Summer 6-13-2017

The Impact of Local-Control Accountability Plan Implementation on Long Term English Learners

John P. Sanchez Sr.

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THE IMPACT OF LOCAL-CONTROL ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION ON LONG TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS

Concordia University – Portland
College of Education
Doctorate of Education Program

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THE IMPACT OF LOCAL-CONTROL ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN IMPLEMENTATION ON
LONG TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS

John Paul Sanchez
Concordia University – Portland
College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Barbara Weschke, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee
Carmela Acosta-Cooper, Ed.D., Content Specialist
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Concordia University Portland
2017
Abstract

This qualitative multi-case study was conducted in California, using a selected sample of 20 local education agencies (LEA). This sample was utilized to analyze the effectiveness of how K-12 school districts are meeting the needs of long-term English learners (LTEL) while implementing the local-control accountability plan. The sample of local education agencies was comprised of school districts with student enrollments ranging from 1,500 to 30,000, located in urban, suburban, and rural communities. The results of the study revealed that 13 of 20 LEAs (65%) implemented interventions above and beyond the state required English language development standards. The study also reviewed each LEAs’ assessment results to determine themes in the number of LTEL students demonstrating acquisition of second-language literacy. English learner and LTEL cohort data on students attaining English proficiency posted by the state was analyzed. The study revealed differences between LEAs that implemented interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories, and LEAs that did not. Data trend patterns indicated that LEAs who utilized interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories produced less LTEL students than those LEAs that did not. The results of this study may impact how LEAs prioritize goals in their local-control accountability plans.

Keywords: long-term English learner, English learner, local-control accountability, interventions, academic literacy.
Dedication

It is with the greatest of appreciation that I dedicate this study to my mother Rita, whose inspiration, grit, and determination brought us to the United States for a brighter future. My two sons, JP and Noah who supported their father through this process. To Caryn, the love of my life, who walked along side me throughout the doctoral journey.
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“For the LORD grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding”
(Proverbs 2:6).

I would like to first acknowledge that it is by the grace of God that all things seemingly impossible are made true. Thank you, God for granting me the wisdom to listen and learn from all my teachers and mentors. Thank you, God for strategically placing all my teachers and mentors in my life at the right moment in time.

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To my committee members who picked me up and pointed me in the right direction every time I stumbled along the doctoral journey. To my dissertation committee Content Reader, Dr. Deborah A. Johnson-Blake, her dedication and care for the work I presented to her was balanced with rigor and compassion. Her attention to detail made the quality of the work presented here.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Only one-half of the students who enter elementary school as an English learners (EL) will become proficient in English before matriculating into the 7th grade (Olsen, 2014). This is in contrast to research-based pedagogical approaches that are known to reverse this trend, and yet, there is no consensus among educators as to how best to reverse the production of long-term English learners (LTEL). This statistic is the impetus for experts in the field to publish reports on existing programs that produce LTEL students, their motivation is to address this achievement gap of language acquisition, as it has the potential to continue to widen. Olsen’s (2014) work indicated that half of EL students who enter an English-language development (ELD) program in public schools will continue as a LTEL students in secondary education. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to ascertain if there is a need to align LTEL legislative requirements, and local-control goals with academic literacy practices based on the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2000; Menke & Kleyn, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). Moreover, this study specifically investigated the use of interventions aligned to academic literacy practices that included reading, writing, and oral discourse for school throughout the different subject areas (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Thus, the study aimed to answer the central question, how are local education agencies (LEA) addressing LTEL students in their local-control accountability plan goals?

States across the union have been analyzing data on the academic performance of long-term English learning (LTEL) students since the 2009–2010 school year to meet compliance requirements from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Although NCLB was enacted into law in 2001, LTEL accountability was not required from LEAs until the 2009–2010
school year as mandated by the U.S. Department of Education in the notice of final interpretations on Title III released in October 2008 and approved by the U.S. Department of Education in January and May 2010. This study sought to ascertain how LEAs have been addressing the needs of LTEL students since federal law began monitoring their progress. Olsen (2010), Menke and Chae (2010), and The Education Trust-West (2014) studied different academic language programs used throughout the states of California and New York to ascertain the progress of LTEL students. Each of these authors conducted surveys in particular local education agencies that met a predetermined diverse criteria of population size, and geographic locations in each state to attain a more accurate study of their central questions. These questions addressed LTEL student needs, such as reversing inadequate language acquisition (Olsen, 2010); and defining the characteristics of LTEL students in the secondary setting (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012). The research conducted by these authors served as a foundation for subsequent studies such as the current study.

**Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem**

There are two driving forces behind seeking the need for systemic support for LTEL students. One is the moral resolve of educators who want what is best for students (Greenleaf, 1991), the other is law and accountability that looms over education agencies such as Every Student Succeeds (ESSA) Act of 2015. Since the 2009–2010 school year, LEAs have been pressed to meet NCLB (2001) goals in English and mathematics. Each of the goals had to be met by significant student subgroups such as African Americans, Hispanics, Socioeconomic disadvantaged, Special Education, and English learners. The sanctions faced by LEAs who fell into the lower 5% performance range were nothing short of punitive (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). The NCLB Act expired in 2007; however, it remained in place until the Obama
administration ushered in ESSA in 2015. Although ESSA relaxed the punitive consequences for LEAs, it has not stopped monitoring student progress, including English acquisition from English learning (EL) students as well as LTEL students.

Regardless of federal mandates, educators across the nation recognized the growing need to address the phenomenon of LTEL students. Researchers such as Menke, Kleyn (2008; 2010), and Olsen (2010; 2014) published articles and reports revealing discrepancies in both student achievement as well as interpretation of what differentiates an English learning (EL) student from a LTEL student. Nonetheless, the average LEA will report about half of their EL students will become LTEL according to the NCLB definition of 5 years or more as an EL student who has not yet attained English proficiency (Olsen, 2014).

What causes the LTEL phenomenon? Three theoretical concepts aimed to frame the answer to this question and this study. First is the threshold theory, originally developed by Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977) and later elaborated by Cummings (2010). The threshold theory posits that second-language learners acquire the target language at a rate of efficiency that is interdependent of their first-language. Thus, the threshold of their second language is interdependent of their first language proficiency. Second, the objective of a successful language-development program is for students to achieve academic literacy and LEAs should adopt research-based interventions that will accomplish this. Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) described academic literacy to include reading, writing, and speaking. Literacy should be explicitly taught across all subject areas and teachers should require students to know multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

Menke and Kleyn (2010) also discussed research outlining policies that do not consider the interdependent hypothesis. Also known as the theory of linguistic transfer, the authors
explained that EL students who transfer academic literacies from their first language (L1) to the second language (L2) will not develop the target language at an efficient rate compared to EL students who maintain literacy skills in the L1. Additionally, the concept of subtractive education as studied by Valenzuela (1999), proposed that education policy that does not support academic scholarship in either the target language and/or the L1 is inherently inadequate for maximizing English proficiency. The conceptual framework of this study was supported by three theoretical pillars: the threshold theory (Cummings, 2010; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977), academic literacy theory (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007), and the theory of linguistic transfer (Cummins, 1979). Thus, programs that lack these fundamental methods create the phenomenon of LTEL students (Menke & Kleyn, 2010).

**Statement of the Problem**

According to studies conducted at national and state levels, about half of all EL students will continue on as LTELs after 5 years or more in American public schools (Olsen, 2010; 2014). The expectation is that all students become proficient in English after receiving 5 years of English language development in American public schools (NCLB, 2001). The problem is that there is a discrepancy between the expected time EL students are to acquire their second language, and students attaining proficiency within the 5–year expectation. Menken, Kleyn, and Chae, (2012) explained that the acquisition of a second language is measured in terms of mastery in the dimensions of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the target language. Thus, the typical English learner may attain proficiency of the L2 in 7 years of instruction. Herein lies a 2–year discrepancy between what is expected by law and what the research indicates to be attainable. Olsen (2010), Jacobs (2008), Menken, Kleyn, and Chae (2012) argued that academic
literacy, coupled with content area rigor starting in elementary education, is the key to minimize the production of LTEL students.

Jacobs (2008) explained that LTEL students are a phenomenological derivation of the EL subgroup. A phenomenon that is not new, however, the LTEL phenomenon became relevant with accountability from the federal government (NCLB, 2001, & ESSA, 2015). Discussions surrounding the LTEL phenomenon include research of English language development (ELD) program quality, teacher preparation, and pedagogy. This study concentrated its research in reviewing pedagogical approaches specifically aimed at mitigating the LTEL phenomenon. In the last 6 years, LTEL phenomenon research consistently pointed to the need of adopting academic literacy practices to existing secondary programs to meet the needs of LTEL students. While this is a viable endeavor, it does not address the question of quality of ELD programs at the elementary level that seems to be producing LTEL students. Olsen (2010), Jacobs (2008), Menken, Kleyn, and Chae (2012) argued that academic literacy, coupled with content area rigor starting in elementary education, is the key to minimize the production of LTEL students. In other words, it is not enough to deliver 1–2 hours a day of ELD and wait for the student to catch up linguistically, but rather incorporate accessible curricula strategies of academic literacy into the core subjects of mathematics, social studies, and science (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

Menken (2013) addressed the social linguistic influences that further impact the phenomenon of LTEL. Influences such as student mobility may bring about inconsistent educational settings; for example, an EL student may be placed in a bilingual classroom in one LEA, while the next LEA will mainstream the student with instructional aide support (Menken, Kleyn & Chae, 2012). However, influences outside of the school setting are also prevalent and must not be discounted even though there is not much that can be done as educators do not have
control of what happens before and after school. Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) explained that students bring literacies in context outside of school as well personal, social, and cultural experiences. These student experiences must be understood and leveraged in order to augment attainment of their proficiency in English.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to ascertain if there is a need to align LTEL legislative requirements, and local-control accountability goals with academic literacy practices, based on the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2000; Menke & Kleyn, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). The research conducted revealed patterns of educational practices by LEAs across California. Because this was a qualitative, multi-case study where pedagogical practices were compared to the number of LTELs an LEA produced over 6 years, the study uncovered best-practice models that were used throughout the state. Thus, this study found that there is a need to align pedagogical practices based on the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories. Alternatively, this study revealed that there are more efficient practices that may prompt future research studies.

In the spirit of servant leadership, this study may provide policy makers, teachers, LEA leaders, and program coordinators with information that can better guide future decisions about their programs and settings. Educators may use the findings of this study to support underrepresented language minority students affected by policy (Greenleaf, 1991). As leaders and stewards of education, this study aimed to address the inequity issue of producing LTEL students. There is an ethical contradiction that exists in the order of providing a free quality education to all students, in that it is not carried out for about half of EL students who enter an ELD program (Olsen, 2010). This writer is not suggesting that there is a deliberate agenda not to
provide a quality education to EL students, but rather it is a call to action for a recently uncovered and known phenomenon. Blankstein, Noguera, Kelly, and Tutu (2015) explained that institutional equity shortcomings can be addressed by these institutions providing equal amounts of compassion and leadership, compassion for those underserved, and leadership to do what is right in the face of cultural norms and practices that do not meet the needs of a subgroup. In the case of this study, politically driven policy for EL and LTEL students has outpaced what the research interprets as effective pedagogical practices (Olsen, 2014). Blankstein, Noguera, Kelly & Tutu (2015) argued that institutional change for equity is a life-long endeavor and that each objective is reached in collaboration with others, as opposed to adversarial strategies. To that end, champions of equity attain efficacy through the servant leadership quality of bringing people together by empowering and trusting them to do the right thing for students (Patterson, 2003).

Hence, this study sought to provide a tool that can be leveraged to address the LTEL phenomenon and thus bring about change to a growing gap in education. LTELs are produced over several years and involve multiple school sites and educators. According to the leading researchers in the field, LTELs are also influenced by contradicting policies and practices across LEAs (Jacobs, 2008; Menken, Kleyn & Chae, 2012; Olsen, 2014). Because the problem of LTELs is greater than one teacher, principal, school, LEA, or state, the problem could be addressed holistically. The data matrices composed in this study were designed to evaluate EL and LTEL programs and interventions of an LEA; they may be reused and duplicated to evaluate programs regardless of student enrollment size or setting. Additionally, the data matrices may be expanded to accommodate future assessment results, or adjusted for variables different from those studied here.
Research Questions

There are two research questions that this study aimed to answer. These questions were designed to potentially isolate solutions and best practices currently implemented in LEAs. Ideally, all LEAs should have articulated plans and goals for their LTEL students as well as their EL students. However, current local-control accountability policies do not require LTEL goals and that is why there was a need to ask the following questions:

RQ1: How well aligned are the LEAs’ interventions described in the local-control plan aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories?

RQ2: Do LEAs’ assessment results indicate an increase in number of LTEL students’ acquisition of English as a second language?

The first research question reflected the idea that 100% of LEAs are not just using interventions above and beyond the state’s English-language development standards and curriculum. However, this question also searched for the alignment of the interventions to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories. The second question of this study involved a search for the efficacy of the interventions articulated in the local-control accountability plan. However, this study was grounded on the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories and thus the research sought to find specific pedagogical approaches based on these theories (Cummings, 2000; Menke & Kleyn, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). The answers to the second research question were qualitative inasmuch that the data from multiple data points revealed how effective LEAs were meeting the needs of their LTEL students.

This study attempted to find relationships or differences in students attaining English proficiency who participated in interventions aligned to academic literacy practices founded on
the threshold, and transference theories for reducing the number of LTEL students (Cummings, 2000; Menke & Kleyn, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). Additionally, this study attempted to find relationships or differences on state assessment results that measured the number of LTEL students attaining English proficiency from 2009 to 2015. The state assessment data of LTEL students attaining English proficiency may or may not have indicated a reduction trend in LTEL students, thus demonstrating students' acquisition of second-language literacy.

**Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study**

As discussed in the problem statement, research conducted by experts in the field and advocacy groups for language minority students consistently found that current pedagogical practices are only effective for about half of EL students (The Education Trust-West, 2014). One must keep in mind that the efficiency standard set by NCLB (2001) is confined to a 5–year period wherein EL students are expected to have attained proficiency in English. Thus, the relevance and significance of this study were based on best practices by LEAs who were efficiently serving EL students within the 5–year paradigm of second-language acquisition and mastery (NCLB, 2001).

According to research conducted in 40 school districts in California from the year 2000 to 2009, there was little or no significant change in the percentage of ELs attaining proficiency in English (Olsen, 2010). This consistent student performance or lack of performance has prompted language-acquisition experts to explore and study LEAs who are experiencing success in this area (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012; Olsen, 2014; The Education Trust-West, 2014). Although there is theoretical research available in second-language acquisition and pedagogical practices, there are political influences that guide the decision-making process, as opposed to
allowing research and science to influence decisions. For these reasons, this studied employed both the theory and application of second-language acquisition through the lens of EL and LTEL education policy compliance requirements.

The relevance of this study appeals to two principles: ethical and technical. The ethical piece derives from the inherent need for educators to serve all students and thus provide an equitable educational program. Educational leaders are compelled to seek more efficient ways to maximize student learning for all students, and the LTEL population is a challenging phenomenon. The technical piece comes from the frustration that educators may feel from not meeting the needs of LTEL students and thus there is a need for both solutions and leadership in this area. This study sought to advance how practitioners address ethical and technical challenges that the LTEL phenomenon poses.

**Definition of Terms**

**ADA.** Average daily attendance is the mechanism used by the state to measure the size of the student population within a school or LEA (California Department of Education, 2014).

**AMAO.** Annual measurable achievement objectives defined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 to measure the academic achievement of EL students (NCLB, 2001).

**Benchmark English learner.** A student who is making yearly adequate progress attaining English proficiency along the 5–year continuum as outlined by NCLB, 2001 (Olsen, 2010, 2014).

**English learner (EL).** A student who is learning English and has not yet attained proficiency (Olsen, 2010).
**English-language development (ELD).** EL students with less than 3 years’ attendance in American schools are typically placed in English language development or ELD courses and or embedded ELD coursework (Olsen, 2010).

**First language (L1).** First language a student learns from birth (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007).

