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Investigating elementary teachers' instructional planning and teaching experiences with long-term English learners: a qualitative study

Melinda V. Lopez

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

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The Dissertation Committee for The University of Texas at Brownsville

Certifies That This Is the Approved Version of the Following Dissertation:

Investigating Elementary Teachers’ Instructional Planning and Teaching Experiences with Long-Term English Learners: A Qualitative Study

By

Melinda V. López

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

Doctor of Education

In the Field of Curriculum and Instruction

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University of Texas at Brownsville
April 2012
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DEDICATION

This dissertation study is dedicated to my son James Christian. When I began this journey, you were just a dream. Then you came into my life and became my purpose in life. I hope your mom’s dissertation study will instill in you how valuable an education is in your lifelong quests and help you to believe that if you put your mind to it, you can accomplish anything. Always follow your dreams. May God bless you always.
AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation committee members for their guidance, support, and dedication in seeing me through this process. Your advice and recommendations were greatly appreciated. I have finally completed this journey with your help and expertise. Dr. Alma Rodriguez, thank you for always refocusing me and making things more visible for me. Your knowledge and expertise helped me shape this dissertation. Dr. Maria Elena Corbeil, thank you for helping me improve my writing and always being patient and positive about my writing skills. Thank you for always providing me your strength to help me complete this dissertation.

Dr. Sutterby, thank you for taking me on late in the game and always accommodating my work schedule so that we could confer. Thank you for seeing my vision and allowing me to further expand my passion for education with your guidance. I would also like to thank all of my professors I have had the pleasure of having for classes. Each one of you rooted for me to finish this journey.

I would also like to thank my second family of four years – my doctoral program colleagues. Thank you to the members of Cohort one. You all made this journey enjoyable through your support, prayers, and friendships. Foremost, I would like to thank my parents for always supporting me throughout this process. Thank you for being parents once again to my son, James. I know I said the words, “I’m going to graduate” so many times, but I am finally finished and this time, “I am going to graduate!”
ABSTRACT

Investigating Elementary Teachers’ Instructional Planning and Teaching Experiences with Long-Term English Learners: A Qualitative Study

English Language Learners (ELLs) are currently the fastest growing student population in the United States (Duohon-Ross & Battle, 2001; Verdugo & Flores, 2007). Within this population, there exists a group of students who are frequently criticized for lacking academic fluency in English despite having been educated in the United States for a long period of time. They are known as Long-Term English Learners. Long-Term English Learners share some characteristics with other groups of students, but occupy a unique space with regards to language issues (Olsen, 2010). The phenomenon of Long-Term English Learners is not new, but continues to present a challenge for many educators and students. The challenge for educators is being prepared to teach these students in order to close the achievement gap and get these students up to grade-level so their performance in the content areas is comparable to their native English peers.

Despite this phenomenon, no research has been conducted on elementary Long-Term English Learners and how elementary teachers plan instruction for these students.

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the body of knowledge of how elementary teachers of Long-Term English Learners decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use to teach academic content. To achieve this, a qualitative study was conducted. In order to select the participants of this study, a criteria was set. Ten teacher participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews (Brenner, 2006).
A six-step data analysis was conducted. Analysis from the data led me to identify how elementary teachers decided which instructional approaches and teaching methods they use to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners. In summary, the findings of this study indicated that: (1) the decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods participants used to teach academic content were based on the needs of their Long-Term English Learners; (2) teachers made decisions to use specific types of instruction that targeted the gaps these students possessed; and (3) teachers made decisions that displayed the type of teachers they characterized: effective and committed.

Based on the findings of this study, I provide three conclusions. In addition, I provide implications for elementary Long-Term English Learners, educators, family members, and policy makers who want to help elementary Long-Term English Learners in closing the achievement gap and also help teachers who have these students with their decision making.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Investigating Elementary Teachers’ Instructional Planning and Teaching Experiences with Long-Term English Learners: A Qualitative Study

English Language Learners (ELLs) are currently the fastest growing student population in the United States (Duhon-Ross & Battle, 2001; Verdugo & Flores, 2007). Within this population, there exists a group of students who are frequently judged for lacking academic fluency in English despite having been educated in the United States for an extended period of time. Freeman, Freeman, and Mercurri (2002) called these students “Long-Term English Learners” while Harklau, Losey, and Siegal (1999) referred to these students as “Generation 1.5” because they are the generation between recent immigrants and those who were born in the United States and speak English. For this study the term Long-Term English Learners (Freeman, Freeman & Mercurri, 2002) will be used.

Long-Term English Learners share characteristics with other groups of students, but occupy a unique space with regard to language issues (Olsen, 2010). Long-Term English Learners typically have been enrolled in U.S. schools for at least seven years, yet still have not reached the criteria for reclassification as fluent in English. Long-Term English Learners are usually in grades 6-12. However, they are also found at the elementary level, mainly in the upper elementary grades. Although they speak English, their academic skills are often considerably below grade level (Freeman, Freeman & Mercurri, 2002; Harklau et. al., 1999). In addition, research (Freeman, Freeman & Mercurri, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2009) found additional characteristics that define this student population. Long-Term English Learners: (1) are often orally bilingual and sound like native English speakers; (2) typically have limited literacy skills in their native language, and their academic literacy skills in English are not as well-developed as their oral skills; (3) have received inconsistent schooling in the U.S., usually
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moving in and out of bilingual education, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and mainstream programs in which they received no language support; (4) perform below grade-level in reading and writing and struggle in all content areas that require literacy; and (5) have different needs from those newly arrived English language learners. Harklau et. al., (1999) characterized Long-Term English Learners as being “equipped with the social skills in English” and “appear in conversation to be native English speakers” (1). Most educators are unfamiliar with the specialized needs of this population (Menken & Kleyn, 2009).

According to Olsen (2010) the inconsistency of L1 development and English language support over time appears to be a major contributing factor to the lack of academic English language development of Long-Term English Learners. Newell and Smith (1999) argued that at some point during their education, Long-Term English Learners missed learning how to decode and organize text in the ways appropriate for their grade levels. This resulted in limited opportunities for academic language development in both their native language and their English language skills. This occurs as students move through grade levels even within a school and experience yearly changes in the kinds of programs and instruction provided.

The phenomenon of Long-Term English Learners is not new, but it continues to present a challenge for many educators and students. The challenge for educators is knowing how to plan instruction teach these students in order to close the achievement gap and get these students up to grade-level so their performance in the content areas is comparable to their native English peers. Despite this phenomenon, little research has been conducted on elementary Long-Term English Learners, specifically how elementary teachers plan instruction for these students. Previous research (McKay & Wong, 1996; Faltis, 1999) that has been done has focused on newcomers or first year immigrant English language learners (ELLs). In addition, there is a need for research
on the type of instruction received by ELLs who have been mostly or fully educated in the United States but who continue to be designated as ELLs as they proceed through elementary and secondary school.

*Research Question Guiding This Study*

This study examines the following question: How do elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners? Some studies (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercurri, 2002; Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Olsen, 2010; Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000; Newell & Smith, 1999; Yang, Urrabazo, & Murray, 2001) have focused solely on secondary Long-Term English Learners, but no studies have researched elementary teachers and elementary Long-Term English Learners.

*Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the body of knowledge on the processes and decisive approaches elementary teachers of Long-Term English Learners use to teach academic content. The success of ELLs depends on the support they receive in learning English as well as in learning their academic subjects. Gándara and Hopkins (2010) argued that teachers of ELLs need a host of additional competencies, including an understanding of how to plan, implement, and manage instruction aligned with English language development standards and resources needed to execute effective instruction. Wong-Filmore and Snow (2005) maintain teachers of ELL students need extensive knowledge of first (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition theory as well as how to explicitly teach about language.
Significance of the Study

The trajectory to becoming a Long-Term English Learner begins in elementary school (Olsen, 2010). The study of how elementary teachers decide on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they use to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners has much to offer educators, policy makers, and researchers (Menken & Kleyn, 2009). This study provides research-based data that can be used to understand and prepare educators to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners, specifically at the elementary levels. The examination of how teachers plan instruction and teaching methods for Long-Term English Learners at the elementary level, can contribute to the understanding of what teachers need to do in helping them close existing academic gaps for this student population and help reduce the population of Long-Term English Learners. In addition, this study focuses on teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners, an area with limited to no research. Teaching academic English and academic content simultaneously to ELLs presents a major challenge to educators in the U.S. (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). As demographics continue to shift, states and school districts across the U.S. must contend with how to best provide programs for ELLs to learn both academic English and content successfully.

Overview of the Research Design

A qualitative study was conducted to examine how elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners. I used semi-structured interviews (Brenner, 2006) in order to develop an in-depth and focused understanding from elementary teachers’ experiences in deciding which instructional approaches and teaching methods they use to teach academic content to Long-Term
English Learners. The data was analyzed using six-step data analysis approach. The six step analysis approach was geared to identifying categories, patterns, and themes.

Setting

Participants for this study were drawn from a school district in a border city in the state of Texas. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011) 91.3% of the city’s population reported being of Hispanic origin, while 87.1% reported speaking a language other than English. The city’s school district has a student population composed of 97.7% Hispanic, 34.2% Limited English Proficient (LEP), and 65.8% ‘At-Risk’ (Texas Education Agency, 2011). The district implements an early-exit transitional bilingual education program in which students are eligible to exit the bilingual program as early as first grade. Thirty-two percent of students are enrolled in either bilingual or ESL programs. The majority of the district’s funding comes from state and federal revenues and more than half of the funds are spent on curriculum and instruction.

Participant Selection

The use of a purposeful sampling strategy to select the participants provided the information needed for this study. I set criteria that allowed me to select participants. The participants selected to be interviewed for this study met the following set criteria. First, the teacher participants needed to have five years or more of teaching experience with Long-Term English Learners. Second, they must have been current upper elementary public school teachers, either in fourth or fifth grade. Third, the teachers must have taught academic content (e.g. science). In order to begin the search for teacher participants, I contacted different elementary principals, assistant principals, and facilitators to obtain the names and emails of teachers who met the criteria. Twelve names were collected. Emails were sent to the qualifying teachers, inviting them to participate in the study. The email included a brief description of the
study, a confidentiality assurance, and my contact information. Ten participants were selected. The participants of this study are teachers in this school district selected from different elementary schools. Once teachers agreed to participate, I obtained their principal’s consent as required by the school district, and arrangements were made to meet and conduct the interviews. In order to protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms were used. Consent forms approved by the school district and the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) were signed prior to the participants’ interviews.

Data Collection Methods

In order to contribute to the body of knowledge on how elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners, I used semi-structured interviews (Brenner, 2006) with the participants. The interviews were semi-structured in that I was able to change the order of questions, omit questions, or vary the wording of the questions during the interview to probe unexpected issues that emerge (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Scholars have argued that semi-structured interviews can help enable research participants’ to begin seeing themselves as contributors to knowledge (Hatch, 2002; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003; Patai, 1993). Semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to focus on the topic while at the same time leaving space for participants to offer insights and topics that the researcher may not have foreseen (Brenner, 2006). In conducting the semi-structured interviews, I took an active role as a listener (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). Semi-structured interviews that focus on teachers’ decision making on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners, can provide an opportunity for teachers to construct an understanding of themselves as teachers of this student group (Patai, 1993).
In designing the questions for the interviews, I selected open-ended questions that focused on teachers’ decision making on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners. The interviews took place in locations selected by each participant. In order to construct a dataset for analysis, all interviews were tape recorded, and later, the audio recordings were transcribed in sentence format using Word Document. The transcribed text became the data to be analyzed. Member checking occurred after the interviews had been transcribed.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using a six-step approach which enabled me to find commonalities, categories, patterns, and themes on how elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners.

Definitions of Terms

This section provides definitions for key terms used throughout the study.

