for the researcher to acknowledge the impossibility of producing completely objective and neutral analysis. My analysis focuses primarily on the contextual or utterance meaning and utterance force. These types of meanings are grounded in pragmatics, and acknowledge the social context, the intent of the speaker, and the effect of the speaker on the listener (Ibid, p. 13). Additionally, my analysis has a social justice bias. In part, the themes that I identify are one
of many likely outcomes of the PD course curriculum because of the educational policies and ideologies currently driving the discourse of education more broadly. Put differently, while the discourse excerpts I have provided demonstrate the validity of my claims, there are many other themes that could have emerged based on the participants’ initial questions.

In this study, discursive data have been presented in a way that maximizes readability, while still communicating the most salient elements of the participants’ speech\(^\text{13}\). Where definite pronouns appear to be indefinite in the given excerpt, the pronouns have been replaced with the name of the intended person in brackets. Likewise where a phrase that refers back to an idea noted prior to the excerpt would be unclear to the reader, the phrase has been replaced with the idea in brackets. Some natural disfluencies (e.g., ums, ahs, part word, whole word, or phrase repetition) have been omitted for the sake of clarity.

Utilizing this method of discourse analysis, I identified cultural models (Fryberg & Markus, 2007) that were reflected in the discourse themes. A cultural model includes ways of thinking about a given topic, activities based on that thinking, ways of talking about the topic, and the underlying ideology reflected in those thoughts, activities, and talk. In other words, a cultural model is the discourse and ideology enacted by a group of people who share that ideology. Shifts in cultural models may occur when new ways to think about the topic, new ways to talk about it, and new activities to enact are offered.

Chapters 4 and 5 each begin with an explanation of the chapters’ respective themes; each of the themes is then subdivided into four to five subthemes. Some subthemes represent specific ways the teachers enacted the beliefs they had about how their students represent cultural models. Other subthemes demonstrate teachers’ movement from one way

\(^{13}\) A transcription key can be found in Appendix I.
of thinking, acting, and speaking about their students to new ways of doing so.

The two primary themes that emerged from the data were as follows:

**Troubling the Notions of Difference.** This theme tracks the ways that a teacher may discursively position the source of a child’s learning problems in various locations, including within the child, thereby positioning the child as a SUCCESS or FAILURE. For example:

“But the problem is she doesn’t actually let him read the questions the whole way through most of the time before answering them because that would take way too much time on her part.” ~Lucy, January 27, 2014.

This theme had five primary subthemes, as shown in Figure 3.1.

![Figure 3.1: Subthemes of Troubling Notions of Difference.](image)

**Conflating Disability With Bilingual/Biliteracy Development.** This theme refers to how and when a teacher may question whether a student’s performance on academic tasks is indicative of a language-learning problem or a learning disability. For example, after an extended conversation about a bilingual student who tended to exhibit prolonged periods of disruptive off-task behavior, Ellen asked:
Ellen: It sounds a lot like working with a learning support student, although she has a capacity to move to a certain level where some learning support students are just at a certain level, but where you have to minimalize it in such a way that they’re still participating, but at a much different level than—

Lucy: Right.

Ellen: And are there learning issues? I mean, has she been identified that way? Because my ESL student is also learning support.

This theme had three primary subthemes, as shown in Figure 3.2. One of the subthemes was further divided into two subsections.

![Figure 3.2: Subthemes of Conflating Disability with Bilingualism/Bilingualism](image)

These themes were found in the comments of all four participants, although the particular ways in which the themes were manifested changed over time for some participants (e.g., the location of the “problem” with a particular EB student might shift from “in the child” to “in the instructional strategy”). The themes were connected to the theories derived from disability studies in education, positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré, 2008; Harré & Moghaddam, 2014; Harré and Van Langenhove, 1991, 1999; Van Langenhove & Harré, 1994), and sociocultural second-language education. In their emergence, the themes illuminated the nascent learning community imbedded in the study’s
professional development course.

The end results of this study can be interpreted as a study of discourse shifts over time by the participants of a PD course within a PLC. The findings are presented in the next three chapters, organized by the resulting themes that answer the study’s overarching research question: “In what ways does short-term explicit sociocultural mediation of the essential understandings of teachers of emergent bilingual students affect the discourse of teachers when characterizing Emergent Bilingual learners in their classrooms?” In Chapter 4, I explore the theme of Troubling the Notions of Difference, while in Chapter 5 I explain the concept of conflated Disability and Bilingual/Biliteracy Development and demonstrate how that concept appears in participant discourse. Finally, in Chapter 6, I illustrate how these themes intersect with the case study of Lucy and Alma.
Chapter 4
Troubling the Notions of Difference

After our team meeting last week, I feel that I have gained a better understanding of the many challenges that bilingual learners face . . . I believe it is important to understand the background of our students so that we do not attach labels such as “lazy,” “unmotivated,” or “uncaring.” In fact, it may be that school is important, but how they present in school should be viewed in the context of their culture and not measured by an “Americanized” ruler . . . [T]o dismiss culture and adopt a “color blindness” approach would take away the richness and value that each student brings . . . I believe that these students work just as hard at times to succeed in school and in life as they discover how to thrive despite obstacles.

~Kiera, Blog Entry, February 17, 2014

This chapter’s theme—Troubling the Notions of Difference—reflects teacher-participant discourse that positions students as different, and as a result of being different, deficient. The participants in the professional development course expressed feelings of frustration resulting from perceived problems in the classroom, but they struggled to locate the source of the problems in ways that helped them to think through how to change the corresponding circumstances, often locating the problems in the students themselves. Of course, the “problem” of this ineffective and harmful deficit discourse was not located in the teachers either. The participants were all volunteers willing to commit to weekly meetings, outside readings, and new lesson plans in order to change the outcomes for their students. Moreover, the conclusions they drew were reasonable, given the lack of professional development opportunities regarding effective ESL practices in the regular classroom as well as communal notions of rights (what is due them) and duties (what they are obligated to do for members of the community). Put differently, the deficit discourse (Valencia, 2010;
Valencia, 2011) the teachers drew on to describe their students was the one that was made available to them by their school and the media. This discourse included narratives of hopelessness and frustration that had direct consequences on the participants’ abilities to see themselves as capable, empowered teachers of their EB students.

This chapter is organized by theme. Therefore, on the next page I provide a timeline of locations in the data that suggest shifts from a deficit discourse to one presuming competence or focusing on a student’s capabilities. This purpose of the timeline is to help the reader locate the specific excerpts of the chapter within the context of the participants’ development over time.
Figure 4.1: Timeline: Development of Participants’ Discourse Presuming Capability

- **Jan 27 Week 1**: Victim-blaming, pseudoscience, oppressive instructional decisions, heterodoxy, and educability were evident in participant discourse.
- **Feb 10 Week 2**: Participants spoke positively about L1 use in the classroom. They positioned students as victims of school culture and practices in their drawings.
- **Feb 17 Week 3**: Ellen, Lucy & Rachelle negotiated potential new positions for Alma. Amos was positioned in Ellen’s blog as engaged, attentive, and successful at classroom learning tasks.
- **Feb 24 Week 4**: Two new students were repositioned as burdens, but school policy was also challenged. Ellen and Lucy used both deficit and capability discourses regarding Alma.
- **March 3 Week 5**: Ellen and Lucy positioned their group of EB students as engaged and capable. The new students were repositioned as hardworking. Lucy repositioned Alma as educable.
- **March 17 Week 6**: Ellen, Lucy & Rachelle negotiated potential new positions for Alma. Amos remained engaged.
- **March 24 Week 7**: Ellen and Lucy positioned themselves as capable teachers of EB students of varying ELD. They repositioned the EB students as capable learners of course content and academic language.
In the following sections, I share and analyze excerpts from the participants’ blog entries as well as our conversations in order to illuminate the manner in which locating problems in students positioned both the teachers and their students in particular ways. I begin the chapter by briefly reintroducing positioning theory as a theoretical and analytical lens by which to understand the changes in participant discourse—from deficit discourse to a discourse of capability—over the duration of our professional development course. I also draw on the work of Valencia (2010) and his characteristics of deficit thinking in order to distinguish between different kinds of deficit thinking, which allows greater specificity in discussing how a comment reflects (or shifts away from) deficit thinking. Following the introduction, I chronicle how the participants shared with me their feelings of frustration. Next, I analyze how the factors that the participants named as frustrating were discursively located in places the teachers cannot control: character, cognition, and culture. I likewise illustrate how the discourse of one of the participants, guidance counselor Kiera, was inclusive—that is, it troubled notions of difference. More specifically, I argue, Kiera cast the school’s EB students as having been like the native English-speaking students in specific ways that were explicitly positioned as good for the school. In the final two sections, I point out the ways in which the participants began to discursively move the location of problems out of the students and into settings they felt capable of changing (see Figure 4.1 on p. 78), thereby shifting from a deficit discourse to one of capability.

This chapter draws most heavily from positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré, 2008; Harré & Moghaddam, 2014; Harré and Van Langenhove, 1991, 1999; Van Langenhove & Harré, 1994) and the notion of deficit discourse in positioning. In analyzing the data, I noted where teachers discursively located differences that were perceived as
problems (perceived deficits) and the way in which doing so discursively positioned students to others. These differences were coded as located in the students’ character, cognition, or culture. More specifically, differences in behavior were typically attributed to character “defects” (e.g., laziness, attention-seeking), cognition (e.g., an inability to focus, LD), or culture (e.g., family values).

I also noted when participants discursively moved perceived deficits into the school, whether these deficits entailed the school’s lack of professional development opportunities, limited instructional strategies, or lackluster curriculum and materials. I further classified all of these moments into two categories. I coded these moments as “inclusion” when the participants explicitly countered the notion of “difference as a problem,” as Kiera does in the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter. I coded these moments “movement” when the participants located a problem they had previously named in the child to a place outside of the child.

As the weeks passed, the group developed understandings of educational pedagogy for EB students that opened up opportunities for addressing the perceived deficits. Accompanying this change, the participants began to discursively move the location of the perceived deficits out of the students and into settings they felt capable of changing.

Initial Meeting: Sharing Frustration

As mentioned in Chapter 3, in order to indicate a willingness to participate, each volunteer had to complete the Informed Consent Form (Appendix D), and write a “case study” about the EB student with whom he or she was concerned (Appendix E). This case
study included a description of the student as well as the would-be participant’s own questions and concerns about the student or about teaching the student. All volunteers who submitted these two forms were accepted as participants in the study.

Within the initial descriptions that each teacher provided about their focus students, phrases that indicated feelings of frustration and/or helplessness were common. One of the more experienced teachers, Ellen, for example, wrote, “I’m at a loss as to how to proceed with these students,” and “With 43 minutes of class time and 25 other students, I’d like to be more effective in helping him achieve success.” Ellen’s colleague Lucy wrote, “Both of these students are in the same class, which is a large class of 27. There are several other students in the class that also require extra attention. I am finding it difficult to provide these students with the extra support that will allow them to pass.” With these comments on the table, we began our PD course.

At the conclusion of our first week’s discussion I was concerned by the obvious distress in Lucy’s voice. I also had concerns about the ways in which Lucy’s student, Alma, was positioned by the other participants during that open discussion (see Chapter 6). It seemed important to intervene in the discourse about Alma immediately and to encourage Lucy to see herself as a teacher with agency in her own classroom. Here, I include much of a private conversation that I had with Lucy in order to show how Lucy responds to the particular comments I make, the ways Lucy has been attempting to address Alma’s behavior and lack of academic progress, and the depth to which Lucy feels frustrated. The first excerpt provided here occurs less than a minute into our eight-minute conversation.

Excerpt 4.1: Week 1, 1:1 conversation, Jan. 27

Alaska: Well I totally hear that (+) you’ve tried a ton of stuff with her—
Lucy: I’ve had her for two years so I’ve tried lots of stuff.

Alaska: {right, right!}

Alaska: Um (+++) But we need to get her thinking differently about [Lucy’s science class]. (++++) Do you:: genuinely feel like there’s no hope for her?

Lucy: Not no hope, but she just needs to determine that “I need to put the effort in.” Like when she: actually puts a reasonable effort in, she can pass. But: how do you motivate her to want to put the effort in? I mean, we send a weekly report home to her parents.=

Alaska: {mhmm

Lucy: =So that information is going home with effort, and it’s the same thing, week after week of she’s not doing her assignments; she doesn’t do her homework, she’s not paying attention in class.

I began by positioning Lucy as a hard-working, dedicated teacher: “You’ve tried a ton of stuff with her” to which Lucy responded by accepting and reinforcing that position: “I’ve tried lots of stuff.” I again reinforced this position with a “right, right” only to pause and shift to positioning Alma as a student who is not yet part of the classroom community. In doing so, I chose my words carefully knowing my intention (illocutionary force) was to open a space for Lucy to reposition herself and Alma. In order to facilitate this, I questioned Lucy about her positioning of herself as hopeless. Lucy’s response, “Not no hope, but--,” suggested that she was willing but unable to let go of this positioning. She immediately shifted to positioning Alma as a potentially capable, but unwilling, student. This suggestion of potential capability was the first positioning of Alma that indicated it could be possible for Lucy’s positioning of Alma to shift—a promising sign. This was followed by a return to Lucy’s positioning herself as a hard-working but burdened teacher who was struggling with parents positioned as ineffective and Alma positioned as an uncooperative student. Lucy reiterates that her effort—sending home information to Alma’s parents—was not resulting in changes in Alma’s ability to pay attention in class or Alma’s behavior regarding class
assignments and homework. Because this conversation followed the end of the first meeting of the PD course, Lucy and I had a relationship that was about 90 minutes old. Accordingly, my response was to return to positioning Lucy as capable and dedicated.

**Excerpt 4.2: Week 1, 1:1 conversation, Jan. 27**

**Alaska:** You: (+) are probably doing things right (+) a lot of the time. right?=

**Lucy:** {+right+}

**Alaska:** =Because the rest of the class is doing okay?

**Lucy:** °hch-hch° That class is rough.

**Alaska:** It's a frustrating class.

**Lucy:** I have a group of A’s and B’s. And I have these kids who are failing, and I’ve got like eight or nine of them right now because (+)°they’re just having a rough time. So. It’s a rough class° because my kids who are at the top are sick of helping these kids who are really low, like not like C, D level low, but really struggling learners.

**Alaska:** Right.

**Lucy:** So I’m having a rough time, okay how do I keep the A, B students content and moving forward, ye::: still bring these low kids up. I mean, I’ve done a little bit of okay, you guys are working on this:::, I’m meeting with this group over he:::re. But you can only do that so much and still move the top kids forward because (+) they really can’t learn all this stuff independently::.

**Alaska:** Right.

**Lucy:** And I can’t like totally leave *these* kids to work on their own, because they’re really like way out there.

This continuation of the conversation introduced two new groups: students identified according to their good grades, hereafter referred to in this study as GOOD LEARNERS. The second group of students was failing, thereby leaving them discursively positioned as FAILURES. Interestingly, GOOD LEARNERS were “at the top,” while FAILURES were “really low. Also, the GOOD LEARNERS were “my kids” and the FAILURES were “these kids,” although this last usage was inconsistent.
The **GOOD LEARNERS** were discursively positioned as learners on a learning journey. The **FAILURES** had to move up first, though. That is, they had to become **GOOD LEARNERS** in order to move forward. Acknowledging this difference, Lucy offered a fairly explicit examination of the rights and duties of the two groups. The **GOOD LEARNERS** had a right to be content and move forward and not be asked to “learn all this stuff independently.” Lucy felt that she had the duty to make certain those rights were satisfied. The **FAILURES**, of course, Lucy said, also had a right to be brought “up,” rather than left, “way out there”—but not, importantly, at the expense of the **GOOD LEARNERS**.

I frequently attempted to validate what I heard Lucy saying, because her situation—with a student she had tried over and over to reach unsuccessfully, who was also disrupting her class every day—was a genuinely difficult one. Lucy had not been provided with the appropriate professional development tools in order to identify or meet Alma’s academic needs. The conversation discussed above concluded with the following exchange:

**Excerpt 4.3: Week 1, 1:1 conversation, Jan 27**

**Lucy:** But I’ve had her for a year and a half and she hasn’t passed a marking period yet and::*:heh-heh-heh*

**Alaska:** What happens if she doesn’t

(++++)

**Lucy:** I’ll get her again next year.

Lucy reaffirmed Alma’s position as the **FAILURE** in the classroom, using the evidence that Alma had not passed any of the previous six marking periods to support her claim. I did not confirm the positioning, but rather questioned the possible conclusions of the storyline

14 See p. 139 for a discussion of Lucy’s educational philosophy and classroom management power base.
of Lucy and Alma. Lucy let me know that storyline would simply continue the following fall.

Having heard hope for positioning Alma as capable earlier in the conversation, I resisted the impulse to challenge Lucy, and I let the conversation end there.

Ultimately, this conversation captured Lucy’s feelings regarding the perceived hopelessness of the situation—Alma had not passed any of the six marking periods for which Lucy had been her teacher and if she did not pass that year, she would return again to Lucy’s classroom. At this point in time, Lucy did not appear to see many possibilities for Alma that would result in success. Without being able to see what Alma is able to do, or to envision new possibilities for Alma, Lucy was unable to find relief for her frustration.

The feelings that Lucy expressed are common among teachers who, like Lucy, are working in rapid-influx schools. A “rapid-influx” school is one that has little history of serving more than the occasional exchange student or a handful of recent immigrant families, yet has grown in a short period of time to serve a population of students that is comprised of at least 10% language-minority students (Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004). Latino families comprised only 5% of the Riverview School District, but most of them were enrolled in the three schools participating in the study, which increased the percentage of Latino students at the three sites. Additionally, the students enrolled in the ESL program were not evenly distributed. At Rachelle’s school, 17% of the student body was in the ESL program. The percentage was much lower at the high school, in part because all of the schools in the county fed into Riverton High School and so the numbers swelled with students coming from schools with few EB students. Because the representation of Latino families in the Riverton school community had grown so rapidly, I classified Riverton Schools as rapid-influx schools. In “Not in My Classroom”: Teacher Attitudes Towards
English Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom,” (2004) Walker, Shafer, and Liams asserted that teacher attitudes are the poorest in rapid-influx schools. They attributed this to four primary factors, one of which is that teachers felt burdened by the addition of ELLs to their classrooms, and that they were not given enough time to prepare or teach their students.

Lucy consistently used language that indicates that this particular class was a burden on her. Her reasons included the size of the class and the diversity of student learning needs. However, Lucy did not fit the profile of the burdened teacher in two key regards: (1) She was willing to attend a time-consuming (burdensome?) professional development course for an entire marking period on her own time, and (2) she did not make claims that implied that her EB students were the most burdensome aspect of her job.

Walker, Shafer, and Liams (2004) also noted a lack of professional development opportunities available for rapid-influx teachers, a vulnerability to widespread misinformation about effective education of ELLs, and negative attitudes among administrators. Lucy had not received any professional development regarding instructional strategies for ELLs, whether at Riverton High School or in her Master of Teaching program. This lack of access to professional development made Lucy vulnerable to politically motivated and inaccurate information about appropriate and effective methods of teaching ELLs, such as that provided by Ms. Gamma, Lucy’s principal, who had negative attitudes about ELLs.

Just like her feelings of frustration, Lucy’s attitudes and experiences aligned with attitudes and experiences commonly found among teachers in rapid-influx schools. There is only one exception: Lucy had met the criteria for participation in the study because she not
only had a student about whom she has questions or concerns, but *she was a willing volunteer* in the study. Lucy had come to the course because she wanted things to change and she wanted to make the change herself. While most teachers care, Lucy cared an extraordinary amount. She cared that Alma was failing and she cared that if Alma failed, Lucy would have to spend a third year teaching a student she had no idea how to reach.

**The Problem is in the Student's Character**

One place that the teacher-participants often located problems was in students’ character. The most common “problems” attributed to their students’ character included tendencies towards laziness, apathy, aggression, generally disruptive behavior, and attention-seeking. Out of 22 coded instances of participants locating perceived problems in their students’ character, whether during our discussions or in their blog entries, I have selected two to present here for analysis.

In the first week’s discussion, Lucy began to describe Alma.

**Excerpt 4.4: Week 1, Jan 27**

**Lucy:** Well Alma, she understands perfectly as far as conversation goes, she doesn’t have any problem with that. The science vocabulary sometimes stumps her a little bit, but she gets sheets and she can kind of read and process that to some degree. But it’s just the effort and paying attention?

In this excerpt, Lucy located the problem of Alma’s poor academic performance in Alma’s character—making an effort—and in her head—attention. She acknowledged that Alma appeared to have difficulty understanding the science vocabulary but also discursively places the location of the problem back onto Alma’s character and cognition when she said,
“She gets sheets and she can kind of read and process that to some degree.” In doing so, Lucy put into words what Gee (2012) has called a “master myth.” Master myths provide a seemingly natural and reasonable cultural structure for a way of thinking about a particular topic (e.g., attention) that is powerful enough to obscure other ways of talking or thinking about that topic. In this case, Lucy gestured towards the master myth of “attention-seeking” as a character trait. This master myth is common among members of the educational community, who frequently refer to students as “attention-seeking,” (seen as part of character) even though research suggests that attention-seeking behavior is a function of the environment in which students are located. In fact, the ATTENTION-SEEKING STUDENT type is so common, it can be considered to already exist in a classroom, waiting for a student to be cast—or positioned—into it early in the school year (McDermott, 1993), if not by the end of the first week.

The more particular notion of negative-attention seeking is well established in scholarship on behavioral management of students, especially in literature grounded in a behaviorist strategy of positive and negative reinforcement. Studies of negative attention-seeking behavior began in the 50s and 60s (e.g., Bandura & Walters, 1963; Gallimore, Tharp, & Kemp, 1969; Gewirtz, 1954). Many of these studies proposed various theories of why children might engage in negative attention-seeking behavior. Interestingly, they tended to locate the problem not in the child, but in the context. While a teacher may feel justified in assigning punishment based on negative attention-seeking behavior in a student perceived as being attention-seeking, this deficit perspective ultimately frames a situation as unsolvable since problems located in the student are located outside of the teacher’s influence.

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15 Negative attention-seeking is appearing to seek negative attention from the teacher.
In Week 4, Lucy described a moment from a laboratory activity that she tried to videotape and that captured her frustration with Alma’s attention-seeking. Lucy’s natural speaking pace was very rapid, so the following excerpt includes marks to indicate where she slowed down before returning to her normal speed. The entire report was given in a very animated tone of voice.

