THE EFFECT OF PARENT ENGLISH LITERACY TRAINING ON
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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When the Bush administration set out to revolutionize public education through the requirements commanded by No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), framers of the legislation chose language that appeared inclusive of all students in U.S. schools. The law demands that English language learners take the mandated exams early in their academic careers in the United States even though research indicates most will fail due to lack of time to acquire sufficient language proficiently to demonstrate their learning on the exams. Viewed through a critical theory lens, the inclusive nature of NCLB is in fact, oppressing ELL students. One district in Texas The study involved ELL students in grades 1-12 in a school district in North Central Texas that uses its family literacy center as an intervention to aid ELL families in English language acquisition. Students fell into three categories: students and parents who attend the family literacy center English classes, students whose parents attend the family literacy center English classes but the students do not attend, and students and parents who do not attend the family literacy center English classes.

The quantitative data for the study were reading and math Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) scores of ELL students administered by the district in spring 2005. The independent variable was attendance at the family literacy center English classes. A series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) and descriptive statistics (mean,
standard deviation, homogeneity of variance) was applied to the data and significant differences were observed on only two measures of the TELPAS.

The qualitative data were phenomenological interviews of teachers at the district-run family literacy center. Data derived from in-depth phenomenological interviews were between August and September 2005.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The power of language is universal. This power is documented, celebrated, and recited. When George W. Bush signed Pub. L. No. 107-110, the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), he chose to frame it, a cognitive linguistic term meaning providing mental structures for thinking (Lakoff, 2003), by using the title “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001”, (NCLB). By choosing to rename the act from ESEA to NCLB, Bush changed the frame from the “mainstream policy makers and their ‘authoritarian administrations’” (McLaren, 2000) to a more inclusive and embracing one. Though Bush altered the frame with the new title for the law, the content actually moved the law to a more exclusive and punitive position than it was prior to his reauthorization of it.

The United States government set out to revolutionize public education through the requirement that public schools teach and be held accountable for all students’ academic progress (“No Child Left Behind Act of 2001,” 2001). The U.S. Department of Education website dedicated to NCLB states the “Four pillars of NCLB [are:] stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, proven educational methods, and more choices for parents” (Overview: Four pillars of NCLB, 2004, ¶ 1-4). One stated purpose of NCLB includes developing students into prepared citizens. NCLB literature affirms educating students properly empowers them to lead financially secure lives, contribute to the economy, and be productive community members now.
and in the future (Stronger accountability: Testing for results: Helping families, schools and communities understand and improve student achievement, 2002).

Among the four central tenets of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), accountability is key. Within the accountability aspect, “Student progress and achievement [are] measured according to state tests… and given to every child, every year” (Stronger accountability: Testing for results: Helping families, schools and communities understand and improve student achievement, 2002, ¶ 2). NCLB holds schools, districts, and states accountable for the academic progress of all students in all subgroups through its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reports. Research suggests that, “Subgroups, such as those defined by race and academic status, are now focused upon for further achievement. That is, all students are expected to perform at proficient standards” (Marion, 2004, p. 3). Though implied otherwise, the implementation of the No Child Left Behind accountability measures does not equitably bring all children along but rather punishes those students who cannot conform to the disciplined standard constructed by uniform testing (Lakoff, 2004).

Although the verbiage constituting No Child Left Behind suggests inclusiveness, and the title itself lends credence to this connotation, some subpopulation labels imply otherwise. Attention to the language used in framing political initiatives such as NCLB underlies this dissertation’s critique. For example, at both the federal and state levels, government bureaucrats and politicians choose to use the term “Limited English Proficient” (LEP), to identify the non-English speaking population. The term creates a negative image, a learner with a deficit. By contrast, a more recent term coined by LaCelle-Peterson and Rivera in 1993, “English Language Learner” (ELL) promotes an
image of a child capable of learning a second, or perhaps third, language, English. Throughout this dissertation, the author chooses to use the term ELL instead of LEP, except in direct quotes, when discussing the population under investigation as is promoted by researchers in the ELL field (Butler & Stevens, 1997; LaCelle-Peterson & Rivera, 1993, 1994).

As of the 2003-2004 school year, the English language learner (ELL) population is a reporting subgroup on every AYP report. That policy puts pressure on ELL students to succeed on standardized exams because if they fail, a school or district that may exceed expectations of the state at every level except the ELL subgroup will not make AYP. The school district under consideration for this study initially failed to make AYP in the 2003-2004 school year due primarily to its scores on state tests generated by ELL students. However, the school district appealed the ruling and was granted a reprieve. In the 2004-2005 school year, the district made AYP; however, several schools’ ELL scores were below the passing rate. The fact that this did not affect the district’s AYP measures is due in part to the mandated size of each subgroup to be included in the ratings.

A subgroup must have at least 50 students to be included in the AYP rating system. Several schools did not have the requisite 50 ELL students, so the subgroup score was not reported nor included in the AYP calculations. The district ELL population is growing, and soon, campuses that had low ELL scores but didn’t have enough students to be a reporting subgroup will have to report those scores and include them in AYP calculations. Consequently, there is increased pressure on ELL students to succeed on
the state-mandated tests, including the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).

The district response to increased pressures has been threefold. First, in accordance with Texas education code §29.053(c), “Each district with an enrollment of 20 or more students of limited English proficiency in any language classification in the same grade level shall offer a bilingual education or special language program,” (p. 79). The district offers bilingual education to students whose home language is Spanish. Second, the district places those students not eligible for bilingual education under Texas education code in an English as a second language (ESL) program, according to TEC §29.051, which states,

The mastery of basic English language skills is a prerequisite for effective participation in the state's educational program. Bilingual education and special language programs can meet the needs of those students and facilitate their integration into the regular school curriculum. Therefore, in accordance with the policy of the state to ensure equal educational opportunity to every student, and in recognition of the educational needs of students of limited English proficiency, this subchapter provides for the establishment of bilingual education and special language programs in the public schools…(p. 14).

Third, to meet a revised requirement in Pub. L. No. 107-110, Title III, Part A, Section 3102 (6), which states, “The purpose of this part [is] to promote parental and community participation in language instruction educational programs for the parents and communities of limited English proficient children,” (p. 266) the district founded a family literacy center. The purpose of the center is to help parents to become more
literate and to function as English speakers in the U.S. By acquiring English language skills, parents can help their children with schoolwork, help their families adjust to U. S. life and culture, and help their families become productive members of the community.

Statement of the problem

The extensive research emphasizing the importance of parental involvement in student academic success warrants a study of the effect of parental acquisition of English as a Second Language on student academic performance.

Assumption

Parents who learn English as a second language simultaneously with their children are able to provide support in English language acquisition for their children, that results in higher levels of academic success for the children.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to ascertain what influence English language acquisition classes for immigrant parents of English language learner (ELL) students, conducted at a Family Literacy Center (FLC), have on the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores of ELL students.

Research Questions

1. Is there a significant difference in test scores, at the .05 level, among the students whose parents attend the FLC with them, those whose parents attend without them, and those whose parents do not attend?

2. What is the Family Literacy Center teachers’ understanding of their work in terms of helping immigrant parents and children learn English?
a. What relationships do the teachers see between parents’ educational experiences at the FLC and their children’s school performance?

b. What are teachers’ perceptions of parent learning that might affect their children’s learning and school experience?

Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that students who attend the family literacy center classes with their parents will score significantly higher, at the .05 level, on the academic achievement tests as measured by TELPAS and TAKS, respectively, than do students who do not attend the FLC, whether with or without their parents.

Setting

The setting is a medium sized suburban school district in north Texas. The district population includes 14,849 students taught in 16 schools. Approximately six percent of the students are designated ELL, a 500% increase in three years. The district’s ELL population includes various home languages and consists of considerably divergent socioeconomic statuses. The demographic information of the ELL students for this study will be obtained through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), which is the Texas state-mandated system that “encompasses all data requested and received by [the Texas Education Agency (TEA)] about public education, including student demographic and academic performance, personnel, financial, and organizational information” (About PEIMS, n.d., ¶ 2). To meet NCLB requirements, a family literacy program began operating in fall 2001 in an effort to reach out to immigrant community members whose children were ELL students in the district.
Rationale

As stated previously, a primary goal of NCLB is to prepare students to be good citizens. NCLB defines good citizenship as part of a “good, wise, just, and compassionate country” (Paige, 2004b, ¶ 41), wherein educated graduates are ready to take on “important roles in society” (Stronger accountability: Testing for results: Helping families, schools and communities understand and improve student achievement, 2002, ¶ 12), and are ready to use the knowledge and skills learned in school to aid with their jobs. Paige (2004a) states that “education is freedom” (¶ 40), and ELL children quickly learn that understanding English is necessary for them to participate actively in the free educational system in the U.S. Because the United States is primarily a monolingual society, speaking English is essential to active participation. A person who does not possess English literacy as capital to spend exercises limited power to participate freely in the society. Immigrant adults who come to the United States yearning for a better life for themselves and their children know that in order to participate in this society in both an educational and economic sense, acquiring English is essential.

Federally mandated English language programs meet many of the ELL children’s needs, but federal guidelines on parental needs are vague and thus harder to meet. Freire (1992) suggested that in teaching adult literacy, “reading and writing of words comes by way of the reading of the world” (p. 78) and that “the knowledge of living experience” helps learners get to “there,” the learners’ educational objective, by starting from “here,” where the learner already knows and can use in obtaining the educational objective. Rather than focusing on deficits in an adult learner’s education, highlighting their knowledge gleaned through life experiences and building on what they already
know aids adults in achieving their educational goals. Furthermore, if parents consider their time in the U. S. as more than exile in a foreign land, but rather as “an opportunity with which [they] have been presented” (Freire, 1992, p. 33), then they can focus on English acquisition as a family goal. That goal may aid the family in overcoming economic and social alienation due to their lack of English ability.

For ELL students, succeeding in the mandated tests of NCLB demonstrates knowledge and enables them to move from the marginalized ELL category to acceptance in society as English speakers. Unfortunately, through its implementation, NCLB harms many of those students it is purported to help. ELL students face pressure to gain English language quickly for both their individual achievement scores as well as for those of the school, district, and state. AYP benchmarks create increased pressure on students to perform in spite of the research findings demonstrating that communicative language develops in three years or less but academic language takes at least five to seven years to acquire (Collier, 1995; Cummins, 1984; Ezra, 2003; Hakuta, Goto Butler, & Witt, 2000).

Though the U.S. Department of Education has acknowledged that “[ELL]-students new to the United States often have a difficult time participating in state assessments due to language barriers or the lack of schooling prior to coming to the United States from their native countries” (Paige, 2004a, ¶ 3), there have been no substantial changes in the timelines for ELL students to take mandatory assessments (Matzelle, 2004). The emphasis on learning represented by successful achievement testing reflects a lack of understanding of the implications of a “banking system” of education (Freire, 1970). The most obvious characteristic of this limited pedagogical
framework’s consists of annual tests given to students to measure their “learning.” In the banking system, the educator “leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content,” rather than to engage children in problem-posing education (Freire, 1970, p. 71-72) and “learning is reduced to the transmission of predefined knowledge” (Giroux, 1983, p. 49). The reduced content, deposited by the teacher in the students, limits the capital ELL children can leverage toward social and economic gains and virtually eliminates students’ capacity to break out of oppressive economic and social constraints.

Prior to NCLB, ELL students in Texas received a three-year exemption from the state-mandated tests beginning in the third grade. Teachers concerned with school and district rankings invested considerable time working with non-ELL students who took the state-mandated tests, rather than with the exempted ELL students. With their focus centered on the mainstream students, schools employed a hidden curriculum wherein “administrators and teachers [spent] long hours developing curriculum models based on the rather narrow principles of control, prediction, and measurement” (Giroux, 1983, p. 43). During the pre-NCLB period, ELL children experienced curricular neglect because of their exclusion from normal testing preparation in the classroom. Such curricular neglect constituted a form of oppression by exclusion. At that time, ELL students were oppressed by virtue of being excluded from an equitable education because the system focused on outcomes from mandated tests that those students did not take. Test exclusion “creat[ed] a kind of systemic ‘ignorance’ about the educational progress of ELLs (LaCelle- Peterson & Rivera, 1994, p. 70), yet no attention was paid to ELL student learning in school because accountability measures ignored them altogether.
The No Child Left Behind legislation changed exclusive oppression to inclusive oppression by calling for “the inclusion of all students- even ELLs- in accountability assessment programs” (LaCelle- Peterson & Rivera, 1994, p. 70). The legislation broadened accountability for schools, districts, and states to include student achievement in all areas, thus expunging the exclusionary oppression of the old system. However, the inclusiveness of the new system tests ELL students in English earlier than research indicates such tests will provide an accurate assessment of their achievement. The result, a system that labels ELL children as at-risk academically for failing, exacerbates the problem. Furthermore, the system uses the same test for native English speakers and non-native speakers alike. The two characteristics, testing ELL students before they attain academic English skills and testing with the same exam for native speakers and non-native speakers, form the base of NCLB’s new system of oppression by inclusion. Prior to NCLB, ELL students, beginning in the third grade, were exempt from testing for three years; presently, there is no guarantee for any exemption from testing, though a one-year exemption is most common.

To identify a state policy as oppressive, one must pose the question, “How does the oppressor group or class benefit from oppressing members of its own society?” Miller & Eleveld, (2000) argued, “Oppressors dehumanize the oppressed with …differences, emphasizing the oppresssed’s being different. This difference serves to alienate the oppressed. This difference is put upon them by their oppressors” (p. 92). In the NCLB case, the benefit of oppression resides in the system that “proves” that ELL children should not be educated in our public schools with public funds, because they are unable to demonstrate mastery of the curriculum as measured on the state exams.
The oppressive system has matured from the days of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* ("Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka," 1954) to a more complex level due to U.S. Supreme Court rulings, boycotts, strikes, sit-ins, marches, and other resistance activities. For instance, simply excluding ELL students from the system is an impossibility, due to the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court case *Lau v. Nichols* ("Lau v. Nichols," 1974). That case addressed the unequal opportunity for ELLs to participate in schools. In 1982, in *Plyler v. Doe* ("Plyler v. Doe," 1982), the U.S. Supreme Court proclaimed that all immigrant children should be granted access to public education, whether or not they were legal immigrants. With those rulings, outlawing ELL students from attending school is presently impossible, yet NCLB’s testing mandate on unsupported timelines without modifications in the exams provides a way, without breaking the law, to discourage ELL students from attending schools.