Academic Content. “Academic Content” refers to the skills and knowledge base expected of students for a particular subject area at a particular grade level. For example, all fourth grade students are expected to know the properties of matter in the state of Texas (Freeman & Freeman, 2009).

At-Risk Students. At-Risk students are students who are not experiencing success in school and are potential dropouts. They are usually low academic achievers. Disproportionate numbers of them are males and minorities. Generally they are from low socioeconomic status families. Students who are both low income and minority status are at higher risk of dropping out of school. Their parents may have low educational backgrounds and may not have high educational...
expectations for their children. At-risk students tend not to participate in school activities and have a minimal identification with the school. They face disciplinary and truancy issues that lead to high school credit problems. Family problems, drug addictions, pregnancies, and other challenges prevent them from participating successfully in school (Donnelly, 1987).

*Early-Exit Transitional Bilingual Program.* This program is designed to help children acquire the English skills required to succeed in an English-only mainstream classroom. This program provides some initial instruction in the students' first language, primarily for the introduction of reading, but also for clarification. Instruction in the first language is phased out rapidly, with most students mainstreamed by the end of first or second grade. The choice of an early-exit model may reflect community or parental preference, or it may be the only bilingual program option available in districts with a limited number of bilingual teachers (Ovando & Collier, 1997).

*English Language Learners (ELLs).* ELLs are learners who have a first (home, primary, or native) language other than English and are in the process of acquiring English (No Child Left Behind, 2000).

*English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS).* Federally required standards designed to measure the annual progress that ELLs make in learning academic English (Texas Education Agency, 2011c).

*Krashen’s Second Language Acquisition Theory.* For this study, reference will be give to Krashen’s (1981) second language acquisition theory. There are five main components of Krashen’s theory. Each of the components relates to a different aspect of the language learning process. The five components are:

- The Acquisition Learning Hypothesis
ELEMENTARY LONG-TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS

- The Monitor Hypothesis
- The Natural Order Hypothesis
- The Input Hypothesis
- The Affective Filter Hypothesis

**Limited English Proficient (LEP)** - The definition of “limited-English proficient (LEP)” is taken from the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, S. 9101, 25, of Title IX:

“The term ‘limited-English proficient,’ when used with respect to an individual, means an individual –

- who is aged three through 21;
- who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
- who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual’s level of English language proficiency; or who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and
- whose difficulty is speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual the ability to meet the State’s proficient level of achievement on State assessments described in Section 1111(b)(3) and the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or the opportunity to participate fully in society.”

**Long-Term English Learners (LTEL).** These types of learners have been in U.S. schools for seven or more years. They are below grade-level in reading and writing, and usually math as
well. They often get passing grades, but their grades give many of these students a false perception of their academic achievement. When these students take standardized tests, their scores are low. Most have conversational fluency in English, but lack the academic English language proficiency they need to compete with native English speakers (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercurri, 2002).

Stanford 10. The Stanford 10 multiple-choice assessment evaluates reading, language, math, science, and social studies skills. This assessment helps educators find out what students know and are able to do in these subject areas. This instrument provides a valid and reliable tool needed for objective measurement of achievement. Administrators obtain reliable data to evaluate progress toward meeting the challenges set forth by the No Child Left Behind Act and national and state standards. This assessment can help teachers identify and help children who are at risk of struggling academically (Pearson Assessments, 2012).

Stanford English Language Proficiency Test (SELP). The Stanford ELP evaluates the listening, reading, comprehension, writing, and speaking skills of English language learners in PreK–12. This instrument provides a comprehensive ELL assessment solution for native Spanish speakers, helping determine whether students speak and understand English well enough to succeed in school. In addition, the Stanford ELP can be used to assess the English language proficiency not only of Spanish speakers, but of any non-native English speakers (Pearson Assessments, 2012).

Stanford Spanish Language Proficiency Test (SSLP). The Stanford evaluates the listening, reading, comprehension, writing, and speaking skills of Spanish speakers in PreK–12. This instrument provides a comprehensive ELL assessment solution for native Spanish speakers, helping determine whether students speak and understand Spanish well enough to succeed in school (Pearson Assessments, 2012).
State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, or STAAR, will replace the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) program beginning in spring 2012. The STAAR program at grades 3–8 will assess the same grades and subjects as are assessed on TAKS. The rigor of items has been increased by assessing skills at a greater depth and level of cognitive complexity. In this way the tests will be better able to measure a greater range of student achievement and establish stronger links to postsecondary readiness (Texas Education Agency, 2011d).

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) is a testing program that assesses the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). TAKS was developed to better reflect good instructional practice and more accurately measure student learning (Texas Education Agency, 2004).

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills or TEKS is the official K-12 curriculum for the state of Texas and details the curriculum requirements for every course. State-mandated standardized tests (TAKS and STAAR) measure acquisition of specific knowledge and skills outlined in this curriculum (Texas Education Agency, 2011e).

Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) fulfills federal requirements for assessing the English language proficiency of English language learners (ELLs) in kindergarten through grade 12 in four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. TELPAS assesses students in alignment with the Texas English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), which are part of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Student performance is reported in terms of the four English language proficiency levels described in the ELPS: beginning, intermediate,
advanced, and advanced high. TELPAS results are used in several state and federal accountability and performance-based monitoring indicators (Texas Education Agency, 2011e).

M1s – The acronym M1 stands for monitored year 1 and refers to bilingual students who have exited the transitional bilingual education program are monitored for two consecutive school years in their academic progress.

Organized of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters and an appendix section. The first chapter provides a brief introduction to the purpose of this study and discusses the research problem of the phenomena of Long-Term English Learners and the issues of teacher preparedness to teach these students. I then introduced my research question, the purpose of the study, the research methodology, the setting of the study, and the data collection and analysis process, the findings, implications and provided the definitions of terms that will be used throughout the study.

In chapter two, I provide a review of literature related to this study. The third chapter presents the methodology used in this study, including: the rationale for adopting a qualitative methodology; the setting of study; the participants’ selection process; and how data will be collected and analyzed. Chapter four describes the analysis of the interview data and includes more literature related to this study. Chapter five presents findings and interpretations, conclusions, and implications for students, educators, family members, and policy makers and concludes this dissertation study.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to address the research question, this dissertation provides a review of the literature related to how teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners. Specifically the following areas will be presented: (1) studies focusing on Long-Term English Learners and language acquisition; (2) effective teaching practices and content instruction for ELLs; and (3) teacher professional development and planning that focuses on ELLs.

Researchers (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercurri, 2001; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Olsen, 2010) noted that Long-Term English Learners possess unique characteristics. In order for elementary teachers to plan effective lessons, they must understand Long-Term English Learners and how these characteristics impact students’ learning. At first Long-Term English Learners students are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) and are enrolled in bilingual education or ESL programs. They become Long-Term English Learners because they do not acquire the English language proficiency needed to be reclassified as all English proficient nor do they develop the necessary academic skills needed to achieve academic success as they progress through the grade-levels. Freeman, Freeman, and Mercurri (2002) listed the following characteristics of Long-Term English Learners: (1) they are below grade-level in reading, writing, and math; (2) they often get passing grades, but their grades give many of these students a false perception of their academic achievement; (3) when these students take standardized tests, their scores are low; and (4) most have conversational fluency in English, but lack the academic English language proficiency they need to compete with native English speakers.

Educators must provide instructional approaches and teaching methods that are effective in closing the academic gaps Long-Term English Learners possess. In a report on Long-Term
English Learners, Olsen (2010) provided a list of principles schools should adopt when designing instruction for Long-Term English Learners. Olsen’s principles provide mainly program recommendations. Under principle III: *Explicit Language and Literacy Development Across the Curriculum*, Olsen (2010) provides information on what teachers need to focus on when planning and teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners.

Teaching subject matter to English Learners requires direct, explicit instruction on strategies needed to build vocabulary and comprehend grade-level texts and participate in discussion about the content…Language objectives should target the language forms needed for the academic work. The classes should be interactive, with structured and carefully planned activities that have students actively using language and engaging with the academic content. Teachers must understand the importance of getting students talking about academic content to support the learning and processing of content, and work collaboratively to plan around common language functions and concepts. (p. 34-35).

This principle is important to this study because it addresses the importance of providing instructional approaches and teaching methods that allow Long-Term English Learners to build academic vocabulary, learn content, apply English language concepts. This principle recognizes the importance on building vocabulary, targeting English language objectives, engaging students in learning, and providing opportunities for Long-Term English Learners to actively discuss academic content. Gathering from this perspective, I will present similar literature that focuses on this principle for the literature review.
Long-Term English Learners

Long-Term English Learners are students who have attended schools in the United States for seven or more years and still require language support services (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercurri, 2002). Although these students make up a significant portion of the secondary English language learner population in the United States, very little research exists about Long-Term English Learners and how teachers plan instruction for these students. There is no research that focuses on elementary Long-Term English Learners. However, some studies have looked at secondary Long-Term English learners (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007; Menken & Kleyn, 2009). Menken and Kleyn (2009) found that high-school Long-Term English Learners prior schooling has been subtractive, posing significant challenges for their academic literacy acquisition. Subtractive schooling in this study referred to students being provided inconsistent bilingual education program supports (Valenzuela, 1999) when they enrolled in U.S. schools. In addition these studies found Long-Term English Learners who attended school in the U.S. for seven years or more, experienced programming that did not provide sufficient opportunities to fully develop their native language literacy skills. Research (Collier, 1999; Cummins, 1991) has found that ELLs who have the opportunities to develop their L1 is correlated with school success. Thus Long-Term English Learners arrive in high school with limited academic literacy in English or their native languages, in spite of their oral bilingualism, posing difficulties for them in all subject areas.

Newell and Smith (1999) studied a New York high school literacy program designed for Long-Term English Learners and found that teachers and administrators targeted students’ needs through reading and writing development, note-taking skills, and native language arts instruction using both inductive and deductive teaching strategies. Yang, Urrabazo, and Murray (2001)
found secondary ‘continuing LEP’ students’ general academic performance does not improve as they remain in bilingual education and ESL programs for more than seven years. They also found that students who have been in these programs for seven years or more lack higher-order thinking skills necessary to perform well on criterion-referenced assessments needed for reclassification as an all English student. In as much, this a student group of great concern for educators.

*Needs of ELLs*

Long-Term English Learners are still considered English Language Learners. Because of this, it is necessary to present literature on the needs of English Language Learners. In order for Long-Term English Learners to succeed academically, it is necessary to present research on what makes ELLs succeed academically. In order for ELLs to achieve learning academic language, they must acquire both basic conversational language as well as academic language (Cummins, 1979, 1981). Conversational language involves the use of interpersonal language or in everyday situations. Academic language, on the other hand, requires that students have the background knowledge necessary to understand and use content-specific technical vocabulary, processes, and specialized discourse patterns. While it takes one to three years for ELLs to develop conversational proficiency in English, they need five to seven years to develop academic English, which is the English needed for reading, writing, speaking, and listening in the content areas (Collier, 1999; Cummins, 2001). However, there are ELLs who take longer to develop both conversational and academic language. As the population of students who are English language learners increases in U.S. classrooms, teachers need to find a starting point for understanding the needs of ELLs in their classrooms. Although it is expected that most ELLs will develop conversational fluency within two to four years, the development of the advanced language
competencies associated with academic language proficiency might require five to seven years (Hakuta, Goto Butler, & Witt, 2000). Long-Term English Learners have been enrolled in U.S. schools for seven years or more and have yet to attain the academic language proficiency needed for reclassification.