**Fluent English proficient.** According to Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta, and August (2013) a fluent English proficient student has successfully become proficient in the target language.

**Language minority.** Any primary language spoken at home by students other than English (Cummings, 2010).

**Local education agencies or LEA.** School districts locally controlled by an elected board of education (Lau v. Nichols, 1974).

**Local-control accountability plans.** Governing documents for LEAs wherein they outline plans, goals, and accountability matrices (Local-Control Funding Formula, 2016).

**Long-term English learner (LTEL).** Students who are EL, and have been receiving English-language development support classes for 5 years or more and are not attaining proficiency are considered long-term EL or LTEL (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007).

**Newcomer.** English learning student with less than 2 years of arrival to the United States and fewer than two years of education in the target language (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007).

**Reclassification.** The act wherein students meet stringent criteria set by the local board of education. Typically, the criteria incorporate language assessment exam scores, state assessment data for English language arts, teacher grades, and teacher recommendation (Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta, & August, 2013).
**School district.** A local education agency (LEA) that manages a set of schools and is governed by a locally appointed board of education (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965).

**Second language (L2).** Refers to a language that a student acquired or is in the process of acquiring after the first language (Cummins, 2010). If a student is already proficient in two languages, then the target language can be referred to as the L3, and so on (Cummins, 1979).

**Servant leader.** Defined by Greenleaf (1991) as the act of providing services which are necessary for others to succeed. Servant leadership is the act of seeking for opportunities to either remove obstacles or empower others to achieve the greater good (Patterson, 2003).

**Target language.** Refers to the language the educators seek to teach and the students seek to become proficient in (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007).

**Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations**

There is a significant discrepancy in defining when an EL student can be considered a LTEL student. According to Menken and Kleyn (2010), it takes 7 years or more to master a second language. Under this definition, students would not be considered LTEL until after 7 years of receiving English-language instruction. However, for the purpose of this study, it was assumed that the time standard for EL students to attain proficiency in English is 5 years as set by NCLB (2001). Thus, an argument can be made that a limitation of this proposed study is based on a definition of law as opposed to scientific reasoning. The governing boards of local education agencies have the ability to set policy in accordance to what their constituents deem as a priority. According to servant-leadership practices, this study may have the potential to provide stakeholders and leaders with resources to make decisions on programs and practices to better serve their language minority community (Patterson, 2003).
The sample size of LEAs studied in this research was 20 school districts across California. Although the selection of districts studied varied in student enrollment size, it was still a small sample representation. However, the dataset tools used in this study can be replicated and used in future studies for the purpose of validating or disproving this study’s findings. Although the LTEL phenomenon can be found in students as early as grades 5 and 6, the sense of urgency to better prepare EL students is more pressing in LEAs who serve grades K–12 since they are responsible for the student from elementary through graduation from high school. Additionally, selecting a consistent LEA format increased the internal validity of this study. For that reason, this study was delimited to K–12 school districts only, and thus omitting K–8 and high-school-only districts from the research.

Finally, Menken, and Kleyn (2010) explained that student transiency could cause inconsistencies of program placement.

LTELs come from all over the world, and typically fall into one or both of two main categories: (1) transnational students, who move back and forth between the USA and their family’s country of origin; and (2) students who while attending US schools have shifted between bilingual education, English as a second-language (ESL) programs, and mainstream classrooms with no language support programming. Thus [sic] students have experienced high degrees of inconsistency in their prior schooling, resulting in limited opportunities for academic language development in either English or their native languages. (p. 403)

The research conducted in this study was limited in that it did not directly study EL transiency or mobility rates. However, it did incorporate sample representation of urban, suburban, and rural school districts, providing a variance of high-to-low student transiency. It is important to note
that the most discerning factor that contributes to the phenomenon of LTELs is the inconsistent student exposure to academic language development (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007).

**Summary**

The central question of this study was to uncover if and how LEAs are addressing LTEL students in their local-control accountability plans, thereby creating opportunities for educators to serve language minority families better. Research in the field of second-language acquisition has revealed that there is an inherent performance gap occurring in ELD programs across the nation. Works by Alliance for Excellent Education (2007), Freeman and Freeman, with Mercuri (2002), and Olsen (2010, 2014) found that half of EL students who enter ELD programs in American public schools will continue as a LTEL after 5 years of instruction. By contrast, second-language acquisition experts’ research have also indicated that English-language development programs that do not include academic literacy strategies based on the threshold and transference theories (Cummings, 2010; Menke & Kleyn, 2010; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977) are less efficient and more likely to produce LTEL students (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012).

The language-acquisition achievement gap is consistent both in multi-year studies and across LEAs (Olsen, 2010). Through this examination of 20 school districts, this study attempted to find LEAs who are experiencing success as evidenced by student-achievement data specific to EL students attaining English proficiency. These results were then compared to pedagogical practices listed in districts’ local-control accountability plans. The results of this study aimed to find best practices by LEAs that can be replicated, thus potentially affording educators the ability to better serve EL students in their LEAs (Greenleaf, 1991).
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Discussing, evaluating, and understanding of long-term English learners (LTEL) and their academic achievement can be better understood by discussing current policy for English learners. For this study, and to answer the central question, how are local education agencies (LEA) addressing LTEL students in their local-control accountability plan, the literature review, and student-achievement data must be reviewed in tandem. In American public schools, the topic of English learners (EL) and the need to differentiate educational programs to meet these students’ needs have been legal requirements for over 50 years (Lau v Nichols, 1974). However, the topic of LTEL students only became a legal responsibility for LEAs when the No Child left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 became law. This study called for extensive research of federal laws that required compliance from the states. In turn, research of state and LEA policies was necessary to complete the literature review. Additionally, the research conducted by experts in the field of English-language development, second-language acquisition, long-term EL, and academic literacy was also reviewed through the lens of effective strategies, policy, and mandates.

Experts in the field link student-achievement data to pedagogical theory and practice to make the assertion that current English Language Development (ELD) programs are not meeting the needs of all ELs (The Education Trust-West, 2014). Student-achievement data for LTELs became mandatory during the 2009–2010 school year as required by the U.S. Department of Education in the notice of final interpretations on Title III, released in October 2008, and approved by the U.S. Department of Education in January and May 2010.

Even though experts in the field agree that current policy has not been adequate for a long time, this did not become evident until LEAs were required to report on it (Menken, Kleyn, &
Chae, 2012, Olsen, 2014). To that end, the literature review revealed a gap between research and policy. Menken, Kleyn, and Chae (2012) indicated that it takes 6–7 years for an EL student to attain English proficiency. English proficiency is defined as the student’s mastery in the dimensions of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Linquanti, & Cook, 2015). However, NCLB (2001) held LEAs accountable for EL students who did not reclassify as fluent English proficient in 5 years or less.

Literacy advocates such as Dutro and Kinsella (2010), Menken and Kleyn (2007), Olsen (2010), and advocacy organizations such as Alliance for Excellent Education (2007) have been calling for a change in ELD programs that would emphasize the need for academic literacy skills (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). The need to incorporate literacy skills is different from current ELD models mandated by policy that focus on language acquisition, as opposed to developing academic language (Freeman, Freeman, Mercuri, 2002). Thus, the research demonstrated that theory and pedagogical applications that are more academically rigorous are more effective (Olsen, 2010). Additionally, the literature revealed inconsistent practices in student placement. Specifically, Menken, Kleyn and Chae (2012), and Olsen (2014) indicated that one of the consistent factors found in the research is that LTEL students have been placed in mainstream core classes of science, social studies, mathematics, and electives without language support. These issues can be summarized as inadequate education for second-language learners, and inconsistent student-placement practices, factors that have contributed to the increasing numbers of LTEL students (Menke & Kleyn, 2008; 2010).

**Conceptual Framework**

The threshold theory, originally developed by Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977), and later elaborated upon by Cummings (2010), concluded that second-language learners acquire
the target language at a rate of efficiency that is interdependent of their first language. Thus, the threshold of their second language is interdependent of their first language proficiency. Therefore, inadequate bilingual programs or English-only programs that compromise first language proficiency impede the process of acquiring a second language (Menke, 2008). Practices that undermine the efficiency of second-language acquisition are considered subtractive, or subtractive educational practices (Menke & Kleyn, 2010). The objective of a successful language-development program is for language learners to achieve academic literacy, and LEAs should adopt research-based interventions that will accomplish this. Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) described academic literacy to include the following:

> [Academic literacy] includes reading, writing, and oral discourse for school. [It] varies from subject to subject. [Academic literacy programs] require knowledge of multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media. Is influenced by students’ literacies in contexts outside of school. Is influenced by students’ personal, social, and cultural experiences. (p. 2)

Menke and Kleyn (2010) further discussed research outlining policies that do not consider the interdependent hypothesis, also known as the theory of linguistic transfer, wherein EL students who transfer academic literacies from their first language (L1) to the second language (L2) will not develop the target language at an efficient rate compared to EL students who maintain literacy skills in the L1. Subtractive educational practices such as these create LTEL students (Menke & Kleyn, 2010; Menken, Kleyn & Chae, 2012). The concept of subtractive education as studied by Valenzuela (1999) proposed that:

School decisions, often based on wider policies steeped in assimilationist views, negatively impact the education and academic achievement of recent immigrant and US-
born Mexican students. She noted the importance of examining how students are schooled, rather than focusing only on how they learn, because, ‘the organization of schooling can be just as consequential to the academic progress of minority youth’. (pp. 26–27)

Hence, additive ELD education will incorporate academic literacy practices that will move LTEL students along the academic literacy continuum (Menke, 2013). Therefore, the conceptual framework for this study was supported by three theoretical pillars: The threshold theory (Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977), linguistic transfer theory (Cummings, 2010), and the academic literacy theory (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

Advocacy publications, such as Alliance for Excellent Education (2007), and The Education Trust-West (2012), have collected survey data from LEAs that specifically investigated how school districts were addressing the growing number of LTEL students in secondary education. These data provided policymakers with several indicators such as what programs are being implemented and how effective they are by cross referencing LEAs’ data. This straightforward method answered pressing questions, and at the same time left more questions to be asked. For example, how are LEAs funding their LTEL specific programs? What criteria are used to place LTEL students into the programs? Should there be a local-control accountability indicator that requires LEAs to address the needs of LTEL students? These methodological issues are not necessarily hindrances; however, they need to be revisited in future studies to reveal trends in their application by LEAs (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007; The Education Trust-West, 2012).

The literature on the central topic of LTEL students and how they are performing academically is a relatively narrow field of study. However, studies by advocacy groups and
state data revealed that the phenomenon of increasing numbers of LTEL students across the United States is not new as more and more emergent bilingual students are attending secondary schools (Jacobs, 2008; Olsen, 2010). Studies by Jacobs (2008), Menken, Kleyn and Chae (2012), and Olsen (2014) revealed inconsistencies of programs specifically designed for LTEL students in the secondary setting. To that end, the objective of this study was to explore the potential need to align local control accountability plans to meet the needs of LTEL students.

**Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature**

Olsen (2010) explained that school staff is expected to present EL students and parents with three program choices for their children to learn English upon initial enrollment. The choices were structured English immersion; parent waiver for the alternative program or bilingual education, and English-language mainstream. The intended outcome for these selections was to provide parents with choice in placing their children in programs other than bilingual education and to accelerate English acquisition. Olsen (2010) explained that critics of bilingual education cited inadequacies of bilingual programs and that EL students were enrolled in the program too long without achieving English proficiency. Such criticism prompted policy changes that caused LEAs to streamline their EL programs and focus their resources for compliance purposes (Olsen, 2010).

Olsen (2010) published a multi-year study of LTEL student achievement in comparison to program placements. The study of EL services and instructional settings categorized EL student placement into the programs where they received English instruction over 10 years, beginning in 2000 and ending in 2009. The study revealed that students not receiving EL services decreased from 5% to 1% while mainstream placement increased from 34% to 41% of the student enrollment. Equally, bilingual education and alternative programs diminished from
11% to 5% student enrollment. ELD student placement, and ELD with specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) student placement, remained the same throughout the 10–year study. ELD alone remained between 10–11% student enrollment, and ELD plus SDAIE remained between 47% to 49% student enrollment. Olsen (2010) concluded that the effectiveness of various English learner settings and programs showed placement of English learners into ‘mainstream’ classes without English learner support produces the worst outcomes over time. Furthermore, students who have been in these settings in elementary school are the lowest achievers in comparison to students in any specially designed English learner program. Thus, by middle school and high school, English learners who have been in any form of specialized instruction are more likely to score at grade level and less likely to drop out of high school than those who were in mainstream settings (Olsen, 2010).

Olsen’s (2010) study pointed out two distinct inconsistencies in program implementation. The first was that students who were not consistently enrolled in a specially designed course of study for EL students in grades K–6 were more likely to become LTEL students in grades 7–12. Secondly, students who did not consistently receive specially designed courses for EL in grades 7–12 were more likely to continue to underperform academically, compared to those students who receive EL services. There are several reasons these lapses in service occur, although the study (Olsen, 2010) did reveal some LEAs were out of compliance regarding student placement. There were more instances of lapses in service in grades K–6 due to attendance and transiency rates related to migrant work patterns. Olsen (2014) explained that in the 7–12 grade span the issues become more complex as students become more fluent in the dimensions of listening and speaking and typically do not score below a level of intermediate. Unfortunately, these students are typically placed in mainstream core academic classrooms with little to no ELD support. This
lack of support leads to poor academic achievement and student frustration. In turn, LTEL students in high school become disenchanted with education and opt to drop out and join their families in the workforce as they become old enough (Olsen, 2014).

More recently, a qualitative case study conducted by Bigley (2016) revealed inconsistencies in program implementation. The multiple case study analyzed the fidelity of implementation of the English as a second language (ESL) instructional program by teacher participants in the elementary school setting. Consistent with Olsen (2010; 2014), Menken, Kleyn, and Chae (2012), the qualitative research completed by Bigley (2016) supported findings of inconsistent practices that contributed to producing LTEL students. The method of study selected for Bigley’s (2016) research allowed for the author to triangulate five emerging themes that revealed both inconsistencies and opportunities for improvement. The themes revealed were: sociocultural best practices, sociocultural deficiencies, other practices, district ESL program, and teacher needs. Bigley (2016) indicated that the researchers’ themes that contributed to students being reclassified as LTEL versus not being reclassified to a regular program were subjective teacher recommendation, lack of quality instruction, and needed professional development. Thus, students were not being exited from ELL programs because of teacher recommendations for retention, even when the students met the criteria for advancement. Sometimes these recommendations were based on philosophical beliefs about isolating EL students from non-EL students until the demonstration of academic language mastery. Conversely, other ELD teachers believed that students become stagnant in the ELD programs and that once they have met the other criteria for promotion from an ELD program, they should join the regular program students to enhance their academic language and motivation with their peers. As well, the researchers found that high stakes testing was the emphasis for many
classrooms creating a lack of alignment between language goals and the actual curriculum (Bigley, 2016).

The qualitative case study afforded Bigley (2016) the ability to conduct an in-depth study of instructional practices in elementary schools in the context of the social constructs that influence day-to-day operations of the school setting. These cultural and social influences impact the attitudes and beliefs of the educators who make the final decisions of program implementation and thus providing the reader a broader understanding of the LTEL phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Some examples found in the description of Bigley’s (2016) research pointed to teachers’ professional decisions to either hold EL students from reclassifying as fluent English proficient, even though they met their district’s reclassification criteria, or mainstreaming EL students who do not meet district criteria. These examples point to inconsistent expectations of EL student placement as well as curriculum implementation.