**Excerpt 4.5: Week 4, Feb 24**

**Lucy:** Well, getting her settled into the activity was hard, but once I got her settled, I mean the procedures for this activity were really, really simple, so that she didn’t have to sit there and read a lot and basically they could look around and see what everyone else is doing and copy it. So:: at that point, she was willing to sit down and <kind of> watch everyone else and do it herself, but then as soon as she got it done, the video clip\(^{16}\) shows she starts like hitting her partner and carrying on, and then she starts yelling to the guys behind her, hey, hey, blah-blah-blah. <And this is> the problem: every time I do labs with her, <she might do a little part of it, but then she gets so side-tracked that she doesn’t learn anything from what she did, because she’s not willing to sit there and think about what happened and why it happened and what can we actually learn from what we observe.> (+) So.

**Ellen:** Do you think she’s not sure of herself? Or

(++)

**Lucy:** I think she likes attention too much.

In this excerpt, Lucy began by positioning herself as the **DETERMINED TEACHER** who was able to help Alma settle into the activity, but she spends the rest of the story discursively positioning Alma as a **LAZY STUDENT** and an **ATTENTION-SEEKING STUDENT**. According to Lucy, the central problem was that Alma was unwilling to think and liked attention too much. Of course, identifying others as unwilling to put in effort—as lazy—as Lucy does here is such a common aspect of the discourse surrounding character that it may

\(^{16}\) The video clip cut off after a few seconds and I only saw Alma talking to her lab partner in an appropriate manner. Consistently malfunctioning cameras was one of the reasons we abandoned the use of video as a reflective tool during the first cycle of the research.
seem “natural” to talk about others this way, even children and especially adolescents. Groups of people who are regularly cast as lazy include beggars, welfare recipients, and members of lower socioeconomic classes in the United States. After all, in a country where one of the most stubborn myths is that hard work can lead to success in equal measure, then people who are unsuccessful are, ostensibly, those who are clearly not working hard enough. This myth is ultimately at the heart of Alma’s dilemma. She is failing classes this year that she failed last year. Her teachers are weary of her genuinely disruptive behaviors when not engaged in the work. Although Alma “respond[ed] well to working one-on-one with teachers,” said Lucy, Alma would “immediately be off task” if Lucy turned her back. In this way Lucy positioned herself as the victim or passive recipient of Alma’s academically lazy and socially disruptive behavior.

According to Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard & Lintz (1994) “Achievement ideology is the prevailing belief about success in the United States, which explains why the collectivist, resistant ideology of the poor is such a threat to it.” Given Alma’s age at school entry (about 12 years old), as well as the lack of linguistic support she received in school, Alma had little reason to imagine that academic success correlates with occupational success. Considering that the local industrial job opportunities did not require a high-school diploma, she had little evidence that the effort it would require to master English and pass four years of core coursework in the two years that remain until she turns 18 would be worth it. Moreover, without appropriate scaffolds and a concerted effort across all of the courses in which she was enrolled to provide appropriate content-area literacy instruction, graduation might not even be possible. Thus, if there were no obvious benefits to Alma and no support from the school, it was reasonable for Alma to reject the school’s story that education would
somehow make a difference to her.

In other words, Alma was not lazy. Yet the master myth of laziness that was encircling Alma held that once Alma had made the choice to disengage from the school context, the school was no longer responsible for Alma’s outcomes and should let her fend for herself, even if the outcome of this was certain failure to survive academically. The stereotype of the Lazy Student came with a stigma that gave the education professionals Alma depended on the right to abandon her. Such positioning left Alma vulnerable to the stereotype threat of this student type—when Alma engaged she was at risk of demonstrating Failure—when she did not engage she reinforced the stereotype of the Lazy Student, and especially, the Lazy Latina Student.

For Lucy, this master myth was also a disaster. Even though the myth’s stubborn hold on the social imagination makes it seem reasonable and rational, the myth ultimately positioned Lucy as a victim of Alma’s deficient character. Lucy needed the power to change this untenable situation of a disengaged student who was constantly disrupting her class, but this power would come only when she was able to liberate Alma and herself from the deficit discourse to choose a discourse of capability. Without this discourse of capability, Lucy’s reasonable response was frustration and despair. Both Alma and Lucy were victimized by the power of the myth.

The Problem is in the Student’s Head

Teacher-participants were equally likely to place the location of the problem in the students’ thinking (cognition) as they were in students’ character (see Chapter 5 for a more
extensive discussion of this topic). Out of 12 coded instances of participants’ located the problem in students’ cognition, whether during our discussions, or in blog entries, I present here two examples where the problem was located in the student’s cognition. The first example is a statement Lucy made in the first week’s discussion.

**Excerpt 4.6: Week 1, Jan 27**

**Lucy:** It’s really hard to judge how much is due to language versus attention (+) because her attention is so low that you have a real hard time assessing is she just struggling because she can’t understand, or is: she just not trying at all.

This comment revealed Lucy’s struggle to decide where to place the problem. Was it in Alma’s cognition—attention (focus)—or in her character—not trying? During this first week, Lucy did not consider the possibility that the problem resided in Alma’s lack of English-language development in print literacy. The implication was that Alma’s inability to pay attention to an assessment for very long prevented Lucy from being able to determine the exact nature of Alma’s problem. Lucy’s perception of Alma’s attention span and willingness to apply herself limited Lucy’s ability to address her issues with Alma in a consistent, systematic way.

In the second example, taken from a blog entry written by Ellen only a few days after the first meeting, Ellen reflected on the content of her course and the perceived deficits of her students.

**Blog Excerpt 4.1**

The content I am teaching can be difficult because of the vast amount of information, also the students may have little interest in history, and many of them come to me with very little background in history. When you consider these factors
along with learning difficulties and language issues, my target\textsuperscript{17} students will be a challenge to positively impact. (Blog Entry, January 31, 2014)

Ellen began by positioning herself as a teacher at the mercy of a pedagogically challenging curriculum with which it was difficult to reach students. Ellen located the problems many of her students experienced in her class in a variety of character and cognition-based factors. However, the dominant factor for Ellen was cognition—learning difficulties and language issues. The students were positioned as deficient in knowledge and motivation, as well as dis/abled by LDs. She articulated her corresponding feelings of helplessness quite clearly: “My target students will be a challenge to positively impact.” These feelings of helplessness were also reflected in the initial description of one of Ellen’s focus students that Ellen provided when indicating her interest in participating in the research:

**Case Study Excerpt 4.1**

This student not only is an ESL student, but he also has an IEP. I’ve experienced this situation in the past and I’m at a loss as to how to proceed with these students. (Case Study, December, 2013)

In clearly stating her concern—she “is at a loss”—Ellen positioned herself as lacking the professional knowledge and skills needed to adequately meet the needs of a student who required both specific linguistic supports and specific instructional accommodations for a LD. Having “experienced this situation in the past,” Ellen implied that she was unable to come up with instructional strategies or methods on her own that led to language development and/or the development of course-content understanding. Without the professional development that would make this possible, not only were Ellen’s students positioned as “challenging to positively impact,” but Ellen herself was positioned as

\textsuperscript{17}i.e., focus student
disempowered.

**Notions of Cultural Difference**

While perceived problems may be located by others in a student’s character or a student’s cognition, they may also be located in the home culture. This is a form of Othering. Othering manifests itself in schools when education professionals attribute perceived problems a student may be having to perceived cultural deficits. Because cultural characteristics are perceived as being fixed, these cultural deficits likewise come to be considered fixed. The collection of fixed characteristics of one group as perceived and described by another group are, of course, stereotypes. These stereotypes can sometimes be perceived as advantages\(^{18}\), but for many groups, including the low-income children of color of Riverton school district, the beliefs are typically deficits (Artiles, 2011; Delpit, 2006; Valencia, 2010; Valencia, 2011). Out of 9 coded instances of teacher-participants participating in Othering, whether during our discussions or in blog entries, I present here two examples. In the following exchange from the first meeting, Kiera had shared her questions and concerns about her focus student, Mateo, attributing his disruptive behavior to his avoidance of written work. Ellen responded:

**Excerpt 4.7: Week 1, Jan 27**

**Ellen:** That may speak to the cultural change, too, because a lot of these kids have parents who work very long hours or broken families, or families back in their native countries. And. So.

**Kiera:** Absolutely

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\(^{18}\) e.g., the model minority—Asian students always excel in school
Ellen: There’s that dynamic.

Ellen’s deficit thinking here revealed an attempt to use pseudoscience to position the EB students, Mateo included, as culturally deficient. In doing so, Ellen drew from long-standing narratives in the dominant Discourse about children of color and children from low socio-economic circumstances. Yet what is notable in this case is not that Ellen was suggesting that it was only the students in the Latino/a community who have parents who work very long hours, “broken” families, or family members separated by distance—although she was suggesting that. Indeed, the possibility remains that any given community may have a lot of parents who work very long hours, include families with any manner of adult and child configurations, or include family members who are far away. Kiera, the guidance counselor, agrees with Ellen, implying that perhaps that is an accurate assessment for many of the students. The concern is that Ellen was saying that these characteristics cause problems for the children in school when there was no evidence that that was the case for every child or family. In fact, more work eases financial burdens and lowers stress levels in many families, while other family members (e.g., aunts, uncles, grandparents, older siblings) may provide adequate and loving after-school care that brings the child into contact with extended family on a regular basis. Families who have chosen configurations other than two heterosexual parents may do so in order to provide love, peace, and security to all members of the home. Family members may be separated as part of the process of providing love, peace, and security to the most vulnerable members of the family (e.g., when part of a family emigrates to the U.S., and other members follow later), with the goal of eventual reunification of all members. By ignoring these possibilities, the deficit stereotypes assigned to groups of family types persist.
Up until the mid-1950s, the most popular theory for explaining the generally low academic achievement of minority and working-class students was that these students were “inherently inferior, morally and spiritually, to the children of the middle class” (Erickson, 1987, p.355). In the 1960s, this “genetic” explanation began to be replaced by explanations related to nurturing behavior and contexts. According to Erickson (1987) “Minority children, it was argued, did not achieve because they did not experience a cognitively stimulating environment (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966; Deutsch et al., 1967; Hess & Shipman, 1965). … Their language and culture were intellectually impoverished. They were ‘culturally deprived’ or ‘socially disadvantaged.’” (p.335). In the mid-1960s, anthropology of education researchers recognized this shift as a particularly harmful cultural bias because of its presentation as legitimate social science (ibid.).

McDermott and Varenne (1995) have indicated that from 1965 to 1980, scholars made great efforts to show the fallacy of this way of thinking, but that the way of thinking has nonetheless “lived on in the common sense that most of us use to talk about school success and failure. Of late, much like the inherent intelligence and IQ bell-curve foolishness, it has seen a revival” (p. 334). Indeed, the cultural deficit model is on display when Ellen equated broken homes and absent parents to a fixed cultural difference of the group of Latino/a students that distinguished them from other students who were not part of the Latino/a culture. Yet Ellen’s beliefs, like most individuals’, were not consistent. Indeed, while here she put into words the master myth of the cultural deficit model, later she asserted that the Latino/a students were more motivated to succeed in the secondary grades than their non-Latino/a peers.

Cultural deficit models ultimately enable frustrated school administrators and
teachers to place the responsibility for their minority students’ academic failures outside of the school. Yet these models are also operating in a time when No Child Left Behind and the Common Core State Standards are putting immense pressure on schools to avoid failure at all costs. In this way, the competitive environment is intensified, producing a requirement for children who embody success and children who embody failure.

One promising approach is culturally responsive pedagogy. In this approach, teachers must get to know their students closely and integrate that knowledge explicitly into the curriculum of the class. However, in the actual implementation of this pedagogy, an assumption is commonly made that the school culture is richer and offers more possibilities for integration. The home culture is thus positioned as deficient and “risky.”

During Week 2’s discussion, the participants mediated each other’s understanding of how ideas around cultural and linguistic identities applied to the Riverton schools. I had asked Rachelle, Ellen, Lucy, and Kiera to read a chapter from *Language, Culture, and Community in Teacher Education* (Brisk, 2008). Rachelle worked as both a Spanish teacher and an ESL specialist at the high school and was currently a bilingual ESL specialist in the elementary school, making her able to address comments about both age groups during the meeting. Over the course of our discussion, we talked about some of the cultures that had been brought to the school by recent enrollees. Ellen and Lucy did some boundary work to distinguish themselves from the local White community.

**Excerpt 4.8: Week 2, Feb. 10**

**Ellen:** There’s one line in here that says education is a community responsibility. And I think historically this community has been resistant (++)

**LUCY LAUGHS**

**Ellen:** >not just to education< but: also to different people.
Lucy: Well, so many people grow up in this area, never leave this area, have never been anywhere else, see that oh, it still functions if it’s done a different way. heh-heh

Ellen: Well the mindset is that it works. Why mess with it?

Lucy: Right, but they’ve never seen anything different so why would you even think of doing it differently in their minds.

Interestingly, Rachelle did not contribute to this exchange. Rachelle could have been considered “a local,” as she, too, attended Riverton High School. Yet in the first day’s conversation, Rachelle made an effort to indicate specific ways in which she was not like the locals (e.g., her “parents were educated”). In this way, Rachelle had ensured that that boundary of difference was clearly drawn and displayed for the rest of the group.

One of the attributes of Othering through the use of oppressive deficit thinking and stereotypes is that stereotyped group members are positioned as ‘Other’ by members outside of the stereotyped group or “crowd.” In the above excerpt, Lucy and Ellen positioned themselves outside of the local, primarily White, community; they then assigned characteristics to the local community that positioned the community in opposition to them. The local community was resistant to education—Lucy and Ellen were not. The local community was resistant to new arrivals—Lucy and Ellen were not. “This community” was a specific cultural group that Ellen and Lucy stereotype with the following fixed characteristics: (1) It was resistant to education; (2) It was resistant to different people; (3) It had no experience with the world beyond the immediate area; and (4) It did not tolerate ways of doing things that were different from its own. Ellen’s and Lucy’s last comments are reminiscent of earlier assertions about “this community” disliking ways of doing things that were different than its own and not having experience with the world outside of “this area.” It is not clear how big or small “this area” is.

The cultural deficit model does not just apply to cultural and linguistic minorities; it
also frequently applies to poor Whites, and especially poor, rural Whites (e.g., those referred to as trailer trash, white trash) (Wray, 2006). At the time of this study, this demographic was particularly common to Riverton. According to the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau) data for 2013, while 81.8% of Riverton (primarily White) adults had finished high school, only 10.6% had a bachelor’s degree or higher. The median annual income was $26,875, down from $33,594 in the 2010 US Census. This means that approximately 30% of the children of Riverview school district were below the poverty line. In 2013, much of Riverton’s White population lived near the poverty line.

To reiterate McDermott and Varenne (1995), “[B]eing poor and destitute is one of the quite normal and ordinary ways to exist” (p. 336). Ellen and Lucy drew on a heavily entrenched discourse about poor Whites that emphasizes not just the poverty shared by this group, but also the implied moral deficits such as a lack of ambition, a lack of education, and a willingness to remain dependent on others (Wray, 2006). In talking about the deficits of “this community,” Ellen and Lucy again articulated characteristics that positioned them in opposition to those deficits. More specifically, they positioned themselves as EDUCATED and OPEN-MINDED PEOPLE, with experiences outside of “this area,” who were open to education, open to different people, and willing to try something different. They also discursively drew a boundary between “this community” and “Hispanics,” as “this community” was meant to describe the historic population of the town, which for decades had been over 96% White and “Non-Hispanic.” While Ellen and Lucy had established in past conversations that they cared about their students—who were also predominately White—and their students’ academic success, here they drew from the cultural deficit master myth, or the discourse available about rural Whites in Pennsylvania (located in
“Pennsyltucky”) that was available to them to express their frustration about not feeling effective in their classrooms.

**Inclusion: Countering the Notion of Difference**

The opposite of Othering is inclusion, or viewing difference as a “positive contribution to diversity in education” (Tregaskis, 2008, p. 202). More specifically, inclusion is about seeing similarities in the experiences and lives of students who are all different in some way and then helping students make those same connections with each other in the classroom. It is about discursively redrawing boundaries so that all members of the class are included in the lesson, even if that requires modifying lessons by adding extra linguistic supports and multiple points of entry to the lesson content, as well as multiple ways for students to express what they have learned.

The following blog entries represent two examples out of 24 instances coded as “inclusive.” The vast majority of these “inclusive” instances occurred in the second half of the professional development course, as participants began to discursively move the location of the problem out of their students and into the curriculum—trying new ways of including their ELLs in the learning activities. These two examples are notable because they occur in the first half of the professional development course. In both cases, it is the guidance counselor Kiera who is shown moving towards inclusion. Though she was very quiet during the Week 2 discussion, as the course progressed, Kiera was the first to push back against the deficit narratives around Riverview School District’s EB students. She also shared her feelings about the important role of cultural variety in an inclusive society. Finally, she
related her students’ processes of learning English to her process of learning Arabic during the two years she spent in an Arabic-speaking country.

**Blog Excerpt 4.2**

After our team meeting last week, I feel that I have gained a better understanding of the many challenges that bilingual learners face. As a counselor, I have always been interested in discovering the barriers to learning and how I can assist students in achieving success. This insight into their cultural lives has added a new dimension to their school lives in that students must learn how to co-exist in a world that may not be too supportive of their family values and worldviews. I believe it is important to understand the background of our students so that we do not attach labels such as “lazy,” “unmotivated,” or “uncaring.” In fact, it may be that school is important, but how they present in school should be viewed in the context of their culture and not measured by an “Americanized” ruler. I agree that cultural responsiveness is the direction that needs to be supported, as to dismiss culture and adopt a “color blindness” approach would take away the richness and value that each student brings and would in essence take away from what makes our country great. Additionally, I believe that these students work just as hard at times to succeed in school and in life as they discover how to thrive despite obstacles. (Blog Entry, February 17, 2014)

Kiera demonstrated inclusivity by rejecting the negative positioning of students as “lazy,” “unmotivated,” or “uncaring.” She asserted that it was the responsibility of the school to create a warm, nurturing environment through culturally responsive pedagogy. She also weighed in on the conversation about motivation by saying that she believed “that these students work just as hard at times to succeed in school and in life as they discover how to thrive despite obstacles.” By using the comparative phrase, “just as hard,” Kiera positioned “these students” as sharing a characteristic in common with the native English-speaking students. That is, she perceived the students at her school to all be capable of hard work and thriving despite obstacles. Harré and Van Langenhove (1991) have pointed out that people

\[\text{Unfortunat}^{19}\text{ly in this case, blog entries were private, so the other teachers’ understandings of inclusion were not mediated by Kiera’s thoughts.}\]
“will differ in their willingness or intention to position and be positioned,” which may be why Kiera chose to share these thoughts in her blog rather than in discussions. Yet Kiera’s blog confirmed that Kiera was reinforcing her own beliefs, using the readings as a kind of myelination to protect her notions about the students in her care from the negative positioning of the deficit discourses.

Ten days later, in Week 4, Kiera wrote another blog entry in which she related her own experiences to that of her students. This entry was written in response to a lesson in which we explicitly discussed teaching learning strategies.

**Blog Excerpt 4.3**

Thinking back on my experience with being immersed in a culture that utilizes a collectivist viewpoint, and trying to learn a second language, I recall what helped me to learn the language. When I first arrived in the Middle East, I knew very little of the spoken word and had seen the written word, but knew nothing about the symbols. In learning to read and write Arabic, I remember that someone had taught me how to write my name using sounds similar to the English alphabet. I was also shown how to write the numbers 0 through 10, again using symbols similar to what was familiar to me and some were a complete contrast. I recognized that I was quickly able to write my name and I was able to distinguish between symbols and I am still able to write my name and the numbers 0 through 10. This may also be due to the fact that I had someone write my name and the numbers out for me first, then they made the comparisons, then they wanted me to practice writing and orally saying the sounds and then they corrected my speech and writing. So, to highlight the reading, some of the cognitive learning strategies that I am referencing here are the use of: reading aloud for clarification, imitating behaviors of native speakers, and of course, scaffolding. (Blog entry, February 27, 2014)

Here, Kiera positioned her EB students as having rights similar to her own and teachers as having duties similar to the ones who taught her Arabic. Kiera’s learning objective was to better understand the source of Mateo’s disruptive behaviors and emotional turbulence. She had approached this thus far by observing the discussions of the other classroom teachers (she did contribute, but not frequently) and paying attention to our
discussions of what effective ESL instruction could look like. This was a far more subtle form of inclusion than that displayed in the previous entry. In recognizing some of the characteristics of effective instruction as making sense in the context of her particular lived experience in the Middle East, Kiera was able to relate the content of cultural differences between students’ homes and their school to her own experience. She affirmed in her blog that some of the strategies described in the Week 4 lesson on teaching learning strategies explicitly to EB students worked for her as an EB student, even when she arrived knowing nothing of Arabic.

Moving the Problem Outside of the Student

The participants also made statements that located academic problems outside of their students. In this section, out of 27 instances of discourse coded as “locating the problem outside of the student,” I share two examples from Week 3 that demonstrate Lucy’s and Kiera’s abilities to see some of the classroom context though the eyes of their students. Finally, I share comments from Lucy that indicate key shifts in her thinking about the location of the perceived problem.

In the following, I had asked all four participants to draw pictures showing what the learning experience in their classrooms was like from their students’ points of view. In the previous two lessons we had discussed the connection between language, culture, and identity, the use of multiple-modes of instruction, and the tool of graphic organizers to facilitate academic language development both receptively and expressively with a lower overall linguistic load. The examples come from a drawing activity that week intended to
mediate the participants understanding of the role of context in defining what counts for success in the school setting—or, in other words, to discursively move perceived problems out of the students and into the students’ settings and/or curricula. I left the activity very open-ended. Below, I present Lucy’s and Rachelle’s drawings and provide their explanations. A brief analysis follows each drawing.

Figure 4.2: Lucy’s drawing of her class

Lucy began by explaining that she broke her lessons into specific sections, most of which were illustrated in her drawing. She began each class with a warm-up that functioned as a review. This part of the lesson was cooperative, and she described it as a comfortable time for her students. Next was the instructional part of the lesson that she presented using slides on a Smart Board. Lucy frequently made use of the affordances of the Smart Board, using the board to underline new terms as she talked about them, to add explanatory text, and to draw models wherever possible. She stated that she tried to introduce new concepts in “accessible language.” Lucy continued:

Excerpt 4.9: Week 3, Feb. 17

Lucy: However, of course, it’s chemistry, it gets more complicated because then we have to start looking at patterns of elements and compounds, and as soon as you start bringing those
other vocab words in: (+) that’s where the eyes start to glaze over heh-heh-heh. >“I didn’t figure that out two chapters ago< and I’m still lost now,” so I think a lot depends on the context of the lesson. And then you usually get some practice time where, once again, that can kind of get them back on task as far as, ‘I can do this, I can get some individual help’, so it all depends if it’s something they totally don’t understand at all and the teacher is just standing up there talking, (++) it’s not going to make any sense to them so:::, that one-on-one help tends to be important.