Until the nature of the system changes, ELL students will continue to be inclusively oppressed. As a stopgap, the district in this study uses its family literacy center as an intervention to aid ELL families in acquiring English, with the intent to support ELL student achievement on mandated tests. Preston’s (2003) dissertation examines the work done in the district in the current study. She examined how the parents’ and students’ joint FLC experience strengthened the relationship between the school and home. Preston noted that ELL parents acknowledged in interviews that their children must speak English to participate in school and society in the United States. Consequently, participating parents strongly encouraged their children to learn English quickly. Preston noted that parents attending the FLC recognized that their ability to aid their children was restricted unless they knew English. Therefore, they were committed
to learn the language at the FLC, along with their children. The present study examined the teachers’ perceptions of the potential effect of parental English acquisition at the FLC on their students’ achievement on mandated exams as well as the differences the attendance rates at the FLC had on student performance on state-mandated tests.

Method

Students in the district’s English as a Second Language (ESL) program were sorted into three levels: parents who attend the FLC with their children, parents who attend without their children and children whose parents do not attend the FLC. Within each level, children’s scores on the dependent measures of the Texas Observation Protocols (TOP) for grades one and two, and the TELPAS and TAKS for grades three through twelve, or the TELPAS only for those students who are exempt from TAKS were randomly selected. A series of ANOVA analyses were conducted on the two dependent measures to determine differences in scores within and by group.

To further enhance the understanding of the FLC, the researcher interviewed four FLC teachers to ascertain their insight regarding how parental educational experiences at the FLC relate to students’ achievement on standardized tests.

Definition of Terms

*Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS).*

Defined by Cummins (1984) as “the manifestation of language proficiency in everyday communicative contexts” (p. 136). These oral communication skills in a new language generally develop within two years of arrival.

*Cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALPs).*
Defined by Cummins (1984) “in terms of the manipulation of language in decontextualized academic situations” (p.136). In its basic sense, this is the academic use of English in classrooms, used in textbooks, and used in standardized assessments.

*English as a second language (ESL).*

English as a second language programs shall be intensive programs of instruction designed to develop proficiency in the comprehension, speaking, reading, and composition in the English language. Instruction in English as a second language shall be commensurate with the student's level of English proficiency and his or her level of academic achievement. In pre-kindergarten through Grade 8, instruction in English as a second language may vary from the amount of time accorded to instruction in English language arts in the regular program for non-limited English proficient students to a full-time instructional setting utilizing second language methods. In high school, the English as a second language program shall be consistent with graduation requirements under Chapter 74 of this title (relating to Curriculum Requirements). The language proficiency assessment committee may recommend appropriate services that may include content courses provided through sheltered instructional approaches by trained teachers, enrollment in English as a second language courses, additional state elective English courses, and special assistance provided through locally determined programs (*LPAC decision-making process for the Texas assessment program grades 3-12, 2001*).

*Limited English Proficient (LEP).*
This is the state and federal government term for English language learners (ELL) which is used in most school districts as well (Lessow-Hurley, 1991). Initially, the term was coined in 1968 in the Bilingual Education Act, which was included in Title VII of the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1964. At that time, ELL students were called “children of limited English speaking ability (LESA), and this terminology continued until the reauthorization of Title VII of ESEA in 1978 when the term was changed to “Limited English Proficient” (Wright, 2005). According to Wright (2005), the “new wording was added to emphasize that the purpose of providing native language instruction was to ‘allow a child to achieve competence in the English language’” (p. 7).

*English Language Learner (ELL)*.

Any student who indicates on the home language survey that a language other than English is present in the household must demonstrate his or her capabilities in English in a way that is determined by the state. Examinations determine the competencies, and any child who does not achieve fluent scores on the tests receives the label of “limited English proficient” until the child passes state-approved assessments determining that the child has become fluent (“Chapter 89: Adaptations for special populations,” 2001, 19 TAC §89.1201). ELL researchers have a broader definition of the term (LaCelle-Peterson & Rivera, 1993, 1994; Lessow-Hurley, 1991; Wright, 2005).

*Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).*

As a part of No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), there are accountability measures at the school, district, and state level which are created by the state and
federal governments. Each state’s department of education determines the level of achievement that each student, subgroup, school, and district must meet to achieve progress and thereby earning the funding tied to achievement by NCLB. If a school or district fails to meet AYP measures in one reporting subgroup, the entire school or district can be labeled failing and suffer the consequences outlined in NCLB, which include removal of funding and/or removal of local control of the school or district.

*Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs).*

This is another piece of NCLB. The state provides the benchmark levels and targets for ELL students. The ELL test data from TELPAS and TAKS determines whether a student has demonstrated growth in language acquisition between one year and the next. Students must move up one level in all categories of TELPAS and/or TAKS to show the growth needed to achieve the objective.

*Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).*

The Texas state assessment exam used by the state to determine all students’ (and thereby), a school’s academic performance. Students in grades 3-11 are required to take the annual exam. Exemption from the exam is rare and necessitates official paperwork.

*Texas Education Agency (TEA).*

The official governmental agency of Texas responsible for the curriculum and assessment development and reports for all public schools K-12.

*Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS).*

The TELPAS consists of the Reading Proficiency Test in English (RPTE) and the Texas Observation Protocols (TOP) for grades three through twelve. It consists only of
the TOP for grades Kindergarten through two. Each student will receive a report in
which the two combined test scores create a composite rating used for the AMAO rating
needed for AYP.

*Reading Proficiency Test in English (RPTE).*

A state-mandated reading test for ELL students in grades 3-12, is administered once
annually during a three-week window in the spring semester.

*Texas Observation Protocols (TOP).*

“Enables teachers to **holistically rate** (emphasis in original) each [ELL] student’s
English language proficiency based on classroom observations and daily

**Assumptions**

The first assumption was that the students who attend the family literacy center
with their parents were doing so because they wanted to learn more English.

The second assumption was that experienced ESL teachers with background
knowledge in appropriate techniques for second language acquisition provided all ESL
classes held both in the center and in the schools.

A third assumption was that the parents’ curriculum at the center was appropriate
for adult learners and provided by teachers knowledgeable in adult learning techniques.

The last assumption was that the data provided to the researcher both from the
state and from the FLC teachers were accurate and complete.
Limitations

The first limitation was the regularity of attendance by parents to the FLC. Due to work schedules, transportation, or family commitments, parent participation at the FLC fluctuates throughout the school year. Without consistent attendance, parents cannot acquire English quickly. Another limitation was the small sample groups and the difficulty in matching participants, thus, limiting generalizability. A third limitation was the ELL population was one of the most mobile in schools today. The mobility factor limits possibility of a longitudinal study with the same students over several years. Often ELL students return to their countries for an academic year and then return to the school the following year, creating gaps in their assessment portfolio.

Summary

When the Bush administration set out to revolutionize public education through the requirements set forth in NCLB, framers of the legislation chose language that appeared to include all students in U.S. schools. A closer examination of the statute shows that instead of including all students, the mandatory assessment piece of the legislation, in fact, is leaving children behind. The law requires that English language learners take the mandated exams early in their academic careers in the United States, even though research indicates that most will fail, due to lack of time to acquire sufficient language proficiently to demonstrate their learning on exams. The inclusive nature of NCLB is, in fact, oppressing ELL students. One district in Texas uses its family literacy center as an intervention to aid ELL families in English language acquisition. The following chapter includes a review of literature related to strategies and programs to support ELL families so that they will succeed in today’s oppressive
educational climate. In addition, the chapter presents a review of research about appropriate second language acquisition timelines and accommodations for testing ELL students.
CHAPTER II
RELATED LITERATURE

This study addresses the strength gained by families studying English together to overcome their otherwise inability to function as full citizens in the U.S. that they would otherwise have due to language constraints. To address the research question (1) regarding test score differences, the literature review begins with an examination of the legal background, language acquisition timelines, and ELL testing. The review changes focus to connections between research on standardized testing of ELL students to research on family literacy programs, family dynamics, power balance, addressing question two. Finally, the review, using a Freirean and critical theory lens, discusses the validity of testing as assessing learning, the importance of family literacy, and the empowerment of families working together in the educational realm.

Question 1

“Is there a significant difference in test scores, at the .05 level, among students whose parents attend the FLC with them, whose parents attend without them, and whose parents do not attend?”

Legal Background

Lau v. Nichols (1974), the groundbreaking U.S. Supreme Court case, guaranteed English language learners education of the same quality as that of native English speakers. The lawsuit, brought by Chinese-speaking parents and students against the San Francisco Unified School District, asserted that because the students did not speak English, they had no chance to learn. They claimed civil rights violations (Crawford,
1995). The Supreme Court agreed unanimously, thus setting the precedent of outlawing discrimination due to language by citing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. The Court stated that schools that did not provide students who demonstrated limited English language, the ability to acquire basic skills in school even when given the same books, classes and curriculum, were violating those students’ civil rights and “mak[ing] a mockery of public education” (“Lau v. Nichols,” 1974).

Though the legal breakthrough for ELL students came in 1974, researchers have shown that some ELL groups continue to struggle with English and the educational system in general (Collier & Thomas, 2001; Cummins, 1984; Spangenberg-Urbschat & Pritchard, 1994; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000). NCLB does not flex to the degree necessary when addressing ELL learners and assessment. Paige (2004) asserts that NCLB “is designed to ensure that all our nation’s children get the quality education they deserve, regardless of their origins” (¶ 7) but because the level of quality education is predominately calculated by student performance on exams, the tests fail to assess accurately and adequately students whose origins do not include English. Yet, no longer can teachers disregard ELL students until they become fluent in English. Earlier focus on ELL students in their educational careers pressures teachers and educational systems to equalize educational opportunities for ELL students and non-ELL counterparts.

Language acquisition timelines

Jim Cummins explored the interaction of first and second languages, beginning in the 1970s, employing Freirean-inspired critical pedagogy (McLaren, 2000). He re-examined the findings of a report given to the Toronto Board of Education and argued
that oral proficiency and reading proficiency were not synonymous nor did they happen at the same time. Through a reanalysis of the data, Cummins (1984) found that it took “. . . immigrant students who arrived in Canada at age 6-7 or later, between 5 and 7 years, on average, to approach grade norms in English verbal-academic skills. “This [was] considerably longer than it [took] children to acquire conversational fluency in English” (p. 133). In contrast, Cummins’ research in social language acquisition suggests a two to three year timeframe found support in other’s work (Collier, 1995). (Zwiers, 2004) asserted,

For English language learners, academic English is like a third language, their second language being the social English of the hallways, community, and media. And, whereas students are exposed to social English in various settings, academic language acquisition is generally limited to the classroom… (p. 60)

Cummins (1984) called the social language development basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), which were “the manifestation of language proficiency in everyday communicative contexts” (p. 136), and the academic skills cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALPs), which he defined “in terms of the manipulation of language in decontextualized academic situations” (p. 136). A large body of research supports Cummins’s timelines for academic fluency (Abedi, Leon, & Mirocha, 2001; Collier, 1995; Cummins, 2000; Ezra, 2003; Hakuta et al., 2000; Oakeley & Urrabazo, 2001; Rumberger, 2000). Though voluminous research supports Cummins’s (Cummins, 1979, 1984, 2000) original findings, the testing timeline required by NCLB, in contrast, begins before students demonstrate proficiency in their English language acquisition.
ELL testing

Only recently, researchers focused on standardized assessments of ELL students. NCLB was the impetus for the addition of specific ELL tests to state standardized exam schedules ("TELPAS district and campus coordinator manual," 2005). TEA designed the Texas Observation Protocols for teachers to use when holistically rating their ELL children’s use of English in the classroom. By using state developed rubrics, teachers evaluate ELL students’ use of both BICS and CALPs in the classroom and submit their findings to TEA. Due to the recent development of those tests, there has been little research on holistic tests and adequate yearly progress measurements such as the TELPAS system in Texas. Instead, researchers have focused on standardized measures, such as the state-mandated Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test (TAKS), to measure ELL student learning. Researchers and the U.S. Department of Education have yet to agree about the validity of state-mandated testing when assessing ELL students (Abedi, 2001; Abedi et al., 2001; Bielenberg & Wong Fillmore, 2005; Collier, 1995; Nichols et al., 2005; Oakeley & Urrabazo, 2001; Poggio, 2003; Wright, 2005).

One area in which ELL researchers seem to agree is the finding that comparisons of ELL students’ scores to those of non-ELLs is invalid unless accommodations are made for ELL students (Abedi, 2001; Abedi et al., 2001; LaCelle- Peterson & Rivera, 1994; Poggio, 2003; Shakrani, 2003). In addition, the ELL subpopulation is an unstable one (Abedi, 2004; "Accountability for disabled, LEP students worries states," 2004; Schwartzbeck, 2004; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003; "The true stakes in No Child Left Behind," 2004; Year 2 of the No Child Left Behind Act- major findings, 2004). While
newcomers move into this group and are tested, those who have acquired English leave the group, as they are no longer considered ELL (Abedi, 2004; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003; "The true stakes in No Child Left Behind," 2004; Year 2 of the No Child Left Behind Act- major findings, 2004). In addition, (LaCelle- Peterson & Rivera, 1994) point out,

> The diversity among ELLs needs to be recognized, lest all ELLs be regarded as a monolithic group with a single defining educational characteristic: use of a non-English language. Indeed, while language represents an important, educationally significant variable that is most often conspicuous by its absence from U.S. educational discourse, it is only one of many educationally relevant characteristics of any individual English language learner, whose whole identity including cultural heritage, ethnic group affiliation, gender, and individual learning differences must be take into consideration in educational decisions (p. 59-60).

The lack of stability in this subpopulation makes meeting the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) for ELL students contribute to the distress in meeting AYP goals at a school or district level. AYP for the ELL subpopulation is computed by meeting AMAOs, and to meet these goals, ELL students must move up one level in every category of TELPAS each year. Additionally, if the ELL students are taking TAKS, they must meet the standard in math and reading like other non-ELL students in addition to the growth in TELPAS.

Though most of the literature focuses on the reading portions of the standardized tests, and the issues surrounding them, the research on ELL students is not limited to those sections. Due to NCLB regulations, all ELL students must take the math section
of the state exam or be counted in the non-participating calculation of AYP, even if a child is exempt from the reading portion of it, so in the 2004-2005 academic year, schools implemented accommodations for ELL students in math. Students took the regular TAKS math test but could receive written or verbal help from material as long as it did not address any math term or math concept ("LAT Manual," 2005).

Math is an area in which many educators believe students can demonstrate their abilities regardless of their language skills. Within the arena of high stakes testing, that idea remains unresolved. If the math involves only computation, “the performance gap decreases, or even disappears, on math items that have relatively low language demands” (Abedi, 2001, p. 4). However, most questions on standardized tests have moved from simple computation to interpreting text in word problems and applying mathematical meanings to words that otherwise have different meanings (Bielenberg & Wong Fillmore, 2004). Additionally, some ELL students do not have the background knowledge or vocabulary to understand the test questions, regardless of the math involved, which results in confusion regarding the necessary mathematical process required to solve the problem (Bielenberg & Wong Fillmore, 2004). Thus, ELL students struggle to demonstrate their math abilities on achievement tests given in English without accommodations (Abella, Urrutia, & Shneyderman, 2003). Some changes have addressed ELL needs. In the groundswell of NCLB, gradual changes rarely accommodate a diverse group of learners.