As a result of inconsistent student placement practices and inconsistent implementation of ELD curriculum, as well as once-a-year English language proficiency testing cycles, LTEL students are often misplaced in secondary schools (Menken, 2013; Olsen, 2010). For example, a typical placement of a 9th-grade LTEL student with an English-language proficiency level of intermediate is placed in an ELD III course with students who have attended school in the United States three years or less (The Education Trust-West, 2014). The current adopted ELD textbooks such as Hampton-Brown curriculum, High Point (Schifini, Short, & Tinajero, 2001,) was originally designed to meet the needs of newcomer students making benchmark progress. Yet, the expected compliant placement does not take into account the distinct needs of LTEL students who have enrolled in public schools since 1st grade or earlier (Brooks, 2015; Menken, 2013; The Education Trust-West, 2014).
Some of the urgent issues surrounding legislative policy are the recognition, definition, and qualification criteria for LTEL students. The 2001 federal legislation, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), gave American educators a raw definition and accountability marker in its implementation of the Annual Measurable Achievement Objective 2 (AMAO 2) for those LEAs receiving federal Title III funds. Title III funds are specifically restricted for the purpose of increasing the attainments of English proficiency by EL students (NCLB, 2001). AMAO 2 specifically reports the language acquisition and performance of EL students enrolled in American public schools 5 years or more (Notice of Final Interpretations, 2008). Here, the federal government gives educators a definition of a LTEL student, which is a student who does not achieve proficiency in the English language after receiving 5 years of education in American schools that are receiving Title III funding (NCLB, 2001).

Historically, the ninth circuit court of appeals in the case of Lau v. Nichols (1974) ruled that a free and public education must guarantee an equitable education for EL students. Federal laws such as NCLB (2001) and Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 left states with a void to fill in with policy to address federal mandates. In the case of Lau v. Nichols (1974), states responded by adopting a policy that provided funding for curriculum, book adoption, professional development, credentialing, testing, and accountability (Olsen, 2010). For example, California used the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) to measure and report EL student language acquisition. The CELDT measures language acquisition through four dimensions: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (The Education Trust-West, 2014). The CELDT yields student measurements in 5 levels, and the adopted textbooks published by Hampton Brown (Schifini, Short, & Tinajero, 2001) were organized to move students one level per academic year: beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, advanced.
State and local policy also regulated students’ placement based on their performance on the CELDT (The Education Trust-West, 2014). Students scoring in the range of beginning to attain English proficiency to intermediate level of attaining English proficiency were to be placed in English Language Development (ELD) classes. These ELD classes were to be taught by ELD certificated teachers, and were expected use the state-adopted ELD curriculum in place of the English language arts core curriculum. Students who scored in the range of early advanced to advanced were to be placed in mainstream English language arts courses with support from specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) from a certified teacher. Additionally, EL students in secondary education were to have access to the core curriculum of science, social studies, mathematics, and elective courses all taught by Cross-Cultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD) credentialed teachers (California Department of Education, 2014). According to the requirements for the annual measurable achievement objective 1 (AMAO), the expectation was that every EL student was to make one CELDT level growth each academic year and thus reclassify or graduate from the English learning program after 5 academic years (NCLB, 2001).

Olsen (2010) characterized LTEL students as “English Learners who have been in United States schools 7 or more years, are orally fluent in English, but reading and writing below grade level, and have low literacy in the home language if any” (p. 7). Menke, Kleyn, and Chae (2012) concurred that LTELs stand apart from the two other groups of EL students because they are not new arrivals, but have been in the United States for seven or more years, many are born in the United States. Typically, these students are orally proficient in English and often sound like native speakers. Despite their oral proficiency in English, these students are characterized by low levels of academic literacy in both English and their home language (Menke, Kleyn, and
Chae, 2012). Menken (2013) also supported the assertion that LTEL students move along an academic literacy continuum distinctively different from EL students with strong literacy skills in the first language, thus LTEL literacy needs were not being met by traditional ELD programs. Therefore, the definitions of the leading researchers in the field and the NCLB compliance requirements leave a 2–year gap of interpretation as to whether LEAs must intervene and when they should intervene.

Hakuta (2000), conducted a case study of four distinct LEAs for the purpose of explaining how long it took English learning students to learn English. The significance of this particular study is that the author aimed to answer the politically charged question of how long does it take for school-age children to acquire English proficiency during a time where policy makers were interested in imposing accountability on educators. This study was published a year before NCLB (2001) became law, and the topic how to deal with EL students was being hotly debated. In other words, how long are American taxpayers expected to pay for an immigrant student to become English proficient? Hakuta (2000) made it clear that this study was simplified for the purpose of reaching a broad audience of experts and lay people alike. Thus, he simplified the discussion of the case study to two linguistic dimensions, oral proficiency and academic proficiency.

The importance of Hakuta’s (2000) work, as it relates to this research, is that experts in the field of second language acquisition were warning policymakers that there are marked differences between learning to speak English, and achieving academic literacy in English. To that end, the author selected two school districts in the bay area in California, one school district in Toronto, and one school district in Ontario Canada to conduct his case studies. Hakuta (2000) compared oral language assessment results from each of the school districts’ assessments and
discovered that in all four school districts students achieved oral proficiency in 2–5 years of receiving instruction. However, when reviewing state assessments used for native speakers to measure academic proficiency in the respective grade levels, the study revealed that it takes 4–7 years for EL students to achieve academic proficiency (Hakuta, 2000). Even more pressing, the author uncovered a pattern in the data that was cause for concern. First, there is definitely progress in all areas of academic English proficiency across grades. However, there is a considerable gap between EL student performance and what would be required for age-equivalent performance. Of greatest concern is that the gap noticeably widens in the 5th grade. First and 3rd graders are just one year behind native English speakers in basic reading, reading comprehension and broad reading, but at 5th grade, they are about 2 full years behind (Hakuta, 2000). Here again, Hakuta (2000) either noticed or predicted what we now know as LTEL students and their academic deficiency profile (Menken, 2013). To a large extent, Hakuta (2000) was addressing the rhetoric of the time as it pertained to the public perception of what it takes to teach English learners in American public schools. Moreover, the time and financial investment required to produce academic proficient second language learners. Today, the findings of Hakuta’s (2000) case study are consistent to more recent research conducted by Menken (2008; 2013), Menken, Kleyn, Chae (2007; 2012), and Olson (2010; 2014). Thus, Hakuta’s (2000) case study not only predicted the inadequacy of expecting EL students to attain academic English proficiency in 5 years or less, but his work also forewarned the phenomenon of producing LTEL students by focusing on oral proficiency as opposed to academic proficiency.

Although LTEL students have been in American schools since before Lau v. Nichols (1974), LEAs were not held accountable for their EL student achievement until NCLB (2001) enforced AMAO 2 in the 2009–2010 school year (Notice of Final Interpretations on Title III,
AMAO 2 held LEAs accountable for LTEL students attaining English proficiency in 5 years or less for the first time. Between the implied LTEL definition of 5 or more years from NCLB (2001), the works of Menken, Kleyn and Chae (2007), Olsen (2010) in where they argue that a student becomes an LTEL after 7 or more years, and research by the Alliance for Excellent Education (2007) who subscribe to the 6–year language acquisition model, there was no consensus between policy makers and researchers as to when an EL student becomes an LTEL.

Olsen (2010), Feldman and Kinsela (2005) identified a significant negative performance pattern among LTEL students; their findings posited that LTEL students performed well in the two dimensions of listening and speaking, usually scoring in the ranges of early advanced and advanced. By contrast, LTEL students typically scored in the ranges of early intermediate and intermediate in the dimensions of reading and writing (Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta, & August, 2013). Additionally, Olsen (2010) and Alliance for Excellent Education (2007) also identified that typical LTEL students have little or no literacy in their first language, leaving a void of language transference from the first language (L1) to the second-language (L2). This is critical as EL students need to score advanced in all four dimensions of reading, writing, listening and speaking to reclassify as fluent English proficient (Linquanti, & Cook, 2015).

**Review of Methodological Issues**

The methodological practice of collecting LTEL data is a straightforward task. As required by the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), states across the union have been analyzing LTEL specific data for compliance purposes since the 2009–2010 school year (Notice of Final Interpretations, 2008). By order of compliance, students who do not make the expected benchmark growth per academic year, and do not reclassify after the completion of their 5th academic year, that student is then reported as a long-term EL student. LTEL students were then
aggregated under the AMAO 2 accountability report from the department of education (NCLB, 2001).

Researchers in the field, such as Menke and Kleyn (2010), and Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta and August (2013), insisted that it takes 7 years to reach proficiency in the second-language in an adequate ELD program; thus, it left a definition gap in the method of collecting and interpreting data. On the other hand, because the method has been made consistent by law, the data collected since the 2009–2010 school year are consistent enough for researchers to study. The quantitative and qualitative data collected by Alliance for Excellence in Education (2007), Olsen (2010), Freeman, Freeman, Mercuri (2002), Menken, Kleyn, and Chae, (2012) were derived from surveying LEAs about the programs used in grades 7–12. Although the survey instruments varied from study to study, they looked for specifically designed programs for LTEL students, ELD programs for benchmark EL students, placement practices, teacher selection and preparation, professional development, master schedule course requests, and course availability for EL students. Surveys revealed that student placement practices were the consistent denominator that either minimized the development of LTEL students or augmented the numbers of students remaining in the EL program (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007; Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007; 2012; Olsen, 2010; 2014). For example, students who moved through different schools and moved in and out of bilingual programs, specially designed courses with language support, and mainstream settings typically continued in the EL program in middle and high school (The Education Trust-West, 2014). Additionally, Olsen (2010) agreed that LEAs that adopted specifically designed courses for LTEL students in secondary education had fewer students continue as LTELs. Thus, students who attended LEAs that focused their attention on LTEL student placement practices in middle
and high school, and provided specifically designed coursework to meet the literacy needs of the long-term EL, academically outperformed students who attended LEAs that did not (Olsen, 2010).

Olsen (2014) and The Education Trust-West (2014) compared multi-year data by surveying the same school districts over a 10–year time span. The data collected provided the researchers with a clearer picture of how LEAs were adjusting to the federal mandates. One clear example is the diminishing number of bilingual programs. Research shows that from 2000 to 2009 student enrollment in bilingual education and alternative programs diminished from 11% to 5% (Olsen, 2010). The survey method provided a historical timetable of implementation compliance. The data provided researchers with correlating mile markers and documented what was occurring in the classroom during that period (Olsen, 2014; The Education Trust-West, 2014). This method of correlating quantitative student-achievement data with LEA survey data did not provide definitive evidence of condemnation nor did it give credence to the current federal or state policy at the time. However, it did open doors to additional research studies needed in this field.

One of the pressing issues that drive studies, research, and reports surrounding the topic of LTEL is ethical. Regardless of law compliance, educators enter the profession to make a difference in the lives of the students they teach. To that end, there is an inherent need to lead and serve the language minority community. Greenleaf (1991) explained that the best test, and difficult to administer is this: “Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not further be harmed?” (p. 7).
Education leaders and policymakers can only act upon issues about which they are aware; it is the responsibility of experts in the field to serve by providing the correct information to those who make decisions to make a difference in the lives of the underserved and least privileged in education. The same can be said about the ethical responsibility of those in a position of leadership in education, for they ought to provide opportunities for equity and access to education (Blankstein, Noguera, Kelly, & Tutu, 2015).

**Synthesis of Research Findings**

By and large, the literature confirmed that LTEL students need specific academic support in the areas of threshold language and academic literacy (Brooks, 2008; Cummings, 2010; Menke, 2013; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). This lack of skills forces the additional need to provide specific support in all academic subject areas. While each of these deficiencies is interrelated, addressing language and literacy without the context of the core subject areas will not close the gap (Brooks, 2008; Menken, 2013). Olsen, (2014) listed 7 basic principles for meeting the needs of LTELs. First, LEAs must address these issues with a sense of urgency for attaining English Proficiency. Next, recognize the distinct difference of LTEL students in that their needs cannot be addressed with generic ELD or reading intervention programs, but rather, implement specifically designed programs for LTELs that will yield consistent results. LEAs must provide specific language, literacy, and academic support, and when appropriate provide primary-language support. Perhaps the most important, are that students must have access to rigor, relevance, and relationships. Lastly, effective EL programs must integrate LTEL students in the traditional program as much as possible and actively engage LTEL in their learning (Olsen, 2014).
Olsen (2014) also outlined eight components of a successful EL school program that specifically minimize the potential of creating LTEL students. First, the EL program must incorporate a specially designed ELD course work for LTEL students. Next, the EL program must place LTELs heterogeneously into core subject areas. Olsen (2014) explained that “explicit academic language and literacy development across the curriculum” (p. 21) is a key ingredient. Developing primary language proficiency cannot be ignored, although it was in direct contradiction of English-only legislation (Olsen, 2010). Site administrators must develop flexible master schedules to support systems that facilitate moving LTEL students in and out of interventions with minimum disruptions. Programs must have an academic focus on study skills, metacognition, and learning strategies that include student-led data conferences and testing accommodations. Lastly, effective programs have positive school climates and student cultures (Olsen, 2014). With this in mind, Menke, Kleyn, and Chae (2012) recommended movement by emergent bilinguals in and out of bilingual education programs, ESL programs, and mainstream classrooms be discouraged. Menke, Kleyn, and Chae (2012) also recommend that “schools adopt and adhere to clear, coherent school-wide language policies, so they are able to provide emergent bilinguals with consistent and constant programming” (p. 136). Although a consistent delivery of the second language seems to be a natural assumption, Menke, Kleyn, and Chae (2012) found significant data that point to the opposite. Additionally, they cited that their qualitative investigation yielded two significant themes, the first of which was inconsistency of programs where students are moved from bilingual education to structured SDAIE, to mainstream, and back. The second theme was the transiency of the family from school to school and transnational moves.
To an extent, the LTEL population was unseen and unaccounted for until it became necessary to monitor and report, according to the Notice of Final Interpretations (2008). As educators were made aware, and EL students were categorized by need as opposed to program, students increased their performance on state standards’ English-acquisition exams (Menke, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012; Olsen, 2014). The inconsistency in bringing teacher awareness across the states stems from accountability practices. School districts are held accountable by their respective state departments of education to meet goals and annual measurable objectives that measure EL and LTEL English acquisition, as well as academic performance in the areas of English language arts and mathematics. However, the school district or school is only held accountable for significant size subgroups as defined by NCLB (2001). Therefore, if a school district or school does not have enough students in the subgroup, it is not held accountable, leaving the probability of students in the subgroup across that state to be ignored simply because they are not geographically concentrated and thus statistically insignificant (NCLB, 2001).

As school districts begin to miss their required growth from year to year, they move along the Program Improvement (PI) continuum of 5 years plus. Year-one PI school or school district is subject to monitoring; a year–3 PI school or school district is subject to financial sanctions to be paid out of federal Title funds (NCLB, 2001). Thus, attention to significant subgroups only became paramount when the school district or school was faced with sanctions, leaving students in non-sanctioned LEAs at risk of being ignored, an unintended inequity in educational practice.

Another consistent theme of need on which researchers agree is the intentional instruction of literacy skills in all subject areas (Dutro, Kinsella, 2010; Feldman, Kinsella, 2005; Freeman, Freeman, Mercuri, 2002; Short, Fitzsimmons, 2007; The Education Trust-West, 2014).
According to Menke, Kleyn and Chae (2012) single-subject credentialed teachers in the secondary setting are credentialed experts in their discipline and their passion derives from their love of that subject area. The expectation that a secondary grade single-subject teacher should teach literacy skills within his or her subject area is not consistently enforced (Menke, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012). States across the union have passed legislation requiring all teachers to be trained and credentialed in cross-cultural, language, and academic development to teach EL students, and in 2003 California required teacher-preparation programs to incorporate cross-cultural, language, and academic development requirements into their curriculum (The Education Trust-West, 2014). Thus, the development of academic language in the context of the core subject area was officially recognized as an imperative need (Feldman & Kinsella, 2005).

**Critique of Previous Research**

Menke, Kleyn and Chae (2012) identified an overlap on LTEL data tracking of students in their study where emerging bilingual students were either born in the U.S. or migrated before school age and thus are familiar with the American educational system and culture. For example, in 2005, a report from the Urban Institute (Olsen, 2010) estimated that 56% of the nation’s EL students were born in the United States. More recently, in a report from the National Education Association (Olsen, 2014), the national EL population comprised of 10% of all students. In 2010, California reported that 16% of the student population in grades 6–12 were EL students, 10% of that population met the AMAO 2 classification criteria of LTEL. While the other 6% of EL students constituted newcomers to the country, who started their education later in elementary or secondary schools. The academic characteristics of these students were exemplified by generally low achievement scores and a particular deficiency in writing. Olsen’s (2010) study revealed that 10% of the student population in grades 6–12 had been reclassified
from the EL program and concluded that based on the population of EL students who started their ELD education together, only half reclassify as fluent English proficient by the time they matriculate to secondary school. This problem was exacerbated by the lack of specifically designed programs and teacher preparation in the secondary education setting (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007).

Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta, and August (2013) addressed the need to include EL and LTEL student monitoring into the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that was previously upheld by NCLB (2001), and now signed into law under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta, and August (2013) indicated that the criteria for reclassification of EL students fluent English Proficient (R-FEP) vary from LEA to LEA posing a considerable challenge to monitoring the EL student progress. The argument was made to warn that EL students who reclassified successfully should not be ignored and should continue to be monitored or accounted for within the EL student achievement data. Thus, NCLB (2001) required LEAs to continue to monitor R-FEP students for 2 years after reclassification. Empirical research cited by Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta, and August (2013) gave the followin example in support of the threshold theory (Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). Students who enroll in kindergarten in Los Angeles Unified School District with beginning levels of English proficiency had a 50% probability of reclassification after nine years, compared to an 80% probability of reclassification for students who entered with intermediate levels of English proficiency. Recommendations by Menken, Kleyn, Chae (2012), Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta, August (2013), Linquanti, and Cook (2015) are now found in ESSA (2015). LEAs are still held accountable to monitor EL, LTEL, and R-FEP student progress 2 years after reclassification. Additionally, and
perhaps the most significant of the adaptations of research into law, the definition of how many years it takes for an EL to be classified as a LTEL students is now 6 years. According to the literature in this chapter, the addition of 1 year to the definition of LTEL students may reduce the production of LTEL students.

Summary

The local-control accountability plans adopted by California afford each LEA the latitude to prioritize its educational needs. Laws, watershed court cases, and policies moved educational reform forward but fall short of addressing the needs of LTEL students (Olsen 2010; 2014). These gaps in policy leave education researchers with the question, how are LEAs addressing LTEL students in their local control accountability plans?

The threshold theory by Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977), which was later elaborated with the linguistic transfer theory by Cummings (2010), conveyed that second-language learners acquire the target language at a rate of efficiency that is interdependent of their first language. Thus, the threshold of their second language is interdependent of their first-language proficiency (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012). The objective of a successful language development program is to achieve academic literacy (Menke & Kleyn, 2010). Therefore, LEAs should adopt research-based interventions that will maximize academic literacy in the target language. Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) described academic literacy to include reading, writing, and oral discourse for school. Literacy strategies should be embedded in all subject areas as well as multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media. Lastly, educators should take into account that students learn literacies in contexts outside of school. Thus, students bring their personal, social, and cultural experiences to the classroom and educators should consider these as asset as opposed to hindrances (Menke, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007).
Menke and Kleyn (2010) further discussed research citing policies that do not consider the interdependent hypothesis, also known as the theory of linguistic transfer. EL students who do not transfer academic literacies from the L1 to the L2 will not develop the target language at an efficient rate, compared to EL students who maintain literacy skills in the L1. Thus, subtractive educational practices create LTEL students (Menke & Kleyn, 2008; 2010). The concept of subtractive education, as studied by Valenzuela (1999), proposed that education policies based on assimilationist views, negatively impact how students learn and undermine their efficacy in attaining English proficiency. Valenzuela (1999) emphasized that it is more important to examine “how students are schooled, rather than focusing only on how they learn because the organization of schooling can be just as consequential to the academic progress of minority youth” (pp. 26–27). Hence, effective EL programs should incorporate academic literacy practices that will engage students in the dimensions of listening, speaking and writing, not just reading (Menke & Kleyn, 2010; Dutro, & Kinsella, 2010). Thus, the conceptual framework of this study is supported by three theoretical pillars: The threshold theory (Toukomaa, & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977), academic literacy (Short, & Fitzsimmons, 2007), and the theory of linguistic transfer (Cummins, 2010).
Chapter 3: Methodology

Olsen’s (2014) work indicated that half of all English learning (EL) students who enter an English-language development (ELD) program in public schools would continue as LTEL students in secondary education. Therefore, the intended purpose of this study was to ascertain if there is a need to align LTEL legislative requirements and local-control goals, to academic literacy practices. A qualitative multi-case study of current practices in school districts across California yielded the necessary data to answer the central question: how are LEAs addressing LTEL students in their local-control accountability plans?

States have been collecting data on the academic performance of LTELs since the 2009–2010 school year to meet compliance requirements from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Although NCLB was enacted into law in 2001, it was required by the U.S. Department of Education in the notice of final interpretations on Title III released in October 2008, and approved by the U.S. Department of Education in January and May 2010, thus prompting local education agencies (LEA) to adopt practices and policies to meet the needs of LTEL students. This study analyzed LTEL student achievement results in California by aggregating these data into a matrix that included goals and objectives specific to LTEL students in the selected LEAs’ local-control accountability plans.

The research method for this qualitative study comprised of developing a matrix listing 20 LEAs in California that included data from two sources, one from the local state department and the other from the LEAs’ local-control accountability plans. For the purpose of ascertaining a representative variety of LEAs across California, school districts were randomly selected from purposeful categories comprised of student population enrollment, urban, suburban, and rural communities. The data collected from the state department for each of these purposely selected
LEAs were an aggregate cohort of EL students attaining English proficiency from 2009–2015 arranged by LEA. These cohort data also reported the number of EL students who continued to be LTEL students. The data collected from the LEAs came from local-control accountability plans. The local-control accountability plans outlined goals, priorities, and how their funding was spent in that particular school district. Although the sample represented distinctively different communities and student population sizes, all 20 LEAs in the sample had the same grades K–12 configuration.

The impetus of the study came from findings and reports on the LTEL phenomenon conducted in multiple states. Studies by Olsen (2010), Menke and Chae (2010), The Education Trust-West (2014) used data to study the different academic-language programs used throughout the states of California and New York. These researchers surveyed specific LEAs that met a predetermined diverse criteria of population size, and geographic locations in their respective states to obtain a more accurate study of their central questions. The researchers posed questions such as, how do we reverse the inadequate language acquisition education LTEL students have received (Olsen, 2010), and what are the characteristics of and prior schooling of the LTEL invisible population (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012). These questions and studies have opened the door for subsequent studies such as this one.

Research Questions

Since it was unknown if there was a need to align LTEL legislative requirements with local-control accountability plans and goals, the research questions were designed to isolate each component of alignment. Thus, the research surveyed LEAs’ local-control accountability plan documents and obtained specific goals and interventions purposely designed for LTEL students that meet academic literacy criteria (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007) founded on the threshold
theory (Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977), and the transference theory (Cummings, 2010). The intention of the study was to ascertain the existence of LTEL-specific goals and interventions to ultimately answer the central question, how are LEAs addressing LTEL students in their local-control accountability plan goals?

The research questions were as follows:

RQ1: How well aligned are the LEAs’ interventions described in the local-control plan aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories?

RQ2: Do LEAs’ assessment results indicate an increase in number of LTEL students’ acquisition of English as a second language?

These questions were aimed at uncovering specific LTEL interventions that pertain to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy as described by Cummings (2010), Menke and Kleyn, (2010), Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977), Short and Fitzsimmons (2007). Thus, LTEL interventions must be aligned to the following academic literacy criteria:

1. Includes reading, writing, and oral discourse [speaking and listening] for school;
2. Varies from subject to subject; and
3. Requires knowledge of multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

The research design for this qualitative multi-case study included small-to-very large districts as well as variant student population densities. California adopted local-control funding formulas that addressed student needs based on average daily attendance, as well as the number of significant subgroups such as foster youth, English learners, and students with disabilities. School districts servicing areas with a low density of EL students received fewer financial
resources from the state for LTEL students, while districts with larger concentrations of EL students had access to more financial resources from the state.

LEAs have the latitude to create their own local-control accountability plans. The local-control accountability plan template, distributed by the state’s department of education, contained indicators that were and will continue to be monitored for compliance. According to the local-control accountability template section for student outcomes, EL proficiency and reclassification of EL students are now student-achievement indicators monitored by the state (California Department of Education, 2014). In 2015–2016, the state department of education added a publicly accessible demographic report regarding LTELs and students at-risk of becoming LTEL (California Department of Education, 2014). Because this demographic feature has been added in the statewide student information system, it is predicted that LTELs may become a subgroup whose data will be disaggregated for accountability purposes. To date; however, the local-control accountability plans do not specify LTEL goals as a requirement.

Because the state department’s reports made available to the public are quantitative, and the public is accustomed to evaluating and comparing schools and LEAs with such data (NCLB, 2001), it was imperative for this study to be conducted in a more descriptive manner. The findings and conclusions of this study provided direction for future policy inasmuch as how local governments impact public perception of education by how data are presented. NCLB (2001) ushered in the era of accountability for public education in America, and is now an expectation for which all publicly elected officials will continue to provide. Although the public may or may not understand the difference between a proficiency model of accountability or a growth model of accountability, NCLB (2001) introduced Americans the school rankings model. To that end, it is imperative for experts in the field to provide policymakers with qualitative research that can
be consumed by the public. Servant leaders provide all that is necessary to increase the capacity of all those they lead and serve (Patterson, 2003). Therefore, qualitative multi-case studies such as this one are not only appropriate but are necessary to educate both policy makers as well as the public (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

**Purpose and Design of the Study**

The qualitative multi-case study research design of this study aimed to gather data from local-control accountability plans used across California. These plans were then analyzed through the lens of the threshold theory, originally developed by Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977), and later elaborated by Cummings (2010) as he introduced the transference theory. The threshold theory posits that second-language learners acquire the target language at a rate of efficiency that is interdependent of their first language. Therefore, LEAs should adopt research based interventions that will maximize academic literacy in the target language (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

This research specifically collected goals that directly supported LTEL students and compared them to 6 years of LTEL student-achievement data for the purpose of ascertaining efficacy. The sample consisted of LTEL students from 20 school districts that represented various sizes, ranging from small school districts with an enrollment of 1,500 students or fewer, medium-size school districts with 30,000 total students or fewer, and large school districts with 30,000 total students or more. The actual number of LTEL students in each of these school districts varied in population density. Additionally, these school districts also represented urban, suburban, and rural population settings. For the purpose of this study, school districts were randomly selected from each of these categories. LEAs are required to outline goals, action plans, and accountability metrics to be reported to the state department of education, known as
local-control accountability plans. Within the local-control accountability plan, specific goals for EL and LTEL students can be found under the heading English learners’ proficiency, and student outcomes. These goals and action plans would then be cross-referenced to the LEA’s long-term EL student-achievement data from 2010 through 2015.

The reason this study only uses 6 years of LTEL student data is because states have been responsible to collect data on the academic performance of LTELs since the 2009–2010 school year to meet compliance requirements from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Although NCLB was enacted into law in 2001, it was required by the U.S. Department of Education in the notice of final interpretations on Title III released in October 2008, and approved by the U.S. Department of Education in January and May 2010, thus prompting local education agencies (LEA) to adopt practices and policies to meet the needs of LTEL students. Hence, there is no reliable data prior to 2009–2010 academic year.

**Research Population, and Sampling Method**

This was a qualitative multi-case study, that attempted to discover if there is an alignment between LEAs’ adoptions of goals and interventions specifically designed for LTEL students, founded on the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2000; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). First, cohort data for each LEA representing the number of LTELs attaining English proficiency were collected and arranged by academic school year, from 2009 though to 2015 (see Appendix A). Next, the mean was calculated for each LEA (see Appendix B), and then carried over to the LTEL research matrix tool to be analyzed along with interventions, LEA student population size, and locale service area (see Appendix C). Here, the study was analyzed to determine if the same districts experienced a decline, increase, or maintained the number of LTELs. This analysis was
designed to ascertain if there was a need to align LTEL legislative requirements found in the state’s educational code with local-control accountability plans and state-monitored indicators. Thus, this study sought to ascertain program efficacy by comparing the number of LTELs produced by the LEA 2009–2015. By contrast, this study revealed that additional research is needed, and the research implied that there is a need for additional policy. Hence, conducting a qualitative study was a more appropriate approach as it collected numeric data to be compared to specific qualitative conceptual criteria.

The mode of data collection was a review of the local-control accountability documents and accountability reports which, are available to the public. These data were collected and arranged in the LTEL research matrix report for analysis. The sample for this study came from 20 local educational agencies. Each LEA was required to post its local-control accountability documents online for public use of information. Additionally, each LEA was required to make its student-performance data available to the state for accountability report purposes and are also available to the public. Publicly accessible demographic data served as a tool to select LEAs that met the multi-case study criteria described above for this study. The sample LEAs differed in student population size, as well as the density of EL and LTEL students.

Data collected were coded to reflect the LEAs’ size and population density. These data were then disaggregated for analysis. Trends and anomalies surfaced during the disaggregation of data process that prompt adjustments in further disaggregating data by themes. A completed analysis of the matrix was articulated surrounding the central question of this study: How are LEAs addressing LTEL students in their local-control accountability plans? Data findings revealed themes of practices and approaches by LEAs making gains in reducing the number of LTEL students. Additionally, data were analyzed to determine if these practices were aligned to
academic literacy criteria founded on the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). If the school district was not using practices aligned to academic literacy criteria, and they showed gains in students attaining English proficiency, the strategies used were recorded and discussed. This was particularly important as these data may guide future policy that will impact pedagogical practices.

In similar fashion to Olsen’s (2010) work where she sampled school districts to determine practices and policies for EL and LTEL students, this study attempted to mirror this technique. To that end, 20 LEAs, also known as school districts, were used to conduct this study. The sample of school districts represented small districts with a population of 1,500 students or fewer, medium size school districts with a population of 30,000 students or fewer, and large school districts with more than 30,000 students. The sample represented school districts that serve urban, suburban, and rural attendance areas. Ten small school districts of 1,500 students or fewer were selected, five of these small districts came from densely populated urban or suburban areas, and five from rural areas. Five medium-size school districts were randomly selected, and five large school districts were also randomly selected. Demographic data used in this study only reported language proficiency and did not specify gender, ethnicity, or other subgroups.

The sampling method of purposely selecting school districts varying in size and population density maximized the validity of the study by providing a multi-case representation of current practices according to local-control accountability planned priorities. LEAs for the study were selected using a random picking software (Randompicker.com). Each of the three enrollment-size categories, fewer than 1,500 students, fewer than 30,000 students, and more than
30,000 students was categorized separately until all 20 LEAs were selected. The first step in the process was to collect LTEL student-performance data on English-language development state exams that measure the attainment of English proficiency from years 2009–2015. These student-performance data were analyzed for trends, themes, and patterns such as LEAs who showed an upward trend of producing LTEL students, LEAs who showed a flat trend of LTEL student production, that is, no growth or decline, and LEAs that showed a decline of producing LTEL students. The mean score of each LEA over 6 years of LTEL students attaining English proficiency levels was then recorded and used in the second step of the research process. A data matrix was then created where LEAs were listed along with the following data (Appendix C):

1. LEA 1 through 20;
2. LEA student enrollment size; >30k, <30K, or <1,500 students;
3. LEA setting; urban, suburban, or rural;
4. Do the LTEL interventions meet the academic literacy criteria based on the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Menke & Kleyn, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977)? Yes, no, or strategic answer;
   a. Interventions include reading, writing, and oral discourse [listening and speaking] for school;
   b. Interventions vary from subject to subject; and
   c. Requires knowledge of multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).
5. What is the LEA’s LTEL student-performance mean score over 6 years, from 2009–2015?
Finally, the matrix data were analyzed for the purpose of answering the research questions. In step 4, interventions listed in the local-control accountability plan were analyzed to determine if the LEA was funding and utilizing interventions aligned to the conceptual framework of threshold, transference and academic literacy theories to all of their EL and LTEL students K–12. If the interventions were found to be aligned to the conceptual framework, then that LEA would have received a Yes code in the data matrix. If the LEA did not report the use of LTEL interventions aligned to the conceptual framework, then that LEA would have received a No code on the data matrix. However, if the LEA applied interventions to certain groups of EL and or LTEL students such as certain grade levels, then that LEA would have received a coding of strategic in the data matrix. All the data used in this study are cost free and available to the public; therefore, there was no need to solicit or recruit participants. Additionally, the aggregate data did not reveal individuals, personal identity, ethnicity, or other subgroups thus negating the need for personal consents. LEAs were not reported by name in the study as they were assigned a number in the matrices.