In Lucy’s description, she analyzed each element of her lesson, voicing the ‘student’ point of view. In the process, she positioned the course content as the location of the problems for the EB students in her class. She suggested potential effects this might have had on her students’ motivation in ways that positioned the students as victims of inadequate academic language development. She positioned herself as a GOOD TEACHER by giving examples of how she tried to remedy some of the problems—using simpler language, for example—demonstrating that when she addressed these issues in the content, she felt effective. However, she ultimately felt that the course vocabulary—because “it’s chemistry”—was too hard for the students, which reflected eductability deficit thinking (Valencia, 2010). The oppressive deficit thinking of the State Education Agency (SEA) resulted in reduced funding for schools, and the same thinking prioritized standard literacy development PD in a way that excluded PD for teaching EB students. Lucy has therefore been denied an explicit understanding of how to teach academic vocabulary. The tension that this situation created was palpable. When Lucy said, “So it all depends. If it’s something they totally don’t understand at all and the teacher is just standing up there talking,” she voiced the frustration she felt in not knowing how to modify the instruction to make the chemistry vocabulary accessible.

While Lucy showed a linear progression of her lesson, Kiera used circles to represent the students in Mateo’s class. Mateo attended both ESL and mainstream content-area
classes; in her drawing, Kiera chose to present him in a mainstream classroom.

Figure 4.3: Kiera’s drawing of school from the perspective of Mateo

**Excerpt 4.10: Week 3, Feb. 17**

**Kiera:** Okay. This is a non-ESL class. This is my student here, and what I have in this bubble here is he feels misunderstood, “grades don’t reflect my true ability. I speak Spanish and I’m from a bigger city and I’m in trouble. And (+) here’s my friend over here that sits next to me; he speaks Spanish, he’s from a big city so we kind of connect because we have these two things in common, but would I have chosen him otherwise? I don’t know.”

“Here’s the rest of my class. They’re all connected because they know each other, they’re from here. I feel disconnected. Does my teacher even see me? (+) Sometimes I sit at the front and I don’t always understand.” <That’s kind of my thought.>

**Ellen:** That’s our school in many ways, I think, for a lot of kids.

**Kiera:** And I think, >in this particular class< I think (+) all of our teachers do a great job at trying reach those students, but from what he is saying this is what the experience was from **his** perspective.

In Kiera’s description, she took into account Mateo’s history without blaming that same history for his troubles. Rather, her storyline offered a theory for why his emotional and behavioral problems in the class might have had reasonable roots. Her theory therefore
placed Mateo’s struggles within a particular context. Ellen picked up on Kiera’s final
comments and positioned EB students like Mateo as being part of “our school,” thereby
drawing an inclusive boundary that indicated her perception that many of the native English-
speaking students feel the same way as the EB students.

In the last meeting, Week 7, all four participants were thinking aloud about how the
various concepts learned in the class related to specific situations they had noticed in their
classes and community. In the following excerpt Lucy, Ellen and I had a discussion in which
Lucy and Ellen both express how changing their instruction has benefitted the teachers’
students, including their EB students.

**Excerpt 4.11: Week 7, Mar. 24**

**Lucy:** So many of these strategies that you use for the lower level students, actually help
the upper level students as well=

**Ellen:** {right

**Lucy:** =It’s just that they can learn *despite* the bad instruction where the lower level kids
can’t. So I find when I start incorporating these things, everyone ends up doing better.

**Ellen:** Yes, I have found that, too.

**Lucy:** And that goes—I mean, even for learning support students—you try strategies
that actually work for them, but it works for everyone else. We’re just becoming better at
teaching, essentially, instead of saying here, go learn it all on your own. Heh-heh

Lucy began by positioning the GOOD STUDENTS and POOR STUDENTS as responsive
to the same instructional strategies, in doing so discursively closing the distance between the
two groups, though they remain distinct. She also identified the central differentiating feature
of the two groups: the GOOD STUDENTS “can learn *despite* the bad instruction where the
lower level kids can’t.” She then positioned herself as a DEVELOPING TEACHER—the kind
of teacher who starts incorporating new strategies that “actually work.” Lucy’s own identity
as a **DEVELOPING TEACHER** with new capabilities is at the crux of Lucy’s reflection.

Lucy’s words indicated a substantive shift towards feelings of effectiveness in her classroom. For the first four weeks, Lucy spoke exclusively about how the strategies were or were not effectively implemented with Alma. In the final week, she described her perception that her instructional changes had positive effects on the inclusion and comprehension of the other EB students in her class. She began to position the class as a whole, and especially the class’s EB students, as capable of making new connections to the material by revoicing (O’Connor & Michaels, 1996) the students own position of themselves as **CAPABLE LEARNERS**. This is also evidence of her development of the understanding of the necessity of addressing the linguistic needs of those EB students. When she said, “We’re just becoming better at teaching,” she indicated that her sense of efficacy as a teacher had increased.

### The Emergence of Discourses of Competence and Capability

Locating problems within or outside of a student positions that student—and often, expectations of his or her academic success—within or outside the teacher’s sphere of influence. When a teacher discursively positions his or her EB student as a student whom the teacher has the ability to influence, the teacher and the student then share the metaphorical space of the classroom learning community, thereby creating a space of inclusion. In addition to creating a space of inclusion, a teacher’s notions of where his or her student’s problems are located—whether in the student’s family, character, cognition, culture, or attitudes—influence the degree to which the teacher feels responsible (feels a
duty) for including that student in the learning activities and learning objectives of the class. When a teacher uses inclusive teaching strategies—positioning his or her student as having the right to appropriate linguistic supports—and the student responds, the teacher begins to see the student as a capable, productive member of the classroom. In addition, the teacher begins to feel responsible for the progress the student is making.

An example of this increased sense of self-efficacy was in Week 6 when Lucy and Ellen each reported that their students had asserted in class that the new strategies that the teachers adopted were helping them learn. Of course, this study collected no data to support or refute these assertions. What is relevant here is that both Lucy and Ellen positioned themselves as CAPABLE TEACHERS with a relationship involving two-way communication with their students. By revoicing what they understood their students to be saying, they positioned the students as engaged. Furthermore, Lucy asserted that her students asked her to tell other teachers at her grade level to use these strategies. In doing so, she positioned herself as having valuable knowledge and skills that made her more capable than teachers who did not have that knowledge.

While inclusive teaching strategies may result in increased feelings of self-efficacy in teachers, deficit discourses that blame the victim or engage in (social) pseudoscience are associated with feelings of frustration and helplessness. They discursively result in deficit thinking about students’ educability and exclude the students from teachers’ expectation that the students can meet lesson, unit, or course objectives.

The teachers who participated in the research knowingly volunteered for an eight-week course requiring outside reading, 20% of their afterschool planning time, frequent modification to those plans to integrate newly learned strategies, and 30-45 minutes a week
of written reflections—with no remuneration beyond the promise of new instructional strategies. Ellen, Lucy, Kiera, and Rachelle thus came with the understanding that there must be more to learn about their students and pedagogical practices, regardless of their previous training and personal experiences. Recall that Rachelle already had an ESL specialist certificate. Human beings are agentive members of the cultural systems we live in. People think and speak from within those cultural systems. When people reach for new ways of thinking about language learners, race, gender, or even culture, they draw from what other people have already said or written about the issues that concern them. Additionally, whenever there is the use of a symbolic system to communicate—there is positioning (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1994). When I drew from different discourses in order to share readings and explicit instructional strategies, participants drew from them, too, most notably in the last three weeks. The new discourses afforded the participants new ways to position their students.

Varenne and McDermott have argued in *Successful Failure* (1982) that the structure of the American school is such that it *always* provides for both SUCCESS and FAILURE. These dichotomous identities are simply waiting in the empty classroom on the first day of school. As the children file in, FAILURE will claim his children and SUCCESS hers (Ibid.). The children upon whom the participants in this particular study have chosen to focus come to the teachers having already been claimed by the specter of FAILURE. Mateo fails in self-control, anger-management, self-esteem, academic accomplishments, second-language development, and friendship-building. Amos fails at reading comprehension, English-language usage, and the acquisition of academic vocabulary. Alma fails at the acquisition of academic vocabulary and proper classroom behavior.
In applying this label of FAILURE, though, a reason—however weak—must be given, and this reason is necessarily located in or near the child. The few times that a parent has successfully sued a school, demonstrating that failure and success resided in the structure of the school rather than the child him- or herself, especially egregious conditions of the school have been corrected. However, in a culture that continues to believe that social characteristics such as IQ can actually fall within the so-called Normal Curve, there will always be FAILURE and SUCCESS. Therefore, the reasoning goes, the school owes only so much accommodation since the problem lies within the student.

Yet when an inclusive space is provided for a student to develop, the teacher offers the student an opportunity to be cast (positioned) in a new role. It is this recasting—and the resulting feelings of hope and self-efficacy—that Lucy, Rachelle, and Ellen indicate by the end of the course.

**Excerpt 4.12: Week 7, Mar. 24**

**Lucy:** So many of these strategies that you use for the lower level students, actually help the upper level students as well=

**Ellen:** {right

**Lucy:** =It’s just that they can learn *despite* the bad instruction where the lower level kids can’t. So I find when I start incorporating these things, everyone ends up doing better.

Lucy’s language here was significantly different from that of the first week when she said:

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20 In 1974, a group representing Chinese students sued the San Francisco School District in *Lau v. Nichols*, arguing that Chinese children placed entirely in mainstream classes were in a “sink or swim” environment that primarily resulted in sinking. The San Francisco school district claimed that they were only treating all children equally. Justice William Douglass wrote a scathing rebuttal, which can be summarized in his sentence, “Under these state-imposed standards there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, a curriculum” (Wright, 2010, p. 72).
Excerpt 4.13: Week 1, 1:1 conversation, Jan. 27

Lucy: So I’m having a rough time, okay how do I keep the A, B students content and moving forward, yet still bring these low kids up. I mean, I’ve done a little bit of okay, you guys are working on this, I’m meeting with this group over here. But you can only do that so much and still move the top kids forward because (+) they really can’t learn all this stuff independently.

Alaska: Right.

Lucy: And I can’t like totally leave these kids to work on their own, because they’re really like way out there.

Where Lucy had initially positioned her students into two groups of GOOD STUDENTS and FAILURES, where each group needed very different instruction, she was now positioning the GOOD STUDENTS as benefitting from the same instruction as the FAILURES. The continued discursive positioning of GOOD STUDENTS as “highs” and FAILURES as “lows” points to a need for more explicit mediation on the effects of deficit thinking on her instruction, but the shift towards seeing the two groups as benefitting from improved linguistic supports is a positive one.

Rachelle’s movement is much more subtle because her initial concern was always a question of where to locate the problem. I had suggested that given Sofía’s history (little previous experience with formal schooling; very basic literacy skills in the home language), Sofía’s slower rate of English language development could be explained, and this had made Rachelle felt better about not immediately locating the problem in Sofía. Furthermore, Rachelle had implemented the meaning-centered approach to literacy instruction and language development that I had suggested, an approach which was centered on books with limited or no text (e.g., The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher (Bang, 2006), Good Night, Gorilla (Rathman, 1996)). In her Week 6 blog entry, Rachelle describes the results of this
Blog Excerpt 4.4

I’ve shifted my focus with Sofía and I’m starting to see results. As a former high school ESL teacher, it is easy to get bogged down with teaching reading and writing….For Sofía, it was important that I move away from this and really focus on her vocabulary and conversation development. Although we still read books and write in response to literature, my main focus is to get her talking. As a result she’s having more fun and is progressing very well in her spoken language! We have guided conversations for beginners every day and then take a very extensive picture walk before reading an easy book. Instead of just answering in one word, she is really developing phrases and short sentences. She is even taking a leadership role and posing some questions to ask students who came to the United States in the past few months. She enjoys having something to teach other students, and she is making more connections between English words and things in her everyday life. Overall, I am thrilled with her progress. (Blog Entry, March 20, 2014)

In this entry, Rachelle indicated that her feelings of frustration had been replaced by feelings of hope and efficacy as an ESL professional. Six weeks previously, she worried that Sofía’s lack of language development within the context of a decontextualized, highly skills-based approach to language learning might possibly indicate a learning disability. The switch to focusing on the communication of meaning resulted in Sofía making great strides—and Rachelle recognized her role in facilitating that development. Although Rachelle had never firmly located a problem in Sofía, her questions about the location of the problem were answered—the problem was in the curriculum and instruction. Rachelle changed the curriculum to a communicative focus and Sofía responded with significant development in her English communication skills—an important gateway to improved print literacy skills.

Unlike Rachelle, Ellen began the course confident in her ability to locate the perceived problem in her student Amos’s cognition and culture. In Week 1 she first introduced Amos during our discussion of the strategies they have found that work well with
their students. In Week 2, she considered EB students more broadly during a conversation about language, culture, and identity in EB students. The following quotations are representative of Ellen’s thinking during Week 1 and Week 2, respectively:

**Excerpt 4.14: Week 1, Jan. 27**

**Ellen:** Well, with Amos (++) There’s language issues I think, and there’s learning issues. So I give him a page number and paragraphs to access information from the book.

Here, the phrases “language issues” and “learning issues” both located the problem in Amos’s cognition. At this point in the course, Ellen did not know enough to be able to address the language issues, so Amos is left without aid and Ellen still felt helpless (as evidenced in her written case study of Amos). Recall this statement by Ellen:

**Excerpt 4.15: Week 2, Feb. 10**

**Ellen:** That may speak to the cultural change, too, because a lot of these kids have parents who work very long hours or broken families, or families back in their native countries.

This statement located the nature of Amos’s problem in his culture. By Week 5 of the course, however, Ellen had discursively moved Amos’s problems out of Amos himself and into the curriculum. In doing so, she repositioned Amos as a student who talked to her, persevered on tasks, and developed skills that enabled him to pass her content-area tests.

**Blog Excerpt 4.5**

In the past weeks, I have seen the result of spending more time on vocabulary and partner reading. Most of my students seem to have improved in their understanding of the content material. The students also worked on an internet search packet and [Amos] showed a level of persistence in completing the packet that I have not previously witnessed. While this student persisted in getting his work done, I did find out that he has trouble using a timeline for information. Knowledge of his challenges will help me in the future to offer more help. Also, I have tried being more specific with my directions and expectations. I have also been trying to
Integrate questions throughout my lessons to gauge comprehension of the material we are working on. (Blog Entry, March 14, 2014)

This Week 5 blog entry indicates that Ellen’s early sense of hopelessness was replaced by professional evaluations, critical self-reflection, and modification of her methods.

There is evidence that teachers who have some professional development in teaching EB students and who are located in areas where there are long histories of ESL programs (i.e., former destination states such as Massachusetts and California) are less likely to locate problems in their students and more likely to locate problems in a lack of professional development opportunities. According to a study by Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005), for example, teachers in California tended not to blame the students or their families for low achievement, but rather to seek out ways to improve their instruction through professional development. Yet teachers reported that they had received little or no professional development since the ban against bilingual instruction was passed in 1998, and the quality of the professional development they did receive was uneven. Teachers reported that trainers during this time often had no actual experience working with EB students and presented information on how to adapt materials for EB students as an afterthought. Relatedly, teachers “noted the need for school and district administrators to gain more understanding about the challenges of, and solutions to, working successfully with EB students” (Ibid.).

Teachers with more experience were more likely to locate problems in the instructional programs and resources for the students. Teachers who had more preparation for teaching English learners had greater confidence in their skills for working with these students successfully. They had noticed that since the passage of No Child Left Behind, the amount of professional development was significantly less, and the quality suffered, too. As a
group, they were not finding recent professional development, when it existed, helpful, which was a frustration. What they wanted was paraprofessional help, more time to teach and collaborate with peers, and better ELD materials when presented with choices of additional assistance for their teaching (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005).

When the study participants wrote the initial case studies about their students, they asked about what strategies they could use to reach students doubly identified as learning disabled and ELLs. They asked what materials to use. They asked if behavioral problems might be linked to language or cultural barriers. They asked if there might be identity problems related to being unwilling cultural and linguistic minorities. They wondered how to engage students who appear disengaged and how to bridge cultural gaps. They asked about the use of home languages in the classroom. The participants knew their students well enough to realize that there was a lot that they did not know. Because prevailing deficit discourses in U.S. schools place learning problems in students, however, the teachers usually did, too. The exception to this was Kiera, who, with her intercultural competence and counseling background, tended to look first at her student’s context when trying to untangle the causes of certain behavioral problems. By the end of the course, Lucy and Ellen had likewise developed enough understanding of their students to begin to discursively move some of Amos’s and Alma’s problems out of the students themselves and into their learning contexts. Yet these changes were fragile. Lucy and Ellen were still taking steps backwards at times, casting their new students as burdens in Week 5, for example. They recovered quickly, however, finding ways to reach their new students using the novel strategies presented in the course and viewing the newcomers’ early weeks in the school with more sympathetic and informed eyes.
Teachers who have received some professional development in working with EB students know the kinds of professional development that are required in order to improve the instruction of EB students. Furthermore, teachers who have experienced success in teaching their EB students using effective methods of instruction, including the use of the students’ home languages in the classroom, are significantly less likely to locate the students’ academic problems within the students and more likely to locate them in instructional methods and the systemic lack of support for EB students. In contrast, when teachers have significantly less experience working with bilingual students—which is often the case in rapid-influx districts, where the rate of new arrivals has dramatically increased—teachers are more likely to locate the problems in the students, their culture, and their families.
Chapter 5

Conflating Disability with Bilingual/Biliteracy Development

This chapter’s theme intersects with Chapter Four’s theme—Troubling the Notions of Difference—but the participant discourse for this chapter grapples specifically with the pedagogical implications of identifying a student as first and foremost either a dis/abled student or an English learner. The question of how to tell the difference between “learning issues” and “language issues” (Ellen, January 27)—and/or how to address these issues when both are believed to be present—was cited as a reason for involvement by all four participants in this study.

In the following sections, I share and analyze excerpts from these participants’ blog entries and my conversations with them, all of which exemplify the ways in which the theme of this chapter was expressed. I introduce the chapter by explaining issues of disability and second-language learning in the U.S. Next, I discuss the pedagogical problem of the socially-constructed notion of the “ELL Disability,” or the “English Language Learner Disability,” and demonstrate how this notion causes difficulties for the participant-teachers and their students. From there, I suggest how the language associated with the “ELL Disability” is related to both the “cultural poverty” myth and the lowered expectations assigned to EB students. Finally, I demonstrate how the teacher-participants in this study began to use new instructional methods based on their understanding of their students’ developing language and linguistic needs.

This chapter is organized by theme. Therefore, on the next page I provide a timeline of locations in the data that suggest participants began to connect the learning context to the appearance of student capabilities.
Timeline: Participants’ Development of the Connection of Context to Capability

Jan 27 Week 1
Participants worried about discerning between LD and ELD needs and used language equating one with the other. Any perceived student disability drove instructional choices.

Feb 10 Week 2
Ellen described in her blog entry interacting with Amos more frequently and one-on-one. She noted two new understandings about him that result from this change.

Feb 17 Week 3
Ellen, Lucy & Rachelle struggled with Alma’s capabilities. Lucy explored the possibility that A ELD could be a key to understanding her behavior. Ellen named Amos’s capabilities.

Feb 24 Week 4
Ellen noted even more evidence of Amos’s capabilities in class and on a chapter test. She continued to question whether the LD or ELD was a greater factor in his learning.

March 3 Week 5
Ellen and Lucy positioned their group of EB students as engaged and capable. Lucy repositioned Alma as educable. Participants did not bring up the topic of disability.

March 17 Week 6
Ellen noted in a blog entry whether her unconscious beliefs about her students might sometimes cause her to have labeled her students in ways that dis/abled them. She noted the systemic nature of LD labels.

March 24 Week 7
Ellen continued to note new understandings of Amos’s capability learned from using new instructional methods.

Ellen, Lucy & Rachelle struggled with Alma’s capabilities. Lucy explored the possibility that A ELD could be a key to understanding her behavior. Ellen named Amos’s capabilities.

Ellen and Lucy positioned their group of EB students as engaged and capable. Lucy repositioned Alma as educable. Participants did not bring up the topic of disability.

Ellen described in her blog entry interacting with Amos more frequently and one-on-one. She noted two new understandings about him that result from this change.

Ellen and Lucy positioned their group of EB students as engaged and capable. Lucy repositioned Alma as educable. Participants did not bring up the topic of disability.
In this chapter I draw specifically on the terms “disability,” “dis/ability,” and “dis/able.” I use “disability” to refer to “a condition or function judged to be significantly impaired relative to the usual standard\textsuperscript{21} of an individual or group” (disabled-world.com) in the particular societiey(ies) in which that condition or function is relevant. I employ “dis/ability” to foreground the social response to disability that creates additional limits, restricts access to necessary resources, and denies a person with a disability human rights. Finally, I use “dis/able” to suggest the act of limiting the abilities of a person with or without a disability. Of course, the preferred language for referring to these concepts varies among locations, groups, and individuals, and is always controversial. The above definitions reflect my attempt to reconcile those voices in ways that make visible my own intentions. I do not deny the existence of very real disabilities—yet in this study I am foregrounding the discourse and actions that dis/able students who \textit{may or may not} have disabilities.

When the word disability is attached to a child, the perceived fixed nature of the dis/ability trumps the dynamic potential of language development. In other words, when students experience problems the disability label—whether real or perceived—limits expectations of full participation (Collins, 2013). The students’ possibilities become limited because disability is considered to be a thing that the students have or that has the students (McDermott, 1993) and the students do not grow out of it.

As a result of this understanding, when teachers voice frustration with the lack of professional development opportunities needed to effectively teach their EB students with disabilities, they are silenced by others who tell them that the students’ lack of academic progress is due to the students’ disabilities. The message is that if teachers provide the

\textsuperscript{21} i.e., culturally constructed
accommodations outlined in the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), then any failure on the part of the students is located in the students’ character: lack of effort, lack of motivation, or poor attitudes. In other words, the teachers’ requests for more professional development opportunities and/or more instructional support are disregarded because of the disability labels that have been assigned to their students.

Ultimately, as students collect labels—“ELL,” “attention deficit,” “learning disabled,” “emotionally and behaviorally disordered”—appropriate localized scaffolds come to be replaced by static “accommodations.” A scaffold is an instructional support that shifts as a student progresses and is gradually lessened over time until the student is able to complete the task or master the skill on his or her own. Accommodations, however, are assigned by a student’s IEP team and stay in place all year. The reason that these accommodations do not shift with the student is because the traditional discourse of disability, “focus[d] primarily on presumed defect and limitation” (Kliewer, Fitzgerald, Meyer-Mork, Hartman, English-Sand, & Raschke, 2004), is often about the type of disability rather than the child him- or herself, and is thus assumed to be fixed in the child all year. Furthermore, stigma is applied to the construct of disability—although the degree of stigma varies with social context and type of disability, as well as age, race, and gender of the person with the disability.