In the current educational climate, the performance of students on standardized tests demonstrates their skills and ability to move from the marginalized ELL student to someone accepted in society as an English speaker. Educators and families speak
proudly when their ELL children succeed on both the state and federal levels, because most of the tests are written for native English speakers (Abedi, 2004). Families perceive the power embodied in English learning even though sometimes, successful results are nearly impossible to achieve due to the students’ language acquisition level. Consequently, increased pressure on students to perform, in spite of the research findings demonstrating that academic language is not yet developed, inhibits ELL students from producing accurate results of their academic learning through the standardized testing (Collier, 1995; Cummins, 1984). Furthermore, Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, (2005) note,

Some other [critics] worry that the exaggerated pressure on students and teachers to focus on test preparation is thwarting teachers’ intentions to care for students’ needs apart from those that lead to the scores they receive on examinations (Noddings, 2001, 2002).

It is also argued that the current measurement systems cannot support the demands of those who make educational policy (Linn, 2000; Messick, 1995a, 1995b). Nichols et al., (2005) suggest,

The assumption embedded in the current promotion of a high-stakes accountability model of education is that students and teachers need to work harder and that by pressuring them with the threat of sanctions and enticing them with financial incentives, they would expend more effort and time on academic pursuits, and thus learning would increase (p. 7-8).

This rationale is problematic for several reasons. Learning is a complicated endeavor and as most educators would argue, extrinsic rewards alone cannot overcome the
range of background experiences and individual differences in learning and motivation students bring to school (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001; Good, 1999, 2000; McCaslin & Good, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 1985). Moreover, English language acquisition timelines don’t shorten due to financial incentives or increased outside pressure, and as Noddings (2005) points out, focusing solely on testing does not “educate the whole child.” Therefore, although there is increased pressure on students’ achievement through NCLB, research has not conclusively demonstrated a positive impact between this increased pressure and high student achievement outcomes on mandated tests (Nichols et al., 2005).

**Question 2**

“What is the teachers’ understanding of their work in terms of helping parents and their children learn English?” Subquestions include, “What relationships do teachers see between parent education and the children’s school performance? What do teachers perceive the parents to be learning that might have an effect on their children’s learning and school experience?”

**Family literacy programs**

Research on parental involvement in their child’s schooling encompasses everything from home tutoring to school activities to after-school and evening programs (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Mersky, 1998; Preston, 2003; Weinstein-Shr, 1995b). Although there is ample research about the positive impact of parental involvement in student learning (Auerbach, 1989; Becher, 1986; Lopez et al., 2001; Mersky, 1998; Preston, 2003; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991; Walberg, 1984), little of that research focuses specifically on ELL student achievement.
on standardized tests. However, the available literature does focus on ELL students and parental involvement and demonstrates the complexities of ELL families and U.S. schooling.

Weinstein-Shr (1995) expresses the need to broaden the view from parent to family involvement, as some traditional assumptions about the family can differ in ELL communities. Reaching out only to nuclear families may exclude key familial members in immigrant families. Keeping those differences in mind helps meet the needs of the learners and keeps them engaged in the literacy programs. In the absence of research to determine the best curriculum for parent or family literacy programs, curricula are multi-dimensional and disparate.

The diversity in curricula covers a wide range of content and implementation. Preston (2003) states the Family Literacy Center curriculum consists of three parts: textbook learning, computer lab, and life-skills. Lopez, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha (2001) suggest migrant ELL families may need more practical and hands-on rather than traditional curriculums to meet their needs. Huerta-Macias (1995) indicates that programs combining family literacy and early childhood curricula must meld them together to meet the needs of both the children and their parents. The work of Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill (1991) on literacy and school influences shows that a parent-school partnership is critical for literacy, but no one curriculum, method, or program is best for family literacy centers because ELL populations are diverse in languages, cultures, and needs. Preston (2003) asserts that when parents participate in the FLC, they become more familiar with the U. S. social system, which
helps dispel some of their misconceptions about U.S. education, and the community in which they live.

Family dynamics

Although parent involvement solves some of the problems of children learning English, a problem unique to ELL communities, primarily immigrant families, is the balance of acquiring English while keeping the home language, culture, and family unit intact. Regrettably, the loss of the home language is common, as many Asian immigrants believe that to be truly “American” in the U.S. sense, they must speak English, even if it means sacrificing the home language (Hinton, 1999). The dominance of English, noted in both the U.S. and Canada, pressures immigrant families to learn English to advance their education (Gunderson, 2000). In those studies, the researchers indicate that the loss of the home language affects the family’s ability to communicate. Because children spend much of their days in predominantly English school environments, their acquisition of English, often quicker than their parents’, who work in non-English environments, results in communication splinters in the family (Preston, 2003; Weinstein-Shr, 1995a). Wong Fillmore’s (1991) case study of a child who chose to communicate only in English showed the eventual attrition of the home language, resulting in a lack of use and consequent language and communication gaps between the child and his parents.

study (2000), found that one of the children in the family studied detached himself from the family as a whole due to his lack of English skills, his progressive subtractive bilingualism, which is defined as acquisition of a second language at the cost of the home language, his parents' and grandparents' lack of knowledge of English, and his desire to fit into U. S. society. Those family members who could communicate effectively in Cantonese and those who could not split the family unit and eventually, the family and child lost virtually all contact with each other.

Weinstein-Shr (1995) and Auerbach (1989) noted a shift of power and authority when students translate for parents at school conferences, in banks, or at grocery stores. Unfortunately, when students become more fluent than the parent, they take on what Freire (1970) calls a “sub-oppressor” role, wherein they translate for their parents, take the power of the parent from the adult, and transfer it to the child. This process results at times in a detrimental situation in both the English acquisition of the parent and the cultural structure of the family (Freire, 1970). Such a power shift can result in an uncomfortable situation for both the children and the parent (Weinstein-Shr, 1995a). However, addressing the problems specifically in family literacy programs can reconnect families. One study demonstrated that parents and children working side by side at a family literacy center raised children from monolingualism in a lost land to bilingualism in a found one (Weinstein, 1998).

Power balance

Auerbach (1995) proposes that family literacy centers keep cultural, linguistic, and power issues in mind and support home language interactions between family members while sustaining family literacy programs. One way to approach the balancing.
of two languages and empowering of the parent is by focusing on cultural and life experiences the parent has that can connect the child to his or her own background. When children understand that their parents know important things from their "knowledge of living experience," (Freire, 1992) things they cannot learn in school or from anyone but their family members, the power balance can be restored. A possible way to help families embrace English language acquisition while strengthening familial ties suggests a Freirean approach to adult literacy education. Research shows that the Freirean approach uses cultural and personal experiences to build literacy and operates in both first and second language literacy acquisition arenas (Spener, 1990).

Freire, (1984) in explaining the emancipatory power of education in social transformation states, “Education cannot be considered as the instrument for transformation” (p. 12) but rather a vehicle for “the masses of people [to] get their history into their own hands” (p. 13) once there has been a radical transformation of society. Within the newly acquired history, the people “also get literacy, music, arts, etc…to the degree that the people get democratic power” (p. 13-14). Parents and children holding hands in the storm of language acquisition strengthen the equality of access to power that ELL families seek.

Freire’s philosophical base

In the foreword of Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Richard Shaull writes,

There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes
the “practice of freedom,” the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (p. 34).

This quotation summarizes the contradictory nature of power in education of which Freire speaks in his Pedagogy series. Most notably, Freire critiques what the terms the “banking system” of education wherein students and teachers do not collectively create knowledge, but rather students “patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (Freire, 1970, p. 72) the information provided them by the teacher. Freire further explains,

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher’s existence—but, unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher (p. 72).

Furthermore, the curriculum that teachers deliver strengthens the “legitimate and necessary” knowledge that “strongly embody the values, attitude, and biases inherent” in the curriculum (Darder, 1989, p. 23). In her study of critical pedagogy, she continues stating that,

The underlying principles related to both curriculum content and teaching methodology are derived from what is considered to be the function of education
in American society—namely, the perpetuation of values and social relations which produce and legitimate dominant groups at the expense of a vast number of citizens (p. 23).

Darder’s examination of the curriculum expounds on Freire’s contention that for a true education, teachers and students must learn from each other, work together, and study a curriculum that will change the oppression inherent in the present educational system.

In today’s educational climate, the banking system of education uses student performance on standardized tests as the only accepted measurement of student achievement. Creating knowledge is unimportant if it does not tie directly to mandated exams. Furthermore, Freire (1970) considers the heart of the banking system’s reliance on testing and “the methods for evaluating ‘knowledge,’ …the criteria for promotion: everything in this ready-to-wear approach serv[ing] to obviate thinking” (p. 76) not to build learning and understanding.

Modern researchers indicate that language acquisition requires learners create knowledge by incrementing from their base knowledge of language, (Krashen, 1985), rather than repeating dialogues provided by teachers or simply translating words from one language to another without context or importance to the learner (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Mitchell & Myles, 1998). Freire (1970) asserts that people in power do not want the oppressed to think for themselves lest the power shift to a more balanced state. Keeping the power situation as status quo partially hinges on educating the masses through a banking system of instruction and assessment, and through the notion that “power is most effective and most secure when it becomes so much a part of the background that it is unobserved and internalized” (Heaney, 2000, p. 103). Furthermore,
Heaney states that “the principal instrument for the establishment and protection of power...is the control of knowledge. Thus knowledge is linked to power” (p. 105). Giroux (1983) further connects the power-knowledge continuum to schools and their inequalities. Moreover, the connection between power and the hidden curriculum is linked through knowledge. Heaney states, “Knowledge is constituted by power either by exclusion or inclusion...The exclusion of discourse that deviates from institutional interests is the point and counterpoint by which knowledge is produced” (p. 107-108).

Before NCLB mandated state assessments of ELL students, ELL students were excluded from the taught curriculum. Since teaching them deviated from the institutional interest of ensuring that all tested, students performed well on state exams. Possibly spurred on by the rhetoric of A Nation at Risk, the Texas legislature implemented school performance ratings as part of its overhaul of the Texas Education Code in 1993. The ratings “were based on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test in reading, writing, and math, as well as annual dropout and attendance rates” (Kuehlem, 2004, ¶ 32). Subsequently, in 1995 when the Texas Legislature, under the direction of then governor George W. Bush, revamped the Texas Education Code (TEC), due to “increasing pressure to hold school districts accountable for the education of all children” (¶ 35). A major focus on school performance exams and related ratings ensued.

Denying ELL students proper curricular direction left unchanged the status quo of the power imbalance in schools. State officials and politicians upheld the importance of state ratings and test outcomes as “schools [were] eligible for cash awards for high ratings; and if they [were] rated as low performing twice in a row, they [were] subject to
sanctions from the Texas Education Agency, including possible closure” (Haney, 2000, ¶ 10). Educating the oppressed, not a measured outcome contributing to ratings, relegated teaching ELLs as unimportant. Additionally, one provision of the TEC overhaul was “the ability for parents to transfer their children out of low-performing schools” (¶ 36). The power of that provision did not come to fruition until the amended Texas Education Code became the seed for Bush’s national education policy, NCLB, when he went to Washington D.C. Nichols et al., (2005) note,

The construction and passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) occurred under the leadership of Rod Paige and George W. Bush. In Texas, in the decade before they went to Washington, Bush as governor and Paige as superintendent of Houston school district had built and implemented a controversial high-stakes accountability system that placed increasing demands and expectations on students for well over a decade. And while other states were also implementing accountability systems (Kentucky and New York among others), Texas’s “success” of holding students and educators accountable for learning was quite visible. Although the “myth” of Texas’s success has been critically examined and documented (Haney, 2000), it was too late (or more likely, no one paid close attention) and NCLB, influenced by the programs implemented in Texas and elsewhere was passed in 2001 and signed into law on January 8, 2002” (“No Child Left Behind Act of 2001,” 2001).

The move to include ELL students in mandated testing and school accountability measures, served not to destroy the power of the status quo but rather to “positively reinforce and even constitute relations of power” (Heaney, 2000, p. 108). By including
those students, knowing that their chance of succeeding on the exams was slim, the oppressive system furthered the conservative frame in education that “there are right and wrong answers, and they should be tested for. Testing defined fairness: Those who pass are rewarded; those not disciplined enough to pass are punished” (Lakoff, 2004, p. 82). By adding ELL scores to school accountability rankings, the powerful had the opportunity to move their students from schools where ELL scores negatively impacted accountability ratings, to schools with a lower ELL population where the scores wouldn’t adversely affect the rankings. The legal terms of NCLB did not limit movement to only those students who enjoyed preferred social positions, but the reality of ELL students moving across town to attend school was unlikely. Because NCLB language provided an apparently equitable and democratic movement policy for all students, the actuality of ELL students transferring out of schools was that it was a one-way anti-democratic process. Without inflammatory rhetoric, social conservatives in power achieve their goal of a two-tiered educational system where their children attend better schools with better results and the less fortunate continue to be oppressed by the system.

The oppressive system extends to adult education as well. Here, the aims are more insidious in preserving the status quo of power by both ignoring the needs of the adult learners and furthering the misconception that life experience does not count toward knowledge (Freire, 1970, 1998). The need for the oppressed to construct knowledge that has real-life meaning, to study basic literacy skills, and to learn critical thinking is best embodied by one peasant’s explanation to Freire (1992) and a group of educators,
“The way this conversation’s goin’[sic] nobody’s gonna git [sic] it. Nope. ‘Cause as far as you her’re [sic] concerned”- and he pointed to the group of educators-
“you’re talkin’[sic] salt, and these people here” meaning the others, the peasants,
“they wanna know ‘bout seasonin’ [sic]and salt ain’t [sic]but part of the seasonin’”[sic] (p. 71).

Freire’s core beliefs about emancipatory learning emerge though dialogue rather than by drilling skills. In dialogue, learners who are oppressed develop critical thinking competencies that lead to communication, and communication leads to “true education” (Freire, 1970). When a family learns to critique the banking system at both the adult and child levels, their collective knowledge empowers them to question and challenge the schools to stop the banking system and to initiate critical thinking dialogue that will truly educate them. Implied in the process of developing critical consciousness is praxis or collective political action intended to alter the power balance between the oppressed and their oppressors.