**Instrumentation**

The instruments used in this study were four data matrices. The first matrix was labeled LTEL proficiency data by LEA by school year. The LTEL proficiency data by LEA by school year matrix collected yearly assessment results of LTEL students attaining English proficiency over 6 years, from 2009–2015 by LEA (see Appendix A). The second matrix was labeled Mean score of LTELs attaining English proficiency by LEA. The Mean score of LTELs attaining English proficiency by LEA matrix were the calculations of standard deviation, variance standard deviation, population standard deviation, variance of population standard deviation, and the mean (see Appendix B).
Next, the LTEL research matrix was populated with the mean calculated from 2009–2015 of LTEL student data corresponding to each LEA to form the third instrument of research labeled LTEL research matrix (see Appendix C). The LTEL research matrix was organized by LEA enrollment size, and then coded for local service area; urban, suburban, and rural. It also includes the LEAs’ use of interventions such as: Yes, the LEA implements interventions to all EL and LTEL students, grades K–12. Strategic, the LEA implements interventions strategically targeting certain grade levels or students. No, the LEA does not implement interventions beyond the state required ELD standards and curriculum. Each LEA received a mean score of LTEL student-performance from the second matrix.

The last data matrix was labeled LEA’s LTEL student cohort, 6–year averages from 2009–2015 (see Appendix D). The LEA’s LTEL student cohort, 6–year averages from 2009–2015 matrix was populated with student average daily attendance data by LEA, LTEL interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories, the average population of LTEL students over 6 years, compared to the average number of LTEL that attain English proficiency. The last data column is the mean score of LTEL students attaining English proficiency over 6 years collected from the mean score of LTEls attaining English proficiency by LEA matrix.

**Data Collection**

Using the state department of education website, 20 school districts were selected to purposely represent the diverse populations in California. Depending on the density of the EL student population, some school districts qualified for additional local-control funding while others did not (California Department of Education, 2014). This is significant as these school districts had access to additional financial resources at their disposal, which may have explained
gains in EL and LTEL students attaining English proficiency. The sample represented urban, suburban, and rural school districts. The reason for the geographical variance was to have representation of EL student per-capita density, thus affording me the ability to compare and contrast how LEAs responded to small-and-large EL student concentrations.

Data were collected from two different sources: The state-department accountability reporting site, and the LEAs’ local-control accountability plans. The state department’s accountability reports were exported and disaggregated by LEA, population size, and service area. For this study, EL cohort data that included the number of LTEL students by LEA were collected and organized in a data matrix for evaluation. The EL and LTEL cohort data reported the number of students attaining English proficiency. The local-control accountability plan for each LEA in the sample was collected and downloaded from the school’s respective website. Since the local-control accountability plan was organized into a standard template provided by the state department of education, data on EL and LTEL goals and priorities were consistently extrapolated. These data were noted and evaluated for adherence to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). The results of this evaluation were recorded on the LTEL research matrix of LEA sample, along with the cohort data of EL and LTEL students attaining English proficiency.

**Identification of Variables**

The independent variable in this study was the local-control accountability plan for each LEA because the board of education for each LEA had the latitude to prioritize goals to meet the needs of their community. The measurable dependent variable was the alignment of local-control accountability goals and interventions to 6 years of LTEL student-performance data.
Specifically, dependent variables to be measured were the following: a) did the local-control accountability plan have specific LTEL goals; b) did the local-control accountability plan have specific LTEL interventions in the action plan founded on the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories; c) did the local-control accountability plan have specific goals to reduce the number LTEL students, thus demonstrating students' acquisition of second-language literacy; d) and what did 6 years of LTEL student-performance data suggested?

The dependent variable that is specifically looking for alignment to the threshold, transference and academic literacy theories uses a three-prong rubric designed by Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) in where specific intervention components ought to be present in the local-control accountability plans. These pedagogical approaches and interventions are:

1. Includes reading, writing, and oral discourse [speaking and listening] for school;
2. Varies from subject to subject; and
3. Requires knowledge of multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

Through the qualitative review of the local-control accountability plans, data that indicated funding towards materials and professional development supporting all three components of the pedagogical practices described by Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) were coded as being aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummins, 2000; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). Consequently, a partial or no indication of funding of these pedagogical approaches in the local-control accountability plan resulted in a code of no alignment to the conceptual framework. These data were then organized in the LTEL research matrix of LEA sample for analysis.
Data Analysis Procedures

This study was a multi-case, qualitative research design reliant on documents and data available to the public. The data matrices instruments were analyzed for trends and patterns such as LEAs that showed an upward trend of producing LTEL students, LEAs that showed a flat trend of LTEL student production, that is, no growth or decline, and LEAs that showed a decline in the number and percent of LTEL students. These data patterns and themes were then compared to the districts’ local-control goals and interventions to determine a trend. LEAs’ interventions were then analyzed for alignment to academic literacy practices criteria founded on the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977), which included reading, writing, and oral-discourse listening and speaking for school; these varied from subject to subject; and require knowledge of multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). This process was completed by coding each of the 20 LEAs with either a Yes, all qualifying students received an intervention aligned to the conceptual framework; no, there were no LTEL students receiving an intervention other than the state required curriculum; or the LEA received a Strategic code for selecting groups of students as opposed implementing interventions to all qualifying students.

The LTEL research matrix of the LEA sample (see Appendix A) was used to collect evidence from LEAs’ local-control accountability plans that addressed the research questions of this study. LEAs whose interventions were aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories were coded and documented in the research matrix, as well as the mean score of LTEL students attaining English proficiency over 6 years. The mean score of LTEL students attaining English proficiency represented the LEAs’ efficacy in pedagogical approach over time. The 6–year time spans of 2009–2010 school year to 2014–2015 school
year were specifically selected as these have been the reporting periods of accountability by the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) for LTEL student-performance.

This qualitative, multi-case study was completed using predetermined groupings based on LEAs’ student populations size of <30,000, >30,000, and >1,500 students, as well as LEA groups based on urban, suburban, and rural locales. Additionally, statistical groupings, based on the implementation of interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories, revealed themselves organically through the research process. Themes and trends were then coded among groups of LEAs by student population size, community locales, and implementation of interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Short, Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977).

Limitations of the Research Design

The data survey was largely dependent on public documents and accountability reports that showed demographic data consistent with state and federal definitions of LTEL students (NCLB, 2001). Because California had more than 300 school districts, there was no problem finding 20 school districts that met the diverse sample requirements of this study. Other significant limitations were that this study omitted school districts that were not K–12, meaning that LEAs that are K–8 and or high-school only were not represented in this study, thus limiting the study to full K–12 LEAs only.

Additionally, EL and LTEL cohort data collected for this study were not disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, home language, or socio-economic status. The purpose of keeping the EL and LTEL cohort data pure was to isolate pedagogical practices and priorities adopted by LEAs. Isolating LTEL data to the essence of English acquisition is essential to identify best practices.
Teachers, program specialists, LEA leaders, and policy makers may use this study to assess and evaluate their current practices and decisions on meeting the needs of LTEL students in their own settings.

**Validation, Dependability, and Credibility**

Data for this study were collected from the state department of education website (California Department of Education, 2014). Accountability reports from these public sources were used by local education agencies, as well as this researcher. These data reports were compiled by the state department of education, and they were aligned to NCLB (2001) requirements. The data collected were then cross referenced for dependability with their districts’ demographic reports, also available on their respective websites.

The data collected in this study recorded each LEA’s interventions that were aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories, as well as intervention not aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Short, Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). Additionally, the mean scores of LTEL students attaining English proficiency over 6 years were also recorded. The correlation between these two variables resulted in valid data that were suitable for analysis. These data were also vetted against LEA student population size, EL student density, and urban, suburban, and rural locale.

**Expected Findings**

In terms of the local-control goals and interventions, it was expected that each LEA would have specific goals for EL student achievement and reclassification of EL students, due to the specificity of the local-control accountability template and state indicators. However, it was also expected that very few LEAs would have specific LTEL goals and interventions as this is
not explicitly stated in the local-control accountability template or measured as an accountability indicator by the state.

Because the topic of LTEL students’ accountability is a relatively new issue to LEAs, only becoming an expectation in the 2008–2009 school year, it was expected to find small advances in the areas of courses specifically designed to meet the needs of LTEL students in the secondary education setting across the sample studied (Notice of Final Interpretations, 2008). It was expected that LEAs with large concentrations of EL and LTEL students would have programs designed to meet the needs of LTEL students founded on the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories, while LEAs with small concentrations of EL and LTEL students were expected to not have specifically designed courses or interventions (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977).

In the area of defining what a LTEL student is, the definition of at risk of becoming LTEL, the law enhancements are relatively new, it was expected that LEAs had not yet responded to these recent changes. A potential benefit that may be derived from this study was that teachers, program specialists, LEA leaders, and policy makers may use this study to assess and evaluate their current practices and decisions regarding meeting the needs of LTEL students in their own settings.

**Ethical Issues**

The intended purpose of this study was to ascertain if there is a need to align LTEL legislative requirements with local-control accountability plans and academic literacy practices (Brooks, 2015; Menken, 2013; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Experts in the field of EL and LTEIs advocate not just for policy, but there is an expectation for funding support in the areas of program adoptions and teachers’ professional development. While there is a potential fiscal
impact connected to any legislative action, this study did not bear a direct or indirect connection to a particular academic program or professional-development consultant group.

I am a practicing educator and district-level administrator and have no direct oversight of the EL program under the current leadership capacity other than support for all students in the district. My interest in this field of study comes from having been an English Language Development teacher and site level EL coordinator. Additionally, I am a former EL student who graduated from the public-school system.

Summary

There is a need to close the achievement gap of EL students from becoming LTEL students, a gap that has the potential to continue to widen (Olsen, 2010). According to Olsen (2010), half of EL students who enter an ELD program will continue as a LTEL student in secondary education. The method used in this study was designed to ascertain if there was a need to align local-control accountability indicators to current education code as well as academic literacy practices (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007) founded on the threshold, and linguistic transfer theories (Cummings, 2010; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977) to stop and reverse the negative expansion of LTEL students (Menken & Kleyn, 2010). Demographic data from the state department of education were used to identify a cross section of LEAs that represented a variety of school districts by student enrollment size and concentration of EL and LTEL students.

The instruments used to collect data from current local-control accountability documents were data matrices. The data matrices organized LEAs by enrollment size and educational setting. These included local-control accountability goals, interventions, and 6 years of LTEL student-performance data. This approach attempted to answer how LEAs were addressing the
needs of LTEL students in their local-control accountability plans. The rationale for conducting a qualitative multi-case study was twofold. First, NCLB (2001) primed the American public to view how schools and LEAs perform via a quantitative ranking system that omits qualitative data. Thus, it is essential that experts in the field provide policymakers with relevant qualitative data in a format that can be accessed by the public, not just the experts. Second, quantifying the performance of LTEL students underscored the need to monitor how LEAs prioritize their local-control accountability plans.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

This qualitative multi-case study began with an overview of data matrices analysis, a description of their contents, and a comparison of LEAs by categories. The description of the selected LEAs is discussed and a discussion of field notes on the contents of their local-control accountability plans follows. There will be a data discussion on specific LTEL interventions aligned to threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories for reducing the number of LTEL students (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). There will also be a data discussion on the assessment results of LTEL students attaining English proficiency in each LEA, and whether they demonstrated students' acquisition of second-language literacy. Finally, this chapter will summarize data findings as they pertain to the research questions.

In recent years, the field of education has seen a transition in focus from an all-students-must-reach proficiency-model in No Child Left Behind (2001) to an all-students-must-attain growth-model in Every Student Succeeds Act (2015). Because of this shift in the national education approach, authors Blankstein, Noguera, Kelly, and Tutu, (2015) raised questions of equity and access. Particularly, how do we ensure that local-control plans and goals for education are designed to close the opportunity gaps of underrepresented minority students? Since every state and local education agency (LEA) has the flexibility to determine its own educational priorities, there will be a natural variance of student achievement outcomes. The question of equity comes from the variance that exists in student-achievement across the country, often referred to as the achievement gap, particularly the performance gap between English learning (EL) students, and the number of EL students who become long-term English-learning (LTEIL) students. This variance was evident in the data addressed in this study.
This study examined specific interventions that LEAs are funding to mitigate the production of LTEL students. Specifically, the two research questions that guided this study:

1) Are the LEAs’ interventions aligned to academic literacy practices founded on the threshold, transference theory for reducing the number of LTEL students; and

2) Do the LEAs’ assessment results of EL students attaining English proficiency indicate a reduction trend in the number of LTEL students, thus demonstrating students' acquisition of second-language literacy?

Additionally, the study compared practices listed in the local-control accountability plan to student achievement data from 2009–2015. The interventions listed in the local-control accountability plans were assessed against the academic literacy practices described by Short and Fitzsimmons (2007). Their research indicated that LTEL interventions must be aligned to the following academic literacy criteria:

1. Includes reading, writing, and oral discourse [speaking and listening] for school;

2. Varies from subject to subject, and

3. Requires knowledge of multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

This study used a sample of 20 school districts across California; the sample included LEAs with a student population larger than 30,000 students, LEAs with fewer than 30,000 students, and LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students. Additionally, the sample included LEAs that serve urban, suburban, and rural communities.

The research sought to uncover how well local-control accountability plans addressed the needs of LTELs, and the findings of this study were consistent with work done by Olsen (2010; 2014). Although the local-control accountability concept gives LEAs the flexibility to address what their communities deem as priority (The Education Trust-West, 2014), the data do not show
change from previous accountability schemas in California (Olsen, 2014). Education policy in the United States is undergoing a transition from NCLB (2001) to ESSA (2015), and yet the overall production of LTEL students has not increased, based on the findings in the sample of LEAs studied. However, some school districts have reported gains that are above the state average. These gains and other trends will be discussed throughout this chapter.

**Description of the Sample**

This study called for the review of 20 school districts or LEAs in California, varying in student population size. Additionally, the sample required a representation of community locales that included urban, suburban, and rural LEAs. The locale data information on rural school districts is kept by the United States department of education (*U.S. Department of Education*, 2015) and it lists all qualifying LEAs for small rural school achievement (SRSA) program by state. This database was used to identify the rural LEAs in this study. Thus, five LEAs with a student population of more than 30,000 students were randomly selected; five LEAs with fewer than 30,000 students were selected; five LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students serving qualified rural areas; and 5 LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students serving non-rural areas.

All five of the LEAs with more than 30,000 students serve urban communities; all five of them serve pockets of suburban communities as well. Three of the 5 LEAs with fewer than 30,000 students serve urban and suburban communities as they share their district boundaries with other LEAs in large metropolitan areas. Five of the LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students that did not qualify as serving rural communities did serve remote areas such as mountain and desert communities. By contrast, the other five LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students qualified as serving rural communities (*U.S. Department of Education*, 2015).
Each of the LEAs selected in the sample reported 6 continuous years of student-achievement data to the state department of education, from 2009–2015. Also, each LEA made its local-control accountability plan available to the public for review for the 2015–2016 school year. Each rural locale LEAs selected for this study qualified to apply for the SRSA award for small rural school districts during the 2015–2016 school year. Seven of the LEAs selected in this study met the academic literacy practices criteria described by Cummings (2010), Short and Fitzsimmons (2007), Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977). By contrast, seven LEAs did not implement interventions that met the academic literacy practices criteria described by Cummings (2010), Short, Fitzsimmons (2007), Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977). These seven LEAs provided the minimum required English-language-development (ELD) standards and curriculum to their EL students.