Amos, an EB student of teacher-participant Ellen’s, was one such case of a student who had been “diagnosed” as LD. Yet the diagnosis of LD, in both Amos’s case and others, is problematic for a number of reasons. The first is that the label of LD is usually acquired by students who are failing to progress in some way (Biklen & Burke, 2006). That is, it is often used for students who appear to have problems processing what they are reading (e.g.,
poor recall and/or comprehension of the material) and who typically are not “responding” to instructional strategies designed for the native-English speaking student.

Of course, this diagnosis is especially complicated for EB students. If appropriate scaffolds are not in place, if those scaffolds do not change as the student progresses in their language development, and if the teacher lacks an essential understanding of how to teach his or her EB students, then not progressing may be the logical outcome. In this case, it is impossible to say that the lack of progress can be attributed to the student (Ruiz, 1995). Amos and other EB students who have been labeled with L.Ds must receive their instruction in contexts in which their capabilities are optimized and the materials and instructional pedagogy are designed for students with varying levels of English proficiency in order to draw valid conclusions about any differences in cognition. It may very well be that Amos had a disability that interfered with his learning English, but that determination can only have been made if he had consistently been provided with instruction by a school community proficient in the education of EB students.

Yet this type of education takes time. Typical bilingual/biliteracy development takes 6 months to 2 years for oral language development, 3 to 5 years for academic literacy in students with previous formal schooling and literacy in their first languages, and 5 to 10 years in students with no literacy in their first languages and no previous experience with formal schooling (Cummins, 2008). Other socio-historical factors such as poverty, exposure to trauma, and cultural and linguistic differences must also be taken into consideration. Ideally, education professionals would not consider trying to diagnose disabilities before the minimum number of years of schooling is completed. Perhaps if the majority of instruction took place in the child’s first language, as in a two-way bilingual program with a particular
design, education professionals could consider an earlier assessment. However, there is insufficient research in this area to make a claim to that effect.

In the following section, I discuss how teachers conflate disability and English Language Development, because of a lack of understanding about second-language development. I likewise address the pedagogical implications of that conflation. Since Ellen grappled most openly and often with this theme in our discussions and in her blog entries, her thoughts about teaching Amos appear most frequently, however, all of the participants struggled with the concepts discussed in the chapter, so their voices are heard in this chapter, too.

The Pedagogical Problem of the “ELL Disability”

The word *conflate* means to fuse two notions into one. When people conflate ideas, they do not confuse them so much as they create a new idea that is truthful to neither of the original ideas. Developing English language proficiency is not dis/abling in and of itself, although it is possible to dis/able EB students through inappropriate pedagogical practices. Yet the very notion of *disability* is problematic because it associates difference with deficit. When disability, difference, and bilingual/biliteracy development are conflated, a new concept is developed—the idea that anything short of full proficiency in the second language is a deficit difference—and that it is thus reasonable for a teacher to expect from his or her EB student poor outcomes and an inability to meet the same learning objectives as his or her

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22 See Ruiz (1995), for an example of a program that provided a context where it was possible to see learning variations in young EB students more effectively.
peers. The teacher may also expect to experience teaching such a student as a significant burden. Going forward I refer to this conflated notion as “ELL Disability.”

In this section, out of 16 instances coded as “ELL Disability,” I share 2 examples that demonstrate Ellen’s and Lucy’s confusion over the degree to which the instructional practices are effective for both EB students and LD students. In this first section, I begin by showing how teachers voice their confusion over the two notions and the pedagogical decisions that are made as a result of the lack of clarity. In this first excerpt from the first week, Ellen had just begun to describe Amos to the group. Ellen attempted to answer my question about what instructional strategies were effective for him.

**Excerpt 5.1: Week 1, Jan. 27** (See also Excerpt 4.15)

**Ellen:** Well, with Amos (+) There’s language issues I think, and there’s learning issues. So I give him a page number and paragraphs to access information from the book.

Ellen said that Amos had two issues—a language issue and a learning issue. The strategy that she described, however, was one that the school had determined would be applied to all students who were diagnosed with the latter of the two issues, a learning disability. The primary “symptoms” of Amos’s disability were a lack of attention and problems with reading comprehension. This placed Amos in the majority of EB students identified with a disability, “as the majority have LD with reading difficulties as the core problem (56%)” (Klingner, Artiles, & Méndez Barletta, 2006, p. 109). Ellen did not have a strategy to address the former of Amos’s issues, his “language issues.” Although she separated out the two issues, the one that was addressed was the learning disability. At this time, Amos was not receiving language support and was being taught entirely in English. When considering EB students who have been identified as having disabilities, it is common
for language supports to be removed and strategies designed for learners with disabilities to take their place (Ibid.). However, this practice is both illegal and pedagogically oppressive. In Amos’s case, he was receiving some time each day in a learning support room. His disability label determined the kind of instruction he received.

Amos’s IEP mandated certain accommodations for him that Ellen had to provide by law. An IEP can include very broad accommodations such as the use of software that will read aloud digital text in a computerized voice\(^\text{23}\) or very narrow ones such as a specific structure required for test items. Amos’s IEP specified that Ellen had to provide Amos with three choices on multiple choice tests instead of four or five (an accommodation not afforded him on the standardized tests he had to take in March); she also had to provide him with teacher-created simplified texts when possible.\(^\text{24}\) Moreover, when using study sheets—a weekly occurrence in Ellen’s classroom—Ellen was to provide the page number and paragraph location of the answer in the modified text or the textbook, as indicated in her statement above.

To return to Excerpt 5.1, Ellen’s implicit question was: Is Amos the dis/abled student type or the EB student type? At this point, Ellen saw no discernable difference, so the notion of “ELL Disability” guided her instructional decisions, making the notion of difference as deficit (dis/abled) dominant (Baynton, 2001). Nevertheless, Ellen wanted to untangle Amos’s various labels in order to determine what he needed from her. She

\(^\text{23}\) However, the quality of the software that does the reading varies. Sometimes the reading is more like the voice of a GPS that turns street names into new strange varieties of the original.

\(^\text{24}\) This practice is discouraged in ESL instruction because it denies students the opportunity to be exposed to age-appropriate and content-specific writing—more context tends to be missing in topics that already tend to be abstract in nature.
understood that the “ELL Disability” label positioned both Amos and her as FAILING. The focus of my mediation for all of the participants for the rest of the course derived from this observation and is as follows: Given that a valid assessment of learning differences is difficult without culturally- and linguistically-appropriate education, what happens when instructional practices assume competency and provide that appropriate instruction?

This mediation is necessary because the “ELL Disability” has direct pedagogical implications. In the following excerpt from the first week, Lucy explained her understanding of appropriate instructional practices for EB students.

**Excerpt 5.2: Week 1, Jan. 27**

**Lucy:** Now, [my diversity training] wasn’t so much focused on English language learners because we didn’t have a huge Spanish speaking population by any means there.

**Alaska:** mhm-mhm

**Lucy:** Bu::t I find that the strategies that work for slower learners tend to work as well for English language learners or anyone who’s really struggling, so the strategies kind of transfer for lots of students in those cases.

In this excerpt, Lucy revealed that for her, the “struggling” learner, the “slower” learner (a student with a disability), and the ELL were the same type of student for pedagogical purposes. The conflation of the three was evident in the assertion that the strategies “transfer.” Additionally, Lucy’s first sentence revealed that Lucy was not yet able to visualize how professional development about cultural diversity might differ from professional development about instructional strategies for ELLs.

It is true, of course, that there is significant overlap in the kinds of instruction that are beneficial for students with disabilities (see Appendix J). For example, both benefit from increased text support in the form of visual aids, realia, and other manipulatives. However, focusing on the commonalities of the instruction is problematic because this hides the fact
that students developing skills in a second language require some instructional supports that students with disabilities do not and vice versa. When a student like Amos, known to have been developing his English language skills and demonstrating failure to progress in those language skills, receives instructional accommodations that nonetheless do not take into account the differences in first and second language acquisition, the likelihood of a student like Amos making much progress in his reading comprehension skills decreases.

Another difficulty that arises when focusing on the way in which instruction is common is that the dominant form of instruction for students with identified disabilities is characterized by an over-reliance on direct instruction that is often rigid in nature. An example of this approach is the use of highly-scripted phonics programs, which can result in students like Amos being able to decode, but not understand, text. Scholars such as Krashen (1996) instead recommend building both conversational and academic vocabulary skills through the use of meaningful tasks and authentic oral language and literacy activities (see also Krashen & Kiss, 1996). These tasks can and should include opportunities to use both English and the home language in all stages of the reading and writing process (García, 2009). Phonics and other skill-based strategies can be taught within these more meaningful tasks and this balanced approach should be the primary focus of the EB student’s instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Eskey, 1998). While all lessons must include some form of direct instruction, EB students need multiple points of entry into the lesson (an inclusive strategy for most students) and a choice of a variety of linguistic scaffolds, including potential support in the first language.

While this pattern of conflating bilingual development with disability is common, exceptions do, of course, occur. One such exception to the pattern materialized in a
conversation between Rachelle and me. Rachelle was the ESL specialist at Riverton Elementary. At times in the district she had taught high-school Spanish, middle-school and high-school ESL, and was at this point in the Elementary ESL program. For reasons related to the district’s budget, every spring Rachelle was furloughed and every August she was rehired—and typically reassigned—in part because, as a dual certificate K-12 Spanish/ESL instructor, she could be scheduled in multiple, overlapping ways. This also meant that Rachelle had been learning new positions and developing new lessons for each of her previous three years.

The following conversation took place after the participants, Rachelle included, received a handout summarizing how their school’s curriculum relates to specific questions the teachers have about their students and their descriptions of the target students (see Appendix E). The students were described as a group, thus avoiding identifying specific students. Rachelle looked up from reading the handout, and we had the following conversation.

**Excerpt 5.3: Week 1, Jan. 27**

**Rachelle:** Would you consider Sofía to be:: “having delays in progress in what’s expected in either spoken or written English.”

**Alaska:** Yes, I’m including her in that group.

**Rachelle:** Okay. Okay. (+++) Because I mean technically if you look (+) {at the progress--}

**Alaska:** {Well, I’m including} (+++) That’s what I understood when you were describing her. (+++ I’m not saying she is, does that make sense?

**Rachelle:** Mhm. It’s more like I’m comparing her to all the other kids that I (+++) I think if you would look at what they say you can expect in the first year, she’d still kind of fall into the category considering her (+) lack of (+++)
Alaska: Right.

Rachelle: But I just know that all my other students that have come [when Sofía did] have progressed a lot faster than her.

Alaska: Right. She might still fall within the range of normal for someone with her background.

Rachelle: Yes. Exactly. Given that background.

Like the other participants, Rachelle was exploring the question of whether third-grade Sofía’s seemingly slow progress in acquiring literacy and oral language skills in English was a red flag for an undiscovered disability. At first, Rachelle looked to me for confirmation that it was correct to describe Sofía this way, and I clarified that I did not know: I classified students only by what their teacher reported. Rachelle then thought aloud about her own reasoning—she compared Sofía’s progress to that of her Spanish-speaking peers. I knew from a discussion the previous week that Sofía had had little formal schooling and had no literacy in her first language, so she was still learning how to learn how to read. Additionally, although it had been 9 months since Sofía entered the school, three of those months were summer vacation, which meant she had had only 6 weeks of formal schooling prior to entering again in September. This was the academic background I alluded to in my last line, and Rachelle is immediately reassured. We went on to talk about a plan for getting Sofía out of the scripted program she was currently in and into some actual children’s books for a while. Rachelle knew that given Sofía’s background, it was likely that her slower pace of second-language acquisition was typical. Rachelle resolved to give Sofía more time and use more meaning-centered methods with highly-contextualized reading materials to see if Sofía’s language skills would progress. Rachelle also decided to use Sofía’s home language as needed.

Rachelle approached the likely source of the “problem” of lack of progress with the
assumption of capability in Sofia and as a result, she altered her instructional method to provide a different learning context for her EB student. The pedagogical approach was based entirely on the presumption that language instruction beginning with Sofia’s language skills at the time (a WIDA Level 1 across the domains) would be sufficient to support Sofia’s acquisition of English. The suggestion that perhaps Sofia had a disability is dismissed as too soon to explore. There were too many typical ESL instructional models that might have helped to address Sofia’s lack of progress before considering labeling Sofia as having a disability.

My mediation to Rachelle in this exchange was inconsistent, however. My last sentence also reinforced the binary of “normal” and “not normal” with normal being within a certain range of some score or timeline and “not normal” being outside of it. The researcher can fall back into prior discourse, too.

**Dis/abling the Emergent Bilingual/Biliterate Learner**

Though Rachelle demonstrated an ability to adapt her instructional methods as needed, other teachers with less instruction in second-language instruction must continue with ineffective instruction, thereby causing expectations for the student to be unfairly reduced on the part of the teacher and the school. In this section, I demonstrate how lowered expectations based on locating disability in the students’ cultural background and inappropriate teaching methods based on a presumption of deficits result in a dis/abling of the EB student. In the process, I introduce the importance of presuming competence.
Locating Disability in a Culture

In conflating disability and bilingual/biliteracy development, the concept of “ELL Disability” has the effect of locating any perceived problems with language in the child’s culture as well as the child him- or herself. This is made possible, in part, by the fact that the notions of disability and Othered groups are already conflated by the dominant culture in the U.S. and has been for centuries (see also Chapter 5).

In this section, out of 6 instances of discourse coded as “locating disability in a culture,” I share 2 excerpts that demonstrate how the concept of “ELL Disability” is vulnerable to being located in a student’s cultural background. In the following excerpt from Week 1, participant Kiera talked about the challenges her counselee Mateo faced in being part of a cultural and linguistic minority population at the school, as well as the stress Mateo experienced trying to fit in and do the work that was required of him, and the boredom of being presented with information or learning tasks that were not accessible to him. She and Ellen had the following exchange:

Excerpt 5.4: Week 1, Jan. 27

Kiera: And I think another part is when they feel like they’re not enga::ged, they get bor::ed >and a particular student that I’m working with< (+) he’s got a lot of behavioral problems. And I think he’s really good at the spoken language, but when it comes to writing, he feels a deficit. And when, you know, he’s off task, he tends to rea::ly focus more on getting negative attention because I think he’s not really feeling confident with his writing abilities…When he’s getting one on one attention and he feels like he’s being successful with acquiring the skills that he needs, he:: feels (+) like he’s gaining more success and confidence. When he’s left to his own devices, he:: will do anything to get negative attention.

Alaska: Which feels to you like anything to get out of the task.

Ellen: That may speak to the cultural change, too, because a lot of these kids have parents who work very long hours or broken families, or families back in their native countries. And. So.

Kiera: Absolutely

Ellen: There’s that dynamic.

Kiera: Absolutely. I’m just trying to figure out what it is. I’m trying to figure out is it a behavior or a learning disability or is it really the language that’s the hiccup here?

On the surface, this exchange showed Kiera thinking aloud about her student and establishing that her primary goal in the course was to distinguish between signs of a disability and signs of inadequate language proficiency for the tasks Mateo was asked to complete. Yet as discussed in the previous chapter, Ellen’s earlier comments about culture complicate the question. Ellen had introduced into the discussion narratives around cultural difference, poverty, and immigration. All of these topics have long and complex histories with disability as a concept.

Baynton (2001) pointed out that “the concept of disability has been used to justify discrimination against other groups by attributing disability to them” (p. 33). For example, disability was used to oppose freedom for African-American slaves by attributing lower intelligence to them. In the mid-nineteenth century, when the Caucasian “race” was believed to be the height of evolution, any kind of physical or mental difference was perceived as a reversion to an earlier stage. This is why Down’s Syndrome was named mongolism by the doctor who first outlined the way it expressed itself in the children it affected (p.36).

Schweik (2009) documented in The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public that the federal government had its own version of an ugly law used to “protect” the U.S. from an influx of new residents who might become a “burden” on society. She writes: “Immigration screeners tried to spot prospective unsightly beggars, among others, in order to protect the body
politic” (p. 167). By excluding immigrants with physical differences, the existing population positioned itself as pure and “normal,” and immigrants as potential carriers of disease and deformity. In the notes, she elaborates on this theme for the reader by recalling Sontag’s suggestion of “the inevitability of the diseased/alien equation: “There is a link between imagining disease and imagining foreignness. It lies perhaps in the very concept of wrong, which is archaically identical with the non-us, the alien” (136)” (location 7009) (see also Molina, 2006).

Reaching forward in time to the near present, former Heritage Foundation author Jason Richwine argues in his doctoral thesis that “Hispanics” have a genetically low IQ, and that these genetic differences will persist for decades to come. Since low performance on a test believed to measure intelligence potential (IQ) has historically been classified as a disability in the United States, this argument implies that “Hispanics” are, by definition, cognitively disabled. Richwine lost his job at the Foundation after the media revealed the subject and poor scholarship of his dissertation, but the notion of connecting a presumed genetic deficiency (a type of disability) to a race or ethnic group and immigration policy remains commonplace (Valencia, 2010; Valencia, 2011).

When such assumed relationships are found between a particular (socially-constructed) type or group of people and oppression or exclusion, interlocutors must be particularly attentive to language that continues to suggest that there might be any validity to

25 “Hispanic” is not a race, but rather a demographic tracked by the census, and represents diverse peoples such as indigenous central and south Americans, direct descendants of Spanish immigrants, and populations that are the result of wide-spread intermarriage over generations between people of African, Asian, and European descent. Therefore, even if we could assume a common understanding of what exactly IQ measures, there is no scientific basis for Richwine’s argument.
these assumptions. Othering and dis/ability have come together to obscure the one characteristic that EB students share—that they are all in various stages of acquiring bilingual language proficiency. There has not been a significant amount of research in the affect of the multiple levels of ELD simultaneously occurring in the classroom. In her conversation with Kiera about Mateo, Ellen mirrors back the beliefs prevalent in the dominant discourse around cultural and linguistic minorities, disability, and immigration in the United States.

I did not explicitly address this tendency to locate disability in a given culture in the professional development course. Nevertheless, I did include as a final reading a chapter entitled “Labeling and treating linguistic minority students with disabilities as deficient and outside the normal curve: A pedagogy of exclusion” (Crawford & Bartolomé, 2010). Ellen was the only participant to address it in a blog entry, and she did so twice before we met. I include some excerpts here to show her reflection on how her thinking might have affected her instructional decisions. Ellen wondered whether her expectations for her students were affected by the labels they were assigned.

**Blog Excerpts 5.1**

Wow! While parts of this [chapter] had to be reread for total comprehension, I kept questioning whether I had biases that would cause me to label my students unfairly. I would hope that as an educator that I try my hardest to help any student achieve success. What I realize is that I may have different definitions of success for different students, based on my perceived notions of their abilities. (Blog Entry, March 18, 2014.)

I do understand that our educational system is impacted by the cultural biases that we have, but in reading the [chapter], I also had to look at whether I may be accepting those biases. (Blog Entry, March 21, 2014.)

There are two important discursive features here. The first is that Ellen was concerned about her own labels, which meant she was examining her own thoughts for
evidence of ability profiling. However, it was not clear how developed her conception of what that thinking looks like was. The second was that Ellen could connect cultural biases to the educational system, which opened the door for thinking critically about how biases inherent in cultural notions about disability intersect with cultural notions of English-language proficiency in U.S. schools. There is evidence here that Ellen was taking up some of the main points in the reading and in the discussions we had had. However, at this point—the very end of course—she was not yet making direct connections between the idea of lowered expectations for students with various labels and specific changes in instructional pedagogy.

“You Put the Load Right On Me”: Foregrounding Disability in the “ELL Disability”

A belief that instruction for students with disabilities and emergent language learners is interchangeable puts both the student and the teacher in a situation where they are set up to fail. Since the teacher believes that the accommodations across her or his groups of students with various learning differences will be equally successful, s/he attributes failure on the part of the EB student to a problem in the student rather than in the pedagogical approach taken. This is an example of what Collins (2013) calls ability profiling—using perceived differences in the child to draw conclusions about the potential abilities of the person. In the case of the EB student, this ability profiling is embedded in the concepts of the “ELL Disability” and is used to determine appropriate accommodations or scaffolds. A

26 (Robertson, 1968)
pedagogical mismatch dis/ables the student and teacher and may result in an inaccurate “diagnosis” of disability.

In this section, out of 7 instances of discourse coded as “foregrounding dis/ability,” I share 2 examples that demonstrate how foregrounding the disability in the concept of “ELL Disability” leads to ability profiling. In the following excerpt from week four, Ellen demonstrated that difference in expectations she came to recognize weeks later (Blog Excerpt 5.1).

**Excerpt 5.5: Week 4, Feb. 24**

Ellen: It sounds a lot like working with a learning support student, although she has a capacity >to move to a certain level< where some learning support students are just as a certain level, but where you have to minimalize it in such a way that they’re still participating, but at a much different level than—

Lucy: Right.

Ellen: And are there learning issues? I mean, has she been identified that way? Because my ESL student is also learning support.

Lucy: No, she hasn’t? (+) There’s questions of whether she should be? <Bu::t she never:: puts enough effort> in anyone’s opinion to really judge where her ability lies. So I think she’s been through some testing, but hasn’t got any support, because no one can really justify does she needs it or is she just using a crutch that she doesn’t need. So we’re not quite sure on that. °heh-heh-heh°

Ellen: Yeah, {tha::t—

Alaska: {So if we come at it from the other end, where instead of thinking okay, let’s assume she’s a learning support student and so therefore we’re going to make these changes, let’s not. Let’s assume that in fact (++) everything that she needs is available to her cognitively. But. The language, her written English language >is completely inadequate for the task<=

Lucy: °Right.°

Alaska: =in which case we have a language learning issue and that’s what we want to address, right. (++) And I think you have evidence to say that that’s a reasonable assumption to be making here, right.
Lucy: There’s a question. *heh-heh-heh* Like I said, no one’s quite sure if it’s a learning *disability* or not.

Ellen: *But if she can tell you verbally, then you wonder, is there a processing problem between what she *does* know and putting it down on paper?*

Alaska: Sure. But it doesn’t do us any good.

Ellen: Right.

Alaska: To come at it from this could be what’s wrong or this could be what’s wrong. In the same way that we can speculate on her emotional issues around school, we really don’t know.

Kiera nodded emphatically as I spoke.