*Using Students’ L1*

The use of student’s native language in the instructional process is an important part of the teaching and learning environment. The use of the student’s native language is a mechanism for imparting content and understanding (Berman, McLaughlin, McLeod, Minicuccie, Nelson, & Woodworth, 1995; Tikunoff, 1983). The use of students’ native language is important, because it helps to clarify and elaborate points being made in English (Tikunoff, Ward, van Broekhuizen, Romero, Castaneda, Lucas, & Katz, 1991). Freeman & Freeman (1994) affirm that it is effective for students to be encouraged to use home language vocabulary when they are not able to find the appropriate English terms. Mace-Matluck, Alexander-Kasparick and Queen (1998) found reading knowledge gained in one language can be transferred to another, and the use of one’s native language clarifies and enhances understanding and focus.

*Academic Content Instruction*

According to Gibbons (2002) ELLs need consistent instruction that will facilitate L2 development while simultaneously learning the academic content. Effective teachers of ELLs therefore integrate language and content objectives (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Montes, 2002; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). For instance, they explicitly model the use of passive voice in reporting the stages of a science experiment or they teach discourse markers of cause/effect or chronology in a history lesson. They use graphic organizers not only to display relationships among concepts, but also as a scaffolding tool to teach the language needed to
express these relationships (Tang, 1992). By understanding the linguistic demands of the content areas, teachers can purposefully attend to the underlying "linguistic register" (Short, 2002, p. 20) of their discipline. Teachers also need to understand that their own attitudes toward languages other than English and toward multilingualism play an important role in how students respond to the challenge of L2 learning (Delpit, 2006).

ELLs typically do not have the same depth and breadth of vocabulary and understanding of the structure of the second language (de Jong & Harper, 2005). ELLs often need more time and many more scaffolded opportunities for language and background knowledge development to fully participate in content-based discussions and to develop their oral and literacy skills in English (de Jong & Harper, 2005). For example, when teaching writing to ELLs, Escamilla and Coady (2000) found that teachers must understand the role of the L1 in assessing students' writing and must be able to create opportunities for using the native language as a tool to help ELLs organize their thinking and as a scaffold for more advanced writing in their L2. Teachers must be aware of learners' needs based on their prior literacy experiences and they must be prepared to provide the skills and strategies to bridge the gaps (Schleppegrell & Colombi, 2002).

Students who remain in English language learners as they enter the upper grades are typically exposed more to content driven instruction rather than opportunities to continue to learn the English language. It has been noted that teachers, specifically in the upper grades, focus on teaching content mastery without paying close attention to the teaching of academic language (Cummins, 2000; de Jong & Harper, 2005). For example, secondary language arts teachers tend to focus on teaching basic language skills like spelling, grammar and phonics without attention to content to ELLs. However, English language learners will only be able to master the
curriculum and the language used to convey concepts taught in the content areas if language and content are taught hand-in-hand (August & Hakuta, 1997; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005).

Research on the upper and secondary grades has revealed focus on content mastery and cognitive development without serious attention to the language through which the learning takes place (de Jong & Harper, 2005). Many content area teachers assume that ELLs will be taught English in another class. In a study of content area teachers, one social studies teacher stated, "I believed that was someone else's job" (Short, 2002, p.21). Many content teachers now have ELLs in their classrooms, because ELLs spend only a small part of their school day in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. This is the only time ELLs receive some form of instruction that target English language development. For the remainder of their school day, ELLs are assigned to regular classrooms for their math, social studies, science, and other content instruction, which are usually conducted in English and teach rigorous academic content. The research on teaching academic content to ELLs recognizes the importance of continued English language development embedded in the instruction. As previously discussed, Olsen (2010) argues “lessons should be designed around carefully structured language objectives for integrating subject matter content, vocabulary development, and content-related reading and writing skills” (p.34-35). Despite this ongoing change in the characteristics of the student population, most content teachers have had little or no preparation for working with ELLs (de Jong & Harper, 2005).

**Instructional Approaches and Teaching Methods for ELLs**

In order to examine how teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use for teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners, it is necessary to present research that focused on teaching methods and instructional approaches teachers of
ELLs have used to teach language and academic content. When ELLs are enrolled in schools, they have the daunting task of needing to learn a new language and new academic content. Learning academic content while simultaneously learning a second language is very difficult for ELLs. This is a predicament many teachers of ELLs find themselves in year after year. There is limited research on effective teaching methods and instructional approaches that specifically focus on Long-Term English Learners and their teachers. However, extensive research has been done on the effective teaching of language and academic content to ELL students in general.

When preparing lessons, teachers need to decide how they will deliver the instruction. They need to choose among the multitude of instructional approaches and teaching methods available. Most of the time, teachers rely on what they have learned and have been trained in through teacher preparation programs (Gándara & Maxwell-Jolly, 2006). Teacher preparation programs created for bilingual education and ESL programs need to provide the knowledge and skills needed to develop in order to work effectively with both ELLs and native English speakers (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). Awareness of language development patterns of native English speakers is important for teachers and can result in classroom practices that support the language and literacy development of ELLs (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). However, teachers also need to understand basic characteristics of second language development and the relationship between first language (L1) and second language (L2) learning (Wong-Filmore & Snow, 2005).

*Effective Practices for ELLs*

In addition, prior to preparing instruction for ELLs, teachers need to plan to implement effective research-based instructional approaches that promote content acquisition while
developing English language skills in all of their lessons (Gersten & Jimenez, 1998, Reyes & Rorrer, 2002). Research on effective research-based instructional approaches reveals features appropriate for all learners: maintaining high expectations, scaffolding instruction, vocabulary and background building, using learning activities, and providing opportunities for student interaction (Truscott & Watts-Taffe, 1998; Penfield, 1987; Clair, 1995; Gersten, 1996; Gibbons, 2002; Montes, 2002; de Jong, 2006). In addition, these studies found that the actions of effective teachers of ELLs included using teaching methods and instructional approaches that allowed students to use native languages; incorporating home cultures in teaching; adjusting teachers’ language; linking language learning with content learning; and providing students with opportunities to engage in discourse through cooperative learning. Freeman, Freeman, and Mercurri (2002) suggested four key concepts educators of Long-Term English Learners can implement when educating this group of students; (1) Long-term English learners need a consistent program that consists of engaging students in a challenging, theme-based curriculum to develop academic concepts; (2) Draw on students’ background and experiences, culture, and languages; (3) Organize and collaborate activities and scaffold instruction to build students’ academic English proficiency, (4) Create confident students who value school and values themselves as learners.

Similar findings were found by Hite and Evans (2006). Results of this study indicated teachers of ELLs adjusted their lessons to make learning more comprehensible to ELLs using a variety of strategies such as visuals, manipulatives, and modeling; modification of instructional resources; consistent communication with parents; peer tutoring; implementing a student-centered rather that teacher-centered philosophy; and using students’ native language for providing assistance with learning. It was evident teachers in this study were employing methods
to make academic content comprehensible to ELL students. This study ties directly into Krashen’s (1981) second language acquisition theory which states teachers need to make content comprehensible to ELLs.

*Teachers of ELLs*

In order to answer the question on how teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners, it was necessary to review literature on professional development and teacher preparation programs that focus on ELLs. Teachers who pursue a bilingual teaching certificate need to have knowledge of language acquisition alongside teaching content to ELLs. Preservice teachers need to be prepared to work with ELLs by having knowledge of language acquisition theories, know effective instructional approaches and teaching methods, how to plan lessons through identification of language and academic learning goals and objectives, and know the characteristics of ELLs. Teachers already in the field must seek those professional development opportunities that target ELLs and keep abreast the latest research in this subject area. Districts with enrolled ELLs need to provide ongoing professional development for their teachers of ELLs. Districts cannot assume bilingually certified teachers or content area teachers possess the in-depth knowledge needed to effectively teach ELLs. Learning must be an ongoing process (Facella, Rampino, & Shea, 2005).

*Effective Teachers*

In terms of seeking to close the achievement gap among ELLs and native English speakers, it is necessary to examine issues that contribute to this existing gap. One area to examine is professional development teachers receive that target instruction for ELLs. Professional development directly impacts instruction. An issue that has emerged with
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frequency in the literature is the degree to which teachers believe they have been adequately prepared to work with English language learners in general. Professional development opportunities need to focus on the needs of both teachers and students. Current literature on teaching academic content to ELLs suggests there are fundamental problems with the professional development teachers are receiving on teaching ELLs (Lewis, Parsad, Carey, Bartfai, Faris, & Smerdon, 1999).

In a report by the National Center for Education Statistics (2002), 42% of the teachers surveyed indicated that they had ELLs in their classroom, but only 12.5% of these teachers had received more than eight hours of professional development specifically related to ELLs. When considering teaching, a recent survey of 5,300 educators in California, many of the teachers of ELLs reported they felt unprepared to meet the challenge of teaching them, even when they held specialized credentials (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, Rumberger, & Driscoll, 2005). Research (Gruber, Wiley, Broughman, Strizek, & Burian-Fitzgerald, 2002) has also found that many content area teachers want to know what they can do to help their ELLs succeed academically but are not prepared to do so. If teachers of ELLs are not prepared to teach them, they may select instructional approaches and teaching methods that are ineffective for ELLs when learning academic content. This result can have dire consequences for ELLs.

Professional development on language acquisition, differentiated research-based instruction, and information on ELLs should be provided periodically to any teacher who teaches ELLs. Teachers have to understand the differences among ELL groups and how these ELLs learn so that they can plan using effective instructional approaches and teaching methods to begin evading the creation of Long-Term English Learners. Verplaetse (2000) found teachers that do not understand the complex relationship between cognition and language proficiency for
ELLs might rely on low-level recall or knowledge questions when using questioning techniques with ELLs or refrain from asking questions at all in anticipation that ELLs will be unable to respond. In order to avoid watering down instruction and the curriculum for ELLs, teachers must be able to systematically assess and provide a variety of question forms appropriate to ELLs' proficiency levels (e.g., requiring non-verbal, one-word, or extended responses), while keeping the cognitive demand challenging (Verplaetse, 2000).

If teachers do not recognize this distinction between social and academic language proficiency, they may not pay explicit attention to the level and development of academic oral proficiency for ELLs. Instead, ELLs will be expected to acquire all aspects of their L2 "by osmosis"; i.e., it is assumed that simply being in an English-language environment and interacting with native speakers through cooperative learning structures will suffice for language development (Harper & Platt, 1998). These results begin the inconsistencies among bilingual education programs (Newell & Smith, 1999; Olsen 2010). Structured opportunities for ELLs to actively engage in the process of negotiating meaning through academic language must become an integral part of curriculum planning (Gibbons, 2002).

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a review of the literature related to how elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners. Long-Term English Learners are an existing group for many educators and examining how teachers plan instruction to teach rigorous academic content is necessary. In the review of the literature, I have included research on Long-Term English Learners, effective instructional practices for ELLs, teaching content to ELLs, and teacher preparation and professional development for ELLs. In order to understand how Long-
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Tem English Learners learn, it is necessary to investigate the processes and decisive approaches teachers of these students plan to teach academic content starting at the elementary level. Looking and learning from these teachers’ experiences can make visible what is not visible through studies that focus on ELLs in general and not Long-Term English Learners.

Conclusion

One of the ultimate goals for educators of ELLs is to close the achievement gap between ELLs and native English student. For this to be done, more research into the field of Long-Term English Learners is needed to understand what educators need to prepare to teach these students. This study aimed to identify how elementary teacher of long-term English learners decide on the instructional approaches and teaching strategies to teach academic content. By investigating the teachers’ decisive approaches, this dissertation study attempted to contribute to the research base about Long-Term English Learners. The research presented in this review relate to the topic of this dissertation study. More relevant research will be presented with to correlate with the data analysis section of this research study. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology for this study.
CHAPTER III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research methodology employed in this study. This dissertation is a semi-structured interview qualitative study on how elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) with the primary goal of obtaining and understanding how teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners. Primary data collection methods included semi-structured interviews that were audio recorded and transcribed. Data was analyzed using a six-level process of analyses to identify themes related to teachers’ decision making and to help me understand the decision-making processes elementary teachers of Long-Term English Learners employ in the classroom to teach academic content. This chapter will describe the qualitative research approaches employed in this study and will provide the rationales for employing these methods.