Critical pedagogy and resistance

Freire is not alone in his assertion that there must be critical thinking in schools. Defined by McLaren (2000), critical pedagogy “is a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state” (p. 10). But more important than critical pedagogy itself is the acknowledgement of the hidden curriculum in schools today and how that curriculum works subversively to obstruct any gains made by
employing critical pedagogy (McLaren, 2000). Giroux (1983) makes the case that the embedded or hidden curriculum is a

Structured silence about the relationship between class and culture…By presenting schools as institutions designed to benefit all students, the dominant culture, its knowledge and social practices, misrepresent the nature of effects of social and cultural processes weighted against the interest of students from subordinate cultures…The imprint of the dominant society and culture is inscribed in a whole range of student practices, i.e., the official language…the exclusion of specific cultural capital…Needless to say, it is not simply inscribed or imposed in the consciousness or ideologies of the oppressed (p. 66).

George W. Bush and his advisors understand the hidden curriculum and want it to continue to exist and to strengthen in power. By framing the NCLB statute as something “designed to benefit all students,” Bush made it difficult for anyone to speak out against the inequalities of this law and the hidden curriculum in general without being branded as someone against public education. If the progressives were to bash NCLB with its inclusive language, then the conservatives could use the progressives’ words against them and show those who lie in the middle of the political spectrum how obviously the public education system is broken and should be replaced with a “voucher system to support private schools” (Lakoff, 2004, p. 32).

Summary

As the official Department of Education emphasis on educational research shifts to expectations for experimental or quasi-experimental research, due to NCLB standards implemented by policy makers who seek to define what constitutes
knowledge and how to measure it, the need for quantitative research has increased to replace the current qualitative literature on ELL families. However, data collection remains an obstacle. Current research focuses on determining affective levels of response to participating in outreach programs. Although such an approach is valuable, it fails to meet the expectations and mandates of the NCLB statute.

Several past qualitative research efforts on family literacy generated information about the acceptance and value of such projects, but provide no quantification of the value. Project FIEL (Family Initiative for English Literacy) in El Paso, Texas consists of early childhood students and their parents (Huerta-Macias, 1995). The students of pre-school age do not take standardized tests nor generate quantitative data on those tests. Research on other family literacy centers, qualitative in nature (Auerbach, 1995; Huerta-Macias, 1995; McGrail, 1995; Preston, 2003), cannot be used to compare or enhance generalizability, as none of these studies focused on quantitative student test data and its relationship to the family literacy centers.

Another problem in collecting quantitative data is mobility (Abedi et al., 2001; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003). Family literacy centers cater to a mobile population by nature. People move in and out of the programs at different times throughout the year due to family issues or jobs. Thus, collecting standardized test data from those families either at the school level or at the literacy center presents difficulties. The mobility issue also affects longitudinal studies; consequently tracking the same students from year to year remains challenging.

Through the insistence of NCLB mandates on testing all children so they will not be “left behind” (Overview: Facts and terms every parent should know about NCLB,
2004) instead of ignoring ELL students, the law appears to inclusively oppress them. Though the statute demands scientifically-based research decision making, governmental ignorance of current research on timelines for testing ELL students runs rampant. This leads to inappropriate testing schedules forcing students to take tests prematurely. The policy results in inadequate measures of ELL students’ learning, thus negatively impacting students, schools, districts, and states (Cummins, 1979, 1983, 2000), while promoting the hidden curriculum of class and culture.

The research is clear about second language acquisition timelines and the positive effect of parental involvement in students’ academic careers. Yet there is no research on the combination of those two variables as related to test scores. The intent of the present research is to add to the body of knowledge by exploring the relationship between the academic progress of ELL students as measured by standardized tests and family participation in English literacy courses. The context of the study both supports the district and state need to address the mandates of research asserted by NCLB. Because NCLB examines quantitative data in ascertaining student achievement, chapter three explains the methods in examining the TAKS and TELPAS scores for ELL students. However, because educators know that there is more to assessing learning than simple test scores; this study includes interviews of the FLC instructors and their insights into ELL family learning as it relates to student achievement.
CHAPTER III
METHOD

Questions

The first research question answered in the present study was, “Is there a significant difference in test scores, at the .05 level, among students whose parents attend the FLC with them, students whose parents attend without them, and students whose parents do not attend?” The researcher intended to answer this question with a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) and descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, homogeneity of variance), and a comparison between the smallest group scores, parents who attend the FLC without their children, and the other two groups’ scores.

The second research question investigated in this study was, “What is the teachers’ understanding of their work in terms of helping parents and their children learn English?” Subquestions included, “What relationships do teachers see between parent education and the children’s school performance? What do teachers perceive the parents to be learning that might have an effect on their children’s learning and school experience?” The researcher answered those questions by conducting and analyzing phenomenological interviews with teachers from the FLC.

Purpose

Preston (2003) investigated the effect of the district’s English classes at the family literacy center, and how the acquisition of English aided parents in their involvement with their students’ schooling (Preston, 2003). She found that some parents felt inadequate when unable to “tutor their child in reading homework at home” (Preston, 2003, p. 140) while others felt positive about their ability to interact with their
children either by tutoring them in English or by receiving tutoring from their children in English (Preston, 2003).

The present study expanded the knowledge gained in 2003, focusing on the relationship between parent participation at the FLC and student achievement as measured by state measures: the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). The TELPAS consists of the Reading Proficiency Test in English (RPTE) and the Texas Observation Protocols (TOP). Advancement by one proficiency level for each academic year is required to meet the accountability measures (Neeley, 2004). This level advancement is called Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs), as required by Pub. L. No. 107-110, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 ("No Child Left Behind Act of 2001," 2001).

Method

Setting

Family Literacy Center.

The Family Literacy Center began operating in fall 2001 in an effort to reach out to immigrant community members whose children were ESL students in the Alpha (a pseudonym) school district. According to Preston (2003):

The district initiated an adult ESL community technology literacy lab, which offers instruction in language acquisition, reading activities for parent and child, computer literacy and social connections to access the community, two nights a week for the students in grades three through six and their parents (p. 5).
In 2005, the Family Literacy Center no longer limited the services to students in grades three through six, and, instead, opened it to students and their parents in all grades of the Alpha Texas Public Schools. The APS city government continued to support the program with resources and personnel. The FLC also participated in a Denton Four County Adult Education Co-op federal grant wherein two FLC teachers received training and compensation for their participation (Preston, 2003). One directive of the grant mandated documentation of the progress for all students in those teacher’s classes.

The parental evening classes had three parts: computer lab time, textbook instruction, and daily life instruction. Students spent about 45 minutes at each station with snack breaks in between each component. During the 2004-2005 academic year, the parents used a new computer program aimed more toward vocabulary building from a lower ability level than did the previous program.

The Denton Four-County Adult Education Co-op provided the textbooks and loaned them to the students for the year. Textbooks came in two levels: one and two. Classes were organized into three ability levels: beginners, intermediate, and advanced. Beginner and intermediate classes used the level one textbooks while the advanced classes used the level two textbook. Curricula varied for the daily life instruction part of the class. Some instructors tied curriculum to the textbooks, while others invented curriculum of their own.

Student classes differ from the parental literacy classes. Evenings were organized into stations with students moving between the computer, games, homework help, reading, and direct instruction. Students and parents used different computer programs. The student program was designed to build literacy for all students, not just
for ELL students, and was used district-wide. Students did not have a textbook or a designated curriculum, so the direct instruction varied. Additionally, high school volunteers from the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) club, acting as mentors and tutors, attended the children's classes.

Population

*Alpha Public Schools (APS).*

APS is a medium sized district in a northeast Texas. The district has grown rapidly from 2001 to 2005. In 2002, the district served 12,593 students, compared to 14,849 students in 2005 (*Academic excellence indicator system district reports, 2002; Academic excellence indicator system district reports, 2005*). In 2002, Preston (2003) reported the ethnic representation of the district as 80.9% white/non-Hispanic, 8.1% Hispanic, 6% African American, 4.9% Asian students, and other students. In contrast, in 2005, the demographics were 72.6% white/non-Hispanic (9% decrease), 10.7% Hispanic (37.5% increase), 9.0% African American (50% increase), 6.9% Asian (40% increase), and .5% other (*Academic excellence indicator system district reports, 2005*). Additionally, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students, designated as such by qualifying for free or reduced lunches at school, increased from 5.36% in 2002 to 10.8% in 2005 (more than a 100% increase).

The enrollment of English language learner (ELL) students in APS since the 2000 census, as reported in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), changed as well. The pre-Kindergarten through grade 12 ELL population in the district increased from 146 in 2000 to 861 in 2005, approximately a 500% increase (*Academic excellence indicator system district reports, 2005; Preston, 2003*).
The number of ELL students became critically important in the 2003-2004 school year when NCLB mandated that a school's, district's, and state's Adequate Yearly Progress scores consider all reporting subgroups, of which ELL is one. For two years in a row, the district failed to make AYP, primarily due to their ELL subgroup scores.

APS offers its ELL population both ESL and bilingual classes. In 2005, the bilingual program served students K-4 with planned expansion to grade five in 2006. All ELL students, regardless of their program placement, were eligible to participate in the Family Literacy Center (FLC) with their parents.

Subjects

The State of Texas Education Agency mandates English language support in schools for children who speak other languages. The mandate provides funding and guidelines. To determine a child’s language service needs in Texas public schools, when registering the child, each parent or guardian must fill out a home language survey (TEC §29.056 (1)). This official document requires designation of home, native, or heritage language (L1), with an indication of the first language acquired as a baby. Students whose parents indicate other than English as the first language (L1) must undergo assessment to determine their level of knowledge and skills in English ("Texas Education Code," 1995, TEC § 29.056 (2)). When, through assessment, a child is identified as a “Limited English Proficient” (LEP) student, the district offers the child’s family the opportunity for the child to attend bilingual class when available or, if not available, to attend an English as a Second Language (ESL) class. For additional support, ELL parents are eligible to attend English language acquisition classes at the FLC either alone or with their children.
The present study involved ELL students in APS from grades 1-12. Though the TELPAS collects data on kindergarten students, because this grade is not mandatory in Texas, they were excluded from the study. District personnel provided the researcher with the names of all students who attended the FLC. Because the population of students in this group was small, about 50, data collection included the entire population.

For the sample of ELL students, whose parents attend FLC but whose children do not attend FLC, the district provided the names of the parents and the researcher matched those names with student names through the SASI database parent name feature on each student’s profile. Once all the student names and parent names were matched, the researcher exported the data into a spreadsheet. From the population, using the random sample generator feature in the spreadsheet program, the researcher matched a sample to the FLC group in number.

Using the PEIMS database at the district, all students grades 1-12 who were ELL and who received language support during the day but neither they nor their parents attend the FLC were selected into the population and exported into a spreadsheet. From the population, using the random sample generator feature in the spreadsheet program, the researcher matched a sample to the FLC group in number.

Because the district’s ELL population includes various home languages contains students from divergent socioeconomic backgrounds from Brahman Indians to Colombian peasants, the researcher matched the SES status of the students in each group. The intent was to compare students whose parents are educated and able to
provide many extra-educational amenities with students from similar backgrounds thus limiting the effect of parental education and SES across all groups.

Data collection

To address question 1: Is there a significant difference in test scores, at the .05 level, among students whose parents attend the FLC with them, students whose parents attend without them, and students whose parents do not attend? The following data was collected:

*Standardized tests.*

For this study, the researcher extracted the state reported 2004-2005 TELPAS scores, the TAKS scores from 2004-2005 from the district database. Masked student identification insured the confidentiality of students. At first and second grades, the Texas Observation Protocol (TOP) components of the TELPAS served as the dependent variable. Though kindergarten students in Texas are also assessed with the TOP rubrics, because kindergarten is not mandatory in the state of Texas, no kindergarten students were included in the sample. For grades three through twelve, both components of the TELPAS, TOP, and RPTE served as one dependent variable. For students in grades three through twelve, the TAKS scores functioned as another dependent variable. For students who were exempt from the TAKS test, only TOP and or TELPAS scores were used as dependent variables.

*Phenomenological teacher interviews.*

To address question 2: What is the teachers’ understanding of their work in terms of helping parents and their children learn English?” Sub questions include, “What relationships do teachers see between parent education and the children’s school
performance? What do teachers perceive the parents to be learning that might have an effect on their children’s learning and school experience?” the following data sources were used. Data derived from in-depth phenomenological interviews were between August and September 2005. Using Seidman’s (1998) phenomenological protocol, each teacher who consented to be a study participant was interviewed three times, for 90 minutes per session. Interview questions began broadly and moved, through the sessions, to more specific questions about the FLC (Appendix). Following the protocol, the topic of the first interview centered on the teacher’s life history in terms of education. The researcher asked the teachers to discuss life situations that influenced their becoming teachers. The researcher focused on how the teachers came to the profession “in the context of their lives” (Seidman, 1998, p. 11), not simply in light of their chosen career.

The second interview dealt with the details of working at the Family Literacy Center. The researcher asked the teachers to describe a day at the FLC in detail from the beginning of class to the end. The importance of describing in detail is its function in building a base on which teacher’s “opinions may be built” (p. 12).

“Reflecting on the meaning” (p. 12) of the teacher’s work at the FLC constituted the heart of the third interview. Teachers were asked to sift through the details of the FLC and the teacher’s own life experience in order to explain their understanding of the meaning and impact of family literacy on the parents’ learning, as it influenced student achievement. The researcher audio-taped and transcribed all interviews for data analysis. To protect confidentiality of teachers, the researcher masked their identities by providing pseudonyms for the teachers and schools mentioned in the interviews.
Data analysis

*Standardized tests.*

The dependent variables consisted of the TAKS and TELPAS scores. The independent variable was the attendance configuration of the parents to ELLs/children at the FLC. The quantitative data were analyzed employing the SPSS® statistical program. The researcher conducted a series of ANOVA procedures on the two dependent measures (TAKS and TELPAS scores) to determine differences in scores within and between groups. Groupings for the ANOVA procedures include: TELPAS grades 1-2 (TOP) groups “parent and child attending FLC” and “neither parent nor child attending FLC”, TELPAS (grades 3-11) groups “parent and child attending FLC” and “neither parent nor child attending FLC”, 2005 TAKS reading groups “parent and child attending FLC” and “neither parent nor child attending FLC”, 2005 TAKS math groups “parent and child attending FLC” and “neither parent nor child attending FLC”, all TOP (grades one through eleven) sans the RPTE scores for groups “parent and child attending FLC” and “neither parent nor child attending FLC”, 2005 TAKS reading and math and TELPAS for grades three through twelve for groups “parent and child attending FLC” and “neither parent nor child attending FLC”, and TELPAS scores for students exempted from the TAKS test from groups “parent and child attending FLC” and “neither parent nor child attending FLC”. Due to the small number of cases in the “parent attending without students attending the FLC” group, the data were viewed as an independent group from the others and descriptive statistics were assembled. In the 2004-2005 school year, the state education agency ascribed a score of 2100 as the minimum passing grade for the TAKS. This score will serve as one dependent variable.
Additional statistical procedures were conducted on the test data, including an examination of the data concerning the number of years the ELL students who took the TAKS reading and math tests had been enrolled in the U.S. school system. Frequency counts of this data were reported. Additionally, since AMAOs are calculated on all students moving up one level of English proficiency to meet AYP mandates, data concerning TOP and TELPAS scores and the number of years in U.S. schools were analyzed. Frequency counts of the number of years in US schools data were reported.