Alaska: And none of us have the relationship with her where we might be able to get at that….If we come at it assuming that what we know about what she *can* do is more important than what we think we know about what she *can’t* do, then we have something we can build a lesson plan on. *That’s where we’re going with it.* Then we open the process that we’re using, add some strategies, and plan a lesson that will help other students in the class as well.

Ellen’s statement here revealed the injustice of the “ELL Disability” notion. When she talked about learning support students as being “just at a certain level,” she was referring to the level as a fixed characteristic. In other words, she saw the students as always being at a certain level—having less learning ability—regardless of context. However, Ellen suggested that Alma in particular, as an EB student, “has a capacity to move to a certain level,” which implied room for further development. In response to my suggestion that the students’ “problem” might lie in the instruction and that this should be thought of positively because it suggested the teachers’ ability to help create progress, Lucy reiterated that the question of Alma having a disability remained unsettled. Ellen responds, “Yes, but,” and then went on to affirm that a learning disability might be present. My suggestion to consider the empowering potential of adjusting language instruction was not taken up by either teacher. I reworded my suggestion to be more specific to Alma, which elicited agreement from the guidance
counselor, Kiera, and finished with a connection to some pragmatic instructional practices.

Notwithstanding the discursive shift regarding Alma’s potential as a student, this conversation indicated Ellen and Lucy’s shared struggle with the psychological and professional risk of investing in Alma as a student. If Alma was repositioned as the type of student who could learn but who was excluded from the instruction offered other students by virtue of inadequate instruction, then the problem could have been discursively shifted by the administration—and the public—to the curriculum and instruction, and by extension, the teacher. On the other hand, if Alma’s lack of engagement in reading and writing was a result of her refusing to perform as THE STRUGGLING READER/WRITER in the classroom hierarchy of students—and certainly her refusal to participate in the educational institution’s established rituals of disability identification suggested her awareness of the role of THE STRUGGLING READER/WRITER—then Lucy had two choices. She could condemn the performance, citing Alma’s love of performing the role of THE DISRUPTIVE ATTENTION-SEEKING STUDENT and demanding that Alma abandon this role and accept her designated role as THE STRUGGLING READER/WRITER; this left Alma (with 4.5 years of formal schooling at the age of 16) entirely responsible for her own outcomes. Alternatively, Lucy could decide that if Alma was rejecting the role of THE STRUGGLING READER/WRITER, then she, as the teacher, could release (reposition) Alma from that role.

In order to do that, though, both Lucy and Alma would be taking big risks. Lucy and Alma would need to develop a trusting relationship in order to be able to talk meaningfully about what was and what was not working in the literacy tasks assigned to Alma and the supports provided within those tasks. This would take time, and every day that passed without Alma producing materials that were meaningful to the educational institution would
be very difficult for Lucy. Lucy’s educational philosophy illustrates what Levin and Nolan (2009) call the Legitimate power base. She believed her job was to teach, and students were responsible for their learning. The most important work of the classroom was the acquisition of course content and the achievement of learning objectives. Relationships were entirely between the teacher and the students, and the teacher’s role was to be an expert rather than an emotional support. Lucy wanted to create a supportive learning environment as much as a Referent-base teacher would, but she believed this was established by providing students with fair, disciplined, and well-taught lessons. Lucy further believed that fairness occurs when students were provided with a robust and challenging curriculum—and that students must do their part by taking advantage of it.

For Lucy, the idea of spending large amounts of time developing trust with Alma appeared to be a deviation from that course. Yet it did not have to be. The first action she could take with Alma was to grade her on the basis of the content she could communicate in her dominant English language domains—speaking and listening. In other words, Lucy could have released Alma from the role of THE STRUGGLING READER/WRITER by removing writing from the science objectives for Alma. She could have also provided alternate ways for Alma to accomplish the reading, which would have still included Alma in the learning objectives. For example, Lucy might have allowed Alma to work with a partner who read aloud the text for both of them while Alma filled out a graphic organizer. This

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27 The Referent base features a belief that the teacher has a responsibility to teach social skills and problem-solving along side the curriculum, with each having equal value to the students in the class. This teacher expects that some class time will be devoted to the teaching and modeling of these interpersonal skills and relationship building. The Referent power base is much more difficult to use in secondary settings without block scheduling, or with the factor of many more students than the ECE and intermediate elementary settings.
could be done in class so long as all the other students were working in the same manner.

Such changes, however, required Lucy to take risks. Therefore, for Lucy to make these changes, she would first need to trust the pedagogy of teaching content-area concepts and vocabulary to EB students like Alma. All of the participants wanted their students to be able to produce content-area texts. While Lucy wanted her students to be able to produce oral and written narratives about physical science experiments that linked to theory, Ellen wanted oral and written narratives about history that linked to the present. Rachelle wanted Sofía to be able to produce oral narratives that have a beginning, middle, and end. Even Kiera wanted Mateo to be able to explain—an oral text—why he behaved the way he did. In order to develop these narratives, though, “Teachers must... shed conventional disability orthodoxy if they are to see in all children the capacity to generate and interpret narrative” (Kliwer et al., 2004, p. 382).

What I hoped to communicate to the participants was a counter-narrative about their “ELL Disability” students. Teachers may approach their lesson planning with the presumption that their non-disabled and native-English speaking students are capable learners with the potential for further development. However, everything from the assessment of children perceived as disabled to the actual definition of LDs by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2013) depends on discourses of deficit and students’ failure to progress at the same pace as their same-age peers (Biklen & Burke, 2006). Therefore, students with perceived disabilities and still-developing English skills are presumed first to have deficits that limit—and sometimes abrogate—any recognized capabilities.

In the aforementioned conversation, Ellen and Lucy in particular were limited by the

28 Additionally, she would have benefitted from more administrative support.
belief they had acquired from the dominant educational understanding of LDs (a lack of academic progress in the classroom) and therefore the belief that when they saw this symptom, disability should be suspected. When Alma’s disability could not be ruled out because of her refusal to participate in the testing process, the profiling of Alma as a student with a disability remained (Collins, 2013). As discussed in Chapter 4, when the problem is considered to reside in the child, the teacher feels disempowered to address it. She or he is bound by the belief that a change in instructional pedagogy that would be appropriate for an EB student will not make a difference because the disability will limit the effectiveness of the instructional method. In other words, because disability is viewed as a static, fixed characteristic that cannot be changed, and the process of language learning is viewed as potentially transient—that is, one can learn the language, become proficient, and be done with the learning process—the notion of disability bound up in the “ELL Disability” becomes the obstacle that cannot be overcome.

Unbinding Students and Teachers Trapped by “ELL Disability”

Because of the commonplace quality of the “ELL Disability,” finding new ways to think about learning differences in children developing bilingual and biliteracy skills must be a purposeful endeavor. In this study, only in seeing the effects of appropriate instruction on their “ELL Disability”-positioned students did the participants begin to trouble this notion, but the developing ideas of capability and the significance of the language-learning needs were still new enough as to be unstable and inconsistently applied. In this section, out of 9 instances coded as “separating disability from ELD,” I provide 3 examples that demonstrate
Ellen’s progress in particular in troubling the notion of the “ELL Disability.”

In the first excerpt, taken from Ellen’s blog entry immediately following our initial discussion, Ellen revealed that she was empowered by this meeting to set aside the question of how to teach Amos, her student with an “ELL Disability,” and instead adopt a new strategy that worked for him. In doing so, she learned for herself something that she had heretofore depending on the SPED specialist to provide for her—an understanding of her student’s ability to comprehend grade-level text.

**Blog Excerpt 5.2**

I interacted with [Amos] more and helped more one on one than I have before. [Amos] and his partner both have IEPs and received time in resource to read the material with each other as well. I realized how very little [Amos] understands. He was able to answer questions I asked him after I read a paragraph to him. (Blog Entry, January 31, 2014)

She noticed how this changed for him when she saw progress four weeks later:

**Blog Excerpt 5.3**

I have seen a huge difference in [Amos] since I have been trying different strategies in class. He is more verbal than ever before—interacting with others and asking questions. He can be easily distracted (part of the learning support identification), but he is easily brought back on task. I give this student page numbers and paragraphs on his assignments and this helps him find answers, but he is not always correct with his answers...a symptom of language comprehension or learning problems? (Blog Entry, February 27, 2014)

The second post demonstrated a slight shift in her thinking. While she was still pondering the source of a problem—language-learning or learning in general—she now worded her inquiry differently. Only a few weeks before, Ellen identified her student’s reading comprehension issues as one of the issues associated with his disability identification. At this point, however, she used the phrase “language comprehension.” This shift in
language was important because for Ellen, difficulties with language-learning were difficulties she could address through one of her new reading strategies: the use of graphic organizers, paired and cooperative learning arrangements, or more time spent talking directly and one-on-one to the student about the questions he or she had generated.

Yet perhaps even more important than Ellen’s newly-empowered pedagogical approach was Ellen ability to develop a counter-story to the disability label. The belief that Amos could be “easily brought back on task” was not part of the narrative of Amos’s dis/ability. Yet Ellen was unconsciously gathering data on Amos’s capabilities that contradict the LD label. Ellen still felt the need to provide an accommodation for Amos in accordance with his IEP. Ellen demonstrated in the next excerpt that she recognized changes in Amos as a result of the alterations she had made to his learning context:

Blog Excerpt 5.4
In the past weeks, I have seen the result of spending more time on vocabulary and partner reading. Most of my students seem to have improved in their understanding of the content material. The students also worked on an Internet search packet and [Amos] showed a level of persistence in completing the packet that I have not previously witnessed. While this student persisted in getting his work done, I did find out that he has trouble using a timeline for information. Knowledge of his challenges will help me in the future to offer more help. Also, I have tried being more specific with my directions and expectations. I have also been trying to integrate questions throughout my lessons to gauge comprehension of the material we are working on. (Blog Entry, March 14, 2014.)

Ellen recognized here concrete ways in which improved accessibility translated into increased engagement and persistence on Amos’s part. As she described his work on the Internet research project, she was able to name some of the specific changes she had made to her instruction in order to elicit this change. In doing so, she created a counter-narrative to that of Amos as a student deficient in attention; she also effectively undercut her earlier
assertion that Amos “would be hard to impact.” Kliewer et al (2004) describe their use of the term literacies as “observable, tactile, or otherwise graphically knowable semiotic systems used as social tools to bring forth and give literate shape to narrative’ (p. 387). In this way, bilingual literacies are about much more than being able to use two languages. By adding new literacies (digital content) to the classroom, Ellen provided Amos with another way to access texts—in this case, a way to access tests that was successful for him. His behavior in this context countered the “easily distracted” label.

As Ellen achieved a better perspective on Amos’s abilities, she realized she is capable of directly addressing difficulties that previously seemed unresolvable. In this way, she freed herself from the power of the word disability and came to see Amos as a student whose learning is dynamic and responsive. Put differently, she less frequently allowed herself to be dis/abled by Amos’s labels (and his IEP) and more frequently provided Amos with opportunities to participate in learning activities that enabled him to continue developing academic language skills, including comprehension of texts and the ability to demonstrate understanding.

Ultimately, what Ellen learned is that a scaffold (e.g., a particular type of graphic organizer such as the timeline) that one might otherwise assume would be a useful tool for Amos was not familiar enough to him to be useful as is. However, if Ellen could offer some instruction in the use and the meaning of a timeline, Amos would then be able to make use of the tool and perhaps use it independently going forward. It is clear from Ellen’s comment, “Knowledge of his challenges will help me in the future to offer more help,” that she recognized that she could help him learn to use the tool that was the timeline.
Conclusions

By the end of the professional development course, the participants were able to articulate multiple ways that focusing on English language development practices resulted in significant improvement for their EB students. They also made progress in understanding how inappropriate instructional practices dis/abled their EB students. As Ellen enriched her classroom’s learning environment with new tasks designed to make texts more accessible to all and encouraged students to talk to each other about the lesson content, she shifted the context of the class in a direction towards which more of her students’ capabilities could emerge and be visible. In doing so, she saw a slight improvement in her relationship with Amos, but this improvement revealed to Ellen only additional areas in which Amos had not understood the course text.

Ellen initially felt bound by Amos’s IEP’s listed accommodations even though she felt them to be inadequate. Ellen’s instinct in this case was correct: research shows that EB students only develop language proficiency by reading robust texts that are rich in context (e.g., texts that are accompanied by visual aids including photos, graphs, and graphic organizers), not when they are presented with the narrow or restricted learning opportunities common in IEPs. An example of an appropriate accommodation for a student overwhelmed by a challenging piece of non-fiction would be the use of distributed learning in which students are responsible for different parts of the text and report back to the group so that all students learn the main ideas, key details, and key vocabulary of the piece. In this way, the linguistic load of the text is reduced, but the expectation that students can make meaning of their given sections remains high, the academic vocabulary they read is the same as the rest of the class, the material is clearly grade-level and age-appropriate, and the students use oral
language skills to communicate what they learn to the rest of the group. Presuming competence is about recognizing what students can do and building on it, which is in direct opposition to reigning practices that foreground what students cannot do and limit the students to the minimum involvement required by the lesson activities.

In our final meeting, the participants demonstrated an ability to apply their developing understanding of how to make instructional decisions based on students’ capabilities. They began the discussion full of questions about two new students who had arrived with no English oral language or literacy skills. One was an 8th-grader with some literacy and previous formal schooling in the home language and the other was a 9th-grader who appeared to have neither. We had spent a great deal of time developing strategies for teaching content-area academic vocabulary and identifying second-language literacy skill supports such as graphic organizers, multiple-modalities of instruction, as well as considering the use of texts in the home language. However, we did not talk much about the beginning bilingual student in an English-immersion environment, as that did not describe the participants’ initial focus students and time was limited.

Overall, the tone was excited. They liked the results of increasing wait time and giving students new ways to gather their thoughts before participating in class discussions; they also liked giving more control of the discussion to students. Although Lucy struggled with having enough time to cover all of her science material and Ellen worried they did not complete everything in her history lesson, both were pleased with the students’ increased participation. Then the conversation returned to Ellen’s new student, Ernesto, who was partnered with one of the other bilingual students, Juan. Ellen noticed that Juan was having to work hard to keep up with Ernesto’s fluent Spanish, and she recalled the second week’s
reading about subtractive bilingualism where the home language is lost or stagnates as the second language is learned. Knowing that the continuing development of the home language leads to better academic outcomes in the school language, Ellen stated that she felt the relationship was working out well for both of the students in unexpected ways as Juan’s Spanish was being strengthened and Ernesto’s English had begun to develop. During this discussion, Lucy revealed that she still struggled with identifying strategies that were particular to EB students (e.g., age-appropriate texts with rich language) and students with learning disabilities (e.g., developmentally appropriate texts). However, she also articulated multiple ways in which focusing on the English language development practices resulted in significant improvement for her EB students, with many of the strategies she named (e.g., increased wait time, the use of graphic organizers) being appropriate for some students with learning disabilities and students still developing English proficiency. This final discussion suggested that both Ellen and Lucy had made some progress in understanding how inappropriate instructional practices dis/able EB students; it likewise indicated that when teachers such as Ellen and Lucy receive explicit mediation, a developing, but fragile, understanding of the fallacy of the “ELL Disability” was rendered possible.
Chapter 6
Lucy & Alma:
Rejecting Notorious Deficits to Choose a Capability Discourse

“We some of these students are like wild animals.”
~Ms. Gamma, Riverton High School Principal

This chapter focuses on the “telling case” (Rex, 2000) of Lucy and her struggle to understand her notorious emergent bilingual student, Alma. A telling case is one that is illustrative of how various factors intersect and affect all participants. In this case, two themes—troubling notions of difference and conflating disability and bilingual/biliteracy development—intersected and affected Lucy and Alma. In her initial understanding of Alma’s capabilities, Lucy revealed both troubling notions of difference and a conflation of disability with bilingual/biliteracy development. Interestingly, however, Lucy soon became convinced that she could help remedy Alma’s disruptive behaviors and poor academic outcomes. This desire for change came in spite of an extraordinary effort on the part of Lucy’s fellow teachers and principal—individuals with greater perceived expertise and authority—to position Alma as incapable, wild, and hopelessly flawed. This case thus offers the opportunity to connect the experience of teachers such as Lucy to the notions of school-centered dis/abling and positioning, thereby furthering our understanding of why some teachers ultimately reject this positioning to instead choose a capability discourse.

To achieve this richer understanding, it is necessary to provide a brief history of the “wild child” concept in popular discourse. It is also crucial to analyze the language used by the participants involved in this particular case, as well as the principals with whom I met at the beginning of this study. Throughout this discussion, I include small slices of dialogue
that are meant to show the context in which Lucy is teaching and reasoning about her pedagogical relationship with Alma; the slices of dialogue are thus included as a narrative rather than in the standard format. As I switch over to analyzing larger pieces of dialogue and excerpts from the participants’ blog entries, I return to the standard format used for displaying spoken discourse in this dissertation.

**Alma as Representative of the Wild/Feral ELL**

In the late fall preceding the start of my professional development course, I attended a meeting with three Riverton school principals, Ms. Alpha at the elementary school, Ms. Beta at the middle school, and Ms. Gamma at the high school, as well as the middle school vice-principal, Mr. Delta. We had been meeting for about 40 minutes, talking about the details of the proposed course and its attendant research, when our conversation turned to the lack of formal school experience sometimes found among the district’s incoming students. Ms. Alpha pointed out that while the school district had some emergent bilingual students with formal school experience, other students enrolled in the district’s schools had little to none. She wondered what to do with the children who were “so far behind,” questioning whether she should “just pass [them] to the next grade.” The other administrators shared Ms. Alpha’s concerns, saying they worried about the students and their classmates even though they had “nothing to work with anymore. No funds for prep time,” not to mention an ESL teacher who was stretched thin between her work at the middle school and the high school.

“Some of these students are like wild animals,” continued Ms. Gamma, noting that
“we had one who would spit on the floor.” This comment\textsuperscript{20} referred specifically to Alma, a student who could be described as notorious. In this conversation, Alma is specifically compared to a wild animal—a seemingly feral child with no language development who is not used to living indoors.

As we were packing up to go, Ms. Alpha began talking about how many students qualify for special education services, estimating that about half of the ESL students did. She said the school district had even “got a bilingual psychologist in to test two kids, and they both qualified.” Returning to the subject of Alma, she said: “But then what about the girl [Alma] at the high school? She would have qualified if she had been tested\textsuperscript{30} and she has come a long way. She’s not still hitting kids.” Ms. Gamma laughed and concurred, saying, “There’s still some crazy stuff going on.” In this exchange, Ms. Alpha discursively links the subject of Alma—recently positioned as Wild—to the problem of so many of the district’s ESL students qualifying for SPED. With the mention of the bilingual psychologist, she notes the difficulty in getting accurate assessments of the “abilities” of students who do not speak English in English-dominated educational environments. This brings her back to Alma—Alma, she asserts, has come a long way. Ms. Alpha believes that if Alma had completed the testing when she first arrived, she would have qualified, but seems to doubt she would now. In response, Ms. Gamma positions Alma as a student who can only be partially reformed.

About a week after this conversation, I attended the high-school faculty meeting. I

\textsuperscript{20} Spitting on the floor indoors is taboo in the U.S. There are very specific informal social contexts where it is acceptable for men. It is almost never acceptable for women and inspires disgust. This is not true of all cultures.

\textsuperscript{30} An attempt had been made to test Alma, but she had refused to engage with test administrators and it had thus proven impossible to draw any meaningful conclusions.
had been describing the project and soliciting participants when Ms. Gamma jumped in and suggested that the course would be a good choice for teachers of very difficult students like “a certain someone we all know who has been known to engage in pretty challenging behavior, right? Like spitting?” In this way, Ms. Gamma communicates the positioning of Alma as a Wild/Feral child to teachers from an administrative level.

**Alma as Notorious and Uneducable**

My discussion with the four administrators and attendance at the high-school faculty meeting set the stage for the kinds of challenges I encountered in the professional development course about to begin. In the first week’s discussion, for example, the teachers took turns telling the others about their focus students as they answered some of my questions. Lucy responded to my question about teaching strategies that she had noticed worked well with her focus student, resisting referring to her by name. Because of Alma’s notoriety at both the middle school and high school, however, the other participants soon recognized her in Lucy’s descriptions. Ultimately, this initial discussion, which features three of the four participants talking at length about Alma, revealed the way Alma was positioned both to Lucy and by Lucy at this particular point in time.

**Excerpt 6.1A: Week 1, Jan. 27**

**Ellen:** I know who you are talking about.
ALL LAUGH except Kiera.

**Rachelle:** That angel?
ALL LAUGH except Kiera.

**Ellen:** with horns? heh-heh
Rachelle: I had her three times a day. u::h.

ALL LAUGH except Kiera.

Alaska: So you found that [proximity to the chalkboard] helps with her, that constantly calling her name=

Lucy: {heh-heh-heh Uh, last year—}

Alaska: =to keep her engaged helps. Okay, but obviously there’s still a frustration there. But these are things that you have found that help her.

Lucy and I began to talk briefly about Alma’s academic and behavioral history in Lucy’s classroom. Then Rachelle, who worked with Alma as her ESL specialist when Alma first came to Riverton Middle School, contributed more information about Alma. Previously laughing, Rachelle’s tone shifted to become more somber, while her voice dropped to a lower range.

Excerpt 6.1B: Week 1, Jan. 27

Rachelle: She definitely has a severe lack of schooling. She came in seventh or eighth grade, she even like spit on the floors when she came, like she had no…

Ellen: She was like a <wild animal.>

Rachelle: Yeah, she had no idea. So she didn’t really have any of the elementary training. Just to give you a little bit of the background.

Alaska: Sure, sure, okay. So we know that much like [Rachelle’s] focus student (++) there’s an issue with, uh, poor or little to no (+) previous schooling. And therefore I’m assuming little to no literacy in the first language? Is that what we’re looking at here?

Rachelle: Yeah, she could write somewhat in the first language, but it definitely wasn’t—like she made tons of spelling mistakes and she—it was very—I’d say it was a first or second grade level writing in Spanish.

Alaska: So not where we would expect she would be.

Rachelle: When she came in seventh, yeah.

In the excerpts above, the sarcasm (“that angel?”), the mocking (“with horns”), the
“u:h”, and the laughter of Lucy’s fellow teacher Ellen and the ESL specialist Rachelle revealed the mediation Lucy received from her professional colleagues. Alma was positioned as a notorious Wild/Feral Child who was a burden to all who worked with her. This shared positioning echoed the comments Ms. Gamma made about Alma in the previous meeting at which none of the others were present.

In fact, Alma’s lack of previous formal schooling and limited L1 literacy skills are not exceptionally uncommon, although they are certainly in the minority in the U.S. The fact that Alma had some writing skills without having had formal schooling is indicative of Alma capability of learning literacy skills, but at the age of 12 at entry to school, she needed significant, targeted linguistic supports to begin to catch up to her peers. Instead of receiving the support she needed, however, Alma has been demonized—given figurative horns—and mocked. This connection between metaphors of non-human or less-than-human entities is a form of what Collins (2015) calls discursive dehumanization.