The study revealed that six LEAs strategically used the academic literacy practices’ criteria described by Cummings (2010), Short, Fitzsimmons (2007), Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977). Strategic implementation means that the LEA targeted English learners by grade level to administer academic literacy practices, while providing the minimum state requirement to the rest of the EL students. All six of the LEAs that used the strategic implementation model concentrated their efforts in grades K–3, and adopted intervention course materials to be implemented in grades 9–12.

The EL and LTEL data collected from the state department were student cohorts disaggregated by LEA and academic year. These data represent EL students eligible to reclassify as fluent English proficient, disaggregated by LEA and academic year. By virtue of students designated as LTEL, these data represent the number of EL students in the cohort who
did not meet reclassification criteria. The data collected for this study were not disaggregated by gender, socio economic disadvantaged, ethnicity, or primary language.

**Summary of the Results**

Olsen (2010; 2014) discussed the consistency in which K–12 English-language development programs continue to produce LTEL students. Typically, half of the EL students who enter public schools will reclassify as fluent English proficient (Olsen, 2010). The data collected from the 20 LEAs studied for this research were also consistent with Olsen’s (2010, 2014) work as the mean number of LTEL over 6 years was 49.31 from the EL students eligible to reclassify as fluent English proficient. The LTEL research matrix organically produced an efficiency spectrum, meaning that all 20 LEAs fell between producing a minimal number of LTEL students and thus efficiently reclassifying EL students to fluent English proficiency, to reclassifying a minimal amount EL students and thus being less efficient. Specifically, LEA number 14 was the most efficient in the study with a mean score of 70.20 while LEA number 9 was the least efficient with a mean score of 38.63, and the rest of the LEAs in the study fell somewhere in between.

There were four outliers in the study, two at each end of the spectrum (see Appendix C). LEA number 3 in the study, with an enrollment of more than 30,000 students that implemented interventions aligned to academic literacy practices, showed a mean of 38.70 over 6 years. Also, LEA number 9, with fewer than 30,000 students that implemented interventions aligned to academic literacy practices, showed a mean of 38.63 over 6 years. By contrast, LEA number 14, with fewer than 1,500 students that fully implemented interventions aligned to academic literacy practices, showed a mean of 70.20 over 6 years. Additionally, LEA number 5, with more than 30,000 students that strategically implemented interventions aligned to the threshold,
transference, and academic literacy theories showed a mean of 66.81 over 6 years (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). As noted in Table 1, LEA number 5 also averaged the smallest number of LTEL students compared to the rest of the LEAs with more than 30,000 students (see Appendix D).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEA</th>
<th>Interventions aligned to CF</th>
<th>% Proficient</th>
<th>LTEL cohort–Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>47.60</td>
<td>3901–1857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44.03</td>
<td>1440–636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>38.70</td>
<td>3145–1215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>45.75</td>
<td>2284–1041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>66.81</td>
<td>946–632</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The review of local-control accountability plans revealed the total number of LEAs that dedicated financial resources to meeting goals specific to EL and LTEL students. Moreover, the local-control accountability documents outlined specific interventions designed to meet the goal metrics. These interventions were studied to determine if they were aligned to the academic literacy criteria (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). The research indicated that seven LEAs applied the interventions to all English learners across all grade levels. Also, six LEAs strategically applied interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories to targeted grade levels (Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977; Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). For instance, the most common strategic application for these LEAs was to implement academic literacy strategies above and beyond the ELD standards to grades K–3.

Finally, seven LEAs did not use any interventions that were aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).
The data comparison of LTEL students attaining English proficiency with LEAs applying interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories showed three themes: full implementation, strategic implementation, and no implementation (see Table 2). The 7 LEAs that provided interventions to all grade levels, and were aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories had the mid-range mean of LTEL students attaining English proficiency at 49.80. Notably, LEAs that strategically applied interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories showed a higher mean of LTEL students attaining English proficiency at 52.29 over 6 years by a margin of 6.03%, compared to the LEAs that did not provide interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). LEAs that did not apply any intervention beyond the state required program achieved a mean of 46.26. Additionally, LEAs that applied interventions strategically to targeted grade levels outperformed LEAs that implemented interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories to all students across the K–12 grade span by a margin of 2.49%.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of LEAs</th>
<th>Interventions aligned to the CF</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Full Implementation</td>
<td>49.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Strategic Implementation</td>
<td>52.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>No Implementation</td>
<td>46.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research data were also disaggregated by LEA student population size of more than 30,000 students, fewer than 30,000 students, and fewer than 1,500 students (see Table 3). The trend of LTEL students attaining English proficiency pointed to be more efficient in LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students with a mean score of 50.46, compared to LEAs with larger student
populations. The trend difference between LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students to LEAs with fewer than 30,000 students was 2.70%, the difference from LEAs with more than 30,000 students was 1.89%.

Table 3

*LEAs disaggregated by student enrollment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of LEAs</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&gt;30K</td>
<td>48.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&lt;30K</td>
<td>47.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>&lt;1,500</td>
<td>50.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distribution of LEAs represented school districts that serve urban, suburban, and rural attendance areas. Ten small school districts of 1,500 students or fewer were selected; five of these small districts serve suburban areas; and five serve rural areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Five medium-size school districts, and five large school districts serve a mixture of urban and suburban metropolitan attendance areas. The study revealed a trend difference between rural and suburban LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students. Suburban LEAs yielded a 2.43% higher mean of LTEL students attaining English proficiency at 51.67, compared to rural LEAs at 49.24 (see Table 4). Table 4 also includes the 6–year average enrollment of LTEL student cohort as well as the 6–year average of LTEL students who attained English proficiency. As discussed earlier, LEA 14 is an outlier with a 6–year mean of 70.20. It should be noted that the average LTEL student population per year for LEA 14 is 126 students, which is a small population and vulnerable to statistical variance.
Table 4

*LEAs with fewer than 1,500 ADA disaggregated by attendance area with cohort 6–year average*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEA</th>
<th>Urban/Suburban</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Avg. LTEL Cohort</th>
<th>Avg. Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>55.36</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>51.11</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>56.00</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>42.83</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>40.93</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>46.43</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>70.20</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>40.43</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>44.65</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>56.66</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this instance, the variance standard deviation for the rural group of LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students is 49.19, while the variance standard deviation for the suburban group of LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students is 142.83 (see Appendix B).

**Detailed Analysis**

The trends revealed in this study were consistent with the review of the literature regarding LTEL students in both philosophical and pragmatic applications. Philosophically, Menken, Kleyn (2010), Menken, Kleyn, and Chae (2012) argued that students need 6–7 years of rigorous English-language development to achieve mastery of the second language. Mastery is defined as having advanced skills in the four dimensions of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Jacobs, 2008) in the target language. For instance, the mean production of LTEL students for all 20 LEAs researched in this study was 49.31, consistent with the findings in Olsen’s research (2010; 2014), indicating that only half of all EL students entering public schools will attain English proficiency in 5 years or less.
There was an evident trend that pointed to a more efficient pragmatic approach to delivering interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). Six LEAs used the more efficient strategic approach of delivering interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories to EL and LTEL students by targeting specific grade levels. These were LEAs numbered: 1, 4, 5, 16, 19, 20. For example, LEA number 4 targeted LTEL students in grade 9 and placed them in the Puente program. The Puente program is a bridge-to-college program designed to provide academic, social emotional support to participating students by enrolling them into an elective course with a teacher dedicated to support a cohort of LTEL students; furthermore, each high school dedicated a full-time counselor, and academic college tutors to support their students.

The average percentage of LTELs demonstrating English-language proficiency was 6.03% higher in LEAs using the strategic approach than the seven LEAs only using the state-required ELD standards and curriculum. These were LEAs numbered: 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17. Also, the strategic approach was 2.49% more efficient than the seven LEAs that provided interventions to all grades K–12. Thus, the difference between the strategic application of interventions, to a complete K–12 application of interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories, became a significant theme (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977).

Another theme that emerged from the research was the efficiency of students attaining English proficiency, and how that was associated with student population size of the LEAs. Small LEAs with an average daily attendance (ADA) of 1,500 students or fewer had a 50.46 mean production of LTEL students attaining English proficiency. LEAs with fewer than 1,500
students had a lower production mean of 1.89 better than LEAs with an ADA larger than 30,000 students. Also, LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students had a lower production mean of 2.70 better than LEAs with an ADA of fewer than 30,000 students. Thus, small LEAs showed a trend of being more efficient at having their students attain English proficiency than the larger LEAs in the study.

There was an evident sample difference among the 5 LEAs in the larger than 30,000 ADA category; five LEAs in the fewer than 30,000 ADA category; and 10 LEAs in the fewer than 1,500 ADA category. Thus, an additional trend was revealed between the suburban and rural categories within the 10 LEAs with 1,500 or fewer students. There were five small LEAs that serve rural attendance areas, and five small LEAs that serve suburban attendance areas.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the results analysis for this study:

RQ1: How well aligned are the LEAs’ interventions described in the local-control plan aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories? The research revealed that 7 of 20 LEAs, or 35%, delivered a full implementation of interventions aligned to academic literacy practices founded on the threshold theory (Cummings, 2010; Menke & Kleyn, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). Furthermore, 6 of 20 LEAs, or 30%, strategically implemented interventions to targeted grade levels aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic theories. Also, the research showed that 7 of 20 LEAs, or 35%, did not deliver interventions beyond the state required ELD standards and curriculum.

RQ2: Do LEAs’ assessment results indicate an increase in number of LTEI students’ acquisition of English as a second language? The mean scores of LEA categories revealed some trends and themes that address this question. First, the overall mean score of
49.31 for all 20 LEAs in the study were consistent with research presented in the literature review (Olsen, 2010; 2014). Second, the strategic approach of applying interventions aligned with the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories to targeted grade levels was more efficient than applying interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories to all grades K–12 (Cummings, 2010; Menke & Kleyn, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). Third, LEAs that did not offer interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories to their EL and LTEL students had the highest numbers of producing LTEL students. Lastly, LEAs with and ADA of fewer than 1,500 students were more efficient reducing the number of LTEL students by a margin of 2.70%.

**Summary**

The original problem statement, and impetus of this study, persist in that half of all EL students will continue as LTELs after 5 years in American public schools (Olsen, 2010; 2014). The expectation that all students become proficient in English after receiving 5 years of English-language development in American public schools (NCLB, 2001) is unsubstantiated by leading researchers in the field, and this study was no different (Menken & Kleyn, 2010, Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012). However, there were several trend indicators in this study that yielded notable results. As a matter of equity in education, the results of this study affirmed that the policy that LEAs were expected to apply has been inadequate in meeting the needs of LTEL students.

There were several notable trends that emerged in the research, some were anticipated in Chapter 3, and some were revealed organically. One unanticipated trend were LEAs that strategically targeted certain grade levels to apply interventions aligned to the threshold,
transference, and academic literacy theories to their EL and LTEL students outperformed LEAs that applied the interventions to all students, grades K–12. It was anticipated that LEAs that applied interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977) in any capacity, would outperform LEAs that only applied the state required ELD standards and curriculum.

Another unanticipated outcome was that LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students were more efficient in producing more English-proficient LTEL students than the larger LEAs. The reason this was not anticipated was based on the inherent lack of financial resources that small ADA school districts have for their use. The efficiency may be attributed to a necessary small-school funding adjustment where qualifying schools receive funding above the average daily attendance formula to afford day-to-day operations (California Department of Education, 2014). These additional funds result in small class sizes compared to larger school districts that generate ADA funding without additional state support. Within the cohort of LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students, there was another unanticipated trend. The five LEAs serving suburban communities outperformed the five LEAs serving rural communities, albeit by a very small margin.

As anticipated, there were some outlier LEAs on both ends of the efficiency spectrum of educating LTEL students. However, the mean scores of these LEAs matched the actual population ADA and size of eligible LTEL students. For example, LEA number 14 fell in the category of fewer than 1,500 ADA. With a mean score of 70.20, they outpaced the state average of 50% by 20 points (Olsen, 2010; 2014). However, their total ADA in 2015 was 694 students with an average of 126 LTEL students, and an average of 88 LTEL students attaining English proficiency over the 6–year period studied. Another example was LEA number 5, with a mean
score of 66.81, which outpaced the state average by 16 points. Although LEA number 5 fell in the larger-than–30,000 ADA category, it averaged the smallest cohort of 946 LTEL students over the 6 years compared to the other LEAs in the same category by a margin of 494 students to the next smallest LEA at 1440 LTELs, and a margin of 2,955 students, to the largest LEA in the same category at 3901 LTELs.

The data collected in this study yielded unique results across the spectrum of efficient educational practices, as well as a contrast of equitable educational practices. However, the collective results of the study confirmed the work of the experts in the field and echoed the findings of the literature review. Although LEAs that adopted pedagogical practices aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977) found some success, the need to allow more time for students to attain English proficiency remains evident.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This multi-case study explored the problem that only half of all English learners (EL) who enter public schools in kindergarten or 1st grade are reclassifying as fluent English proficient in 5 years or less. Olsen (2010) explained that “English Language Learners are the nation’s fastest-growing student population, yet they are disproportionately underserved and underachieving” (p 2). This study collected data in a 6-year span of 2009–2015, from 20 LEAs to analyze how interventions were implemented and what the outcomes of the interventions yielded. Conclusions drawn from the discussion of this research came from local education agencies (LEA) currently serving long-term English learner (LTEL) students in California. Thus, the summary and discussion of the results will include the demographic, and community settings that were served during the 6 years of data collected. Although the research conducted in this study had several limitations, discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, the conclusions drawn point to the validity of earlier theoretical work. This consistency in research may present implications for current practices and policies.

In this final chapter of the study, I will discuss the implications of current policy and practices surrounding LTEL students. I will compare interventions used to minimize the production of LTEL students to published literature, and review the contrast among LEAs and their approaches to mitigating the LTEL student phenomenon. This chapter will review the research methods used in this qualitative multi-case study, as well as the quantitative results. The research approach was conducted to ascertain if there is a need to align or calibrate current policy to practices founded on the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977).
As indicated, this study yielded support for earlier work by experts in the field (Menken, Kleyn & Chae, 2012; Olsen, 2010;2014). The research questions in this study explored the phenomenon of LTELs by asking if LEAs were utilizing interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic theories; and did their student-achievement data indicate a reduction in LTEL students. Thus, the results herein confront policies posed in national educational law, state law, and local boards of education policies that either oppose the research or simply omit it. These contradictions and/or omissions in policy may prompt discussion and recommendations for future studies in the fields of English learner pedagogy, LTEL interventions, reclassification, and educational equity. Each of these areas is directly affected by educational accountability policies such as Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), and local-control accountability indicators set by the state. To that end, the results of this study may prompt further research in the topic of how to best meet the needs of LTEL students. This final chapter represents conclusions from the literature review, findings, data interpretations, assumptions, ethical dimensions, implications, and recommendations for future research. Also, a summary of findings and analysis, implications and recommendations will be discussed.

Summary of Results

The sample for this study consisted of 20 LEAs from California. These LEAs were randomly selected under the following categories; student enrollment of more than 30,000, fewer than 30,000 students, and fewer than 1,500 students. Additionally, LEAs selected for this study also represented communities in urban, suburban, and rural areas of attendance. The research conducted was organized into a LTEL research matrix that organized the 20 LEAs by student enrollment size, community type or setting, implementation of interventions, and the mean score of LTEL students attaining English proficiency over 6 years (see Appendix A). Details of the
research were organized into a data table to provide context of the student cohort that was studied (see Appendix C). Student cohort data was organized by the average daily attendance for each LEA, implementation of interventions, \( N = \) LTEL average cohort, the total average of LTEL students attaining English proficiency, and the mean score of LTEL students attaining English proficiency in the 6–year span of 2009–2015. These data were collected from student-achievement reports made available by the state department, as well as the local-control accountability plans made available by each LEA.