*Phenomenological teacher interviews.*

The researcher coded interview transcripts using NUD*IST®‡ (non-numerical unstructured data indexing, searching, and theorizing) software, version N6. Using the program, the researcher explored text for similarities and relationships between different teacher interviews by utilizing open, and axial coding processes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The first phase of the process involved pattern analysis as the researcher read through the transcriptions of the interviews and identified emerging patterns and concepts. Then the researcher developed categories through the open coding process. Once primary concepts had been identified, the second sorting of data involved axial coding in which the characteristics or attributes of the concepts were identified. Through axial coding, the researcher explored and distinguished the dimensions of each of the characteristics of each concept. Using this process, the researcher sought to create enlightened views on the relationships between parent education and children’s academic performance.

†SPSS Inc., [www.spss.com](http://www.spss.com)

By using the teachers as observers, the researcher expected the added qualitative data would further enhance the results of the quantitative data based on the small sample size. By broadening the scope of the study through the interviews, the researcher was able to investigate teacher perceptions of the parents’ experiences and the impact of those experiences on their children's academic performance. The teacher data provided a rich context for interpreting the quantitative data that were gathered.

**Instrumentation**

**Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)**

The TAKS is used by the state to determine a student’s academic performance. Students in grades 3-11 are required to take the annual exam in reading and math. Other subject areas are tested in various grade levels but were excluded for this study. Due to NCLB, all students are expected to take the exams. Exemptions are rare and necessitate official paperwork.

Non-English speaking students may be exempted from the test up to three times if they meet the guidelines stipulated by the Texas Education Agency. For example, if a student comes to the United States with no English background, he or she may be required to take the state assessment his or her first year in Texas if he or she speaks Spanish and is in third through sixth grades, since there is a Spanish version of the state test at those grade levels. If the child does not speak Spanish, the exemption for the first year documents readily. To be exempt from the test in the second or third years of attendance is more difficult, though it is possible.

To exempt a child in the second or third school year, school personnel must document the extra help and/or tutoring that the child experiences during the school
year. In addition, school personnel must demonstrate why the time has not been sufficient, through test scores and observations, for the child to have acquired the language necessary for the test to be a valid measure of that child’s knowledge. After the third year of attendance in any U.S. school, the child must take the state exam that is tied to NCLB (LPAC decision-making process for the Texas assessment program grades 3-12, 2001). Additionally, though there are provisions for exemptions, “Section 39.023 (m) of the Texas Education Code requires TEA to develop procedures for language proficiency assessment committees to follow to ensure that exempted LEP students are administered the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills at the earliest practical date” (LPAC decision-making process for the Texas assessment program grades 3-12, 2001).

Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)

In response to NCLB-required testing for ELL students in Texas, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) developed the TELPAS system. The system is organized into four divisions: listening, speaking, writing, and reading. A teacher using the Texas Observation Protocols (TOP) for listening, speaking, and writing (“TELPAS district and campus coordinator manual,” 2005) must assess all ELL students K-12.

The reading section of the TELPAS system contains a division between kindergarten through second grades and third through twelfth grades. In K-2, the teacher using a rubric provided by TEA (“TOP Texas observation protocols: Rater manual grades K-12,” 2005), also assesses the reading section of TELPAS. In grades three to twelve, students must take the reading proficiency test in English (RPTE) to determine the reading score for the TELPAS system.
**Reading Proficiency Test in English (RPTE)**

A state-mandated reading test for ELL students grades 3-12 is administered once annually during a three-week window in the spring semester. The test consists of easy, medium and hard reading passages and complementary comprehension questions, though there is no gradient or pattern as to which level of difficulty follows another. TEA determined four levels of scoring: beginner, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high. A child must take the test each year until he/she no longer meets the state “limited English proficient” criteria. TEA states that once a child achieves the advanced rating, that child must take the usual state reading test the following year, whether or not the child is still eligible for exemptions due to ELL status. In addition, an advanced or advanced high rating on the test does not change a student’s ELL status, as it is not included on the state list of norm-referenced tests that can be used to exit a child from the program (“TELPAS district and campus coordinator manual,” 2005).

**Texas Observation Protocols (TOP)**

“Enables teachers to **holistically rate** (emphasis in original) each LEP student’s English language proficiency based on classroom observations and daily interactions” ("TOP Texas observation protocols: Rater manual grades K-12," 2005). Teachers are encouraged to collaborate with others to assess adequately, using rubrics provided by the state, the student achievement in English language proficiency. Teachers use TEA’s rubrics to rate a student’s performance in the classroom as beginner, intermediate, advanced, or advanced high ("TOP Texas observation protocols: Rater manual grades K-12," 2005). The teacher records the scores and sends the results to TEA to await the final rating. A team of teachers evaluates students in writing, listening,
and speaking. In K-2, teachers also evaluate reading, as those students do not yet take RPTE. Students must advance one level in all areas each year to meet AMAOs.

Phenomenological teacher interviews

Each of the consenting teachers from the Family Literacy Center participated in three 90-minute in-depth interviews. The first interview questions explored the life experiences that led to the teacher’s decision to become a teacher in APS and at the FLC. The second interview focused on the English curriculum and the instructional strategies in the school day and at the FLC. The third interview investigated the teachers’ understanding of their work in terms of helping parents and their children learn English. More specifically, the third interview focused on the teachers’ perceptions of the relationships between parent education and the children’s learning and school performance.

Timeline

The project began at the end of August 2005. Quantitative data were collected from the assessment department upon approval from the dissertation committee. The researcher contacted the teachers for interviews at the end of August and began interviews in late August or early September at the convenience of the teachers.

Summary

To adequately assess the student achievement of APS, both quantitative and qualitative data were examined. Quantitative data included TAKS and TELPAS scores for three groups of students, composed of those who attended the FLC with their families, those whose parents attended the FLC without them, and those in which neither the parent nor the child attended the FLC. To provide a rich context for
interpreting the quantitative data produced, phenomenological interviews of FLC instructors focused on connections the instructors see between attendance at the FLC and student achievement. Chapter four presents the outcomes of both the quantitative and qualitative analyses.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to ascertain what influence English language acquisition classes for immigrant parents of English language learner (ELL) students, conducted at a Family Literacy Center (FLC), have on the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores of ELL students.

Question 1

Question

The first research question answered in the present study was, “Is there a significant difference in test scores, at the .05 level, among students whose parents attend the FLC with them, whose parents attend without them, and whose parents do not attend?” Data analysis results from the series of ANOVAs, descriptive statistics, and frequency counts on years of attendance in U.S. informed to support or not support the hypothesis.

Hypothesis testing

It was hypothesized that students who attended the family literacy center classes with their parents would score significantly higher, at the .05 level, on the academic achievement tests as measured by TELPAS and TAKS, respectively, than did students whose parents attended the FLC without their children, or than did students and parents who did not attend the FLC. The homogeneity of variances test was performed. Before any ANOVA analyses were conducted, items were tested on their homogeneity of
variance. To meet the assumption of variance tested in the homogeneity of variance test, the $p$ value of items must be greater than .05. When an item does not meet the assumption of variance, it means there was already a difference in the groups prior to the analysis. In the case of this study, it is impossible to determine whether the difference was participation in the FLC or some other factor. When an item does not meet the assumption, the analysis ends there and that item does not continue to be analyzed through an ANOVA. In the cases where homogeneity of variance was rejected, the ANOVA was conducted. In addition, effect size was performed for all analyses (Henson & Smith, 2000). Henson and Smith note that sample size directly affects statistical significance with a small sample size diminishing the likelihood of rejecting the null hypothesis ($p_{calculated} < p_{critical}$). In the analyses, the failure to reject the null hypothesis in all cases might be due to small sample size.

A series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were performed on the test data. In all cases, there was one three-way independent variable, parent participation in the FLC. The number of dependent variables varied depending on the number of components comprising the exam. In the first analysis, the dependent variables included the listening, speaking, reading, writing, and composite components of the TOP exam, which is the entire TELPAS for grades one and two. The independent variable consisted of three groups: group one (henceforth to be signified by the designation “Group 1”) ELL children and parents who attend the FLC, group two (forthwith to be signified by the designation “Group 2”) ELL parents who attend the FLC without their ELL children, and group three (forthwith to be signified by the designation “Group 3”) ELL children and parents who do not attend the FLC. Descriptive analyses
(mean, standard deviation, and homogeneity of variance) were also performed on the data. The significance level used for all models was $\alpha \leq .05$, meaning any numerical statistics greater than .05 were considered non-significant.

To conduct the analyses, data were processed through the 11.5 version of the SPSS® statistical program. Using the program the researcher performed analyses of variance procedure “for determining whether the difference between the mean scores of two or more groups on a dependent variable is statistically significant” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 618). Table 1 lists the ANOVA for the grade one and two TELPAS dependent variables: TOP listening, TOP speaking, TOP reading, TOP writing, and TOP composite for groups 1 and 3 in which $n = 27$. Because the number of students in Group 2 was at most 8, it was determined to exclude that data from the analyses because the number was considered too small a sample size for any ANOVA analyses.

Table 1

Analysis of Variance for TELPAS grades one and two (TOP) for groups 1 and 3

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Source</th>
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<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$\eta^2$</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOP listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.242</td>
<td>.627</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>.264</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>.606</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Within groups 25

p < .05.

There was no statistical significance between groups 1 and 3 on the TELPAS grades one and two as demonstrated by the TOP scores. TOP reading and TOP composite items did not meet the assumption of variance, and thus were not included in the ANOVA.

Table 2 shows the ANOVA for grades 3-11 TELPAS scores (TOP and RPTE scores) for groups 1 and 3 in which n = 50.

Table 2
Analysis of Variance for TELPAS grades 3-11 (TOP and RPTE) for groups 1 and 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>$\eta^2$</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>TOP speaking</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP reading</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.850</td>
<td>.0007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TOP composite</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was no statistical significance between groups 1 and 3 on the TELPAS grades 3-11 as demonstrated by the TOP and RPTE scores. TOP listening did not meet the assumption of homogeneity and was not included in the ANOVA.

Table 3 (n = 34) and Table 4 (n = 33) describe the ANOVA for ELL students taking TAKS reading from groups 1 and 3 and math from groups 1 and 3.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>(\eta^2)</th>
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<tr>
<td>TAKS reading</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.862</td>
<td>.0009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

There was no statistical significance between groups 1 and 3 on the TAKS reading test.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>(\eta^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAKS math</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.454</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was no statistical significance between groups 1 and 3 on the TAKS reading test.

Table 5 (n = 77) consists of all students' TOP scores for groups 1 and 3.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Measure</th>
<th>Mean Group 1</th>
<th>Mean Group 3</th>
<th>Standard deviation Group 1</th>
<th>Standard deviation Group 3</th>
<th>Sample size Group 1</th>
<th>Sample size Group 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>.956</td>
<td>.790</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>.883</td>
<td>.839</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.870</td>
<td>.839</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The group 1 mean was smaller than the mean of Group 3 in all analyses except those for writing. The standard deviations in Group 1 have smaller standard deviations than Group 3 in reading and composite, which indicated differences in the ANOVA within-group variability might have contributed to the lack of between-group variation.

Table 6 (n = 77) consists of the ANOVA of all students' TOP scores for groups 1 and 3.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>(\eta^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOP listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.049</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(p < .05\).
<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOP speaking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOP reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.290</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOP writing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.917</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOP composite</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.290</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .05.

There was statistical significance in TOP speaking between groups 1 and 3 on the TOP all grades ANOVA. The effect size indicated that statistical significance was rather weak with only about 5 percent of the difference explained by the difference in groups. All groups met the homogeneity of variance test and were included in the ANOVA. Additionally, when examining which group scored higher on the test, group 3 had a higher mean, which meaning that the statistically significant difference between the two groups was not attendance at the FLC but rather some other undetermined factor. The larger standard deviation for Group 1 in TOP speaking indicated the significant statistical difference found was possibly due to within group variation, thus indicating
that the lack of contribution to differences between the groups may have been because the group itself was so varied.

Table 7 (n = 29) reveals the ANOVA for TAKS reading and math and TELPAS for grades 3-11 for group 1 and 3 students who were not exempt from the TAKS test.

Table 7

Analysis of Variance for TELPAS (TOP and RPTE) and TAKS for groups 1 and 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>$\eta^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOP listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.914</td>
<td>.0004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>.700</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.826</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP composite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.826</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPTE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>.324</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TAKS reading
Between groups 1  .846  .366  .030
Within groups 27

TAKS math

Between groups 1  .108  .745  .003
Within groups 27

p < .05.

There was no statistical significance between groups 1 and 3 on the TELPAS and TAKS reading and math. TOP writing did not meet the assumption of homogeneity and was not included in the ANOVA.

Table 8 (n = 19) consists of the descriptive statistics on TELPAS scores for those students who met exemption criteria for TAKS in 2005.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Measure</th>
<th>Mean Group 1</th>
<th>Mean Group 3</th>
<th>Standard Deviation Group 1</th>
<th>Standard Deviation Group 3</th>
<th>Sample size Group 1</th>
<th>Sample size Group 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>.522</td>
<td>.755</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>.640</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>.640</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPTE</td>
<td>711.54</td>
<td>767.50</td>
<td>91.74</td>
<td>110.61</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The smaller mean and standard deviation of Group 1 than Group 3 in all areas indicated that any statistical significance found in an ANOVA could not be attributed to the attendance at the FLC.

Table 9 (n = 19) consists of the ANOVA for TELPAS scores for those students who met exemption criteria for TAKS in 2005.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>$\eta^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOP listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.66</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>.305</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.827</td>
<td>.376</td>
<td>.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP composite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>.305</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RPTE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Between groups</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .05.

There was statistical significance in the TAKS exempt TELPAS scores ANOVA in the TOP listening scores. The effect size indicated that statistical significance was rather strong with 38 percent of the difference explained by the difference in groups. All groups met the homogeneity of variance test and were included in the ANOVA.

However, as the statistical difference found in Table 6, the means of the two groups, indicated that the stronger group was Group 3, the students and parents who do not attend the FLC, and so the difference between the groups could not be attributed to the FLC.