This dehumanization, and Alma’s attendant uneducable nature, was presented as nearly fixed by Lucy’s colleagues, all of whom were positioned as more knowledgeable (the ESL specialist), more authoritative (the principal), and more experienced (Ellen) than Lucy. Yet Lucy had nevertheless volunteered for the professional development course in order to get answers to her questions about Alma and to change the learning environment for them both.

A Short History of the Ideas Behind the Wild/Feral Child

In order to recognize why this particular positioning of Alma was so problematic, it
is necessary to understand the history of the Wild/Feral Child, including the dis/abilities both implied and explicit in the notion of the Wild/Feral Child, as well as how those disabilities are tied to anti-immigration ideology and practice. The Feral Child type has a firm hold in mythology and in the modern imagination. From Romulus and Remus (the legendary founders of Rome), to Mowgli (Rudyard Kipling), Tarzan (Edgar Rice Burrough), and Hayy (Ibn Tufayl), legends reflect our fascination with what it would mean for a child to grow up without the company of other humans.

Questions regarding what it means to be human have long preoccupied researchers. The question of humanness was particularly central to the Enlightenment. In 1797, a small boy was seen running naked in a forest in an area of southern France called Aveyron. Two years later he was successfully captured (Lane, 1976). Known as the Wild Boy of Aveyron—and later Victor—the youth, approximately 12 years old, captured the curiosity of the French. In a matter of weeks, a professor of natural history at the Central School for Aveyron, Abbé Pierre-Joseph Bonnaterre, had been dispatched to the orphanage caring for him in order to study him. The belief was that Victor would shed light on the innate nature of human beings.

As the story of Victor suggests, one common characteristic of the Feral Child is that the child's history is shrouded. Without the mystery of where the child came from and how the child survived on his or her own, the Feral child is only as fascinating to the dominant society as other impoverished, non-vocal, neglected children are. Interestingly, a similar fascination can be found in the modern preoccupation with “natives” (referred to earlier in the twentieth century as “primatives”). The descriptions of Margaret Mead’s South Pacific Islanders in the pages of *National Geographic* gave Western society a refracted image of what
“uncivilized” human society might look like. This fascination was partly motivated by the
“civilized” viewer’s desire to feel that they had accomplished something simply by being
“civilized.” In the Wild Child, the uncivilized human being that garnered such attention in
the pages of National Geographic is brought home, appearing domestically for the first time.

In considering the Wild Child, one sees a fascination and repulsion regarding the
variety of physical and/or neurological differences that emerge. By locating difference inside
of some people and not others, one is able to implicitly define what constitutes “normal.”
One need only look to the Facebook meme that celebrates the “incredible” courage of a
young child learning to walk on her or his new prosthetic legs. While likely well-meaning,
this meme ultimately serves as a way of drawing boundaries between its “normal” viewers
and the objectified child with her or his perceived deficits. The child pictured in the meme is
just learning to walk, and it does not take her or him any more courage than it takes any
other child learning to walk.31 Yet the desire to overlay heroics on the everyday experience of
a person with a physical and/or neurological difference, as captured by this meme,
effectively suggests the romanticized deficit(s) myth that lies within the concept of disability.32
Moreover, while this meme may serve only to put figurative distance between its viewers and
the objectified child, one can easily imagine the more malicious form of this distance that
may emerge in the face of perceived physical and/or neurological differences—the physical
distance that may emerge in the form of segregated classrooms, for example.

The metaphor of the Wild Child is not just about noting physical and/or

31 The parents are likely having different experiences, but that has everything to do with the
difficulty of obtaining adequate and equal access to health care and assistive technology—
complicated by issues of race and class.

32 Stella Young calls this “inspiration porn.”
neurological differences. It is also a metaphor that conflates disability with lack of language as a direct result of the ultimate form of cultural poverty in the form of lack of human contact. Therefore, the teachers’ discourse about Alma suggested that she was very far removed from a “normal” student. Her differences were both extensive and pronounced when compared to the imagined ideal student.

An example of the Wild Child as an acceptable discourse in a professional setting is Chambers (2002) editorial that appeared in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, which argued for a public-health approach to “feral children” that he saw in his work as a magistrate. An excerpt from this editorial follows:

Feral is defined as running wild—untamed, animal. A senior politician has used the word\textsuperscript{33} of certain young people, reflecting a widespread concern that increasing numbers of adolescents and children are out of control. ‘Feral behaviour’ is frequently unlawful, and sitting as a magistrate I deal with it regularly in the youth courts. This behavior is challenging, disruptive, and frequently violent, and those who bear the brunt include not only authority-figures such as parents, teachers, and social workers, health professionals, and police, but also other children. In the language of rights they are indulging in full-blown autonomy and exercising self-

\textsuperscript{33}It is not clear what word the senior politician is referring to, especially since this references a British language variety common to the group of youth constructed by the discourse in this editorial. In the U.S., the term that comes to mind is “wilding,” which originated in the 1989 discourse of youth of Color convicted of raping a jogger in Central Park. Long after the five served their sentences, a serial rapist admitted to the crime. DNA evidence confirmed the innocence of the youths. A recent use of the term by a U.S. politician was in 2010 by Mayor Bloomberg of New York City.
expression with scant restraint or respect for others. The results of such reckless behavior—"injuries and intoxications"—are a common sight on hospital wards. p. 429

In this excerpt, Chambers attributes a host of fixed characteristics to the Feral children he sees as a magistrate. Significantly, Chambers begins by defining Feral children as "wild—untamed" in the first sentence of the paragraph. He then establishes the authenticity of his argument by referencing an unnamed personage of democratically-elected authority and power. This link discursively links the politician's term to the society that elected him/her. Next, Chambers describes the behaviors that can be used to define a child or adolescent as a Feral/Wild child. He asserts that these children can be identified by their "challenging, disruptive, and frequently violent behavior." Next, he immediately identifies the problem of the existence of these children—they are a burden on members of society typically held in some esteem: "parents, teachers, social workers, health professionals, and police." Of course, they are also a danger to other (innocent, valued) children. Discursively, the Feral/Wild Child lives and thinks from a location outside of the civilized society. Furthermore, these youths are a financial burden on society as their "reckless behavior" result in "injuries and intoxications" that result in hospital stays. Elsewhere in the article, Chambers clearly locates the problem of these children in cultural deficiencies, including poor parenting. He also locates some of this behavior in the children's cognition through discursive links to "attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder" (2002, p. 429). In Chamber's piece, the Wild Child has moved out of the forest, away from social isolation, and has become a metaphor for the uncontrollable, uncivilized, incorrigible child.

In considering the above comments, then, the definition of a Wild Child has not changed significantly from the time of Victor of Aveyron.
### Wild/Feral Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1797</th>
<th>2002/2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Found in the wild</td>
<td>• Come from a social position perceived of as less civilized (i.e., culturally deficient)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have no language</td>
<td>• Act in animal-like ways, including self-centered behavior bordering on psychopathic. Frequently violent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Act in animal-like ways, including violent behavior towards those keeping the child “captive.”</td>
<td>• Have no (privileged) language varieties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have few, if any, social skills</td>
<td>• Have few, if any, social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Little prospect of living independently (i.e., socially dependent on society)</td>
<td>• Others have low expectations for additional cognitive development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Others debate which came first—the child abandoned because of “idiocy” or the child having failed to develop cognitively and socially because of neglect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 6.1: Wild/Feral Children

Looking at Table 6.1, the first attribute in the modern column is related to the idea of cultural poverty. The second is akin to an emotional/behavioral disorder. The third is a learning disability related to literacy or oral language. The fourth again recalls an emotional/behavioral disorder. Taken in sum, the result is always a low expectation for the Wild Child’s further development. She or he is born an impoverished child—a child with an impoverished cultural beginning—and is raised without input from civilized society. The result is a host of linguistic, cognitive, and emotional/behavioral deficits, all of which seem to ineradicably separate the child from her or his peers.

Of course, as fascinated as society may be with the Wild/Feral child, it does not
actually want people with the characteristics the term evokes, and it has encoded the fear and
disgust of disability into federal and state laws (Schweik, 2009). The first major immigration
law in the United States was passed in 1882, and it prohibited entry to anyone with perceived
neurological disabilities, as well as anyone believed to be “unable to take care of himself or
herself without becoming a public charge” (Baynton, 2005; Ibid.). As time passed, states that
believed the law was too lax began to put in place their own border control regulations for
the purpose of keeping out the dis/abled and the indigent (Schweik, 2009). When considered
in light of the immigration discourse prevalent during the country’s 2012 presidential
elections, a discourse that suggested that illegal immigrants were a significant burden on the
economy and healthcare system, the Othering of Alma as a Wild Child becomes visible.

Unfortunately, like most feral children, it is unlikely Alma would be released from
the notoriety of her “discovery” by the school. That is, to be released from the role of the
Wild Child of Riverview School District, Alma needed to be surrounded by teachers who
had received professional development that could help them reposition Alma as a student
who was making perfectly reasonable choices in a learning context that was being perfectly
unreasonable in its assessment of her capabilities.

Developing an Understanding of Alma

In Week 2 of the professional development course, I led a discussion on the
interplay of language, culture, and identity. During that discussion, I asked the participants to
consider the affordances of being bilingual. Kiera, our guidance counselor, introduced the
first push-back to Alma as Wild Child.
Excerpt 6.2: Week 2, Feb. 10 (See also 4.12)

Kiera: I was also going to add, I found this very interesting, the strongest predictor of L2 student achievement is the amount of former schooling and it goes back to [Lucy’s] student, which that could definitely be the case with her. You can see where if she had no formal schooling, you could see why she may not be doing as well in school.

Alaska: Yes.

(++)

Kiera: And socially. When you come to school you learn more than just academics. You learn how to behave and how to interact with students (+) peers.

Rachelle: A lot of those are unspoken rules.

Kiera: Yes.

Neither Lucy nor Rachelle responded to this conversation. Yet Kiera has here pointed out one of the most salient counter-arguments to Alma as Wild Child—that Alma has had no previous experience with the numerous procedural and behavior rules of formal schooling or the language of the professionals working with her. In doing so, Kiera directly and indirectly addressed two of the most commonly cited pieces of evidence regarding Alma’s feral status, suggesting that perhaps Alma seemed uneducable because she had not been provided with these two single greatest predictors of school success for school-age second-language learners in the United States. In this way, Lucy began to receive peer support for challenging the way the group thinks and talks about Alma. Kiera was troubling the notion that Alma’s differences were unreasonable—or wild.

A couple weeks later, in Week 4, Lucy talked at length about Alma’s behavior during a recent lab project. Ellen offered questions about Alma for Lucy to consider.

Excerpt 6.3: Week 4, Feb. 24

Lucy: <And this is> the problem: every time I do labs with her, <she might do a little part of it, but then she gets so side-tracked that she doesn’t learn anything from what she
did, because she's not willing to sit there and think about what happened and why it happened and what can we actually learn from what we observe.> hh (+) So.

Ellen: Do you think she’s not sure of herself? Or

(+ +)

Lucy: hh I think she likes attention too mu::ch *heh-heh-heh*

Ellen: You don’t think she’s—well, she *is* avoiding doing the work.

Lucy: Yeah, she’s avoiding doing the work, but I mean, it was very attention hey, look at me type thing a lot. (+) TURNS TO ALASKA I mean, you made the suggestion of maybe that as soon as she got to the writ{en part,

Ellen: °right.°

Lucy: well now it’s becoming too challenging that she tries to avoid that.

Ellen: °Maybe she does.°

Alaska: It’s a possibility, right; I don’t really know what’s going on in her head.

LUCY and ELLEN LAUGH. KIERA NODS.

Alaska: It could be:: possible too, that she experiences being the center—even of negative attention—as preferable to [being positioned as illiterate]. (+++) You had mentioned in your write up of her that when you spoke to her about what was going on, not her behavior, but what was happening in the lab, that >she was able< to answer your questions adequately and so she was demonstrating comprehension of the main ideas that you want her to have. So. We know that she can engage in the lab and she can meet the learning objective from that point.

At this point, Lucy was still operating on the belief that Alma was a Wild Child, citing Alma’s lack of response to good instruction, which is part of the history of the Wild Child. Quite tentatively, Ellen asked whether there might be another reason for Alma’s behavior. Lucy reasserted her belief that Alma is “exercising self-expression with scant restraint or respect for others” (Chambers, 2002, p. 429). She then acknowledged the more explicit mediation I provided to her in a private blog response the week before. Perhaps Alma was not so much reckless as she was positioned to fail, Lucy suggested, and in doing so, openly troubled her own notions about Alma’s challenging avoidance behaviors. Perhaps,
Lucy said, Alma’s behaviors were a problematic response to the “normal” human desire to position oneself as capable. I acknowledged Lucy’s careful observations of Alma, thereby suggesting that I, too, recognized what Lucy saw as evidence of capability and engagement.

In addition to witnessing Lucy trouble her own notions, in Week 4, she shared that Alma had been hospitalized for stomach ulcers and that her absence rate increased dramatically before her hospitalization. Since being released from the hospital, Alma had continued to accumulate absences. Lucy explains:

**Excerpt 6.4: Week 4, Feb. 24**

Alaska: How often is she absent?  
Lucy: Usually [Alma is] there all the time, but apparently she got a stomach ulcer? So she’s been absent a lot since we started this program. But before that she was absent like three days a year, so: heh-heh  
Rachelle: Some days you wished for more absences heh-heh  
Ellen: But that’s usually caused by stress, stomach ulcers, so you wonder the:::  
Rachelle: The inside, maybe that’s part of the issue<.

As this conversation suggests, each of the participants drew on the particular discourse to which they had access. When the teachers had access to new discourses, they often made the choice to use them in talking with each other. For instance, it is notable that Ellen did not pick up on Rachelle’s negative tone during this conversation. Rather, Ellen wondered if the ulcers might have been caused by Alma’s experiences at school. Rachelle recognized the cue provided by Ellen and changed her tone to be more sympathetic.

Gitlin, Buendía, Crosland, and Doumbia (2003) have considered the “welcoming-unwelcoming” of immigrant students. They particularly note that while teachers frequently cite diversity as good for the school and for individual classrooms, the teachers are equally
adamant that they do not want the ESL students in their particular classrooms. This apparent contradiction stems from the perception that ESL students are a burden among other existing burdens—a sort of straw that is capable of breaking the camel’s back. In this conversation, however, signs of a developing understanding of the student’s burdens as being greater than the teacher’s emerge.

There Are No Wild Things in Lucy’s Classroom

The following week we did not meet, so the next time I heard from Lucy was 13 days later when she wrote a blog entry in which she talked about her new-arrival emergent bilingual student and Alma:

Lucy Blog 6.1

Based on my observations, Alma seems much more comfortable with oral language than written language. She is resistant to engaging in reading and writing, but usually more willing to participate in oral discussions. Adding supports for assignments that included using reading and writing might reduce her stress levels and help her to engage in learning more frequently.

On a side note, the new Spanish-speaking student that enrolled two weeks ago came from the same country as Alma. He also seems to have very little experience with schooling. He shows little familiarity with using computers, using sentence and paragraph structures in Spanish, or how to complete normal school assignments like fill-in-the-blank style questions. I can only imagine how difficult it would be to learn these basic skills, a new language, and high-school level content when you have probably never been introduced to elementary level content. No wonder students decide not to engage when the mountain most likely looks too high to climb.

In the first paragraph of her blog entry, Lucy made the clearest statement to date that suggested she was recognizing Alma’s capabilities and seeing the possibility of helping Alma achieve different outcomes by adding scaffolds that were specific to Alma’s needs. Alma’s
behaviors in class had not changed at all—thwarted in part by frequent school closings for weather, as well as Alma’s frequent absences due to her health—but Lucy was now positioning Alma as someone other than a feral child.

Lucy also seemed to be making connections between her learning in the professional development course and her experiences teaching her new-arrival bilingual student. When she connected her new student to Alma at the beginning of the second paragraph, Lucy effectively undoes the discourse of the Wild/Feral child. A Wild/Feral child cannot, by definition, be like any other student, and yet in this blog post, that is exactly what Lucy—for the first time among all of the school professionals and program participants—suggested.

Here, then, Lucy turned from the discourse of the Wild/Feral child to suggest a broader understanding of the challenges facing emergent bilingual students.

Lucy likewise repositioned her new student from a student who “speaks zero English” to a student who is fluent in a language—Spanish. When she first mentioned the new student in an earlier discussion, Lucy used language that implied that the “zero English” student was unwelcome. In this blog post, however, the observation that the student did not yet have print literacy in his first language suggested Lucy’s new understanding that children who can read and write in their first language learn print literacy in a second language much faster. Understanding this relationship is to understand the value of the home language to the student and to his or her teacher in the English-speaking classroom. It is one of the things the new student had in common with Alma, and Lucy has learned to recognize and value it.

In this way, Lucy seemed to be acknowledging that the student’s burden was greater than she first realized. In addition, she was coming to relate this burden faced by the new student to the burden experienced by Alma, suggesting more explicitly than before that
Alma might have had very good reasons for refusing to engage. Furthermore, there was no longer any suggestion of disability in the description of the students. Both were suggested to have typical reactions to extraordinary circumstances. Notably, the development of literacy skills in a second language stood as part of an explanatory notion in its own right.

In Week 6, Lucy spoke about her experience teaching reading strategies explicitly for the first time in her science class. These results clearly demonstrate greater self-efficacy and a richer understanding of Alma that, in some ways, offered a counter-story to that of Alma as the wild, uneducable student.

**Excerpt 6.5: Week 6, Mar. 17**

**Lucy:** Alma is like hit or miss whether she wants to participate or not. The good part was::, on her first day, she was engaging in the dialogue part of it. So it says it was a small group that gave her more time to speak. And hh after thinking about some of the things you were pointing out, like I think conversationally, she does process the information. But as soon as you get to the written format (+) she just shuts down whether she's doing the writing or whether it's a reading comprehension, it's just like okay I'm not putting that effort in. hh So that was kind of reinforced through that discussion as well.

Another aspect of the feral child story that relaxed here is the notion that the feral child is a constant burden on his or her care-givers. In this moment during the Week 6 discussion, Lucy described a small-group structured activity in which Alma participated appropriately, sharing her ideas on the subject matter orally. Lucy was beginning to see more clearly the delineation between the Alma who was allowed to express her ideas orally and the Alma who was required to express the same ideas in writing.

In other words, Lucy was now talking about a challenging, but not feral, student. For Lucy, a challenging student was a student who could be difficult to engage and who still avoided any kind of activities involving content-area text, but who was no longer considered
uneducable and thus overly burdensome. While Alma was still failing science, Lucy’s point of view had shifted ever so slightly to see Alma as a complex person. Of course, it was not possible to predict how Lucy would respond in the company of Ms. Gamma when Ms. Gamma talks about Alma’s “feral” behavior or suggests her notoriety. Yet in the PLC Lucy’s descriptions of Alma were of a real student.

On the final day we met, Lucy shared that Alma got into a fight the previous Friday after a particularly difficult week in Lucy’s class during which she appeared unhappy and irritable. She would not be back in class for a week. Lucy did not see how it was going to be possible for Alma to recover academically from this new absence. There was too much work to make up and too little time left in the year. In her final blog entry, Lucy wrote a response to a prompt that asked her to describe Alma based on her capabilities, similarly to how a parent would recognize her or his child:

**Lucy Blog 6.2**

Alma thrives on social interactions. She enjoys being around her friends and often becomes upset if she is separated from them. She also likes personal attention from teachers. She is not afraid to ask questions. During conversations, Alma clearly expresses her opinions and can share the knowledge that she has developed.

Alma demonstrates a willingness to try new things. She engages in lab activities that allow her to explore scientific concepts. She likes exploring new technology such as her iPad. She is also eager to welcome new students.

An area for growth for Alma is being willing to engage in reading and writing activities. Although Alma can express her ideas verbally, she often refuses to participate in written forms of expression. This results in classwork not being

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34 Alma is not illiterate. She will text and she will use an iPad for social purposes—these tasks require a different variety of literacy, typically based on topics she has plenty of background knowledge about and over which she can choose when to engage and disengage.
completed. She also struggles to learn new information due to a lack of effort in reading.

In Lucy’s final blog entry about Alma, Alma was positioned more completely as a complex, capable student. While Lucy still struggled to avoid terms that implied that Alma’s problems were rooted in laziness or lack of effort, Lucy appeared to have escaped the pull of the Wild Child narrative and is now depending on her own observations, a change that can be attributed to the material covered in our short professional development course.

**Discussion**

There is a limited role for the use of labels in discussing students. In any discussion, speakers may use the names that certain groups have adopted to identify themselves. As a society, speakers can use language that reflects our awareness that some members of a group may share certain characteristics while others will not—that people are complex, dynamic, and surprisingly adept at navigating the world even when there are some obstacles in their way. All people have deficits. All have missing skills, underdeveloped skills and understandings, are ignorant of the vast majority of the massive volume of known information today, and struggle in unfamiliar social contexts. When human beings focus on the deficits of the groups and/or individuals around them, they may arrive at some fairly exaggerated ideas—such as believing that an atypical student is like a wild animal.

Throughout the professional development course, I advocated for an approach that took into account the unique capabilities of each student. Over and over, I asked Lucy to consider the fact that Alma would usually do the assigned tasks—and when she did, she could always meet the learning objectives *orally*. When Alma is considered in this light, the obvious
question becomes, “What is it about the literacy tasks required of Alma that is problematic?”

Taken in conjunction, Alma’s specific history and our understanding of the amount of time (7 to 10 years) that it takes emergent bilingual learners to achieve linguistic and conceptual parity with peers (Cummins, 1981, 1996, 2000) should be a red flag. As a result, education professionals at Riverton High School should begin to compile very careful data about what Alma will and will not read, and what she will and will not write, along with the context of that willing reading and writing. Next, they need to find a way to replicate that context in the classroom, moving Alma gently forward and only releasing linguistic supports as she signals through her capabilities that she is ready for them. Riverton High School already knows that Alma will not tolerate a formal, standardized test of her literacy skills, so these data can only come from the teachers who work with her daily—and each of them, without exception, needs to have had professional development in knowing how to look for what she can do with language and when. The school-wide list of what she cannot do has already done far too much damage—to Alma and her teachers, but especially to Alma.
Chapter 7
Summary and Conclusions

This study has explored the evolution of the discourse of four education professionals in a rural Pennsylvanian school district while participating in a professional development (PD) course focused on EB instructional strategies. The question that guided this study was: “In what ways does short-term explicit sociocultural mediation of the essential understandings of teachers of emergent bilingual students affect the discourse of teachers when characterizing Emergent Bilingual learners in their classrooms?” In order to answer this question, I based the study’s research design and subsequent analysis on fundamental tenets of SCT regarding learning mediation. I likewise used the specific theories of Disability Studies in Education (DSE) and positioning—both of which are predicated on SCT—to delve into the situated learning of the participants in the context of the PD course. Through design research, including qualitative methodology and semantic discourse analysis, I recorded the ways the participants positioned themselves and others, the stigmas and stereotypes evident in this positioning, and the consequences of the positioning choices. I also observed how the stigmas and stereotypes were negotiated during conversations and how they changed over time.