In order to seek and understand how elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners it was necessary to select the most appropriate research methods. Patton (2002) explained that qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in a particular context. Bogdan and Bilken (2007) stated that the goal of a qualitative researcher “is to better understand human behavior and experiences and to grasp the processes by which people construct meaning and describe those meanings” (p. 43). Therefore, this study used qualitative research methods.
This research study used interviewing as the primary source of data collection. According to King and Horrocks (2010), the most commonly used method of data collection in qualitative research is the qualitative research interview. According to Patton (2002), qualitative interviewing is used to find out things which cannot directly be observed. Atkinson and Silverman (1997) defined interviews as a social technique for the public construction of self. Gubrium and Holstein (2003) contended that interviews generate data on their own and generate accounts and performances that have their own properties. They further explained that through these interviews “informants construct themselves and others as particular kinds of moral agents” (p. 116). Therefore, interviews become ways of capturing shared cultural understandings and enactments of the social world (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003).

In designing the interviews for this study, I focused on the “quality of the study” (Roulston, 2010 p. 202) by (1) making sure the use of interview data was an appropriate means to enlighten the research questions posed and (2) the interaction facilitated by interviewers within the actual interview created ‘quality’ data (Roulston, 2010).

More specifically, I used semi-structured interviews (Brenner, 2006). The interviews were semi-structured in that I was able to change the order of questions, omit questions, or vary the wording of the questions during the interview to probe unexpected issue that emerged (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). In order to carryout interviews, I developed an interview protocol to include a list of questions to be addressed in the interviews with all the participants. The interview protocol helped guide the collection of data in a systematic and focused manner (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010).

Semi-structured interviews were needed for this study because “researchers come to the interview with guiding questions and are open to following the leads of informants and probing
into areas that arise during interview interaction” (Hatch, 2002, p.94). The interviews allowed me to gain access to make visible the perspectives of the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Predetermined questions related to the study were used. The interview protocol included a header with the interviewer’s name, date and location of the interview. A brief script was read to the interviewee that explained the purpose of the study and the explained the term Long-Term English Learners. After I explained the term of a Long-Term English Learner, I provided a pre-interview exercise in which I had the participants write down the names of the elementary Long-Term English Learners they had had or currently had in their classes. This allowed the interviewees to focus on this group of students when answering the questions.

My study related to three perspectives in terms of qualitative interviewing. I pursued the interviews with some of the ideas borrowed from a neo-positivist (Alvesson, 2003) approach, a constructionist approach (Silverman, 2001), and postmodern (Fontana & Frey, 2005) approach. As Roulsten (2010) points out “researchers blur boundaries, mix methods, and draw on diverse theories in conducting their work” (p. 204).

In a neo-positivist approach, the skillful interviewer asks good questions while carefully minimizing bias and researcher influences through taking a neutral role (Alvesson, 2001; Roulston, 2010). By using this approach in the interview interaction, it is thought that quality data will be generated from which valid findings may be produced. Researchers using a neo-positivist conception of qualitative interviews are likely to “represent findings in the form of themes supported by extracts from interview transcripts, sometimes complemented with models or diagrams” (Roulston 2010, p. 217). Data are commonly coded and categorized and generate substantive theories concerning research topics (Alvesson, 2001; Roulston, 2010). This
approach was used because I wanted to take a neutral role and allow the data to generate findings and used similar techniques for data collection and analysis for this dissertation.

In a constructionist approach, the interview is a social setting in which data are co-constructed by an interviewer and interviewee to generate situated accountings and possible ways of talking about research topics (Silverman, 2001). Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg (2005) stated co-construction of data occurs when both the researcher (interviewer) and respondent (interviewee) come into the interview with agendas. The interviewer’s agenda is seen through the research topic and the research questions. My agenda was to examine what teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners had to say about the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use to teach Long-Term English Learners.

Respondents may come to the interview with multiple agendas, including, among others, sharing emotional stories, looking for empathy, communicating a message, venting frustration, satisfying interviewers (a seemingly external agenda), doing the interviewer a favor, seeking rewards, contributing to the advancement of scientific knowledge and understanding, helping find a solution to a question, and, as is especially the case in focus group work, making connections to others in similar situations (Gubrium & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005, p.701).

The co-construction that occurs during interviews means that both participants have to be flexible. Each must allow the talk that occurs to go beyond that which was planned or expected (Gubrium & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). In addition, Roulston (2010) stated ‘how’ interview data are co-constructed by speakers and researchers and becomes a topic for study, rather than merely a transparent resource for discussing particular research questions. I borrowed from this
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approach because my research question and interview questions were ‘how’ questions and because I had an agenda with this dissertation study.

Lastly, in postmodern approach, the researcher is self-consciously aware of his/her subjectivities in relation to the research participants and the research topic and explores how these relate to the research findings in representations of research, as well as the ways in which it may be uncomfortable (Pillow, 2003). I related to this idea because of my experiences with the topic of this dissertation study described in the next section. I did not want to significantly influence the interviewees and their responses, although I was very aware it was a possibility and unavoidable.

Role of the Researcher

My experiences in working with elementary English language learners and bilingual teachers for eleven years were instrumental in developing this dissertation study. King and Horrocks (2010) stated personal reflexivity is important to consider in identifying the ways in which a researcher's beliefs, interest, experiences and identities impact the research study. As an upper elementary teacher of bilingual students for six years, I worked with Long-Term English Learners in my classroom. I immediately noticed, not all, but most of these students struggled academically with content area subject matter. They consistently failed weekly tests and benchmarks, displayed poor writing skills, lacked grade-level fluency, and rarely participated in classroom discussions. As I approached my grade-level colleagues with my concerns, they expressed similar experiences. Feelings of frustration and anxiety would take over each spring as I would spend much of the instructional day preparing my students for their TAKS tests. Daily and weekly benchmarks tests in reading, writing, and math indicated my elementary Long-Term English Learners were not going to meet passing standards on the TAKS tests.
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In looking into the student records, I consistently saw patterns of failing grades from previous school years and being retained more than once. When I would conference with their teachers from previous school years, most teachers described similar difficulties they also had had with these students. These difficulties included struggling academically, poor reading and writing skills, low fluency rates, and not participating in class discussions. I needed to know how to plan instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content to these students. Not many professional development opportunities were provided to me as a teacher that targeted Long-Term English Learners. At that time, I was not aware of available professional journals that contained literature on teaching ELLs. My first six years of teaching came right after the passing of No Child Left Behind (2001), so accountability was the center of my instructional planning.

After six years of teaching and obtaining a Master’s degree in Educational Administration, I decided to leave the classroom and become an elementary school administrator. My job required me to provide professional development opportunities, provide instructional resources, coordinate benchmark and state assessments, work and mentor new teachers or teachers in need of assistance, and provide guidance to teachers with students in need of intervention instruction.

When teachers had students who were struggling academically, I directly worked with them to initiate a “Response to Intervention” plan called an RTI. When upper grade teachers would approach me about struggling students, we would sit down to develop individual intervention plans and in doing so would review the students’ records. I consistently saw a pattern of Long-Term English Learners being placed on an RTI. Teachers would vent out their frustrations about these students. When TAKS scores would come in, students who did not meet
passing standard were generally our ELLs and Long-Term English Learners. In the five years that I have been an instructional facilitator, a large portion of my time is spent on working with teachers on RTI plans for their students.

Several years later, I decided to pursue a doctorate degree in Curriculum and Instruction. It was not until I began taking doctoral level courses that I began to fully understand ELLs through and first and second language acquisition theory. I sat in many courses that thoroughly discussed ELLs and language acquisition theories. I had heard of some of the content in my undergraduate courses, but I had not internalized it. I think my teaching and background experiences and prior knowledge allowed me to really understand the content. Ironically many researchers (Gersten, 1996; Short, 2007) discuss the critical importance of using ELLs background knowledge and experiences as a leaning technique.

Although I never considered myself a bad teacher, I always sought to find the “magic bullet” that would help me get my Long-Term English Learners to succeed. My mind was set it was a particular resource that I had not gotten my hands on. Eleven years later, I find myself realizing it was not the actual resource, rather how teachers make decisions on planning and teaching academic content effectively. Now, I see it as a matter of knowing what these students need in terms of language and content support. It is also a matter of what professional development or trainings you have attended. In my case, I took many doctoral level courses that discussed language acquisition and ELLs.

As a result of my current position, my responsibility is to ensure teachers’ success, and my desire to help this student group, I approached this dissertation study from a different prospective. I want to answer my own research question so that I can continue to contribute in determining what I can do to help teachers of this student population. When I began to construct
my research idea, it was easy for me to decide on the topic of this dissertation study. It is something that I am passionate about because I have experienced it myself as a teacher of ELLs and Long-Term English Learners. As I wrote my dissertation, I reflected upon how my role as the researcher would influence my study. When I began to construct my research methodology, I reviewed literature that discussed the qualitative approaches I wanted to use for this study to gain more in-depth understanding of qualitative research in general and to help shape my research methodology. I found myself relating to the ideas of neo-positivist, constructionist, and postmodern approaches.

I did wonder if my position as an instructional facilitator, who is fully knowledgeable of district’s bilingual programs and policies, who oversees teaching in the classroom daily, and who is becoming an ‘expert’ in the field influenced the responses of the interviews. What biases did I bring as I began to conduct interviews, although I did have the intentions of conducting this study without biases? Did I compare myself and my experiences to the participants? Did I approach this study with preconceived ideas about how teachers should be making decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods for Long-Term English Learners? Did I position myself on this dissertation study?

I selected a specific qualitative methodology in which the primary source of data was semi-structured interviews. Once I refined my research question, I created a set of eleven interview questions that were related to my question: How do elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teachings methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners. First and foremost, I knew I had to provide a definition of the term Long-Term English Learners as it was a term I myself learned in doctoral level graduate courses. As a teacher, I referred to these students “the kids who have been in bilingual forever.” I thought
carefully about the questions that I would provide teachers to make sure I was able to elicit as much dialogue as I could. I also wanted to provide questions that were not too complicated or ambiguous so that teachers would feel comfortable sharing their knowledge. I wanted to interview teachers, who like me, worked and taught this unique population and get their in-depth accounts on how they made decisions to use the instructional approaches and teaching methods with their Long-Term English Learners. Also, I wanted to be able to find as many patterns and themes as I could to provide valuable findings to this dissertation study. I tried my best, to be neutral and unbiased and to conduct all interviews and analysis with an open mind. I am trying to be as clear as possible in presenting my research approach and findings. My purpose is to make certain that the results of this study will be as unbiased as possible.

Setting

This study was conducted in a border city in Texas. Due to its status as a border city, it is home to a large Hispanic-American community. In addition, a percentage of students from this city are considered Long-Term English Learners. According to the Texas Education Agency’s Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) 2011 report, the student ethnic distribution of this border city’s school district was as follows: 0.1% African American, 98.6% Hispanic, 1% White, 0.3% Asian. In addition, according to the 2011 AEIS report, 95.4% of school district’s enrollment was economically disadvantaged, 33.3% of students were Limited English Proficient (LEP), and 64.7% of students were classified as ‘At-risk’, referring to students with a high probability of failing academically, and/or dropping out of school. The 2010-2011 graduation rate was 82.7%. The dropout rate in 2009-2010 was 1.6% compared to the state’s 2.4%.