Table 10 (n = 8) shows the descriptive statistics for group 2, ELL parents who attend the FLC without their ELL children.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Measure</th>
<th>Mean Group 2</th>
<th>Standard deviation Group 2</th>
<th>Sample size Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>.744</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10 imparts the descriptive statistics for the smallest group, group 2. Because of the small sample size of this group, it was not included in the other analyses shown.

Table 11 shows a frequency count of students in all three groups and the number of years those students have attended U.S. schools and the failure rate on the TAKS math and reading exams. Research indicates the number of years acquiring a second language is on average, between five and seven years, yet exemption from the tests is at most, three years.

**Table 11**

*Frequency counts for years in school and TAKS failure rate by group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Failed only TAKS reading</th>
<th>Failed only TAKS math</th>
<th>Failed both TAKS tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 66
Four years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Four Years</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five years or more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Five Years or More</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data indicates failures in TAKS occur regardless of FLC attendance at any level.

Summary of quantitative analyses

The ANOVA analyses showed statistical significance in only two ANOVAs: in the analysis of variance for TOP all grades for Groups 1 and 3 TOP all grades speaking and in the analysis of variance for TAKS exempt TELPAS scores for Groups 1 and 3. The small effect size, only about five percent for the TOP all grades for Groups 1 and 3 demonstrates the weakness of this statistical significance. The other analysis demonstrating statistical significance was the analysis of variance for TAKS exempt TELPAS scores for Groups 1 and 3 in TOP listening. The effect size of 38 percent was strong. However, upon further review of the descriptive statistics, the means of the two groups indicates that the stronger group was Group 3, the students and parents who do not attend the FLC, and so the difference between the groups cannot be attributed to the FLC.

In addition, statistical significance for these groups only appeared in listening and speaking, whereas NCLB’s main concern is not those areas at all, but rather in reading.
and writing. In those areas, even the FLC cannot overcome the years needed to acquire a second language and use standardized tests designed for non-ELLs as an adequate measure of ELL learning. Table 11 illustrates the time needed to learn language cannot be overcome simply by parent involvement in the FLC.

Question 2

The second research question investigated in this study was, “What is the teachers’ understanding of their work in terms of helping parents and their children learn English?” Subquestions included, “What relationships do teachers see between parent education and the children’s school performance? What do teachers perceive the parents to be learning that might have an effect on their children’s learning and school experience?” The researcher sought to answer these questions by conducting and analyzing phenomenological interviews with teachers from the FLC.

Description of informants

The interviewees consisted of four teachers from APS who work at the FLC. A fifth teacher declined to be interviewed. Three of the teachers hold ESL certification, and only one of those teachers is an ESL teacher during the day. All informants were experienced classroom teachers. One teacher was in her first year teaching at the FLC, while the others had been there an average of three years.

Methodological approach

The researcher contacted the teachers at FLC about participation in the study. Once the initial interest was generated, the researcher informed the potential participants that the protocol, previously discussed in chapter 3, called for three 90-
minute interviews. All four agreed to the protocol and dates and times were scheduled for interviews. Three participant interviews occurred at the informants’ schools and one informant preferred to be interviewed at her home. At each first interview, the protocol was reiterated and the consent form reviewed and signed. Informants indicated they understood the interviews would be recorded and transcribed and stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s home until the study was completed and then they would be destroyed. No problems were encountered with the data collection.

Data analysis procedures

The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The researcher coded interview transcripts using NUD*IST®‡ (non-numerical unstructured data indexing, searching, and theorizing) software. The analysis process began when the researcher read the transcribed interviews and identified common themes among the informants’ responses. Overarching themes included informants’ prior ESL training and certification, the parent program at the FLC, informants’ observations about different cultures’ interest in school and the FLC, the FLC curriculum, and a miscellaneous category of insights teachers offered about schools, FLC, and family literacy.

Interpretation of the data

To analyze the data, the researcher followed Preston’s (2003) procedure of developing theoretical assumptions from the informants’ point of view that were supported or not supported by the data for the second research question and both of its subquestions.

Question 2. “What is the teachers’ understanding of their work in terms of helping parents and their children learn English?”
Theoretical assumption. The activities being provided at the FLC are geared toward basic survival English and basic literacy skills.

The interview question that provided the most pertinent information was derived from the second phenomenological interview that was structured around the question, “What are the details of teaching in the Family Literacy Center and if the teacher teaches ESL or bilingual students during the day, what does the curriculum and instruction look like there?” According to Preston, (2003) the Family Literacy Center curriculum consists of three parts: textbook learning, computer lab, and life-skills. All of the informants indicated they use the *Side by Side* textbooks for portions of the instruction. The textbooks move from easy to hard English constructions for Beginner and Intermediate levels. Amy (a pseudonym) said she believed her students really liked the textbooks. Trish (a pseudonym) stated that she doesn’t use the “*Side by Side* on a regular basis” but rather picks and chooses the content she thinks will best aid her students with basic life skills.

Another component of the basic life and literacy skill training at the FLC is the computer lab part. In 2004-2005, a new computer program, called *Rosetta Stone*, was implemented. Three of the informants indicated they liked this program more than the previous program for their emergent English learners. Monica (a pseudonym) explained,

The program that we did work with the past two years was *Ellis*. That was really more, I think, of a program that was developed for people coming into a job or workplace job. And it was much more, much less vocabulary, I mean there was vocabulary, but there was vocabulary used more in oral language and then...
questions to answer. The initial one, the basic level, was pretty good for most everybody. As they got up higher, it was much more technical language that they were using. Not technical in terms of a specific job but just more job related type of language that you would hear. And not that many people that we were serving had that kind of a need. And I think we were testing, if I am correct, we were testing that program for the person who wrote it or the company that produced it or whatever, and when we decided that really wasn’t what we needed then we had to go to something else which was *Rosetta Stone*.

Trish commented:

Watching parents working with *Rosetta Stone*, it is easy; it is, to me that is the best example of scaffolding learning a second language. You start with zero and you add on as you go. You repeat with pictures, you repeat with sounds, you repeat with picture and sound. Once they learn, you add on something extra to it. So I personally like that program very much.

Some portion of the instruction consists of creative lessons designed by the teacher. Amy reported her creative lessons “either connect to the lesson in the book, or are interesting and I think they will like [them].” Amy also discussed how she asked [her students],

…at the beginning of the year what they want to learn and we make a list at the very first class what are the things that are important to them and I try to use that list to drive what we spend time on. Most of it is, they want to speak better, read better, write better, and understand the grammar. We do incorporate some things like we practice job interviews. I thought that was good for conversational
skills plus it’s a life skill too that would help them. I passed out job applications. Just for them to see if they could fill out all the information, um, I don’t, most of them in my class have jobs, you know, that hasn’t seemed to (have) been one of their concerns, so I’ve pretty much stick to what is important to them and what their goals are in the class.

On the other hand, Trish’s creative lessons are determined by what she believed her students need to know. She asserted,

I think they need to know about health, I think they need to know about shopping, I think they need to know about utilities, rent, housing. So these are basic adult needs. And if we’re working on health, we learn about body parts, we, I have a whole lesson with a drawing of a figure that I have. So, we go through each part and we do worksheets after that with some pieces blank or there’s a drawing of a person and they need to name or if that is not the case, I have magazines they have to go through: picture of a human they have to cut it out and then name each part. So, depending on what my lesson is, the main lesson activity would be for that night that particular subject. So, throughout the first semester, it is basically areas I need to cover like government: who is the President, who is the governor, where is the White House, those sort of basic information. Then, I cover the government, or I cover the health issues, I cover all these basic needs. Throughout the second semester, I go more with reading and writing something. Jen (a pseudonym) at the beginning of each year asks her class,

What is the one thing you want to learn how to do? One of them was just to write notes to the teacher at school- absentee notes. One of them wanted to
learn how to write notes to the apartment management. Somebody wanted a resume. You know, applications, how to fill out applications.

Monica indicated that during the flexible time in the schedule, the program coordinator sometimes invites guest speakers. She said, Learning the English language is great but there’s still a lot of things that they need help with. And that’s (the) thing that the program has done too, they’ve brought in a lady from a free service where they help these folks as far as legal kinds of things, they’re not attorneys but they can refer them to attorneys. But they try to teach them about this is the law, this is, if they come to your house for someone they have to ask for a specific person, there are places that they can’t come to, um, if they come for a specific person, hog tie them and send them out the door because then, if they get granted access to your home, then they can do whatever kind of thing, the police or the INS kind of thing. And we’ve had her for the last two years and she brings an interpreter with her because the bulk of the population that she serves is Spanish so she brings a Spanish interpreter. And you can go to them and try and get information about INS and getting legal, and getting “green” cards and all that kind of stuff and what you have to do and how you have to maintain your “green” card and that kind of thing. They have somebody come from a bank last year, that was wanting their business and how they would help them and don’t stuff the money in the mattress kind of thing and you can set up a bank account no matter what your legal status is and that type of thing. So the program has tried to bring in people to give them practical information as well as the basic program.
Another determinant of the creative curriculum is the need for parent and school communication without the help of the student as the translator. Trish suggested,

One other thing that may cause some parents to come to these classes is that with school communication from classroom or parent conference or whatever, oftentimes we have had student be the translator for the parents and that is, especially if there is a problem, now we have gotten people that translate when we have parent conference because we did not want for the child to translate, “Well, I’ve been misbehaving in the classroom so we are here to have a meeting about me.” And you don’t know what he is telling to the parents. So that could be the reason, some hidden reason, because when they come they don’t, I would not know they’re there if they want to solve that problem in their family or if for the sake of learning English. Not just to attend parent conference meetings but be able to go and make a doctor’s appointment or go to the DMV and get a driver’s license or go and do all the other basic needs of daily life.

A few of the teachers mentioned their adult students were concerned that their children would lose their home language but their concern did not deter the parents from attending the FLC nor did it inhibit the teachers from encouraging the use of English in the home. Amy noted,

Your kids, they’re certainly speaking English in school, so when they come home, speak the same thing. Speak English with them at night. And they said, “Yeah, but we also want to keep the other language.” And I’m like, “Well do, but if you’re trying to improve, you’ve got to use the language.”

Jen also encouraged the use of English in the home:
Why are you still speaking your language? Yeah, you want your kids to know it, but if they’re really proficient in their home language, and they’re great in English already, don’t you think as an adult, if you’re wanting to better yourself and really help your child in the long run, and help the family in the long run, they’ve got to learn that bond of helping each other. They don’t just speak their home language because they’re not at home; they’re here in the United States. This is their home for right now. And they’ve got to change their whole way of thinking.

Monica reported her perceptions of what parents wanted for their children:

Most of the parents, I think, of ESL students, want them very much to learn English, want them to be successful in school, at least the ones that I’ve had, um, want them to be successful, um, and kind of struggle with the idea that they’re speaking their own language at home because they don’t want their child to lose that, but yet, you know their child is speaking English all day long in school, um, and would it be better if they spoke more English at home if they’re able or does that really matter, or whatever.

Summary of Findings Regarding Curricular Content and Teacher Practice Attitudes

The findings indicate the program provides services for basic English literacy and basic survival skills both in English and in everyday life. The informants agreed that the program provides a great service to the immigrant parents. The evidence also showed there is a basic framework for the curriculum and instruction at the FLC employed by all instructors and influenced by the needs or desires of the adult learners. Furthermore, though some parents feared the loss of home language capabilities, the teachers encouraged English use at home with their children so the parents might have more
practice and develop their English skills. The evidence suggests some of the teachers at the FLC clearly do not favor or understand the importance of parents’ continuing to help their children develop the home language. Recent research continues to support the notion that “pre-existing knowledge for English language learners is encoded in their home languages. Consequently, educators should explicitly teach in a way that fosters transfer of concepts and skills from the student’s home language to English” (Cummins et al., 2005, p. 38). The evidence indicates there are unexamined teacher biases and values about what constitutes success in the U. S. as evidenced by some instructors’ negation of the home language in the adult learners’ English acquisition. The teachers at the FLC seem intent on simply holding English classes without noticing the ramifications of their curricular choices and the oppressive impact the choices may have on the learners the teachers purport to want to help. Teachers also seem to miss the values they impart to the parents about the importance of home language connections in aiding their children’s academic success.

**Question 2a.** “What relationships do teachers see between parent education and the children’s school performance?”

**Theoretical assumption.** The teachers believe that family attendance at the FLC will help improve student test scores.

All four of the informants discussed the importance of regular attendance for their adult students and how that helps them learn English. Amy stated that though she saw the connection of attendance and learning English for her adult learners and how she believed “… the more [the parents] comprehend, the better they’ll be able to help their kids,” she also asserted that assessing children’s school performance was,
...difficult for me just because I don’t really have their kids, do you know what I mean? So even though I think my adults are doing well and progressing and are capable of helping their kids, I, on the other hand, don’t have their kids to compare, you know, their performance from beginning to end so that’s difficult for me to answer. I imagine it could only help, but without actually tracking a student’s performance I can’t say for sure.

Both Monica and Jen agreed with Amy’s assertion that since they didn’t have the students in their classes during the day, it was impossible for them to tell whether or not the FLC was making a difference in test scores though they assumed the extra help in English for those children who attended the FLC with their families could only help them score higher on tests. Trish maintained,

To some extent to me, it’s a straight connection. Parents coming to adult classes is a chance for the kids to come to classes whether they are learning content or not, they are learning English. So this is the double win for both. Parents learning English, kids learning English not content at this point or maybe content. Then once the kids are learning more English, and parents are coming to, keep coming to the classes, then this evolves into learning more content for the kids by understanding more and by seeing parents come to these classes, education becomes a family task. That whether or not parents are still at this point are able to help kids, but they are providing children with a situation that they could get help. Those kids, if they have problems or if they have homework, they can bring them to those classes and the teachers will help them with their homework or subject area. So, to me, there is a visible connection, a surface connection and
there’s an underlying or under surface connection which is the notion of school is a family endeavor. And through going to school together, coming to school, I don’t know what happens when they go home, but that three hours or four hours per night is something that mom or dad is doing the same thing we do. So this is an under layer, to me this is an under layer concepts of even though mom and dad are grown up, even though mom and dad are big, even though they know everything, but still they’re coming to school to learn more. Or to learn something new. So this connection to me is right away apparent. Basic needs right now. Maybe for parent, maybe for kids right now. Newcomers. But, under all this, there’s also another connection that school is important and learning is important.