My analysis of the results of this design research study’s first cycle shows that explicit mediation about a school’s EB students—and how to meet their instructional needs in the classroom—supports changes in how teachers discursively position their students, including in where the teachers locate their students’ problems, and whether the teachers perceive cultural and linguistic differences as a kind of disability. Of course, such changes take time. The creation of long-lasting changes is not so much about taking steady steps forward, but
about leaping forward, falling back, and stepping forward again. This is evident in the
participants’ dialogue and blog entries. Changes appear to be fragile.

In this concluding chapter, I analyze the study’s findings and discuss how they
contribute to a better understanding of teacher education programs designed for mainstream
teachers of EB students. I also discuss how the findings inform my redesign of the PD
course for the second cycle of this study. The chapter is organized into four sections: (a)
Discussion and Conclusions; (b) Implications for Teacher Education; (c) Design
Modifications for the Second Cycle of Research; and (d) Epilogue.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

In this section, I distill key findings from the relevant scholarship in order to provide
a succinct summary of how this study contributes to existing knowledge of the relationship
between the appropriation (in the SCT meaning) of new discourses and shifts in the
discursive positioning of stigmatized/stereotyped students in the context of a small PLC. I
begin by discussing the findings that are related to positioning theory and then consider the
construction of inclusion and capability.

**Positioning and Disability**

Kathleen Collins\(^{35}\) (2013) and Rebecca Rogers (2003) each completed a year-long
study in which a participant-teacher came to believe that one student in his or her class had

\(^{35}\) See also a discussion of this study in the section on Positioning Theory: pp. 31-32.
disabilities that would require varying levels of exclusion from the regular classroom. Both children were in fifth grade at the time of the studies, and both were African-American students, known respectively as Jay and Vicky. Collins chronicles how she attempted to show Jay’s teacher evidence of Jay’s appropriate interactions in the classroom, as well as his highly engaged behavior during the rigorous inquiry-based science lessons, but the teacher persisted in her belief that Jay was emotionally disabled. As a result, the teacher employed various accepted practices of classroom exclusion, which in turn prompted Jay to attempt to insert himself back into the class community in ways that were in alignment with ‘generally accepted’ behaviors in this particular educational context—and other ways that were not.

Like Collins, Rogers reports having asked key questions during Vicky’s first IEP meeting. In particular, she describes questioning test results that conflicted with the data she had gathered for six months about Vicky’s literacy practices. She notes that her contributions were ignored and that no explanation was offered for why some data were being prioritized over other data. Indeed, it seems that the decision to place Vicky in a special education setting was made months earlier when the teacher had first referred Vicky for testing.

These case studies are rich descriptors of what Collins calls *ability profiling*—the tendency of education professionals to profile a child’s abilities according to the “type” of child that he or she represents to that professional. Ability profiling occurs in many EB students’ classrooms and with similarly negative educational outcomes (Crawford & Bartolomé, 2010; Valdes, 2001). Walker, Shafer, and Iiams (2004), for example, have conducted a mixed-methods study including survey data from 422 K-12 teachers as well as interview data from six teachers of EB students. Analyzing their results, they explain that ability profiling, which has its roots in the dominant culture’s stigmas, stereotypes, and anti-
immigrant attitudes (Pang, 2001), leads teachers to behave in ways that fail to meet “the academic and social needs of [EB] students” (p. 130) (see also Tse, 2001; Valdes, 2001; Youngs & Youngs, 2001).

In this study, ability profiling is evident in Lucy’s initial misinterpretation of her own data—data that suggest that her student Alma’s poor academic performance and disruptive behavior is rooted in the stilted development of her print literacy skills. The deficit discourse in which Lucy is immersed stigmatizes Alma as lazy and defiant—in other words, it blames the victim—and then as Wild, or uneducable. These stereotypes are a cultural storyline common among Latino/a youth (Varenne & McDermott, 1999), and they position Alma as a FAILURE. However, Lucy has the agency to adopt the new discourse of the PLC and create a new storyline that repositions Alma as being at a particular point along a trajectory of English-language development. This opens up the possibility of educability—learning and development—within the context of Lucy’s classroom.

For Ellen, ability profiling is clearly displayed in her first blog entry when she states that those students who have been identified as both LD and ELL will be hard to “impact.” McDermott (1993) suggests that there is no such thing as a learning disability, but rather, that a learning disability is actually a label that triggers certain ways of noticing a child’s behavior, documenting that behavior, “remediating it, and explaining it” (p. 272). For any given child, there are frequent opportunities to display LDness in a school context and which may or may not exist outside of that context. McDermott’s argument is not that Ellen’s student Amos or any other child does not learn differently or at a different pace than others; the argument is that if society did not arrange learning in the way it currently does, infusing a particular meaning and value into those differences, those differences would not
constitute a disability. It is in this way that the pre-existing label of LD—with its accompanying stigma and stereotype—can overwhelm a child and alter his or her school context, often in ways that reduce the appropriateness and quality of the instruction provided to the student.

Of course, with or without label, learning differences among students must be addressed. The question that Kiera and Ellen ask explicitly, and that Lucy and Rachelle ask implicitly—“Is my student struggling in class because of their levels of language proficiency or because of learning disabilities?”—is a valid but very difficult one to answer. There is simply insufficient research into the relationship between second-language proficiency and the acquisition of bilingual literacy skills in real classroom contexts to envision what constitutes an appropriate pace and/or learning benchmarks for students who show such variety in language and social backgrounds. Indeed, a recent study has concluded that “[s]ystematic reviews of the research in child development, psychology, and special education have suggested that researchers have rarely focused on the intersection of learning, language background, race, and disability,” thereby demonstrating the need for future research in this area (Klingner, Artiles, & Méndez Barletta, 2006, p. 109).

In the meantime, however, it is imperative that education professionals view the dis/ability label with some skepticism—while still abiding by Department of Education and Department of Justice guidelines for students with these labels, of course—and continue to focus on providing EB students with appropriate instruction that reflects an expectation of competence and capability.

This study clearly demonstrates the importance of PD in the essential understandings of teachers of EB students as it was implementing or observing the new pedagogical
strategies that revealed to the participants the critical role of the learning context in identifying student capabilities. As Ellen continued to implement new strategies that fostered reading comprehension and provided innovative ways of demonstrating thinking, she began to witness more often Amos’s developing skills and newly visible competencies. While I never denied the existence of Amos’s diagnosed LD, I did focus on mediating Ellen’s understanding of the primacy of his English language development in order to allow him to participate meaningfully in the learning objectives of the class—after all, the accommodations provided for LD students at Riverton Middle School were provided exclusively in English.

**Local Understanding, Capability, and Inclusion**

In Kliewer and Biklen’s (2007) article “Enacting Literacy: Local Understanding, Significant Disability, and a New Frame for Educational Opportunity,” the authors define local understanding as “an educational dialogic in which the value, intelligence, and imagination (taken together; what we term citizenship) of all students, including those with significant developmental disabilities, are recognized and response contexts are crafted that foster increasingly sophisticated citizenship” (p. 2580). They go on to note that local understanding is “the communal recognition that educational value and participation may be ascribed and enacted where history has primarily supported dehumanization and segregation” (p. 2581). A local understanding of a student, therefore, is an inclusive one, in that localized understandings enable the teacher to position the student in the classroom in such a way that the student’s resources can be optimized and their needs most appropriately
addressed.

This study demonstrates that as participants acquired new ways of talking about and teaching their EB students, they acquired local understandings that took the place of some of the stigmatized discourse that was available to them in their school setting. Or in other words, this study provides evidence that discourse can shift—interrupting the dehumanization of students within the context of high-quality professional development. Instead of focusing on Alma’s seemingly preordained “wildness,” for example, Lucy made the choice to draw her own conclusions about Alma. In the process, Lucy was sometimes able to remove the stigma placed on Alma and to see ways in which the context could be more responsive to Alma’s linguistic needs. Although frequent school cancellations due to weather and Alma’s absenteeism made it impossible for Lucy to apply what she was learning to Alma’s instruction with any consistency, Lucy did apply this learning to the other EB students in her classroom. In other words, she began to see learning and development in students she had previously positioned as FAILURES.

Over the duration of the PD course, I used readings, discussion, explicit instruction, and blog responses in an attempt to stabilize discursive shifts such as Lucy’s by offering additional mediation relative to each participant’s own efforts and observations about their own students. Kliewer and Biklen (2007) argued that local understandings of students are critical to the inclusion, or citizenship, of students with disabilities; I likewise contend that local understandings are critical to the “increasingly sophisticated citizenship” of EB students. The same is true for teachers who are increasingly marginalized in the very educational system that depends on them. The professional capability of teachers is increasingly denied—and in the process, their position as stakeholders—which justifies their
exclusion from citizenship in the educational policy world as well.

When teachers are not allowed to have input into the curricula of their classrooms, they are effectively denied votes—citizenship—in the educational community. When these same teachers then insist on having input, a broader neo-liberal educational system insists on containing the teachers. For example, new legislation that weakens or removes the collective bargaining rights of teachers may be enacted. This same mechanism is, of course, at work in the classroom that includes marginalized students. When Alma is denied citizenship in her classroom, she insists on having a voice—literally—by continually engaging in loud conversations with whomever will listen. The local educational system (teachers and administrators) responds to her attempts at inclusion with frequent reapplication of the FAILURE label and suspensions. Lucy attempts to change Alma’s behavior through a mix of strategies—some of which are typically considered effective and some of which seem destined to result in failure from the start (e.g., pairing Alma “with another student who is failing” in a sink-or-swim context).

The notion of local understandings aligns well with the essential understandings of mainstream teachers of ELLs. After all, there is no ‘normal’ human being, yet for those who are part of stigmatized social groups, the threat to identity is significant. Just as their students

36 For example, two ways to silence the voice of teachers in their own professions are through exclusion from appropriate ongoing professional learning opportunities or through the issuance of highly restrictive mandates at either the state or local level about what curriculum must be used (e.g., the “reading fluency” program that Rachelle was told to use with Sofia and her peers).

37 For example, moving Alma’s seat closer to the teacher’s most frequent location in the classroom is an example of proximity interference—a tactic supported by classroom management research.
are positioned as FAILURES, so too are teachers dis/abled by the neoliberal pursuit of ability-as-test-scores—and the attendant cutbacks in all-too-necessary PD funding (Reutzal & Clark, 2014). The value of a human being’s identity is embedded in his or her own culture, and teachers must be culturally responsive in order to accept the validity of that identity in a cultural context other than the dominant mainstream.

As an individualistic culture, the United States values the concept of independence much more than community-oriented cultures. This is not to say that parents in community-oriented cultures do not worry about whether their children will be smart enough to succeed, but U.S. culture tends to view intellectual ability as a fixed characteristic (e.g., IQ) and many cultures do not. Nevertheless, the presumption of capability grows from this foundational belief—the local understanding—of a student. Inclusive teachers trust that all their students have value, intelligence, and imagination. It is in providing appropriate instruction and a warm, welcoming environment that education professionals enact local knowledge and communicate the belief that students can combine those elements in order to develop language and content-area understandings. Before the school community can see the capabilities, it has to believe they are there for any student.38

Rachelle had questions about her student Sofía’s apparent lack of progress in oral language and literacy skills; yet she seemed to need only my encouragement and permission to use a meaning-centered approach instead of the (multiple) scripted programs she was provided. I brought her a half-dozen wordless books, and she used a combination of these and books with very simple texts. In rejecting a scripted program that was purported to be

38 An example of a capability-based school is the new K-12 Dr. William W. Henderson School in Dorchester, MA.
for ESL specialists and instead choosing instructional methods that she believed would address her student’s socio-historical background, current language capabilities, and interests, Sofia rapidly progressed. This happened in spite of significant instructional time lost to testing over the duration of the PD course.

Rachelle and I had two brief conversations about what Sofia could do and her history, as well as Rachelle’s concerns. After the first meeting, Rachelle began implementing the plan I had suggested and saw immediate results. She voiced no further concerns about Sofia for the rest of the PD course. However, individual and cultural discourses often includes contradictory messages and Rachelle was inconsistent about her capability-based approach. In conversations about Alma, she used the same deficit discourses about Alma that the others did. However, Rachelle’s language and actions related to Sofia indicated some understanding of the affordances of instruction based on capability. Because Rachelle missed the last three weeks, it is not possible to draw further conclusions about how her language might have further shifted if she had continued to participate.

There is no doubt that factors such as a lack of literacy in the first language, a lack of access to appropriate scaffolds in the classroom, and a lack of previous formal schooling typically contribute to EB students taking much longer to catch up with their peers, but the problem need not be these “lacks.” The problem may be the educational system’s lack of preparedness to accommodate these differences. It is perhaps more useful to say that factors such as a lack of bilingual literacy instruction for students and a lack of appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers result in a low probability of EB students’ success in mainstream classrooms. Education Professionals must be provided with adequate funding for linguistically and culturally diverse programs. There must be more
support for bilingual support of students identified with LDs. There must be regular opportunities for highly-structured, high-quality PD for teachers so that in turn they can provide students with explicit instruction in school procedures, cultural rules, and the discourse of the mainstream classroom—including the language and cultural beliefs of privilege and power. Importantly, this study illustrates the crucial role of conceptually based PD courses. Although teachers were provided with individual activities illustrative of a specific concept—for example, examples of how to provide comprehensible input—the primary focus of the PLC remained how this specific concept could be put in dialogue with the pedagogy of supporting EB students in the acquisition of academic language skills. SCT posits that transformative learning cannot take place without an understanding of both the conceptual and experiential levels of a given skill or idea. This study illustrates that in order for stigma and stereotype discourses to shift, the ideas that are slated to replace them must be explicitly mediated within a safe and supportive community such as that of the PLC. In order for the ideas to be meaningful for the teacher-participants of this study, there had to be support among the teachers and from me to help the teachers recognize how they could effect change in the learning contexts of their EB students, as well as how the resulting capabilities—of both the teachers and their students—reflected those changes.

Education professionals at each school must consciously make the decision to discard the deficit discourses about EB students—with the support of PD such as that provided in this study that provides new ways of talking about the excitement and the frustration of teaching so that the latter does not become the discourse—and focus on building robust lessons that provide multiple points of entry and multiple ways for students to show their developing knowledge and skills.
Implications for Teacher Education

Second-language acquisition is never located entirely in the student. It is subject to the same processes of learning that all learning is, and these processes are dependent on the explicit and implicit mediation of the learner’s context. The language that teachers choose to use with their students is always in the context of some sort of storyline—even when the storyline is a lack of engagement and a lack of inclusion in learning activities—which means that the language is always positioning the students in specific ways.

The words used with the students are infused with meanings that not only further their language development but also become part of their identities in the context of the classroom discourse about them and around them. Where stigma exists, it is taken up. Where stereotype exists (and it always exists until a local understanding of the individual takes its place), it is taken up. A stereotype may be directly incorporated into a student’s identity in the English-speaking school context. It may be indirectly incorporated through the process of stereotype threat. It may be responded to through constant positioning on the part of the learner to be as much like the dominant culture’s members as possible, crafting an identity that implicitly rejects his or her former one.

Yet the ideal developmental trajectory (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Tse, 1999) (in terms of psychology, employment, academic achievement, and financial outcomes) sees EB students develop into bilingual, bicultural adults with integrated identities as members of a multilingual world in which they are valued for all the language they have at their disposal and as well as their intercultural competence as individuals who have navigated multiple cultural contexts. Thus the role of the teacher of EB students is: (1) to foster the development of EB students’ academic and social vocabulary in oral and print literacy
contexts; (2) to foster the inclusion of EB students of all levels in the learning objectives of every activity; and (3) to provide a warm, welcoming environment where space is provided for EB students’ languages and home and school cultures. Education professionals must provide students with access to “Standard English” in order to provide them with access to the language of prestige and power in the United States, but they must not do it in a way that negates or devalues the language and language varieties the students already have.

Of course, doing the above frequently means a shift in the way rights and duties are assigned in the classroom. This shift can only occur when teachers have feelings of capability regarding those duties. When Lucy says, “We’re just learning to be better teachers,” she gives voice to the beginning stages of this shift. Here, the illocutionary force of Lucy positioning herself as an empowered teacher is placed in stark contrast to earlier instances in the PD course in which Lucy positioned herself a burdened one. Furthermore, Lucy now positions the students earning “As and Bs” and the students who are “failing” as all moving forward in their understanding. While Lucy is clearly still struggling to disentangle the notions of disability and second-language learning, she repositions the students as capable, thus suggesting a developing understanding of the critical role that linguistic supports play in her science instruction. Lucy’s evolved thinking accordingly provides an excellent example of the importance of being able to see learning as a dynamic process.

Through the implementation of appropriate teaching methods and culturally responsive pedagogies, EB students may be positioned by the school environment in ways that support their success. Conversely, they may be positioned in ways that constrain or even impede their oral-language and literacy development (across their home and school languages). Likewise, teachers can be positioned in the ways that support or constrain their
professional practices. When school policies reintroduce much-needed professional development—especially in an area as sophisticated as methods and pedagogy for teaching all learners inclusively—they reposition teachers as professionals capable of making instructional decisions in complex contexts with the goal of promoting academic oral-language and literacy skills.

The existing literature emphasizes the importance of providing PD over an extended period of time, and the findings of this study support this. The primary complaint among this study’s teacher-participants regarding the study design was that it did not allow for enough time between meetings to thoroughly explore the new methods and activities that had been taught. As discussed in the next section, this feedback will be incorporated into the design of the next research cycle. This study also confirms existing research supporting the use of PLCs, dialogic interaction, and self-reflection. It is, of course, important to provide multiple ways for participants to demonstrate their thinking. While Ellen took advantage of all the opportunities to engage, Kiera wrote detailed and lengthy blog entries, but spoke much less frequently than her peers in the meetings. Lucy engaged often and at length in the discussions, but admitted she did the blog entries more out of duty than a desire to communicate and accordingly produced fewer entries. Rachelle, who missed the last three meetings because of illness (a situation that might have also been circumvented with more time between meetings), wrote few blog entries, but did write an entry during the period of time that she was sick. The multiple ways of engaging with the material (reading, discussing, and applying it in the classroom) were effectively multiple methods of mediation that helped the participants to learn new ways of teaching and positioning their EB students.

Ultimately, this study contributes to Van Langenhove and Harré’s (1994)
work on positioning and stereotype through the evidence of stereotype and stigma shift that came with increased knowledge and understanding within the PD course. This relationship is represented in the following diagram.

![Diagram showing the relationship between Mediated PD in a PLC, Sterotype or Stigma Shift in Schools, and Positioning]

Figure 7.1: Grappling with Stereotype Shift via Positioning Theory in Teacher Discourse

Through the implementation and analysis of a PD course designed for teachers of EB students in a rural Pennsylvanian school district, this study sheds light on the role of explicit mediation and learning in shifting the stereotypes of individuals, as demonstrated in the shifting positions of others in the discourse of the speaker. As more cycles are completed, I intend to further explore the relationship among the theoretical ideas presented in the PD, the PLC discussions, and shifts in positioning that might point to reductions in stigma.

While it does not answer Van Langenhove and Harré’s question about how to make revised private stereotypes become cultural ones, this study raises the question: Would changes made over the course of many cycles at the same school produce a reduction in the
percentage of EB students referred to special-education programs, a reduction in deficit language discourse away from the PLC, or a new way of talking about previously marginalized and stigmatized students?

**Design Modifications for the Second Cycle of Research**

Design research is implemented in successive iterations that build on knowledge generated from the previous cycles. This section considers the pragmatic knowledge gained from the study with the intention of making the PD course more effective and better-suited to the specific needs of practicing teachers in a PLC. Of primary importance to the second cycle of research’s design is addressing the central concern expressed by teachers in the first iteration of the course: the need for more time between meetings. Accordingly, in the second cycle of the design study, I plan to spread the PD course meetings over 30-32 weeks rather than 8 weeks, thus allowing for approximately 3 weeks between meetings.

Additionally, the second cycle of research will incorporate one of the desires voiced by teachers in Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll’s (2005) work—observing an ESL specialist teach in his or her own classroom. I plan to implement a pilot co-teaching partnership of six lessons in which the two teachers take turns teaching and observing. These lessons will be spread over the PD course meetings. Because I do not anticipate the participation of additional co-investigators in the second cycle, this will be piloted in the second cycle as an option open to a limited number of participants. Some participants will receive this model and others will not.

Changes in course content will include:
1) Although the site of the second cycle will be different, the locations currently being considered are, like Riverview school district, members of the WIDA consortium and therefore use WIDA materials. The PD course will include familiarizing participants with WIDA standards, Can-Do descriptors, and how to use them to craft language objectives within dual-objective lesson plans. In order to use these resources effectively, teachers will need to obtain information on each target student’s WIDA levels, as determined by the student’s placement on the ACCESS for ELLs test.

The reason for the addition of WIDA materials is because these tests typically position the students in very specific ways through the use of quantitative values placed on students’ language development in each specific language domain (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Explicit mediation with the WIDA materials can be used to help teachers visually understand: (a) a trajectory of second-language development and (b) a capability framework, since the WIDA materials are written to emphasize what students can do at any given “level” of development. Additionally, the WIDA standards and Can-Do descriptors serve as mediational tools for showing teachers how to develop specific lesson plans that provide varying entry points for student participation at the students’ particular skill levels across the domains (as well as entry points to a discussion about multiple modalities in EB instruction).

2) With the additional time afforded to instruction that will be created by extending the total time of the PD course, there will be a transition from materials written specifically for a Sheltered Instruction (SI) pedagogical model to materials introducing culturally responsive pedagogy and content-based instruction and that are more directly derived from SCT second-language acquisition research.
An example of concept-based instruction utilizing culturally responsive methods and that is based on SCT second-language theory is a collaborative, project-based unit on parallel and series circuits in which students are given cardboard boxes, LED lights, wiring, switches, and batteries, and the challenge to create a four-room “house” in which some rooms are wired so that all lights come on in a particular room with a single switch, but all of the rooms are independent of each other—yet powered by the single battery. Furthermore, each student must create a final report that includes both a diagram of his or her finished “house” using appropriate symbols and a short description of how he or she reasoned through creating the house.