Elementary Schools’ Bilingual Program

The school district implements an early-exit transitional bilingual program at the elementary level. Students can enroll in this school district beginning with its full day
prekindergarten programs. One of the main criteria to qualify in the pre-kindergarten program is for the students to speak a language other than English. This information is noted on the Home Language Survey parents and guardians fill out when they are registering students to attend this school district. Parents and guardians specify what the child’s primary language is and which language is mainly spoken at home. Given the setting of the study, a large majority of students qualify for this program because their first language is Spanish. There are students whose first language is not Spanish (e.g. Farsi, Korean, Mandarin, Filipino, and German). Once students are registered they are administered an English Language Proficiency assessment called the Stanford English Language Proficiency (SELP) and the Stanford Spanish Language Proficiency (SSLP) for students who speak Spanish. Students who speak other foreign languages are given only the English test. Once the tests are scored, the English portion of the test determines the students’ bilingual classification. The students are classified as Beginner, Intermediate, or Advanced. Non-Spanish speaking students are given an “English as a Second Language (ESL)” label. This classification begins their instructional setting in the district’s early-exit transitional bilingual program. ESL students are still considered LEP students however they are enrolled in all English classes with specialized ESL strategies. These students do not receive native language instruction because the district does not have bilingual teachers who are certified in languages other than Spanish.

The district follows the state of Texas’s criteria for exiting LEP students from a transitional bilingual education program. Each spring the students enrolled in the elementary bilingual education program are given the SELP/SSLP assessments and other assessments to measure the amount English language proficiency and to measure how students are performing academically in the English language. The assessments include the Texas English Language
ELEMENTARY LONG-TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS

Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS), which measure listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the English language, the Texas Assessment on Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) for students in grades third through fifth to measure the academic proficiency on Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) which are the standards to be taught in Texas classrooms. The Stanford 10 assessments are administered to students in first and second grades and measure reading, math, language, science, and social studies skills and are compared nationally. These assessments are the determining factors that will allow students to exit the bilingual program starting in the first grade. Students have to score high and meet passing standards in each of these exams to be reclassified as an English proficient student. Students enrolled in bilingual education are not allowed to exit in Pre-kindergarten or Kindergarten. If parents or guardians do not want their child, who qualifies for the bilingual education program, in the program, they sign a waiver to deny services. The student is automatically placed in an all English class. However, the student is still considered a LEP student and must meet the same passing criteria as bilingual education students to be reclassified as English proficient (TEA, 2011).

Nonetheless, there is a small percentage of LEP students who begin their education in Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten and begin to perform below grade-level year after year as English instruction is increased. They fail to meet passing criteria in all standardized tests, show minimal growth in English language proficiency, are sometimes retained, and reach the upper elementary grades still classified as LEP students. Because of this, students have already received at least seven years of schooling in US schools. Therefore, they become Long-Term English Learners (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercurri, 2002) at the elementary level. Traditionally these are the students who can speak English but their academic skills are often considerably below grade level (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercurri, 2002; Harklau et. al., 1999). Teachers in the
upper elementary grades receive these students lacking the English proficiency and academic skills needed to perform at grade-level and pass rigorous standardized tests. All bilingual students in this district must be taught by a state of Texas bilingually certified teacher (TEA, 2011).

Participants and Participant Selection

This research study used purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling involves the selection of participants who have key knowledge or information related to the purpose of the study (Cresswell, 2009; Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010; Patton, 2002). The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that “all cases meet some criterion...for quality assurance” (Kuzel, 1992: p 38). As I examined my research question: How do elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners? I identified specific criteria that allowed me to select the right participants for this study. The participants selected to be interviewed for this study met the following criteria: 1) five years or more of teaching experience with elementary Long-Term English Learners 2) current upper elementary public school teachers, fourth or fifth grade, and 3) teach academic content. I selected these criteria because it allowed me to narrow down participants who have had experience in planning and implementing instructional techniques to these students and which allowed me to answer my research question.

In the school district in which the teacher participants were selected, there are several different teachers who work with ELLs: elementary bilingual teachers, dual language teachers, migrant teachers, interventionists, special education teachers, secondary ESL teachers, and secondary mainstream content teachers with ELLs in their classrooms. In order for an elementary student to become a Long-Term English Learner, they would need to have had seven
or more years of schooling in U.S. schools which means elementary students would have to have been enrolled in school since pre-kindergarten and reach the fourth and fifth grade still classified as a LEP student. These students would have to have consistently struggled academically by failing content area subjects, not meet passing standards on state standardized assessments, and show little to no progress on English language attainment. Fourth and fifth grade bilingual teachers discussed how they identified students who were Long-Term English Learners and how they decided on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to these students. They discussed the different ways and methods they have had to modify their instruction and lessons to teach rigorous academic content.

In order to select participants from this study, I requested that principals, assistant principals, and facilitators from different elementary schools provide me the names and emails of teachers so that I may contact them through email, inviting them to participate in my study. I provided the school administrators with the participant criteria. The emails invited the participants to participate in the study, defined the term Long-Term English Learners, the interview process, and ensured that all information was confidential. I asked them to reply through email if they agreed to participate in the study. I selected ten participants out of twelve. Table 3.1 provides some background information from each of the participants to include number of years teaching, grade-levels in which they taught elementary Long-Term English Learners, the degrees they hold, and if they had ever attended professional development that targeted ELLs. The participants were given pseudonyms to protect their privacy and maintain confidentiality. Consent forms were created and provided prior to the interviews. Once the participants agreed to participate in the study, arrangements were made to meet in a public place to conduct the interview. I scheduled the date and time of the interviews based on the teachers’
availability and convenience. I allowed the participants to select the location of the interviews.

King and Horrocks (2010) suggested the space in which the interview takes place can have a strong influence on how it proceeds.

Table 3.1

*Teachers’ Profiles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Grade Level experiences with LTEL</th>
<th>Degrees</th>
<th>Professional development that targets ELLs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>ELPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>SIOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belinda</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; &amp; 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Bachelors &amp; Master’s</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>SIOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; &amp; 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>ELPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Bachelors &amp; Master’s</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Bachelors &amp; Master’s</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data Collection*

In order to learn about how elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners, I used semi-structured interviews (Brenner, 2006) with the participants. The interviews were semi-structured in that I was able to change the order of questions, omit questions, or vary the wording of the questions during the interview to probe unexpected issues that emerged (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). In addition, scholars have argued that semi-structured interviews can help enable research participants’ to begin seeing themselves as contributing knowledge to the field (Holstein & Gubrium 2003; Patai, 1993). Semi-structured interviews enabled me to focus on the topic while at the same time leaving space for participants to offer insights and
topics that the researcher may not have foreseen (Brenner, 2006). In designing the questions for the interviews, I selected open-ended questions that focused on teachers’ decision making on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners.

The researcher must be systematic in the data collection process and record the data with accuracy (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). In preparation for conducting interviews, I searched for an audio recorder that contained computer software that downloads into a computer. I chose Sound Organizer by Sony. The software allowed me to create files that stored all of my recorded interviews. Once all of the files were downloaded into my computer, I could listen to the recording and transcribe the interviews. Prior to the first step of data analysis, I conducted ten audio-recorded interviews in all with each teacher ranging from 45 minutes to an hour in length. The length of the interviews depended on how much the teachers talked. For example, one teacher tended to provide me with detailed information and her interview lasted longer. In conducting the semi-structured interviews, I took an active role as a listener (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003).

During the interviews, I also took notes. Taking notes served many purposes for this study (Brenner, 2006; Patton, 2002). Notes taken during the interview can help the interviewer formulate new questions as the interview moves along (Patton, 2002), as well as allows the interviewer to record details about the context, body, language, and affect that might not be apparent on the audio record (Brenner, 2006). Taking notes about what is said will help facilitate later analysis, including locating important quotations from the recording itself (Patton, 2002). My notes became a backup in the event the recorder malfunctioned or a recording was erased inadvertently during transcription. As a recorder was being used during the interviews, notes
consisted primarily of key phrases, lists of major points made by the respondent and key terms or words shown in quotation marks that capture the interviewee’s own language (Patton, 2002). Looking over notes before transcripts are done might help ensure the inquiry is unfolding and can stimulate early insights that may be relevant to pursue while still in the field (Patton, 2002).

Throughout the process of this dissertation study, I kept a journal in which I documented my journey. Reflexive journaling has allowed me to understand the processes of developing and implementing a dissertation study more fully, as well as the experiences, mindsets, biases, and emotional states I went through as a researcher. This journal was used as a tool that documented my work progress, included how and when certain techniques were being used in this study, and tracked my thinking processes. It was necessary for me to track my thinking processes so that it helped me with my decision making and data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning in qualitative research (Hatch, 2002). Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories (Hatch, 2002). Analyzing participant interviews helped uncover teachers’ decision making on teaching academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners and what may not be visible to outsiders about elementary teachers’ experiences with these students. The focus of my data analysis was to investigate how teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use when teaching academic content. Data analysis was conducted throughout the course of this research. In order to begin utilizing a systematic format for data analysis, I began by transcribing each interview using a single column table format (See Table 3.2).
Data Analysis Step One. In order to construct a dataset for analysis, all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcribing is the first level of analysis because it entails the researcher to make decisions regarding what to transcribe, in what ways to transcribe, how to create a format of the transcript, and how to represent the participants of the research study (Green, Franquiz, & Dixon, 1997; Hatch, 2002; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Mishler, 2003; Ochs, 1979). Transcribing to many may seem to be writing down an interview verbatim, but according to Lapadat and Lindsay (1999), it is not just the transcription product such as the verbatim words written down that is important, but it is also the process of transcribing that is important. Furthermore, transcription in qualitative analysis is an integral process that is commonly used in both basic and applied research across numerous disciplines and in professional practice fields (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999).

Transcription involves decisions about what level of detail to choose, data interpretation, and data representation (Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2003). Researchers argue that the way transcripts are created will differ based on the theories the researcher uses or the purposes of the transcript (Bucholtz, 2007; Green, et al., 1997). Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) stated that “analysis takes place and understandings are derived through the process of constructing a transcript by listening and re-listening, viewing and reviewing” (p. 82).

I transcribed the recordings from the interviews into written form I could study them in detail. According to Mishler (1991) a transcript is an interpretation that is constructed as a new, original text by the researcher. The audio-recorded interviews supplied me with a record of the interviews’ structure, quality, and content of speech in order to listen to the interviews as many times as I needed during the transcription process. Transcribing provided understandings about what I listened to and what the teachers had to say, thus allowing me to gain insights about their
decision making processes. As shown in Table 3.2, the single column was for the transcription. The letter R represents the Researcher (myself) and the letter I represents the Interviewee. Statements or questions made by the teachers were represented in italics; Questions and comments I made are not italicized.

Table 3.2

Transcribed Interview Transcript

Melissa

R- Please describe your experiences with elementary Long-Term English Leaners.

I – A lot of them do have trouble with the language they are retained, they do have trouble succeeding academically, for what reasons I think most of them it is language but if they have been in a program that is suppose to work for them then why are they still not you know achieving that standard.

Data Analysis Step Two. I addressed the validity of my study through member checks (Merriam, 2009) achieved by providing the interview transcripts to the participants and asking them to verify that the transcripted interviews were accurate. Soon after the interviews were transcribed, I emailed each participant a copy of the transcript with instructions for them to read and to make necessary changes to their responses if needed. After each transcript was member checked, I went through each interview transcript to begin the process of identifying key terms or concepts that would transform into possible themes or topics by underlining them and just get a general sense of the data. I then added a second column (See Table 3.3) to my interview transcripts to begin identifying key terms. In this two-column interview transcript, I pulled out the key terms out from the transcript and transferred them over to the second column. As I was doing this, I began to notice that certain key words kept reoccurring.
Table 3.3

*Transcript and Key Terms*

Carol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements on experiences with LTEL</th>
<th>Key Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R- Please describe your experiences with LTEL?</td>
<td>Fall under</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I – OK what I noticed with them is the <em>all fall under the same category they are all the same</em> type of student umm a lot of them are *borderline 70 average students they all generally struggle in writing that is the most difficult for them umm I have noticed that it is very difficult especially in fourth grade to make the progress with them that I’d like because they are responsible for so much and there is clearly no learning problem but I mean they are not special ed they are not dyslexic but because the material has also grown with them it and the vocabulary it’s really hard to push them up.</td>
<td>Same Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Borderline 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generally struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing the most difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make the progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsible for so much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No learning problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not special ed, not dyslexic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Material grown with them and vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard to push them up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, I also decided to begin manipulating the data in an additional way by creating a different table (See Table 3.4). This table would allow me to view the data differently.