Summary of Findings Regarding Teachers’ Perceptions of the Relationship of Their Participation in the FLC English Classes to Their Children’s Academic Progress

The evidence indicates a belief on the part of the informants that there will be some connection between attendance at the FLC and student achievement on mandated test scores. A majority of the informants did not believe they could directly connect student achievement to test scores without evidence and they are not privy to the test scores as the children are not their students during the day. One informant made the connection of learning as a family endeavor and the power of learning together as a family, which is supported by research in family literacy. Although the test scores did not support the hypothesis that parent participation at the FLC would help student achievement, the teachers’ acting and teaching as if parent participation does make a difference is important for morale and attendance of the adults, so they continue
their quest to acquire English and to participate in their children’s academic lives. Though the informants did not indicate that seeing parents as lifelong learners was important to the students’ academic success, they encouraged attendance at the FLC and voiced desire that families learn English together. In addition, the informants seemed to fail to connect the culture of schooling in the U.S. for students and adults and how to best enable their students, both the children and adults, to succeed.

Question 2b. “What are teachers’ perceptions of parent learning that might affect their children’s learning and school experience?”

Theoretical assumptions. Teachers believe that parents who attend the FLC currently have a minimal relationship with their children’s school due to the parents’ lack of confidence in their English skills. Teachers believe that parents who attend the FLC will improve the relationship with the school and help the family situation in the community.

The crux of this question is really school involvement. Informants suggested that rarely are parents confident in their English skills, which inhibits their involvement in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), in volunteering in the schools, or in participation in classroom activities.

Amy did speak of one of her adult learners who is involved in the PTA. She reported, I have an adult literacy student who is very supportive of her children. She goes to all their PTA activities, she is really concerned about their progress in school, she comes and tells me what they’re involved in. They’re involved in choir; her daughter is going to college now. I’ve had her for all three years. She’s been coming to my class, and so I know that she’s one that, although she doesn’t feel,
she always feels she’s not very good in English, but I know she’s extremely supportive and um, encourages her daughters to do whatever they can to be successful.

Similar to this adult learner, the informants indicated that their adult students felt ill at ease with their English abilities; regardless of how long they had been attending class, how long they had been in the U.S. or which level of class they had been attending. Amy reported that many of her students “…still feel inadequate and like, I mean, even at the end of the school year you’ll still hear some of them say, ‘Oh, my English is still not very good.’” The rationale for adult students’ poor self concept in English ability seemed to vary. Monica reported that in one household, the mother was attending class and was trying to encourage the father to attend too but “… for whatever reason, based on past school experiences and stuff he just doesn’t think that school is for him.” Monica reported the man expressed frustration that “basically, he gets everything secondhand or third hand when it comes from an English speaker, because either one of the kids or his wife have to translate for him.” His lack of English ability inhibits his involvement at his children’s schools.

Jen expressed frustration with the adult learners not using the resources available to them to practice their English and become comfortable and confident in it. Jen said,

I’d always ask them, “Did you practice at home, did you use any English while you were gone over the weekend or whatever night?” “Nope. Don’t have the chance, there’s no one to talk to.” But yet, some of them have kids that speak pretty good English. “Well, did you talk to your kids in English?” “No.”
Jen went on about the problems encountered when the parents have a lack of confidence in their English skills but their children do not. Jen related how the children, due to their lengthy exposure to English at school on a daily basis, have skills that their parents do not have. She expressed the dilemma as,

The [children] can speak better than you (the parent) can. They can write better than you can. They can probably think Americanized more than you can. So if you ultimately really want to be in the position that you think you’re in, then you better learn some English because if not, your child really is out smarter than you are. Now you can finally say, you’re the disciplinarian, you can kick that in, but ultimately don’t you really want to be smarter than your kid? Know more? Or not? You have to make it a priority. It’s almost like a challenge, you know. If you’re gonna be smarter than your kid in America (laughs) you know, if it’s not a big deal, that’s fine. But at the same time, they want [the kids] to do well here and that’s the crazy part. Even the Chinese. There’s this one little boy. They pick him up from school and he goes to a Chinese after-school program. Plus, I have a lot of them that go to Saturday school. Ok, if they’re pushing their kids that hard here, don’t you think you (the parent) need to be learning some English or learning how to write in English or being able to convey what you want for your family within the country that you live in. How hard is that? You have high expectations for your five, six, seven-year-olds, what about you?

The informants reported astonishment at the length of time many of their students had been in the U.S. without learning English. Monica stated, “It’s amazing to me how long some of them have been here. Eleven years, 20 years, that kind of thing, for whatever
reason now is the time they’ve chosen to try to pursue learning more English.” She went on to say,

As I said, I was amazed to find out how long some of these folks had been here before they try the formal education kind of thing whether it has to do with their children now speak English very well because they’ve been in the school since they were in the kindergarten or first grade and now they’re in the sixth grade or whether it has taken them that long to get up the courage to do it. I don’t know, or now is the time when it’s available to them and they’re going to jump on it kind of thing.

Jen also expressed astonishment when she stated,

One of the (placement exam) questions is how long you’ve been here in the United States, heck; some of them have been here in Texas longer than I have. We’re talking over 10, 17, 15 years. And they don’t know English…I mean, some of them couldn’t speak any English and they’ve been here a long time. But, some of them aren’t going to be comfortable [learning English], and it seems like there should be some way to make them comfortable.

Amy saw it in a context of when the parent comes to the United States, I think it just depends on when you get here, when you arrive in America. How much do you, how important is it to you to learn the language and if you kinda stay in a small circle who speak only your language then the chances are less likely that you’re gonna learn that much so it all depends. Some people come, they don’t know anyone, they’re forced to get out there, and use English and then others can be here for years and really don’t know that much or speak that much.
Amy touched on the importance of community, which was a common theme for all the informants. Jen suggested,

They can come to the country, and they can work and make the money, but if they’re not making strides to really be a part of the community and America and whatever town they’re in, I don’t think they truly become what they really want. They have to really step out of that community and into the school and it’s a scary place because everybody thinks differently and speaks differently, but yet, they’re sending their kids there everyday. And the kids come home, and they’re stuck between two different cultures and I think the moms, most of them are coming to help their kids.

Informants indicated helping the family situation in the community goes back to the first theoretical assumption in that one of the activities being provided at the FLC that is geared toward basic survival English and basic literacy skills is to aid parents not to need their children to translate for them in the community. Monica supported this premise by saying,

The biggest thing was that they wanted to be the parent and they wanted not to have to have their children become the English speaker when they would go to the bank, or to the post office, or to someplace where they had to have a certain amount of English to be able to communicate with the people there and carry on business. They wanted to be able to be the one to carry on business and so they, that was their reason for being at, at school was that they wanted to be able to speak enough English and to speak it well enough that they could be
understood when they went to the bank or wherever. Um, and they wouldn’t have to have their child with them interpreting and translating.

Summary of Findings Regarding Teachers’ Perceptions of Parent Learning that Affects Children’s School Learning

Informants indicated adult students’ lack of confidence inhibits their ability to be involved in the schools, but knew of no evidence connecting families and school involvement. Though the informants encouraged the adults to use the English skills they had, most parents seemed to be uncomfortable with their skills and stayed away from school involvement. Evidence also shows the informants were surprised at the length of time immigrant parents had lived in the United States before learning English and speculated that their decision to attend English classes might have resulted from their desire to aid their children in school. The evidence indicated that teachers clearly are bothered by the fact that the adults have not learned English. Nor do the teachers understand immigrants’ motivations to come to the U.S. nor the family circumstances that may have made it impossible for the adults to learn much English. Interestingly, though the teachers report they believe parent participation at the FLC helps the children do better academically, when asked specifically about the connection, the teachers believe they cannot give testimonials as to the connection because the teachers have been indoctrinated that without test scores in hand, they can make no judgments. Yet, when asked about parent learning without the connection to student achievement, the teachers report the adults are not using what they learn outside of class and therefore, the children aren’t helped. One explanation might be the myopic view of the class and the teachers’ frustration at parents’ lack of acquisition that colors
the teachers’ view of the broader connection between parent learning and their children’s academic success.

Overall summary

This study was designed to determine whether participation at the FLC would increase test outcomes at a statistically significant rate. Neither quantitative nor qualitative data analyzed in this chapter indicated that there are direct connections between the FLC and higher test scores. The findings in this study did not support the hypothesis proposed. However, the findings do provide for discussions as to what participation in the FLC does for the family in a more holistic view. When the framers of NCLB chose to limit public education success or failure to mandated exams, they developed policy contrary to one of their goals, specifically, preparing students to be good citizens and participate in our democratic society. NCLB defines good citizenship as part of a “good, wise, just, and compassionate country” (Paige, 2004b, ¶ 41), yet (Noddings, 2005), suggests:

The aims promoted by NCLB are clearly too narrow. Surely, we should demand more from our schools than to educate people to be proficient in reading and mathematics. Too many highly proficient people commit fraud, pursue paths to success marked by greed, and care little about how their actions affect the lives of others (p. 10).

Thus, the analysis of the present study will be framed using democratic society as the lens, but slightly modified to a progressive and Freirean view, rather than to the original neo-conservative one contained in NCLB. Using the writings of Giroux, Saltman, and Molnar to support their view, McKinzie and Scheurich, (2004) propose that “schools
should be democratic public institutions that serve all students well...[and] that schools should be places where democracy and equity are the undergirding tenets..." (p. 437).

In today’s educational climate, raw test scores almost exclusively provide evidence of academic success. However, in this study, test scores served as dependent measures as related to parental involvement in the FLC. ANOVAs, considered by critical theorists as reductionist, provide a bridge between the status quo and the emergence of the value of test scores in the context of parental support. As stated previously, ELLs who show evidence of succeeding in the current system can use this newfound capital as a means of moving into a more powerful position in society.

In the series of ANOVA analyses, the researcher found statistical significance only in two instances. One instance was in TOP speaking between Groups 1 and 3 on the TOP all grades ANOVA, and the other instance was in the TAKS exempt TELPAS scores ANOVA in the TOP listening scores. In neither of the statistically significant ANOVAs could the difference be attributed to attendance at the FLC. The large effect size for the TAKS exempt TELPAS scores ANOVA in the TOP listening section would indicate that not attending the FLC aided those students in achieving higher grades on the TOP than did students attending the FLC. However, since the TOP scores are holistic measures, considered by teachers using a rubric, and not test scores achieved by students on their own, variances in this area could be attributed to a variety of factors, not just attendance at the FLC. Additionally, once a family believes their English skills are advanced enough to meet their goals, they traditionally stop attending classes. That phenomenon would move those students to Group 3. Because there
was no way to track which students had attended the FLC at one time but were no longer attending, some of the students in Group 3 may have benefited from the FLC in the past but represented the non-attendees in this study.

In addition, though the literature from the Texas Education Agency indicated that the composite score for the TOP would be a combination of all four sub-tests, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, ("TELPAS district and campus coordinator manual," 2005) a closer examination of those scores indicated that only the reading score directly influenced the composite score. Furthermore, the TAKS test does not take into consideration listening or speaking abilities, thus those scores for ELL students may not aid students in scoring passing grades on the standardized measures for reading or math. For those reasons though the mean of the group not attending the FLC was higher on the two ANOVAs with statistical significance, one cannot directly connect attending the FLC to lower standardized test scores, as there are other mitigating circumstances. A re-examination of anticipated assumptions and limitations of the study might provide insight as to some of the mitigating circumstances connected to the FLC.

In observing an ELL child acquiring English, attention is paid to all aspects of language namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The state of Texas developed the holistic rubrics to rate students on the TOP with this in mind; however, composite scores show there is a lack of equity throughout the subtests. A close examination of the TOP and TELPAS, composite scores reveals their direct connection to the reading sub-test of TELPAS be it the RPTE for grades 3-12 or the TOP rubric for grades K-2. In several instances, students scored below advanced-high on every sub-
test except reading, yet the child’s composite score was advanced high. Nowhere in the manual did TEA proclaim that the reading score would be weighted higher when compiling the composite scores. An additional illuminating factor to the possible extra weight applied to the reading section of TELPAS is that if an ELL child scores advanced-high on the reading section in his or her first year of school, or scores advanced or advanced-high on the reading section in his or her second year of school, that child must take the TAKS test the following year regardless of whether he or she would have otherwise been eligible for an exemption ("District and campus coordinator manual for Texas student assessment program," 2005). Though TEA claims high achievement on the TELPAS reading section will lead to success on the TAKS reading test, there is no scientifically based evidence to prove that claim. Instead, the assertion sets ELL students up to take the reading test and be included in school’s AYP even earlier than the research suggests is an appropriate timeline for such an assessment.

Furthermore, since all language is acquired first by listening and speaking and only later by reading and writing, the attention paid solely to reading ability diminishes the accomplishments in the other areas of language acquisition. Additionally, the reading in those tests is academic language and not social language; and as stated earlier in this dissertation, acquiring academic language takes between five to seven years.

The focus of the TELPAS composite score on the reading component demonstrates that those making education policy decisions are not concerned with the development of the whole child or with that child’s interaction with the community. Eisner, (2005) states,
Children respond to educational situations not only intellectually, but emotionally and socially as well. To neglect the social and emotional aspects of their development, to focus all our attention on measured academic performance, is to blind us to these youngsters' need to live a satisfying life (p. 16).

The attention to reading only limits a child new to the United States to an unsatisfying life until he or she can read and those limitations on happiness are undemocratic in nature.

To be involved in a democratic society, participation is a must. For an ELL family, a first step to participation is to interact within both their culturally supportive segment of the community and with the larger community as a whole.

A second implication of the study is the teacher training and adult curriculum of the FLC and its lack of understanding that “language learning is cultural learning” (Heath, 1986, p. 145), and that the teachers at the FLC have the power and responsibility to:

. . . organize classroom relationships so that students can draw on and confirm those dimensions of their own histories and experiences that are deeply rooted in the surrounding community… [and] create the conditions where students come together to speak, to engage in dialogue, to share their stories, and to struggle together within social relations that strengthen rather than weaken possibilities for active citizenship and democracy (Giroux, 1988 as cited in Darder, 1989, p. 75).

The lack of teacher training in cultural awareness is a drawback to the success of the FLC. Teachers at the FLC unknowingly support Giroux’s hidden curriculum and its
focus on the dominant society, culture, and language. Examples of the teachers’ participation in promoting the dominant culture view emerged when the informants discussed how they encouraged the adults to speak English without acknowledging the fears of the adults that by using English, their children would lose contact and desire to learn about their native culture, and how they had not understood the gaps in family dynamics that occur when parents and children no longer have a common language of communication. Informants argued for assimilation in the U.S. culture and language domination rather than acculturation and how to interact without losing cultural identity. Teachers working with oppressed groups should learn how to empower their students to reject the traditional oppressive educational system and demand an equitable one.

Since the FLC classes are not guided by mandated benchmarks, there is a great opportunity to implement Freirean dialogue and praxis. The certification of teachers in ESL who have simply passed a test denies them the opportunity to learn how to aid their linguistically diverse classes in fitting into the U.S. culture while keeping their own familial cultural beliefs and practices alive.