The mean for LTEL students attaining English proficiency in all 20 LEAs years 2009–2015 was 49.31. The mean of approximately 50% is consistent with similar studies conducted by Olsen (2010; 2014) in multiple LEAs in the southwest of the United States. The study revealed three themes as to how LEAs reacted to the need of LTEL students. In one theme, teachers provided the minimum requirements of English-language development (ELD) standards, and no additional interventions for EL or LTEL students were reported in their local-control accountability plan. In another theme, the LEA provided additional support and interventions to all EL and LTEL students in grades K–12 that were aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories. In the last theme, LEAs strategically provided interventions to EL and LTEL that were aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories to targeted grade levels only (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977).

The findings in this study indicated that seven LEAs fully implemented interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories to all EL and LTEL students in grades K–12. These LEAs were numbered: 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 14, 18. Table 5 lists the verbiage used in the local-control accountability plans by LEAs that fully implemented
strategies. EL and LTEL interventions must be aligned to academic literacy criteria that includes reading, writing, and oral discourse for school, varies from subject to subject; and requires knowledge of multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

Table 5

*Local-control accountability language for full implementation LEAs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEA #</th>
<th>Local-control plan language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Provided English language development (ELD) instruction for all English learners and expanded direct student support through bilingual instructional assistants. Provided in depth professional learning for schools and support for student scheduling. Provided intense support to LTELs and their families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Professional development and site-based coaching for teachers, TSAs, and principals on programs, services and instruction of ELLs across all content areas. Funding for teachers and TSAs to attend professional development outside of contract hours (content area teachers, ELD teachers, newcomer cross-site PLC, LTEL to deepen practice on ELA/ELD framework, high-impact language practices, progress monitoring of ELLs/RFEPs and differentiated supports for ELLs across all proficiency levels and ELL subgroups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A focus on supporting ELs, LTELs and LI students by implementing strategies that provide these students with access to CCSS and build vocabulary will be implemented across all subject areas. Maintain the position of English learner (EL) instructional coach to support the unique instructional needs of English learners (EL), including reclassified fluent English proficient learners (RFEP) as needed. Clarifying the focus of this position in this way better aligns to the specific needs for our district. Clear instructional routines up and beyond that of standard lesson design and addressing specific content by language levels as we implement ELD across the curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Provide professional development and support for culturally and linguistically responsive teaching across all content areas. Focus on ensuring access to systematic language development opportunities throughout the instructional day for our English learners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
English learners will have access to all materials and state standards through designated EL instructional at all levels. To target the specific language development needs of English learners the English learner Specialists in our district have provided site-specific support through coaching and team teaching.

All teachers will use and receive professional development for close reading classroom practices. Teacher professional development time will be allotted for instructional rounds. English 3D program implementation for struggling readers.

Adoption of intensive intervention programs K–8 for ELA/ELD. Adoption of interventions 9–12 for EL and struggling readers. Professional development on ELD standards & reclassification for all teachers.

These LEAs shared the common language of providing reading, writing support specially designed for EL students, as well as professional development for all teachers. Also, common language indicates that these are interventions above and beyond the state required ELD standards, as well as all grade levels with the exceptions of LEAs 10 and 14 in where they omit grade level specificity in their language.

Six LEAs strategically targeted specific grade levels to implement interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories. These LEAs were numbered: 1, 4, 5, 16, 19, 20. For example, some LEAs only provided an additional elective class of English support (Dutro & Kinsella, 2010) support to LTEL students in grades 9–12 (Feldman & Kinsella, 2005), while other LEAs focused their academic literacy pedagogy across the curriculum in grades K–3 (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Table 6 lists the verbiage used in the local-control accountability plan for each of these districts. Once again, EL and LTEL interventions must be aligned to academic literacy criteria that includes reading, writing, and oral discourse for school, varies from subject to subject; and requires knowledge of multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).
Table 6

*Local-control accountability plan language for strategic implementation LEAs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEA #</th>
<th>Local-control plan language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Provide instructional coaches to implement CCSS, ELA/Math, ELD, and NGSS; with an emphasis on Long-term English learners (LTELs) and professional development for SDAIE teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Provide additional support and bilingual classroom aides for EL students. Provide funding for programs that target EL and LTEL students in grades 7–12 PUENTE and AVID. Provide funding for intervention programs in transitional kindergarten, K–3, and 4–6: Reader by Nine, ELD instruction in TK 30 minutes. Specially designed classes for EL/LTEL in grades 7th–12th.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Provide funding for literacy standards alignment for languages other than English Xploration Program, AVID, immigrant education program MAPS/NWEA Professional development and release time for teachers to align literacy strategies in grades K–5 to ELA curriculum and address the early intervention strategies for EL students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Provide funding for academic coach (teacher on special assignment) for ELA. Purchase new ELD texts/curriculum, provide release time for professional development. Targeted reading interventions for grades 1–3, and language acquisition intervention for Kinder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Provide reading intervention teacher for grades K–6 to focus on EL and struggling readers. Provide additional ELA support class for LTEL 12th graders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Provide bilingual paraprofessional support in designated EL classes. Provide professional development and collaboration time for SDAIE teachers. Provide courses of accelerated English to reclassify EL students faster than 5 years, plus summer school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These strategic LEAs shared common language that indicated a concentration of resources to specific grade-level spans, or teacher groups such as those teachers who teach SDAIE designated courses. Additionally, resources were allocated to specific programs that target EL, LTEL, and reclassified EL students in grades 7–12 such as AVID and PUENTE. Other commonalities such as professional development, teachers on special assignment that serve as academic coaches for
their colleagues, and release time for teachers to collaborate, plan, and align curriculum to literacy strategies are evident in these group of LEAs.

Lastly, this study revealed that seven LEAs provided the minimum ELD standards and curriculum to their EL students, and did not report any additional interventions in their local-control accountability plan for their LTEL students. These LEAs were numbered: 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17. Table 7 lists the verbiage used in their local-control plans for their EL students.

Table 7

*Local-control accountability plan language for LEAs without interventions.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEA #</th>
<th>Local-control plan language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reading Labs (Learning Centers) at the elementary schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Materials will be purchased to support EL programs and resources. Professional development to increase elementary administrator English Learner pedagogy, materials, and supplies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>After School/summer Reading programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Professional development for all teachers in ELD/SDAIE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Professional development for all teachers in ELD/SDAIE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Summer School for all struggling students. Provide intervention teachers for all struggling readers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Specific growth goals for EL students, but no intervention programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In these cases, it is the lack of interventions above and beyond the state mandated ELD curriculum that is common among these LEAs. It is important to note that all LEAs are required to provide the state standards of English language development, as well as SDAIE supported math, science, and social studies classes for EL students. Thus, the local-control plans for these
districts opted to provide resources in the basic program instead of adding additional interventions for their EL and LTEL students.

The state department measured the number of EL students attaining English proficiency by LEA and by school year. Thus, this study measured the mean of EL students attaining English proficiency from 2009 through 2015 for each of the LEAs in the sample, which is the efficiency with which many EL students attain English proficiency. For instance, seven LEAs that fully implemented interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories to all EL and LTEL students, grades K–12 yielded a mean of 49.80; in other words, these LEAs moved an average of 49.80% of their EL students to reclassify as English proficient. These LEAs were numbered: 2, 3, 8, 9, 14, 18. By contrast, six LEAs that strategically targeted specific grade levels to implement interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories yielded a mean 52.29. These LEAs were numbered: 1, 4, 5, 16, 19, 20. While seven LEAs that provided the state’s minimum requirement ELD standards and curriculum, and did not report any additional interventions for LTEL students in their local-control accountability plan, yielded a mean of 46.26. These LEAs were numbered: 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17.

As explained, LEAs were randomly selected by student enrollment size. When disaggregated, five LEAs with student populations larger than 30,000 students yielded a mean of 48.57; these LEAs were numbered 1–5. Five LEAs with student populations of fewer than 30,000 students yielded a mean of 47.76; these were numbered 6–10. While 10 LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students yielded 50.46; these were numbered 11–20. LEAs with student populations larger than 30,000 students, and LEAs with fewer than 30,000 students for the most part served large metropolitan areas with urban and suburban communities. By contrast, LEAs
with fewer than 1,500 students served suburban and rural communities (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Five of the fewer than 1,500 student enrollment LEAs that served suburban communities yielded a mean of 51.67; these were numbered 13, 14, 15, 18, 20. While five of the fewer than 1,500 student enrollment LEAs that served rural communities yielded a mean of 49.24; these LEAs were numbered 11, 12, 16, 17, 19.

**Discussion of Results**

The problem that prompted this study is that federal and state legislation requires all EL students to attain proficiency in English in 5 years or less, from the point of initial enrollment in American schools. However, state reports indicate that half of all EL students will continue as LTEL students after receiving English-language development instruction for 5 years or more in American public schools (Olsen, 2010; 2014). This discrepancy between policy expectations and actual student achievement spawned the central question for this research: Is there a need to align LTEL legislative requirements, and local-control accountability goals with academic literacy practices aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977)? There were two research questions that guided the analysis of data collected for this study:

**RQ1: How well aligned are the LEAs’ interventions described in the local-control plan aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories?** This first research question confirmed the data to ascertain if the interventions described in the local-control accountability plan for each LEA were aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories to reduce the number of LTEL students. The data collected revealed the following themes: Seven of the 20 (35%) LEAs delivered a full implementation of interventions aligned to threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories. Six of the 20
(30%) LEAs strategically implemented interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories. Lastly, 7 of 20 (35%) LEAs did not deliver interventions beyond the required ELD standards and curriculum.

**RQ2: Do LEAs’ assessment results indicate an increase in number of LTEL students' acquisition of English as a second language?** This second research question guiding the analysis confirmed the data reported to the state on LTEL students attaining English proficiency. More specifically, did the LEAs’ assessment results indicate a reduction trend in LTEL students, thus demonstrating students’ acquisition of second-language literacy? The data collected from the state department showed several trends that will be discussed at length. The data results for each categorical group of LEAs, student enrollment size, community type, application of interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories were applied to a LTEL research matrix for analysis. The research revealed that there were variances among the categories and differences, themes became evident and conclusions were drawn from findings.

Within the five rural LEAs and the five suburban LEAs there was a 2.70% difference in where LTEL students performed better than students in suburban LEAs. The reader should keep in mind that these results were drawn from LEAs with fewer than 1,500 total students, and the largest 6–year average of LTELs within the 10 LEAs in this category was 229 students. Thus, a variance difference of 2.70% in such small LEAs could mean plus-or-minus five students. However, when analyzing the marginal variance among LEAs with more than 30,000 students, fewer than 30,000, and fewer than 1,500, there was a more pronounced trend. Regardless of implementing interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories, LTEL students in LEAs with fewer than 1,500 students attained a mean of 50.46, and
outperformed their counterparts in LEAs with fewer than 30,000 students with a mean of 47.76 by a margin of 1.89%, and they also outperformed their counterparts in LEAs with more than 30,000 students with a mean of 48.57 by a margin of 2.70%.

A possible reason why there was a trend where LTEL students in smaller LEAs performed better than students in larger LEAs could be due to small-district-adjustment-funding practices. LEA and school funding are reliant on a per-pupil funding formula, where state pays LEAs a set amount of dollars per student, per year. Part of the accountability is that the students must be present each day in order for the LEA/school to collect funding, and is known as the average daily attendance (ADA) rate. Large schools and LEAs draw enough ADA to be fiscally self-sufficient, and they accomplish this by balancing a teacher-to-student ratio with ADA income. However, smaller LEAs typically do not draw enough ADA funding to sustain their educational programs and are reliant on small-district adjustment funding. This adjustment in funding is in addition to ADA funding, resulting in a smaller student-to-teacher ratio, or smaller class sizes in low ADA school districts that may translate to better student achievement results overall (California Department of Education, 2014).

There was an unanticipated result in the implementation of interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). I predicted that LEAs who only provided ELD standards and curriculum to their EL and LTEL students would not perform as well as those LEAs that provided interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories. It was not anticipated that LEAs that implemented interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories to all their EL and LTEL students, grades K–12 would not outperform LEAs that strategically implemented interventions. Thus, the
emerging theme from the research was that LEAs that strategically targeted specific grade levels to implement EL and LTEL interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories yielded the best results in reducing the numbers of LTEL students. LEAs that strategically implemented interventions, regardless of ADA enrollment or community setting, reduced the number of LTEL students by a margin of 2.49%, compared to LEAs that fully implemented interventions grades K–12. LEAs who strategically implemented interventions also outperformed LEAs that only provided ELD standards and curriculum by a margin of 6.03%.

One of the most common strategic practices uncovered in the local-control accountability plans was the use of academic literacy pedagogy in grades K–3, which is a proactive approach aimed to address potential academic literacy issues before EL students become LTELs. These LEAs provided EL students with academic literacy skills across the disciplines, thus minimizing the number of LTEL students (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Another common strategy found in the local-control accountability plans was a dedicated elective support course for LTEL students in grades 9–12. The funding for these courses was geared toward purchasing and training teachers in English support curriculum (Dutro & Kinsella, 2010). Another, less common strategy, was the implementation of dual-language immersion programs; these programs enroll equal amounts of EL or LTEL students to students who only speak English or English-only (EO) students. Teachers in the program alternate the target language of English or Spanish throughout the day, depending on the subject area and grade level. For example, science in grade 7 would be delivered in English, and social studies would be delivered in Spanish. Then, science in grade 8 would be delivered in Spanish, and social studies would be delivered in English. The purpose
of dual-language immersion programs is to edify both EL and English-only students second language academically through the rigor of content area studied (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

Further analysis revealed that the strategically targeted interventions are fiscally more efficient for the following reasons: Primary-grade teachers typically hold a multiple-subject teaching credential and are trained to teach reading, while single-subject-credential teachers, who specialize in subject areas such as mathematics, social studies, and physical education, are not traditionally trained to teach reading. Thus, investing in primary-grade teachers with additional training and materials in academic literacy would yield more efficient student-achievement results as these teachers have a formally trained capacity. By contrast, it would take additional time and resources to build the academic literacy capacity in single-subject credentialed teachers who are not formally trained to teach English. A similar argument can be made for teachers who are not only bilingual, they have acquired a bilingual certification in addition to their multiple or single subject credential. These bilingual-certificated teachers not only have the capacity to deliver bilingual lessons, but have also demonstrated the aptitude to address the education of EL and LTEL students by seeking additional certification. Thus, LEAs that strategically target students in certain grade levels, also target teachers who are motivated to take on the responsibility, as opposed to imposing the responsibility on all teachers as LEAs who implemented interventions across all grades.

This research sought to address the efficacy in practices to reducing the production of LTEL students. To that end, the research revealed that 13 of 20 (65%) LEAs used a variety of interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). All 20 LEAs reported goals to increase the number of EL student reclassification to fluent English proficient,
as this is an expected state-monitored metric. Seven of 20 LEAs did not report using additional interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories in their local-control accountability plans. These seven LEAs that did not specify interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories did articulate a variety of approaches in providing professional development to teachers delivering ELD standards and curriculum.

The research also revealed how LEAs are prioritizing the needs of LTEL students under current state policy. Hence, the study uncovered that the lack of direct accountability metrics to reduce the number LTEL students creates an inconsistent priority and practice across California. However, the findings are not an indictment that seven LEAs are unresponsive to a group of students and their needs; however, the findings underscore that ELD standards and state-adopted curriculum are not enough to address the needs of all EL students. This finding will be further discussed in relation to the literature.

The parameters of this research followed the state department’s accountability metrics during the academic years of 2009–2015, which expected all EL students to attain English proficiency in 5 years or less. This multi-case study revealed discrepancies between educational policy and research. The literature review presented various works by experts in the field of second-language acquisition and LTELs indicating that it takes a minimum of 6 years for a student to attain proficiency in English. Thus, according to the literature, educators cannot expect all EL students will demonstrate mastery of a second language in 5 years or less.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

The premise of this study was based on the discrepancy between research and policy of how to serve English-learning students, in this case federal education policy and state accountability metrics, versus research findings and literature. Olsen (2010; 2014), and the
Education Trust-West (2014) published arguments that highlight EL student performance deficiencies under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, particularly the phenomenon of LTEL students. These authors pointed to EL student-achievement data that indicated about half of all EL students who entered American public schools continued as LTEL students after 5 years or more of instruction. There are two areas of significance in these publications; first is the 5–year mark as the distinctive definition of what constitutes a LTEL student. The second area of significance is why are the educational practices for EL students only 50% efficient. The research questions of this study addressed these discrepancies through the theoretical lenses of best pedagogical practices that reduce the production of LTEL students.