Doing this allowed me to start thinking about the overall meanings and how key terms fit together under each question. I created a third table (See Table 3.4) to include the interview questions on top and all of the key terms that resulted from each interview question underneath in column format. In order for me to view which key terms were consistently reoccurring, I used Table 3.4 to help me keep record of all of the reoccurring key terms. After creating and analyzing Table 3.4, I then decided it was necessary to refer to my interview questions and group those questions into main categories. The main categories I created were experiences related, instruction related, and teacher related. I decided that interview questions 1, 2, and 11 focused
on experiences. Questions 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 focused on instructional approaches and teaching methods, and questions 3, 4, 10 focused on teacher topics. This allowed me to see the possible or potential themes from each interview question and begin narrowing down the data even more. It also allowed me to begin categorizing my data.

Table 3.4

*Interview Question and Key Terms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provide extra resources</th>
<th>Do not want to learn language</th>
<th>Hesitant to learn</th>
<th>Struggle</th>
<th>No comprehension</th>
<th>Do not progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Translating for them</td>
<td>Speak Spanish at home</td>
<td>Smart but struggle with Eng language</td>
<td>Cannot spell</td>
<td>Fall under same category</td>
<td>Low vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouped</td>
<td>Dominant language</td>
<td>Have not mastered either language</td>
<td>Cannot decode</td>
<td>Borderline 70</td>
<td>Hard to push them up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible for so much content</td>
<td>Not special ed</td>
<td>Not dyslexic</td>
<td>Minimal progress</td>
<td>No support at home</td>
<td>No L1 foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>Were promoted</td>
<td>Low self-esteem</td>
<td>In tutorial classes</td>
<td>Quiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline problems</td>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>Trouble succeeding academically</td>
<td>Are still in bil program</td>
<td>Not achieving standards</td>
<td>Should be transitioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big gap</td>
<td>Don’t know sounds</td>
<td>Don’t know basic reading</td>
<td>Two grade levels below</td>
<td>Try to catch up</td>
<td>Modify instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not excel</td>
<td>Fail standardized tests</td>
<td>Fail weekly tests</td>
<td>Language holding them back</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This second level of analysis allowed me to see possible topics in relation to the research question, “How do elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners?” Because teachers identified numerous possible topics, it was necessary for me to go into a deeper level of analysis.
and see which topics reoccurred and which ones were only mentioned once or twice by the teachers.

Data Analysis Step 3. In the third step of analysis, I extended the second analysis by utilizing the key terms under the possible topics column. I went back to review all of the transcripts with identified key terms. I then added another column to Table 3.3 to begin identifying key terms into possible topics (See Table 3.5). As presented in Table 3.5, a sample is provided for how key terms became topics. For these particular teachers, identified key terms included “conference-with them, we talk a lot about what we are doing, sharing websites, and we share the membership too.” The key terms became teacher collaboration topic.

Table 3.5

Transcribed Interview with Columns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements on teacher collaboration</th>
<th>Key Terms</th>
<th>Topics Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belinda</td>
<td>My co-workers you know I conference with them and try to find better, you know, what they are using to help their…their students</td>
<td>Co- workers Conference with them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Literally every morning we stand out in the hallway and all we talk about is what we are going to do and try that day</td>
<td>We talk We are going to do and try</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cristina</td>
<td>Yes I also share with other teachers when I go to in-services and we are sharing websites. I love that. Or we pay for one membership and we share the membership too...</td>
<td>Share with other teachers at in-services Share memberships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Elementary Long-Term English Learners

Once I had placed all key terms into possible topics I began to narrow down the data by topics. I then created Table 3.6 - Experiences with Elementary Long-Term English Learners Topics by Frequency, Table 3.7 - Instruction for Elementary Long-Term English Learners Topics by Frequency, and Table 3.8 - Teacher Related Topics of Frequency based on the categorization of my research questions. The topics in these tables represent the derived topics that teachers mentioned in the interviews. I identified these topics through analyzing the transcribed interviews in the format of Table 3.5. I looked for similarities and differences in what the teachers said about their experiences and decisions on teaching academic content to elementary Long Term English Learners. The checkmarks (√) in tables 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8 indicate which teachers made reference to that topic during the interviews.

I found that the most reoccurring topics under Table 3.6 were limited or no comprehension, limited academic vocabulary, use first language a lot, big gaps, struggle with English, poor reading skills, low self-esteem, modified instruction, retained, no control of the languages, not practicing L1, poor performance, quiet, poor writing skills, no first language foundation, hesitant to learn, and no home support. Topics under Table 3.7 were using first language for instruction, vocabulary-centered instruction, using students’ prior knowledge and experiences, learning styles, using visuals and pictures, having a back-up plan and preparedness, using synonyms and cognates, modifying instruction for elementary Long-Term English Learners, state assessments, hands-on teaching, re-teaching, having supplemental lessons, using journaling, teacher collaboration, whole group discussion, small group instruction/tutoring, using a variety of resources, and closing the gaps. Topics under table 3.8 include do whatever it takes, resourceful, ELL professional development, teacher collaboration, fidelity and motivator, patient
and compassionate, communicator with parents, bridging the gaps, and state assessments. A total of 44 topics were derived from the interview data.
## Table 3.6

*Experiences with LTEL Topics by Frequency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Irene</th>
<th>Laura</th>
<th>Belinda</th>
<th>Diana</th>
<th>Linda</th>
<th>Carol</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Melissa</th>
<th>Ana</th>
<th>Terry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little/No Comprehension</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Academic Vocabulary</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Gaps</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggle with English</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor reading skills</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>Modify Instruction</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>Retained</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>Not Practicing L2</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Performance of Standardized Tests</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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</tr>
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<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor writing skills</td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No home support</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Total % | 100% | 100% | 80% | 90% | 90% | 70% | 80% | 80% | 90% | 60% | 60% | 60% | 20% | 100% | 60% | 40% | 90% |
Table 3.7

*Instruction for LTEL Topics by Frequency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Use L1 to clarify</th>
<th>Teach vocabulary</th>
<th>Using Prior Knowledge</th>
<th>Learning Styles/Differentiation</th>
<th>Using Visuals/Picture</th>
<th>Have a backup plan</th>
<th>Use synonyms/cognates</th>
<th>Lowered Instruction/Shortened Assignments</th>
<th>Preparing for State Assessments</th>
<th>Hands on teaching</th>
<th>Re-teaching</th>
<th>Supplemental Lessons</th>
<th>Use journaling</th>
<th>Whole Group Discussion</th>
<th>Small group tutoring</th>
<th>Using Technology</th>
<th>Peer Tutoring</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>√</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belinda</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>√</td>
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Total % 90% 100% 60% 80% 100% 40% 90% 100% 70% 90% 70% 60% 40% 70% 40% 100% 100%
### Table 3.8

#### Teacher Related Topics by Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Irene</th>
<th>Laura</th>
<th>Belinda</th>
<th>Diana</th>
<th>Linda</th>
<th>Carol</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Melissa</th>
<th>Ana</th>
<th>Terry</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do whatever it takes</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resourceful</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Professional</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Collaboration</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicator with parents</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging the Gap</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>50%</th>
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<th>60%</th>
<th>100%</th>
<th>90%</th>
<th>70%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The first three level of analysis allowed me to identify key terms and turn them into possible topics. In addition, the third step of data analysis allowed me to begin identifying major themes from the interviews and the subcategories connected to these themes. However, in order to further continue analyzing my data and begin making interpretations, I conducted an additional level of analysis.

**Data Analysis Step 4.** In this level of analysis I focused on topics under teacher experiences with elementary Long-Term English Learners. I looked at the topics (Table 3.6) and focused on those in which fifty percent or more of responses fell under those topics. Of the 17 topics that were derived from questions related to experiences with elementary Long-Term English Learners, only two topics, ‘quiet’ and ‘hesitant to learn’ had less than fifty percent responses. From the 15 topics created under this category, I decided to group those topics into subcategories. Here I referred to Spradley’s (1979) work on semantic relationships which I used to show how I categorized my topics. I chose to use attributions as the best form to help me categorizes these topics. I created Table 3.9 to help me categorize these topics.
Table 3.9

*Topics Under Experiences with LTEL*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Semantic relationship</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little or No Comprehension</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Literacy need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Academic Vocabulary</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Academic need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use L1 a lot</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Language need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Gaps</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Academic need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggle with English</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Language need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Reading Skills</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Literacy need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Self Esteem</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Literacy need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant Modified Instruction</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Academic need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained Students</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Academic need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Practicing L2</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Language need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of English Language</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Language need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Performance on Standardized Tests</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Academic need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Writing Skills</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Literacy need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Control of Language</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Language need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Home Support</td>
<td>Is a characteristic of →</td>
<td>Academic need</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the categories were designated, a main theme emerged. Figure 3.1 details the theme that emerged from the subcategories.
This theme would represent decisions teachers made on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content based on the needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners. Under these themes, the following subcategories emerged: academic needs, language needs, and literacy needs.

In the fourth set of analyses, I focused on categorizing the topics that arose regarding teachers’ experiences with elementary Long-Term English Learners. This step was needed so that I could begin to provide empirical evidence of my research question: How do elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners?

*Data Analysis Step 5.* In this level of analysis, I focused on the topics related to the instructional approaches and teaching methods teachers used to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners. I looked at the topics under Table 3.7 to begin further analysis of this section. I also narrowed in on the topics that had fifty percent or more responses. Of the 17 topics that resulted, three topics had fewer that fifty percent responses. Those topics were having...
a back-up plan, using journaling, and small group tutoring. The other 13 topics were to be categorized into subcategories in which a theme would be created. I selected Spradley’s (1979) semantic relationship of strict inclusion to help me categorize the topics related to the instruction of elementary Long-Term English Learners. I created table 3.10 to help me categorize these topics.

Table 3.10

*Topics Under Instruction for Elementary Long-Term English Learners*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Semantic Relationship</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use L1 for Clarification</td>
<td>Is a kind of →</td>
<td>Modified instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach Vocabulary</td>
<td>Is a kind of →</td>
<td>Vocabulary-centered instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Prior Knowledge</td>
<td>Is a kind of →</td>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Visuals</td>
<td>Is a kind of →</td>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Synonyms and Cognates</td>
<td>Is a kind of →</td>
<td>Vocabulary-centered instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowered Instruction/Shortened Assignments</td>
<td>Is a kind of →</td>
<td>Modified instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare for State Assessments</td>
<td>Is a kind of →</td>
<td>Vocabulary-centered instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands-on Learning</td>
<td>Is a kind of →</td>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-teaching and repetition</td>
<td>Is a kind of →</td>
<td>Modified instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplemental Lessons</td>
<td>Is a kind of →</td>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Group Discussion</td>
<td>Is a kind of →</td>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Technology</td>
<td>Is a kind of →</td>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer tutoring</td>
<td>Is a kind of →</td>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once I had my categories, I decided I needed to create one main theme. I created Figure 3.2 to represent a visual on the theme that resulted from the subcategories.
This theme represents the instructional decisions teachers made when selecting the instructional approaches and teaching methods elementary Long-Term English Learners need in order to understand academic content. Under this theme, the following subcategories emerged: vocabulary-centered instruction, differentiated instruction, and modified instruction.