This project utilizes the following pedagogical principles: (1) a meaning-infused application of content theory; (2) cooperative learning that necessitates the use of both social and academic language to achieve the learning objectives; (3) choice within limited parameters, which allows for problem-solving and personal investment (the houses themselves often are elaborately presented, complete with furniture and window decorations) and which provides additional opportunities for connections to background knowledge as students visualize electrical circuits in the context of their own varied homes; (4) the opportunity to find research sources in languages other than English, creating the opportunity to build literacy skills and academic vocabulary in the home language, which is associated with gains in the second language as well; and (5) the potential for the use of multiple literacies to negotiate the meanings of those multiple literacies used in the meaningful communicative task.

Since these methods are woven into existing methods of sheltered and bilingual English instruction, this is less of a shift in teaching methods and more of a foregrounding
of the mediation already provided in the PD course about the key role of integrating students’ home languages and cultures into everyday instruction. It likewise provides a more culturally and linguistically robust classroom for all students, including those coming to school with only Standard English as a language variety. These two additions will fill the extra time created by lengthening the time of the professional development course.

Finally, teachers will be provided with user-friendly cameras to record their own lessons for the purpose of more in-depth reflection on their blogs. Occasionally, research assistants may help with videotaping teachers at the teachers’ request for days when cooperative learning or stations are being used and a single camera in a static position would be insufficient.

**Epilogue**

In the end, nine weeks of a PD course with seven meetings in total was simply not enough to cover it all. It seemed like we were only just getting started when the course reached its end. Ellen was beginning to discursively separate language-learning and general-learning problems and to recognize how the changes she had made to the learning context had resulted in Amos’s capabilities being made visible in ways that were meaningful to school culture and measures. Kiera was making progress in understanding the educational contexts in which Mateo was more engaged and less disruptive. Sofía was rapidly expanding her oral language, which Rachelle was confident would eventually lead to development of her print literacy skills in English. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Lucy was looking beyond Alma to the rest of her class and seeing the ways in which her previous good
instruction was not enough to meet the linguistic needs of her EB students. This was leading to more frequent implementation of the new strategies, which resulted in Lucy feeling more effective and empowered as a teacher.

As the story of Alma suggests, even at the course’s end, I recognized that we were not done learning. Yet I also recognized that Amos, Alma, Mateo, and Sofía were being recognized for their capabilities more frequently and in the process, the participants were beginning to see themselves as more capable teachers of EB students.

One week into the following fall semester, I received an email from Kiera wanting to know when we could start again. All of the original participants wanted to continue with the course, and Kiera had convinced all of the high-school guidance counselors to participate as well. Unfortunately, our teaching schedules conflicted and prohibited us from beginning the second cycle immediately. Yet the teachers’ efforts to organize the second cycle of the course was evidence of the difference the course had made to the teachers, and of their perceptions of the difference it had made for their students.
References

22 PA Code, Chapter 49, 13(b) in PA Bulletin (2007), Vol. 37, No 38.


Diversity and Excellence. Retrieved from:
http://escholarship.ucop.edu/uc/item/65j213pt.


Appendices
Appendix A: Letter from Superintendent

From: [Superintendent]
CC: [Principals of Riverview Schools]
Subject: Re: Clearances
Date: Wed, Nov 6, 2013 12:50 PM

Alaska,

I sent out an email to my principals and they are excited to get things moving. So welcome to Riverview School District. We would appreciate any help you can provide to improve our ELL and multicultural climate. In return, we will try and accommodate with teachers, supporting technology and building availability for meetings.

As we discussed, here are the names and contact information for three principals with the largest ELL population.

[Ms. A, Ms. B, Ms. G, and Mr. D contact information]

Best wishes as you complete your program and thank you for considering to work with Riverview School District,

[Superintendent]

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39 Identifying text modified.
Appendix B: Letter to Principals

November 00, 2013

Alaska Black Hults
PO Box 384
Pine Grove Mills, PA 16868

Name
Address
Address

Dear [Principal name]:

My name is Alaska Hults and I am a former classroom teacher and currently a doctoral candidate at Penn State University. I am writing in the hopes that some of your teachers might want to work with me for about 8 weeks—or approximately the length of the third marking period. Specifically, I am looking for teachers who have one or more English language learners in their classrooms about whom they have some questions. These teachers might be wondering how to more fully include the student in their regular classroom activities.

I will be helping the teacher learn new ways to include their English language learners in the lessons they are already doing with the whole class. The teacher will be helping me understand the challenges and benefits of the rural PA classroom for his or her English language learners. At this point in time, I am only looking for teachers who would like the extra support and for whom this would be a completely voluntary project. I will be providing the teachers who participate with refreshments during our meeting, and offering them the chance to co-author a conference presentation and present with me at a professional conference in Pennsylvania such as the Keystone State Reading Association conference, which will be in State College next year.

In the past I taught 4th grade in rural Arizona on the Navajo reservation and in semi-urban and suburban California. My classroom in each of these settings was a mainstream (typical) fourth-grade class, which included students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. I hold a current K-6 PA teaching credential, and the ESL program specialist certificate. At Penn State I teach the Introduction to Teaching English to English Language Learners for students who are pursuing K-12 certification in their content area. Participating teachers for this study can be from any grade.
Teachers would be using inclusive approaches intended for use with English language learners. I will be sharing approaches as well as resources for lesson ideas and teacher-oriented books.

Teachers would be talking to each other as well as me, so that teachers would continue to have contacts within the district with whom they could exchange ideas long after the project is over.

Finally teachers would videotape some of their own lessons and share that video with me. I would provide them with simple video cameras for this purpose.

I have tried to be detailed in this letter without including an overwhelming amount of information. Nevertheless, you may still have questions. Please write me at abh173@psu.edu or call me at 000-000-0000 and I can answer your questions over the phone or set up a time for us to meet.

Thank you very much for your time and attention to this letter.

Sincerely,

Alaska Black Hults
Education Researcher
The Pennsylvania State University
Appendix C: Procedures Handout for Prospective Participants

Mediating Inclusion
Alaska Black Hults
814-933-6082; email: abh173@psu.edu
The Pennsylvania State University

A summary of the research

This study uses design research for the purpose of exploring how professional development about a teacher’s emergent bilingual student (aka English Language Learner or ELL) helps or hinders the teacher in being able to include the student in all aspects of the classroom.

The research examines the current social context of the mainstream K-12 classroom with native speakers of English, bilingual students, and emergent bilingual students, and teachers trained in content-area methods that presuppose a classroom consisting primarily or entirely of monolingual English speaking students. In other words, many of us learned classroom methods that assume the students are all equally proficient in English.

Topics that culturally and linguistically responsive teachers really need to know will be discussed with input from the teacher participants, and strategies designed to fully include all learners, including those with varying levels of language proficiency, will be introduced to teachers. Importantly, the exact content of the professional development will be decided based on the teacher-perceptions of need. For example, if a teacher has a concern about a student who will not stay seated during group work, I will bring to the discussion strategies for engaging culturally and linguistically diverse students in small group work.

Procedures

Teachers will meet once a week with me as a group. If we have elementary-level teachers interested in participating and secondary-level teachers interested in participating, one group will meet with me at the elementary school and the other at the high school or middle school. We will meet weekly through the third marking period (this is negotiable). Teachers will video-tape their own lessons each week and submit one video every other week that they feel best represents their efforts to try out the strategies/methods. As I mention in the parent permission slip for video-taping—all names, including the school, the county, and the participants—will be kept confidential. Most of the videos I will never see, and the teacher is only sending me her best. I will supply the cameras.

Teachers will participate in a password-protected blog during the week in which they will reflect on their teaching for that week. At the end of the marking period these data will be downloaded. The teacher will get a copy of what she wrote and I will get a copy. The data
will then be deleted from the blog and the blog deleted.

The weekly meetings will be videotaped\(^\text{40}\), primarily to assist me in being able to tell who said what when I transcribe the meetings.

\(^{40}\) The quality of the audio recordings proved sufficient, so I did not videotape the discussions for this cycle.
Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Mediating Inclusion
Principal Investigators: Alaska Hults, 163 Chambers Building, The Pennsylvania State University abh173@psu.edu, 814-933-6082
Advisor: Dr. Kathleen M. Collins, 159 Chambers Building, The Pennsylvania State University, Kathleen@psu.edu, (814)865-2203

1. Purpose of the Study: Interested teachers will be provided professional development on inclusive teaching strategies and methods related to their emergent bilingual students. The purpose of this research is to explore how the professional development affects or doesn’t affect their professional relationship with those students.

2. Procedures to be followed: At the beginning of the study you will be asked to describe in writing the emergent bilingual student in your class about whom you have concerns and for whom you would like to learn additional inclusive teaching strategies. Each week you will meet once with the researcher and other interested teachers to discuss how the student is responding to any strategies you tested out that week or have decided to implement long term in your class. These weekly meetings will be for one hour a week during the third marking period. You will be asked to videotape lessons in which you use a strategies or strategies from the training and submit one of the videos you want to talk about in the meeting to the researcher every other week (a total of 3-4 videos). You will also have access to a private blog to which you will write a short (3-4 paragraph) personal reflection about things that happen during the week that seem relevant to our discussions and receive ongoing responses from the researcher and any of the other teachers you have given access to. The strategies and methods are intended to be incorporated into typical routines and instruction for your grade level. I will keep copies of your written responses, and keep a copy of any video you submit to me as data for the study.

3. Benefits: Your student may understand your regular classroom materials and lessons at a deeper level and therefore may be more engaged in the lessons as taught in the regular classroom. Your student may feel better prepared for the class assignments and be able to participate more fully in any work and class discussions in the regular classroom. You may find that other students in your class who are native speakers of English benefit from the same strategies and modifications suggested in the training.

4. Compensation: If you would like to prepare a presentation based on our discussions and video data, I would be happy to help you prepare for the professional organization of your choice and to present with you if you wish. Your school district has offered to provide you with ACT 48 credit in exchange for your participation.
5. **Duration/Time:** We will meet with as a group of teachers once a week over the period of the third marking period for an hour each session. You may spend some time each day starting and stopping a small video camera and jotting down reflections following lessons in which you test drive or use a strategy from the professional development.

6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be stored and secured in a password protected external hard drive in the locked home of Alaska Hults. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. You town, school, and school district will be referred to by pseudonym. If you speak about the contents of the professional development discussions outside the group, it is expected that you will not tell others what individual participants said. Video data will be destroyed on or before March, 2022 (8 years from the completion of the project).

7. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Alaska Hults at (814) 933-6082 or write her at abh173@psu.edu with questions, complaints or concerns about this research.

8. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to participate in this research is voluntary. You can change your mind about participating at any time. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

9. **Storage of Data:** Audio/Video recordings will be stored in password protected external hard drives. They will be destroyed on or before March 30, 2022 (8 years from completion of the project). Only Alaska Hults, and Dr. Kathleen Collins will have access to the recordings.

   - I AGREE to allow work (i.e., copies of any writing generated by the participants) generated by this research to be released to the principal investigator and the research team of this study for research and educational purposes as described above.

   - I DO NOT AGREE to allow work (i.e., copies of any writing generated by the participants) generated by this research to be released to the principal investigator and the research team of this study.

10. **Video Data:** Audio/Video recordings will be stored in password protected external hard drives. First and foremost, their purpose is to assist accurate transcription of the data. In a meeting of several people, video is used to identify exactly who is speaking. With your permission, very brief segments of the video may be used in professional presentations of the research results. Your words are simply more compelling than the researcher talking about your words. The video will be destroyed on or before March 30, 2022 (8 years from completion of the project). Only Alaska Hults, and Dr. Kathleen Collins will have access to the recordings. Once segments useful to the study have been chosen, the remainder of the recordings will be destroyed (unless approved for archiving). Segments cannot be used for any purposes beyond those detailed and consented to below.

   - I AGREE that segments of the recordings made of my participation in this research may be used for conference presentations.

   - I DO NOT WANT segments of the recordings made of my participation in this research to be used for conference presentations.
You are consenting to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

_____________________________________________  ___________________
Participant Signature                          Date

_____________________________________________
Print Participant Name

_____________________________________________  ___________________
Alaska Hults, Principal Investigator          Date
Appendix E: “Case Study” Prompt

Name: _____________________________  Grade/Course(s): ___________________

Title of Project: Mediating Inclusion

Principal Investigator: Alaska Hults, [address], The Pennsylvania State University, [email], [phone]

Case Study

When you volunteered for this study, you did so because you have some questions or concerns about one or some of your students who are English language learners and want to learn more strategies and methods that will help you include the student to a greater extent in the learning activities of the classroom. In the space below tell me what you know about the student (choose one of your students, if you have more than one that inspires questions or concerns) and what you want to know about the student or about teaching the student. You can write as much as you wish, but a typical description would be 2-4 paragraphs long and include the student’s history, his or her current participation in your class, and your questions and/or concerns.
Appendix F: Blog Post Protocol

Once a week, please submit a blog post. If it’s easier, type it up in Word and then copy and paste into the blog. Please use the following general outline.

**Individual Reflection** (probably 3-5 paragraphs, and not more than 2 pages) based on what you observed in your videos, as well as your general thoughts/recollections. Your reflection should:

- Address your method/strategy test-drives (strengths/weaknesses) from the week and what responses you saw in your students.
- Describe at least one difference between what you had planned and what you actually did, along with a detailed explanation of why the change occurred.
- Discuss any dilemmas/problems of classroom practice that you faced that week along with how you attempted to solve them and an assessment of your solution (Did it work? Why/why not? etc).
- Share (in detail) one of your values/assumptions/beliefs about teaching (language teaching or teaching in general) that was either supported or challenged based on a situation or incident that occurred during your lessons.
- Plan of action and rationale for changes/improvements to subsequent lessons.

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41 Video collection was abandoned due to persistent problems related to poor quality technology.
Appendix G: Curriculum Outline

A handout connecting descriptions of the target students and specific questions participants had to the course curriculum

Our 6 Students

Themes:
More than one of these children have:
• Behavior problems (little previous school culture experience, conflict between collectivist world view and individual world view, dislike of his or her school identity(ies)=constantly trying to derail them)
• Age-appropriate spoken language, but not academic language
• Formal identification of learning problems (IEPs)
• Delays in progressing as expected in either spoken or written English or concepts related to a specific content area (e.g., SS or Sci)

At least one student has:
• Poor perseverance, s/he does not appear to know how to stay focused long enough to find the answer, wants others to give it to him/her. (What are some possible causes for this from our readings that would suggest that her behavior could be reasonable from her point of view?)
• Poor basic communicative English skills
• A lack of consistent access to quality education in their first language—this is their first experience with real “school”

All of the students are in classes that:
• are larger than would be ideal,
• include other children who have behavior issues,
• are too brief in duration (43 minutes)

Although there were only four focus students, the original papers that teachers submitted sometimes listed two students about whom they had questions. In both cases I asked them to narrow their reflections to one of the students. In this outline I include all of the descriptions and all of the questions for the purpose of an inclusive curriculum.
Plan
We’ll start by talking about assumptions we have about language learning in the U.S., the way we talk about our kids (name them), and why it might be worth it to think differently/talk differently about and around them. We’ll spend this week noticing the circumstances under which our students are successful.

Because we have questions about behavior problems, which some of us wonder might be specifically related to culture issues, we’ll talk about language, culture and identity in Week 2. We’ll also talk about using graphic organizers this week.

Because we have questions about basic communication skills and academic language skills and what’s normal development, we’ll talk about these issues and specific methods that relate to them in Weeks 3, 4, and 5. We’ll talk about discussion protocols that allow for different degrees of spoken and written language to participate. We’ll talk about having language and content objectives for each lesson and how to include this instruction without adding a lot of extra time to the lesson. We’ll also talk about why language-learning problems get so tangled up in general-learning problems in the U.S. and why it’s important that we, the regular classroom teacher, think about this issue. Week 6 we’ll write our own language autobiographies this week and think about our own learning issues.

The last week will be week 7 and we’ll look back over the previous 6 weeks, and spend another week noticing what works with our students and reflect on what may or may not have changed.

January 27, Week 1: Fixed versus dynamic learning beliefs and identity
February 10, Week 2: Language, Culture & Identity—individualistic and collectivistic worldviews
February 17, Week 3: Academic Language (Cummins)
February 24, Week 4: Comprehensible Input (Krashen)
March 3, Week 5: Strategies for moving from introducing new concepts to mastering them
March 10\(^{43}\), Week 6: Student-to-Student Interaction and Student-to-Teacher Interaction
March 17, Week 7: Practice & Application
March 31, Week 8: Wrap-up.

\(^{43}\)Teachers wanted more time to implement new strategies, so we skipped March 10 and this topic was moved to March 17. March 17 was moved to March 24. March 31 was cancelled due to conflicts with the testing schedule, which had been changed to accommodate numerous school closings due to weather that winter.
Appendix H: Summary of Course Readings by Week

Week 1: Fixed Verses Dynamic Learning Beliefs and Identity


Chapters 1 and 2 describe the fixed performance and dynamic learning frameworks and research demonstrating the effect words that reflect these frameworks have on the learning behaviors of children.


Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the way language functions and the effect that teacher language has on the classroom environment. This is an accessible introduction to the notion that children’s capabilities shift as context shifts, and that teachers have control over the learning contexts in their classroom.

Week 2: Language, Culture & Identity—individualistic and collectivistic worldviews


This chapter examines how language is an inextricable piece of a person’s identity and how social mirroring about that language and culture affects a person’s conception of their own identity within a certain context such as school. It examines different ways school approach the topic of cultural and linguistic diversity (i.e., assimilation, cultural plurality, cultural responsiveness), towards establishing cultural responsiveness as the least harmful and most conducive to student success in the school. Stages of identity formation for CLD students are discussed with implications for school behavior.


This chapter outlines the role of having dual content and language objectives in Sheltered Instruction pedagogy.
Week 3: Academic Language (Cummins)


This chapter examines how language is an inextricable piece of a person’s identity and how social mirroring about that language and culture affects a person’s conception of their own identity within a certain context such as school. It examines different ways school approach the topic of cultural and linguistic diversity (i.e., assimilation, cultural plurality, cultural responsiveness), towards establishing cultural responsiveness as the least harmful and most conducive to student success in the school. Stages of identity formation for culturally and linguistically diverse students are discussed with implications for school behavior.


This chapter explains the importance of a carefully crafted introduction to each lesson that builds background and/or activates the prior knowledge of students. EB students may have significant background knowledge about a topic, but due to language barriers or cultural differences struggle to connect their existing knowledge or skill to the new content or skill. This chapter also introduces academic language and suggests ways to teach different types of academic language explicitly.

Week 4: Comprehensible Input (Krashen)


This chapter presents a variety of common techniques for making everyday instruction more comprehensible. For example, it discusses the importance of giving clear, complete explanation of assignments and avoiding the tendency to assume that students can figure out key details of the work implicitly.

Week 5: Strategies for moving from introducing new concepts to mastering them

This chapter explains the difference between cognitive, metacognitive, and language-learning strategies, gives specific examples of each, and suggests scaffolding techniques and tasks that may elicit higher-order thinking in students.

**Week 6: Student-to-Student Interaction and Student-to-Teacher Interaction**


This chapter discusses methods for encouraging more student engagement in lessons and activities through various configurations of peer- and student-teacher interaction.

**Week 7: Practice & Application**


This chapter describes and provides a history of the social construction of disability among linguistic minority students. It challenges the reader to consider ways in which difference is cast as disability and the ways in which labels dis/able students.


This chapter emphasized the importance of integrating the strategies and methods from the previous chapters into lessons consistently and naturally. It emphasizes the importance of hands-on tasks, using new academic language across content areas, and integrating language skills into all lessons.
## Appendix I: Transcription Key

1. plus sign(s) \(+\) indicates relative length of pause.
2. colon \(:\) a lengthened sound or syllable; more colons prolong the stretch.
3. m-dash \(\|--\) a cut-off or interruption.
4. markers of intonation
   a. \(\,,\) micro pause;
   b. \(\,.\) falling intonation;
   c. \(\,?\) rising intonation on last part of word or word in phrase
5. equal sign \(=\) a latched utterance, no interval between utterances
6. open brace \({\}\) overlapping talk, gestures, or talk and gesture, where utterances start simultaneously
7. brackets \([\,]\) a word or phrase replaced for clarity to refer to a thought or concept introduced in the conversation prior to a given excerpt
8. double parenthesis \(\((\,)\) description of other features of symbolic interactions, (e,g., gesture, nodding)
9. arrows \(<\,<\) the talk speeds up
10. arrows \(<\,>\) the talk slows down
11. italics \(text\) a word or sound is emphasized.
12. degree \(°\) signals the beginning and end of a phrase that is softer than normal
13. Laughter: \(°heh°\) Lucy has a laugh when she appears nervous or uncomfortable. I have indicated this laugh as \(°heh°\) with the number of syllables indicating the length of the laugh.

In contrast, the group sometimes laughs together. I have indicated this as a phrase in all caps ALL LAUGH or ALL LAUGH EXCEPT KIERA. This note appears between turn taking.
### Appendix J: Representative Instructional Strategies for Students with Learning Disabilities and Emergent Bilingual Students

**Instructional Strategies for Students with Disabilities**
- Grade on progress or effort
- Access assistive technology
- Provide access to large print
- Establish quiet space to deescalate
- Use developmentally appropriate reading materials
- Arrange seating for sensory needs
- Remove from distractions
- Provide amplification

**Instructional Strategies for Emergent Bilingual Students**
- Create print-rich classroom
- Teach integrated skills lessons
- Provide lesson outlines in L1
- Encourage L1 development
- Use age-appropriate reading
- Monitor BICS skills (L2)
- Monitor CALP skills (L2)
- Monitor acculturation process
- Send home notes in L1
- Value students’ cultural heritage

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<tr>
<th>Instructional Strategies for Students with Disabilities</th>
<th>Instructional Strategies for Emergent Bilingual Students</th>
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<tr>
<td>Grade on progress or effort</td>
<td>Create print-rich classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access assistive technology</td>
<td>Teach integrated skills lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide access to large print</td>
<td>Provide lesson outlines in L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish quiet space to deescalate</td>
<td>Encourage L1 development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use developmentally appropriate reading materials</td>
<td>Use age-appropriate reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrange seating for sensory needs</td>
<td>Monitor BICS skills (L2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove from distractions</td>
<td>Monitor CALP skills (L2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide amplification</td>
<td>Monitor acculturation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Send home notes in L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value students’ cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Herrera, Murry, and Cabral (2012, p. 250)
ALASKA BLACK HULTS  
Curriculum Vitae

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RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS AT PEER REVIEWED CONFERENCES