In addition to the lack of cultural awareness training, the lack of a unified, comprehensive, and aligned curriculum that is responsive to student needs impedes the FLC’s success. Though initially the Denton Co-op connection was helpful (Preston, 2003), it now appears to limit the positive impact of the FLC on its learners. Now that the program is functional, the curricular issues can be addressed. The teachers at the FLC indicated they are ready for a curriculum that directly addresses the needs of the Alpha community and that they were willing to write and implement the curriculum and to jettison the co-op connection. Ideas for the curriculum included interactive exercises
between adults and children, which use English and divisions of classes according to specific needs of the adults, rather than simply on abstract language acquisition. These ideas included the vocabulary and understanding needed for a new job or communication with a child’s school or interaction with a landlord. Also, teaching the parents what content and skills were addressed at certain grade levels so that they could interact with their children about educational needs, whether the interaction occurs in English or in the home language.

Moreover, the informants indicated they believed the program was not a priority for the district because there was no communication between them and those who oversee it at the district levels. Since a communication gap exists, the informants indicated they thought they had no venue in which to advocate changes to the FLC’s curriculum. A new curriculum, with training about cultural awareness of ELL families should also contain an underlying theme of “an emancipatory educational process - a process that, above all, is dedicated to the empowerment of students through…illuminating the freedom of students to act upon their world” (Darder, 1989, p. 107). With that idea as a guiding theme, the FLC could provide its learners the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge needed to interact with the community as a whole and to participate in the democratic society at large.
The present study has examined the effect on student achievement of parent and student participation in the Family Literacy Center. The following discussion considers the results of the study and elucidates the findings. The discussion includes a re-examination of the assumptions and limitations of the study and additional material that helps explain the results derived from the phenomenological interviews. The chapter closes with a look at the value of the present study for the body of research on ELL students and implications for further research.

One assumption was the high level of training and expertise of the ESL teachers at the FLC. The phenomenological interviews provided insight as to the fallacy of that assumption. Of the four FLC teachers, one had no ESL certification at all, and the other three teachers had gained their certification through the regional service center program that one informant explained as, “[The regional service center] had about four sessions it was like 4 hours [each], like 16 hours [total] and it was like a crash course on the exam. Pretty much the exam. And I went and took it and passed it.” None of the informants provided contrary information about the certification process. Their descriptions make clear their lack of in-depth training in language acquisition background or the best instructional models for ESL. Unlike university ESL undergraduate students who take ESL methods, culture, techniques, and second language acquisition classes, these teachers were provided with only the knowledge
needed to pass the test. The one daytime ESL teacher had more contact hours with ESL students and their parents than all the other FLC teachers combined.

Another assumption was that the curriculum at the FLC was appropriate and the teachers were knowledgeable about adult learning techniques. The evidence from the interviews provided a mixed review of the curriculum at the FLC, and demonstrated that the teachers had received little or no training in adult learning techniques. The teachers whose positions were connected with the Denton Four-County Adult Education Co-op reported they had had to use a curriculum from the Co-op that did not correspond with the textbooks provided by the Co-op. Additionally, neither the textbooks nor curriculum correspond directly to the assessment provided by the Co-op. Copious amounts of paperwork coincided with the Denton positions, which the informants reported stifled their creative ability to teach effectively, their ability to create a curriculum driven by the desires of the adult students, and their interaction time with their adult students. The teachers involved with the Co-op did receive some training for adult learners, but they commented the negative impact on instructional time and on the paperwork outweighed any benefit the training provided. Thus, the informants stated that they did not see value in the relationship with the Co-op. Conversely, those teachers who were not connected to the Co-op confirmed that they had had no training in adult learning techniques. Due to their liberation from the Co-op curriculum, the teachers were able to connect the curriculum to meet the goals of their learners and to derive assessments from their curriculum rather than outside sources.

The limitations proved to be inhibitors for a comprehensive study of the effectiveness of adult literacy on student achievement. Through the phenomenological
interviews, the researcher learned about the limitation of attendance, a topic that was addressed by several of the informants. Teachers viewed attendance to be a key factor in English acquisition. The mobility of ELL families was also directly related to attendance at the FLC. Informants indicated that families might begin the year at the FLC but return to their native countries for the winter holidays and not return to the FLC that year until after the second semester term began, if at all. The long periods of absence from the FLC also contributed to some of the missed mandated tests, which resulted in incomplete data for some of the students. Students with incomplete data were dropped from the study. The excluded cases added to the initial limitation of the small group sample size. The results and subsequent discussion of the data lead to many implications of the study and areas of growth for APS and the FLC.

Implications

**Question 1.**

To address the implications of question one, in an ideal world, when NCLB was constructed, provisions would have been put in place to discard the exclusive oppression of ELLs in the U.S. educational system without exchanging the exclusive for inclusive oppression. When teachers could no longer disregard non-fluent ELL students, the opportunity to help the ELL students holistically arose. Schools could have focused on cultural differences between the U.S. and other countries and how those differences affected ELL families. Attention could have been paid to immigrant parents, who often bring with them cultural expectations and personal biases of what the parent and school relationship should look like, or to cultures including those where focus is placed on oral traditions rather than literacy. Funding could have been
allocated to families for whom English is a struggle to empower the parents engage in school activities so that they could aid their students in homework. However, instead of guiding teachers and administrators to focus on diverse student populations, cultural differences, institutional and personal biases, and the best practices for English language acquisition, including timelines, NCLB guidelines directed teachers’ attention to test scores, compliance, punitive measures, and keeping the power balance unchanged. Because the status quo in the Department of Education will not change for the foreseeable future, critical theorists and other like-minded individuals must find a way to aid ELL students within the parameters of the law, while exerting pressure on outside forces to amend the oppressive measures contained in it.

The over-arching problem in aiding ELL students is that although NCLB passed through Congress with bilateral support in 2001, implementation has been directed by the neo-conservatives in power. Discovering, contacting, and pushing disillusioned lawmakers to make changes in NCLB’s implementation is a way to initiate the changing of the law itself. Because this concept is macro in nature, it will take time. This being the case, micro ideas to aid ELL families more quickly must be taken in the meantime. One implication of the present law is the inappropriateness of testing timelines for ELL students.

Timelines making mandatory ELL testing tied to AYP ignore the complexities of the ELL population. Oftentimes, ELL families must move across state and country lines within a school year due to jobs, visas, or family issues, and the complexities of the ELL population are not addressed in NCLB. Policies need to be established for addressing the mobility of students and for providing accurate assessment. Until the NCLB
regulations address the reality of immigrant students moving around the country and to and from their home countries, the negative impact those students can have upon a school's AYP far outweigh their benefits. There is no way to fairly evaluate students if their educational opportunities have been diminished due to moving about the country or the world. The scores from the students are not an accurate assessment of their knowledge or ability. However, the criteria in NCLB are the same for those children as for others who never move. This is not only an ELL issue, yet the difficulties for ELL students are greater than for the average non-ELL student. Perhaps a redefinition of a school year would alleviate some of the stress caused by and to the children at individual campuses. To date, one day is equivalent to one year of schooling when calculating attendance is considered. One day cannot be considered fair educational opportunity for ELL students if their peers are in the school for an entire school year. A policy must be developed to address this issue, even though stating exactly how many months should be equal to an entire school year when considering attendance policies is difficult.

Another problem is the acceptance by the Texas Education Agency of a simple test to meet ESL certification requirements for the public schools, with no requirements for adult education. State and federal laws mandate ESL services for children and adults, but the lack of appropriate standards for ESL certification limits the success of both the teachers and the students. ESL methodology is varied and debates ensue regarding the best methods. Without university classes, teachers are overwhelmed by the numerous methodologies employed by teachers to provide non-English speakers with guidance in the art of learning English as a second language. These
methodologies range in intensity from direct instruction via pullout programs to immersion classes, where non-English speakers receive no specific English language instruction, and learn solely through exposure and vicarious experience. Since ESL certification requires no university hours in Texas, teachers often default to a methodology most like the one they are most familiar even if it is not appropriate for second language acquisition. Evidence from the interviews of the informants indicated their use of familiar methodologies at the FLC rather than applying appropriate ESL methodologies or researching adult learner methodologies. Furthermore, because TEA does not require university classes for ESL certification, teachers are able to become certified without addressing multicultural and diversity issues for both children and adult learners. In addition to the diversity of languages spoken in this country, cultural norms both within the school and outside the school directly impact student achievement. Without knowledge of appropriate interactions and cultural differences between schools and parents, communication gaps occur and parents fail to involve themselves in schools due to linguistic misunderstandings, different cultural norms, or a combination of both. Multicultural classes at the university level would help to fill in the gaps in teachers’ understanding of these issues.

**Question 2.**

To address the implications of question two, an implication of the study is the deficiency in critical pedagogy at the FLC. The sense one gets when one enters the FLC is that it is a place where teachers want to help ELL families acquire English but don’t know the best way to accomplish the task. Neither the computer lab program nor the textbooks provide teachers with the necessary instruments for empowering ELL
families, and the informants don’t believe that the district is supporting them in teaching English, much less in social reconstructive activities. However, with knowledge of Freire’s banking system, Giroux’s hidden curriculum, and McLaren’s definition of critical pedagogy, and given some guidance on implementation of critical pedagogy in the FLC, the teachers might consider changing their curriculum choices to include critical pedagogy during the life skills segment of the FLC classes. By connecting an empowering curriculum based on critical pedagogy and focused on connections between learning English and the parents’ interaction with “the wider community, society, and nation-state” (McLaren, 2000, p. 10), teachers might enhance the efficacy of the FLC for their students. Additionally, the gains made by employing critical pedagogy would curtail the power of the dominant society over the ELL families. At least two of the teachers at the FLC have some characteristics that lead the author to believe they could move away from the hidden curriculum and toward one based on critical pedagogy had they received training.

In fact, because the teachers believe they have little connection to the district administrators who are supposed to oversee the FLC, the teachers might employ such a change without asking for district permission. The teachers at the FLC indicated that they want to learn more about how to help their students and the introduction and implementation of some critical theory may be for what they are looking. Such training or course work would also invite discussion about assimilation versus acculturation into the U.S. culture, about where home language fits into second language acquisition, and about how best to empower the adult learners who attend the FLC so that they might aid their children in school. Furthermore, the addition of critical theory to the repertoires
of the teachers might carry over to their day teaching positions as well. None of the teachers claimed to like NCLB and its mandates, thus knowledge of critical theory might empower the teachers to dispose of any oppressive practices they employ in their classrooms. Grassroots actions of teachers, coupled with political change at the Congressional level, would change the landscape for ELL families throughout the U.S. by minimizing oppression in the classroom.

Contributions to the literature

The findings in the study contribute to the field of second language acquisition test timelines, linguistic framing, and the hidden curriculum. First, with the inclusion of ELL test scores to school, district, and state AYP measures, educators are looking for a way to speed up the process of language acquisition so that their ELL students will pass assessments and limit the damage that their scores can do to meeting AYP goals. In the present study, APS has offered language acquisition classes for ELL families in hopes that the attending ELL students’ test scores would be higher than their non-attending counterparts’ scores. The findings of the study indicate that family participation in a literacy center does not speed up the language acquisition process. The findings support the work of Cummins and others that language acquisition takes a certain number of years regardless of interventions provided by outside sources.

A second contribution to the field consists in tracing the linguistic power of framing, in this case the educational policies of the No Child Left Behind Act. Lakoff’s work briefly touches on the framing of educational policies and its impact on the U.S. population, but does not focus specifically on the linguistic choices of the neo-
conservatives in their reauthorization of ESEA through NCLB. This study provides a more in-depth look at NCLB, using Lakoff’s work as a basis.

A third contribution is focusing attention on Giroux’s notion of hidden curriculum through the ELL lens and Freire’s critical pedagogy. The current study attended to Giroux’s and other critical theorists’ work on the way the hidden oppressive curriculum impacts the linguistically diverse through the educational practices embodied in NCLB. This narrow focus of the study adds to critical theorists’ body of work as it applies to oppressive practices in the present educational climate. Moreover, the study further emphasizes the codification of Freire’s “banking system” through the lack of critical pedagogy ideals in NCLB. The neo-conservatives have equated “proven educational methods” with the “banking system,” rather than using critical pedagogy as defined by McLaren, because critical pedagogy empowers all learners, regardless of social position, to create knowledge and transform the power balance at all levels in the U.S.

Recommendations

To evaluate the efficacy of family literacy centers on student achievement, several recommendations for further study emerge. First, in a future study of the quantitative data, a larger district with a vibrant ELL population and literacy center would provide larger sample sizes for all groups. The larger groups and ability to randomly select all groups might produce different results, as statistical significance is easier to achieve with large sample sizes. Additionally, the generalizability of the study would increase with larger groups.

Second, because literacy centers are not a funded mandate by the government, finding larger populations of ELL families involved in family literacy centers may prove
difficult. An alternate study would be to use various groups from family literacy centers across a large geographical area. In Texas, there is a great possibility of generating similar groups, though small, in different cities throughout the state. Because all ELL students in Texas take the TELPAS and have the same exemption criteria for TAKS, a study of many groups across Texas attending family literacy centers might also provide for larger sample sizes for the groups.

A third recommendation for literacy centers might be an experimental design using the existing Denton Four County Adult Education Co-op as a control group and developing a new curriculum or different training consisting of cultural awareness and adult learning instructional practices for the teachers in the Co-op to determine how their adult learners score on an assessment at the beginning and end of the academic year. The results could influence the use of federal grant monies for adult education of ELL students in the region.

A fourth recommendation is a longitudinal case study of families at the FLC from the time they initially come to the FLC until they believe their educational needs have been met. Such a study could focus on the parental literacy in both languages and its influence on the student achievement. An in-depth look at a committed learner at the FLC might provide the center with a deeper understanding of the needs of the ELL families they serve and begin a conversation as to how to best serve the families and the community as a whole. The longitudinal study would aid the Alpha community’s understanding of ELL timelines in language acquisition for adults and children. The longitudinal study might start a conversation within the district or city levels focusing on how to empower ELL families and how to welcome their diversity into the community.
APPENDIX
Interview Protocol for Teacher Participants

1. What life and professional experiences brought you (the teacher) to your current position and desire to teach in the Family Literacy Center?

2. What constitutes the English curriculum at the Family Literacy Center? What are the instructional strategies used with parents and with children at the Family Literacy Center? If you also teach the children during the day, how do your curriculum and instructional strategies compare to those used in the FLC?

3. What is your understanding of your work in terms of helping parents and their children learn English? What relationships do they see between parent education and the children’s school performance? What do you perceive the parents to be learning that might have an effect on their children’s learning and school experience?
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