In the fifth step of analyses, I focused on the teachers’ statements on what guided their instructional decisions when teaching academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners. This step was needed so that I could begin to provide empirical evidence of my research question: How do elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners?

**Data Analysis Step 6.** In this step of analysis, I focused on the topics that resulted under teacher related topics. I looked at the topics (Table 3.8) to begin further analysis of this section. I also focused in on topics that had fifty percent or more responses. In this section all eight topics had fifty percent or more responses. To help me categorize these topics into subcategories I used
Spradley’s (1979) semantic relationship of attribution to help me categorize these topics. I created table 3.11 to display the results.

Table 3.11

*Teacher Related Topics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Semantic Relationship</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do whatever it takes</td>
<td>Is an attribute of →</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resourcefulness</td>
<td>Is an attribute of →</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL professional development</td>
<td>Is an attribute of →</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher collaboration</td>
<td>Is an attribute of →</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivator</td>
<td>Is an attribute of →</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>Is an attribute of →</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicator with parents</td>
<td>Is an attribute of →</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging the gap</td>
<td>Is an attribute of →</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once I had the categories, I decided to create one main theme. I created Figure 3.3 to represent a visual on the theme that resulted from the subcategories. This theme focused on types of teachers needed for elementary Long-Term English Learners. The subcategories of this theme are effective and committed.

In the sixth step of analysis, I focused on the teachers’ statements on their decisions guiding them to the instructional decisions when teaching academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners. This step was needed so that I can begin to provide empirical evidence of my research question: How do elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners?
In order to answer my research question, I used a six-step analyses series. I constructed Table 3.12 to represent three main themes that I identified when analyzing referenced topics in Tables 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8. The results of the data analysis showed teachers based their decisions on needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners, type of instruction, and type of teacher. I then identified subcategories for these themes. As seen in Table 3.12 subcategories identified for the theme of needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners, type of instruction, and types of teachers. Subcategories for the theme needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners include language needs, literacy needs, and academic needs. Subcategories under type of instruction included vocabulary-centered instruction, differentiated instruction, and modified instruction. Subcategories under type of teacher included effective and committed.
Table 3.12

Identified Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 Type of instruction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary-Centered Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiated Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 Types of Teachers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the research methodology employed in this study. This dissertation was a semi-structured interview qualitative study on how elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) with the primary goal of obtaining and understanding of how teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners. Primary data collection methods included semi-
structured interviews. Data was analyzed using a six-step process to identify themes related to how elementary teachers make decision on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they use to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners. The following chapter presents the analysis of the data.
CHAPTER IV. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

Students categorized as Long-Term English Learners have weak academic language skills and significant gaps in reading and writing (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercurri, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2007). Generally, however, Long-Term English Learners lack rich oral language and literacy skills in scholastic English needed to participate and succeed in academic work (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercurri, 2002). They exhibit little to no literacy skills in their L1 and L2, or often only minimal academic vocabulary in their home language (Olsen, 2010). Long-Term English Learners in general have strong oral bilingual skills for social purposes in English and their native language but they have limited academic literacy skills in English and their native language (Menken & Kleyn, 2009). These students are most commonly found at the secondary levels. However, there exists a group of Long-Term English Learners at the elementary levels mainly in the upper elementary grade levels. Educators make decisions daily on how to best educate Long-Term English Learners who have been enrolled in bilingual programs to learn English for years but who have never performed proficiently in the language. The purpose of this qualitative study is to add to the body of research supporting how teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners, decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to these students and assist in closing existing academic gaps.

In this chapter, I analyze the data, present analysis, and add new relevant literature from the interviews I conducted using a qualitative methodology.

After conducting six levels of analysis, I identified three reoccurring themes from the data that answer the research question: How do elementary teachers decide on the instructional
approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Language Learners? Teachers based their decisions using these reoccurring themes: “needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners, type of instruction, and types of teachers”. The data analysis in this chapter will be divided into three sections, needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners, type of instruction, and type of teachers. Each of these sections will include an analysis of their subcategories.

As stated in Chapter 3, the purpose of my study was to research how elementary teachers of Long-Term English Learners decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use when teaching academic content and make visible the components that influence the decisions these teachers have to make when teaching academic content. In the first section, needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners, I analyzed the data to show how teachers made decisions to teach academic content based on language needs, literacy needs, and academic needs through their experiences with elementary Long-Term English Learners. In the subsequent section, type of instruction, I analyzed the data to present how teachers made decisions based on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they utilized in the classroom that included vocabulary-centered instruction, differentiated instruction, and modified instruction. In the third section, types of teachers, I present analysis to show how teachers made decisions based the obligations and effectiveness the teachers possessed in order to help these students succeed. I conclude with a chapter summary.

Needs of Elementary Long-Term English Learners

This section presents the data that identifies how teachers made decisions on instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content based on the needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners. The needs that teachers continually identified were
language needs, literacy needs and academic needs. I also include direct statements made by the teachers as evidence to support this finding.

Language Needs

When the participants were asked to describe their experiences with elementary Long-Term English Learners, all participants discussed experiences regarding students’ language abilities. As a result, students’ language abilities emerged in this study as major challenges teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners faced which in return drove them to make decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content to these students. Data analysis indicated that all of the teachers interviewed characterized these students as having language needs such as underdeveloped L1 and underdeveloped L2. Some of the decisions teachers had to make regarding which instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content were based on the language needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners. Ana reflected many of the teachers’ thoughts: “The majority doesn’t catch up because of the language.” Teachers cited a number of additional language concerns they experienced with these students consistently: no control of the languages, lack of knowledge of the English language, using L1 a lot, low self-esteem, not practicing the language, little or no parental support.

No Control of the Languages

The more proficient ELLs are in their first language, the more likely the acquisition of the second language will develop; the less proficient they are in their first language, the slower the acquisition of the second language will be (Cummins, 1991). August and Hakuta (1997) concurred with Cummins as they too concluded, “The degree of children’s native language proficiency is a strong predictor of their English language development” (p. 28).
One of the many needs teachers addressed in the interviews was that most of their elementary Long-Term English Learners had underdeveloped L1 and L2 language skills. Several teachers cited having no first language foundation as a reason these students have language needs. Diana stated “Not all, but most of these students have not mastered either language,” and continued by saying, “their Spanish is just as bad as their English.” Linda added students “don’t have control of their first language.” This issue brought about several concerns to the teacher participants because when they have to refer to using the students’ L1 for clarification, some students may not have their academic L1 developed and will have difficulty transferring the language and understanding academic content. This also poses more difficulty for these students because having underdeveloped first language will make it even more difficult and prolong these students’ acquiring their second language, which they continue to do in the upper elementary grades.

Teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners face this issue alongside having to make critical decisions on how to have students learn academic content and academic English proficiency. Once elementary students reach the fourth and fifth grades, the curriculum and instruction is more rigorous and the standards are exceptionally higher. Students are expected to reach English proficiency and perform on grade-level on state standardized tests in English. In grade-levels that teach and assess at rigorous levels, these issues are crucial for educators to make the most appropriate decisions on how to best educate this group of students.

*Lack of Knowledge of the English Language*

While it takes one to three years for ELLs to develop conversational proficiency in English, they need five to seven years to develop academic English; that is, the English needed for reading, writing, speaking, and listening in the content areas (Collier, 1999; Cummins, 2001).
Teachers brought to life that after seven or more years of schooling in the United States, these students continued to struggle with the English language. When teachers were asked how they identified elementary Long-Term English Language Learners, they frequently referred to these students’ English language skills. Teachers shared these students applied weak English language skills in both social and academic settings. Terry was more specific in her response related to the topic. She stated “with all of my years of teaching experience, I can identify these students by listening to them speak and through classroom participation. I compare the different levels of bilingual students that I have and sometimes these kiddos share similar traits as my first year ELLs and that is scary…I want to know what happened to these kids….where did we go wrong with them?” Terry, a fifth grade teacher, described how she identifies her elementary Long-Term English Learners compared to the other bilingual students in her class and questioned the bilingual education program support these students received since they enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten and or Kindergarten. Based on the research that Collier (1999) and Cummins (2001) have reported, this group of students should have already developed both academic and basic English language components. Other teacher participants had similar responses to these students’ English language abilities.

- Students are very smart but continue to struggle with the English language (Belinda);
- By 5th grade you have to be proficient in English and these kids are not (Mary);
- I can identify them immediately in speaking to them and observing their oral skills. They are those that fall between my first year bilinguals and my non-LEP students (Carol);
• These students have been in the bilingual program since PK and Kinder, but I immediately notice their lack of knowledge in the English language…they should reach me knowing more advanced English skills (Melissa);

• When I have them in my class, they usually stand out because they don’t have the same English skills like my non-LEP students (Diana).

Belinda identified these students as being smart but found they lacked academic English language proficiency. Mary reminded that by the time students, who have been enrolled in US skills since Prekindergarten and Kindergarten should have some academic English language proficiency. Her experiences with these students indicated they are not mastering the language. Based on their past experiences, both Carol and Melissa are able to identify these students simply by observing their oral language skills and application of the English language. Diana noticed their English skills are not equivalent to her non-LEP students, resulting in these students “standing out” from the rest of her class. Through their general statements, it is evident that teachers can identify the students’ English language weaknesses both socially and academically. Data analysis of this study indicated that teachers made decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to these students based on their English language needs. Teachers had to use instructional approaches and teaching methods that taught both academic content and English skills which will be further discussed in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Using L1 a lot

Several teachers discussed how they heard their elementary Long-Term English Learners use their L1 to ask questions, give answers, and in expressing themselves in the classroom even though their instruction was all in English. Teachers also discussed how these students used
their L1 in conversing with other students socially. As Olsen (2010) stated, “They continue to use their home language within the home and sometimes school and community contexts” (p.24). This is a common characteristic on Long-Term English Learners. However, it was evident teachers embraced the students use of L1 to allow these students to learn academic content in either language. Diana noted, “I hear them speaking in Spanish and I let them because that is how they are understanding the content.” Nonetheless, teachers expressed concerns that these students needed to express themselves and use academic English in a variety of educational contexts. For example, Irene stated that she heard her elementary Long-Term English Learners “talk in the first language a lot.” She further stated, “I have found myself telling these students to answer or explain things to me in English, but I don’t do it to embarrass them. I need them to practice the academic English.” As stated before, by the time Long-Term English Learners reach the upper grades, they should have mastered basic academic English skills. They should be comfortable applying and using the language as well, but teachers are finding that they still refer to their L1 for explanation, expression, and clarification.

Not Practicing the Language

Practicing acquired English skills is important, and providing opportunities for practice sharpens one’s skills (Verdugo & Flores, 2007). It is essential for teachers of ELLs to provide opportunities for students to use or practice their language skills in a variety of school activities. Berman, McLaughlin, McLeod, Minicuccie, Nelson, and Woodworth (1995) found that effective teachers provide opportunities for ELL students to produce written reports, oral presentations, and get them to engage in the exchange of ideas. Moll (1988) found that effective teachers allowed ELL students to try, use, and manipulate the English language.
Contrary to the above research studies, teachers felt that their elementary Long-Term English Learners still did not practice the English language in the classroom after being provided with many opportunities to do so. Several teachers cited the reason many students did not practice the language was because their home language is Spanish and that is what they were most comfortable in. For example, Laura expressed strong feelings by stating:

Well I think most of them, they just don’t want to learn the language…you know they speak Spanish…mostly at home it’s their dominant language… and they ….I think they are just afraid of failure so they don’t want practice it and plus they do not have to speak English at home so they are hesitant to learn.

In this statement, Laura cited many issues regarding practicing the language. She cited the language used at home is a main reason why her elementary Long-Term English Learners speak Spanish in the classroom and do not want to practice and apply the English language. She also cited that these students are afraid of failing, therefore, prolonging their learning of the English language. Linda referred to a different reason these students do not practice the English language is her statement below:

Well I think what is going on is that when they come to PK and K, they are switched to English right away and they don’t have the foundation in the home language to read, write, and speak, they don’t have control of the first language and then we switch them to English so they don’t have their L1 and they are coming in with a new language and there is nobody at home to practice with so they are stuck.