The first area of significance is the discrepancy of how policy and research define LTEL students. Menken, Kleyn, (2010), Menken, Kleyn, and Chae, (2012) defined the time it takes for an EL student to attain English proficiency to be between 6–7 years from the initial date of enrollment into public school. This is based on the premise that students master the four dimensions of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the target language of English, thus meeting reclassification criteria to be considered fluent English proficient (Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta, & August (2013). NCLB (2001) held LEAs accountable for LTEL students using a 5–year mark in direct contradiction of the research conducted by Menken, Kleyn, (2010), Menken, Kleyn, and Chae, (2012).

The second area of significance was the efficiency in the number of students who continue to be LTEL. This study surveyed 20 LEAs across California in where LTEL student-achievement data between 2009–2015 were disaggregated. The data for this study revealed that the average production of LTEL students in the LEA sample over the 6–year parameter was 49.31, consistent with the research conducted by Olsen (2010; 2014), and the Education Trust-
West (2014) where they indicated that half of all EL students matriculate into middle and high school as LTELs.

Given these areas of significance and the consistency between this study’s findings and the literature, one can draw a conclusion on the efficacy of policy in number of years it takes to classify an EL student to a LTEL student. The research of Menken, Kleyn, (2010), Menken, Kleyn, and Chae, (2012) indicated that the 5–year mark is unsupported and one can conclude that given an additional 1–2 years in the accountability metrics, the production of LTEL students would decrease. The argument of defining the time it takes for EL students to be considered LTEL students was addressed in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, during the Obama administration, known as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. ESSA (2015) replaced the definition of time that a student is considered LTEL from the previous 5–year mark (NCLB, 2001) to a 6–year mark. This change in federal policy is now more closely aligned to the literature, and states are also aligning their accountability metrics to reflect that EL students in schools for 6 years or more who have not yet attained proficiency in English are considered LTEL (ESSA, 2015).

This study sought to document evidence of interventions utilized to mitigate the LTEL phenomenon across California. Research by Alliance for Excellent Education (2007), Dutro, Kinsella (2010), and Olsen (2010) found that there are consistent pedagogical lapses in current ELD practices that did not meet the needs of LTEL students, citing that half of all EL students who entered the schools surveyed in their study would attain English proficiency in 5 years or less. The Education Trust-West (2014), Olsen (2014), Menken, Kleyn, Chae (2012), and Brooks (2015) documented that LEAs who reported successful numbers of LTEL students attaining English proficiency utilized interventions above and beyond the ELD standards and curriculum.
These LEAs also reported using specifically designed interventions to meet the needs of LTEL students.

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2007), Dutro and Kinsella (2010), The Education Trust-West (2014), Olsen (2010; 2014) further ascertained that interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories yielded the best results. Thus, using strategies aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories lowered the number of LTEL students in the respective school programs researched (Cummings, 2010; Menke & Kleyn, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). This study documented that 13 of 20 (65%) LEAs in the sample utilized interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic language theories. The documented findings were consistent with research conducted by The Alliance for Excellent Education (2007), Dutro and Kinsella (2010), The Education Trust-West (2014), Olsen (2010; 2014) where 13 LEAs that used these interventions demonstrated trends of LTEL students attaining English proficiency more efficiently than the LEAs not employing interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories.

**Limitations**

This study limited its sample of LEAs to only draw from full K–12 school districts. The intention was to omit LEAs that only served elementary, grades K–8 only, and high school districts. The rationale was to compare LEA organizations similar to each other, as well as to compare organizations that were interdependent of the academic achievement of their students throughout their academic career. This interdependence creates an accountability among lower-grade teachers to prepare their students for the upper grades’ colleagues who work in the same
organization. Additionally, K–12 LEAs used a similar template to develop their local-control accountability plan that was different due to other LEA configurations.

Local-control accountability plans were designed by the state department for the purpose of handing local boards of education the responsibility of prioritizing educational needs (The Educational Trust-West, 2014). The expectation is that LEAs must include all stakeholders in making decisions about what are the educational priorities and where the dollars should be invested. At the same time, metrics of student achievement aligned to these priorities must show growth every year. The local-control accountability plan and goals are necessary for the LEA to spend funds that are not earmarked by educational law, such as salaries, benefits, textbooks, and building maintenance. All other funding or grants are considered categorical and must be articulated in the local-control accountability plan.

Based on the state department requirements for the local-control accountability plans, LEAs must have reported all interventions above and beyond the base program for the public to view, and the local board of education to approve. Thus, interventions above and beyond the base program will encumber additional costs for professional development, materials, and the like (The Education Trust-West, 2014). LEAs that did not report any interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories in their local-control accountability plans were coded as not providing such interventions.

There was one other limitation this study did not examine more thoroughly: the criteria for EL students to reclassify as fluent English proficient. Linquanti and Cook (2015) examined best practices for reclassifying EL students. Their work revealed LEAs that used more rigorous reclassification criteria better prepared EL students to thrive academically. This is a reasonable finding; however, the implication is that the rigor of reclassification criteria varies from LEA to
LEA. From this inconsistency, one can infer that LEAs with less rigorous reclassification criteria may have different trends of LTEL students attaining English proficiency.

Although district demographic factors such as urban, suburban settings, and student enrollment were purposely included and disaggregated, there were some demographic factors that were not included in the study. For example, student gender, race, special education, and socio-economic status were not included in the data collection. The state department did not disaggregate LTEL cohorts for these subgroups and thus these data were not collected.

**Implication of the Results for Practice**

The results of this study have underscored significant shortcomings in education policy as it pertains to EL and LTEL education. One example was the discrepancy between NCLB (2001) and the definition of a LTEL student as having been in American public schools for 5 years or more. This time-limit definition was different from the literature that indicated that it takes 6–7 years for a student to attain English proficiency (Menken, Kleyn, 2010; Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012). This discrepancy was addressed and potentially corrected in the Every Child Succeeds Act (2015) as the federal law now defines a LTEL student as having been in American public schools for 6 years or more. According to Menken, Kleyn, (2010), Menken, Kleyn, and Chae, (2012), this shift in policy will have a dramatic effect on the number of EL students who continue to be classified as LTELs. To be clear, the addition of 1 year to the definition of LTEL may drastically reduce the 50% average production of LTEL that has been consistently documented (Olsen, 2010; 2014). Policymakers and educational leaders will need to respond to new data, although the literature leads readers to anticipate better results, which remains to be studied.
As reported in Chapter 4, there were no significant data findings in this research; there were, however data trends and themes that were consistent with the literature that may have practical policy implications. Thirteen of the 20 LEAs, or 65% of the LEAs selected in this study, utilized interventions above and beyond the minimum ELD standards and curriculum. This means LEAs that only implement the minimum ELD standards and curriculum will continue to yield more LTEL students, compared to LEAs who move their pedagogical practices beyond their English-language arts and ELD classrooms. The implication of this study is that LEAs may need to adopt curricular programs and pedagogical practices aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic theories to be more efficient in meeting the needs of LTELs (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977).

Additionally, the results also imply that LEAs need to dedicate their programs and practices, and be strategic in their efforts based on the specific needs of their LTEL population.

There is an equity implication that was indirectly broached in the research conducted. The very nature and purpose of the local-control accountability plans is to give local governing boards of education broad power to determine educational priorities in collaboration with the communities they serve (The Education Trust-West, 2015). In the sample of 20 LEAs, 100% of them had a significant population of EL students, and 65% of school districts deemed providing their EL and LTEL population additional support a priority. Moreover, the student-achievement data of the seven LEAs that did not report funding spent on interventions for their EL and LTEL students attained a mean of 46.26, which was below the average by a margin of 3.74%. The implication here is that these LEAs must include a diverse representation of the population they serve to be a part of their advisory committees so that their voices can be reflected in the local-control accountability plans (Blankstein, Noguera, Kelly, & Tutu, 2015).
Recommendations for Further Research

In the areas of policy for English learners and LTEL students, there is both a great deal of research, and a short history of implementation. The watershed case that required LEAs to educate their English-learning students occurred 43 years ago (Lau v. Nichols, 1974). This court of appeals decision ushered in the era of implementing second-language acquisition practices. In the world of education, moving from the theoretical to the pragmatic requires both leadership and policy. Leadership without policy does not change fundamental rights, just as policy without leadership are just words without interpretation or action. Thus, educational leaders must be vigilant of potential pitfalls in policy or lack thereof.

A potential pitfall of which LEA leaders must be mindful are the state metrics for accountability required by ESSA (2015), particularly the reclassification metrics for EL students becoming fluent-English-proficient. As LEAs are held responsible for decreasing the number of LTEL students, pressure for improving scores will increase. As time passes and trend data can be ascertained, research should be conducted to evaluate the consistency in reclassification criteria rigor. As the work of Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta, August (2013), and Linquanti, Cook (2015) implied, lowering the rigor of reclassification criteria can affect the number of LTEL students an LEA produces. Leaders must resist the temptation of developing less rigorous criteria for reclassification as this will also decrease the academic success rate of reclassified students (Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta, & August, 2013). Therefore, it is recommended that future studies that expand on EL student reclassification by Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta, & August (2013), Linquanti, and Cook (2015) be conducted in the environment of the recently enacted ESSA (2015).
It is also recommended to continue to conduct research that will provide feedback on policies such as NCLB (2001) where intended and unintended outcomes are analyzed to guide decision makers. Studies, such as this one, should be conducted over a 6–year period to assimilate the method of collecting 6 years of data as used here. Utilizing the data matrix created for this study, a similar study can be conducted to analyze EL and LTEL student achievement in the new educational environment of ESSA (2015). Furthermore, the data collected over a 6–year period can be compared to data collected for this study to draw conclusions on practice, research, and policy effectiveness.

Equity in education as it pertains to the local-control accountability plan should also be studied. Local-control accountability plans were first implemented by states in 2015; the objective of this initiative was to give more local control to governing boards of education (United States Department of Education, 2015). Given the findings in this study, where 35% of LEAs did not invest in interventions for their EL and LTEL student populations beyond the minimum requirement, a study that measures this inequitable practice should be considered (Blankstein, Noguera, Kelly, & Tutu, 2015). Thus, a study in where qualitative data on the culture and climate of LEAs who invest additional resources to support EL and LTEL students can be collected and analyzed for factors of equitable practices. The rationale for such a study can be drawn from EL and LTEL student achievement results in where LEAs who have implemented additional resources not always have better results. In other words, simply investing dollars in interventions will not guarantee results. To that end, what sets apart LEAs who invest additional resources and achieve better results for their EL and LTEL students? Researchers could develop a set of milestones on which to base “making adequate” progress toward proficiency in academic English or reclassification.
Conclusion

This multi-case study explored research conducted by Olsen (2010; 2014) around LTEL students attaining English proficiency. Specifically, this study confirmed the same percentage of EL students who continue as LTELs after 5 years of instruction in American public schools to be 49.31%. The statistical data findings connected to interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories were statistically consistent, and thus the data trends supported the need to consider alternative education policy for EL and LTEL students (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukoma & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). This research studied local-control accountability plans and EL student achievement of 20 LEAs across California. The research design was significant for two reasons: First it isolated how LEAs prioritized their resources, teachers, and funding. Second, the research design isolated LTEL student cohort and their ability to attain English proficiency in their learning environment.

The research design of this study aggregated LTEL cohort data from each LEA from 2009–2015. This study was successful in providing LTEL cohort performance trend data. Specifically, trend data supported that the 13 LEAs that provided additional interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories outperformed the seven LEAs that did not provide additional interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories. This was true regardless of LEA population size or whether it was an urban, suburban, or rural community. The seven LEAs that did not provide interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories provided the minimum state requirement of ELD standards and curriculum. This inconsistency also confirmed research conducted by Dutro, and Kinsella (2010), Freeman, Freeman, Mercuri, (2002), Menken, Kleyn, and Chae (2007), in where the authors highlighted program implementation inconsistencies among other
causes of the LTEL phenomenon.

This study sought out to not only to highlight a need, but to also provide direction for potential change. Sustainable change must be systemic, and systemic change cannot occur without policy, just like policy cannot occur without servant leaders creating it and protecting it (Greenleaf, 1991). Servant leaders must make decisions on behalf of students whose voice is barely heard among the myriad of education politics (Blankstein, Noguera, Kelly, & Tutu, 2015). It is those silent parents of our EL students who are simply grateful of the educational opportunities for their children, and completely trust the professionals who teach them every day. It is those silent voices who depend on the servant leaders to advocate on their behalf and support those who touch lives every day. It is the ultimate calling to serve those who serve our students and it is an awesome responsibility to bear, that is why educational leadership is God’s work.

Chapter 5 concludes this research study. The findings produced both trends and themes, specifically three themes emerged from the study. From the 20 LEAs in the sample, there were seven LEAs that did not implement interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories; these LEAs implemented the required ELD state standards. Six LEAs strategically implemented interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories in targeted grade levels. Seven LEAs implemented interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories across grades K–12. Data trends indicated that LEAs who strategically implemented interventions aligned to the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories produced fewer LTEL students (Cummings, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). Recommendations invite all stakeholders to evaluate their local-control accountability plans to ensure that the needs of EL
and LTEL students are being addressed equitably.
References


English Language Education for Immigrant Children, Cal. Education Code §§ 313.


http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/48938/ThompsonKarenEducationFullyAccountingEnglish.pdf?sequence=1


### Appendix A: LTEL Proficiency Data by LEA

**LTEL proficiency data by LEA by school year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>09–10</th>
<th>10–11</th>
<th>11–12</th>
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### Appendix A: LTEL Proficiency Data by LEA (Continued)

*EL & LTEL proficiency data by LEA by school year*

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<th>09–10</th>
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<td>87</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<tr>
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<td>80</td>
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<td>46.20%</td>
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<td>94</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<td>35</td>
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# Appendix A: LTEL Proficiency Data by LEA (Continued)

*EL & LTEL proficiency data by LEA by school year*

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Proficient</td>
<td>% Proficient</td>
<td>% Proficient</td>
<td>% Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## LEA 17
- Total LTEL: 292, 293, 279, 214, 223, 73
- Proficient: 144, 114, 146, 88, 104, 21
- % Proficient: 49.30%, 38.90%, 52.30%, 41.10%, 46.60%, 28.80%

## LEA 18
- Total LTEL: 47, 61, 65, 60, 52, 40
- Proficient: 24, 24, 35, 29, 21, 14
- % Proficient: 51.10%, 39.30%, 53.80%, 48.30%, 40.40%, 35%

## LEA 19
- Total LTEL: 128, 186, 156, 143, 140, 128
- Proficient: 50, 70, 65, 59, 59, 56
- % Proficient: 39.10%, 37.60%, 41.70%, 41.30%, 42.10%, 43.80%

## LEA 20
- Total LTEL: 362, 312, 315, 323, 287, 295
- Proficient: 203, 152, 166, 180, 177, 192
- % Proficient: 56.10%, 48.70%, 52.70%, 55.70%, 61.70%, 65.10%

*Note.* The state of California average of EL students becoming LTEL from 2009–2015 is 50% (Olsen, 2014).
Appendix B: Mean Score of LTELs Attaining English Proficiency

*Mean score of LTELs attaining English proficiency by LEA*

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<th>PSD</th>
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Appendix C: LTEL Research Matrix of LEA Sample

*LT EL research matrix of LEA sample*

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**Appendix D: LEA’s LTEL student Cohort Averages**

*LEA’s LTEL student cohort, 6-year averages from 2009 through 2015*

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*Note: *CF* = The conceptual framework of the threshold, transference, and academic literacy theories (Cummings, 2000; Menke & Kleyn, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977).*
Appendix E: Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association.

__________________________
Signature

John Paul Sanchez

__________________________
Name (Typed)

April 30, 2017

__________________________
Date