Linda referred to several issues in this statement. Linda felt one of the reasons her Long-Term English Learners do not practice the English language enough was because they have not developed their first language enough to have control of it, an issue previously discussed in this
chapter. Like Laura, Linda also cited that these students do not practice the language at school nor at home because there is little to no support at home. These teachers felt students’ lack of applying the English language is a reason elementary Long-Term English Learners struggle with their academic English Language.

As will be discussed further in this chapter, teachers cited providing classroom opportunities for Long-Term English Learners to practice the language through academic activities. Diana stated, “Well first with these students I have to have full control of the teaching, so I do a lot of explicit and direct teaching, but I do provide them more opportunities to discuss the content.” Teachers felt that because their elementary Long-Term English Learners did not practice the English language enough, they had to make decisions on providing instructional approaches and teaching methods that allowed them to learn and apply critical English language skills need for the rigorous academic content.

**Little or No Parental Support**

Research supports the importance of parental involvement for improved student achievement, better school attendance, and reduced dropout rates regardless of socioeconomic background or ethnicity (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Goldenberg (2008) indicated that students whose teachers and parents acknowledge their developing language skills are more likely to feel confident and take the initiative to learn a new language. In terms of parental support, teachers cited that lack of parental support has also resulted in these students not acquiring English language proficiency after so many years of schooling in the U.S. Terry referred to this issue in her comment below:

The family support at home tends to be minimal and by that I mean, most parents only speak Spanish and some have come in to use that as an excuse for not helping their
children with homework. When I conference with them, I give them some ideas on how
they can help at home. I also send them with our parent liaison so that they can be
provided with assistance in helping their children with homework… Some parents do
have high regards to education, but several lack a lot of resources such as transportation
thus students cannot make it to tutorials…..some families have many factors that affect
these students such as their poverty level.

Terry discussed the topics of family support for elementary Long-Term English learners
and the economic status of these students as a determining factor of their English language
proficiency. The question of whether or not these students lacked English language proficiency
due to their home economic status was thought about as I analyzed this portion of the data.

The study took place in a school district in which 95.4% of students are economically
disadvantaged and where 33.3% were identified as Limited English Proficient (Texas Education
Agency, 2011a). The district is located in a city in which the majority of households (88.5%)
predominantly speak languages other than English (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Studies
(Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000; Gándara, 2000) suggested that socioeconomic factors also
influence the rate of English language acquisition among the population in question. Guerrero
(2004) suggested the effect that poverty might have on the second-language development of
ELLs is likely to reveal itself in various ways. Perhaps parents working long hours at low-paying
jobs leave little time for interaction with their children still in need of an adult native language
model (Guerrero, 2004). However, the aim of this study is to examine how teachers decide of
the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to
elementary Long-Term English Learners rather than the effect of parental support on English
language proficiency. Regarding this issue on little or no parental support, Ana stated:
When I have conferences with the parents of these students, I tell them to allow their child to watch television shows such as cartoons in English or any show that they will enjoy or have them read books and magazines in English so that they can keep learning the language and learn how many different ways it is presented.

In her comment, Ana noted that her Long-Term English learners need to hear and see the English language in a variety of contexts outside of school so that they can continue learning the English language through different forms and be able to relate and retain that knowledge. Ana gave recommendations to her parents on how they can help their children practice the English language at home. Other teachers had similar responses on the issue of parental support.

- I think another commonality is the support at home generally is not there. The bilingual students that I have had that have that support at home are now M1s [Monitor year 1 (M1) - abbreviation for students who exited the district’s bilingual program and are monitored for two academic years] (Carol);

- I work very hard with my parents by keeping them abreast of what I am doing in the classroom. I am always conferencing with the parents of my students who are struggling……very few [parents] get frustrated because they have been here since PK……they come to the meetings and I tell them everything, but I still notice I get very little support (Mary).

Carol and Mary shared similar experiences on the parental support of elementary Long-Term English learners practicing the English language. They both cited that parental support is minimal with this group of students. As the research (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; Gándara, 2000; Guerrero, 2004) states, the more parental support students have, opportunities for academic success increase. For this group of students, parental support is crucial. However,
teacher participants interviewed in this study are finding that their Long-Term English Learners lack the parental support they need in helping them practice and apply the English language, one of the many possible reasons these students lack English language proficiency.

*Low Self-Esteem*

Olsen (2010) stated, “Many Long-Term English Learners have developed habits of non-engagement, learned passivity and invisibility in school, and have not developed the behaviors associated with academic success” (p. 24). Ana stated, “I am teaching away and sometimes I forget they [Long-Term English Learners] are there…not on purpose though.” In this statement, Ana described how she forgets her Long-Term English Learners are in sitting her class. Ana referred to the characteristic that Long-Term English Learners rarely participate in class. However, in this study, the issue of elementary Long-Term English students having English language needs was associated to low self-esteem when teachers discussed this topic during the interviews. Laura associated low self-esteem as contributing to her students’ language needs by stating, “I think they are afraid of failure so they don’t want to practice the language”. Laura’s statement also shows that her students’ low self-esteem is a contributing factor for them not practicing the English language either. Mary noted:

I have had the quiet ones that I have to draw out. I think that if they think if they sit quietly in the corner they will be invisible and not have to participate. I can tell that they do not want to participate because they are embarrassed if they have to answer out loud in English. When we are reading in class, they never volunteer to read out loud.

Terry stated, “They rarely use academic language; they tend not to be inquisitive.” Laura, Mary, and Terry have experienced their Long-Term English Learners not wanting to participate in class activities and are noticeably quiet and feel they are embarrassed about how
they use or read the English language. Because of this language need, teachers have had to make decisions on which teaching methods and instructional approaches they will use to teach academic content that allow students to actively participate, apply the English language, and build their self-esteem.

Long-Term English Learners have accumulated gaps in language development that has impacted their access to and achievement in academic content areas (Olsen, 2010). The teachers identified elementary Long-Term English Learners as having many English language needs. Because of these needs, teacher participants noted many of their decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods needed to teach academic content to these students were based on their students’ language needs. Later in this chapter, those specific instructional approaches and teaching methods will be discussed further.

Literacy Needs

Reading and writing in English are two of the greatest challenges that English Language Learners face in school (Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Chinn, & Ratleff, 2011). Studies on Long-Term English Learners (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercurri, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Olsen, 2010) have found these students struggled with reading textbooks, making sense of specialized words, and handling long written passages. Data analysis of this study indicated decisions regarding teaching academic content were determined based on the literacy needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners. Teachers characterized these students as having limited literacy skills in both English and their native language. Much of the responses related to the literacy skills of elementary Long-Term English learners were expressed when teachers were asked how they identified these students and on their teaching experiences with these students. For example, Diana responded, “These are the kids that are struggling, they can’t decode, have low
fluency, and no comprehension.” Her reply reflected many of the teachers’ responses and thoughts regarding these students’ literacy needs. Like language needs, teachers cited several issues involving literacy needs to include: poor reading skills, little or no comprehension, poor writing skills, and low self-esteem.

*Poor Reading Skills*

In the state of Texas, the Texas Education Agency provides the curriculum standards called the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) to guide educators on what to teach in each grade-level. Towards the end of each school year, students in grades 3rd, 4th, and 5th, are assessed rigorously through standardized tests required by the Texas Education Agency. The state assessments assess grade-level TEKS. These state assessments hold districts and schools accountable for the students’ performance in Reading, Math, Writing, and Science. Further, these tests are used to determine schools’ *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)* to comply with the federal *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* mandates (No Child Left Behind, 2000), which also include consequences for failure to perform and improve.

In addition, the state of Texas assesses the English language proficiency of all identified LEP students in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing through the Texas English Language Proficiency System (TELPAS). To assess reading, LEP students must take an online reading assessment that counts for seventy percent of their overall rating. The online assessment is based on the reading TEKS taught throughout the school year. Through a combination of state assessments and TELPAS scores, an accountability system is in place that rates the academic performance of districts and individual schools. Traditionally, LEP students are one of the lowest performing groups in these assessments. Table 4.1 displays one of several English
Language Arts Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) fourth and fifth grade students are required to master in the area of reading.

Table 4.1

4th and 5th Student Expectations for Comprehending Informational Texts

| TEK 4.10 | Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Culture and History. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain the difference between a stated and an implied purpose for an expository text. |
| TEK 5.10 | Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Culture and History. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to draw conclusions from the information presented by an author and evaluate how well the author's purpose was achieved. |

Both TEKS require a variety of skills that students in these grade levels must possess in order to master these TEKS. Skills include analyzing, inference, drawing conclusions, explaining, evaluating, and providing evidence of interpretations when reading informational test. These TEKS prove to be very rigorous for students who lack critical literacy skills in English.

In this study, teachers expressed many concerns regarding poor reading skills. Teachers were able to describe how they noticed their Long-Term English Learner lacked many critical skills needed for reading fluently, reading all forms of genres, comprehension, and learning and understanding new vocabulary in the English language. Several teachers were able to provide details on specific skills these students lacked. For example, Melissa referred to the issue of phonics and initial reading skills by stating “they still don’t know their sounds…..they still don’t know basic reading...they are still at a level that is two grade levels below, so sometimes it’s just
baffling.” In this statement, Melissa associated lack on phonemic awareness and basic reading skills as the source of poor reading skills.

Linda provided a more specific experience regarding poor reading skills. Linda cited, “When I teach alliteration or onomatopoeia, it is very difficult for them.” Both alliteration and onomatopoeia require a lot of English language background knowledge and students who do not have this knowledge will struggle with learning these skills. Teachers also discussed issues related to fluency. For example, Mary expressed concerns by stating, “And I still receive them in the 5th grade with little fluency. I just don’t get how they are promoted when they can’t read.” By the time students reach fourth and fifth grade, they are expected to be reading more than ninety words a minute. Carol described how she has had to modify reading fluency homework assignments for these students by stating, “I send fluency homework that is at their level because they are not at their level.” In this statement, Carol is describing a decision having to be made on sending lower level fluency homework. Laura referred back to the issues of language needs by stating, “When they don’t practice the language, they struggle with everything in reading.” In this statement, Laura connected the issue of poor language skills interfering with reading skills.

Poor reading skills are a characteristic Long-Term English Learners possess. To the degree of how weak these skills are will vary among individual learners. However, it is evident in this study teachers have had to make decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to help develop these students’ reading skills. Further in this chapter, it will be discussed which instructional approaches and teaching methods these teachers used to teach academic content.
**Little or No Comprehension**

Comprehension is a critical literacy skill all students need for academic success and for all subject areas aside from reading (Echavarria et.al, 2004). In this study, teachers mainly associated comprehension with reading instruction. As a result of poor reading skills, teachers further described their elementary Long-Term English Learners possessing little or no comprehension skills. For example, Ana discussed how limited decoding and comprehension interferes with the learning of other subjects by stating, “If they cannot read and comprehend reading passages, they cannot read and comprehend math problem solving problems.” In this statement Ana noted poor comprehension disallows students to understand math problems. Irene compared comprehension skills among these students with other students by stating, “I notice they take longer to comprehend information than my non-LEP students… I always have to provide them with extra resources.” Irene described that in order to help her elementary Long-Term English Learners she has to provide additional resources to them. It is evident here that Irene made a decision to provide additional resources to her students to assist in their comprehension. Other teachers shared similar responses:

- In 5\textsuperscript{th} grade I do not have the TPRI [Texas Primary Reading Inventory assessment administered to K-3\textsuperscript{rd} grade students in this district] testing to tell me their level, but once I start benchmarking, doing fluency, and AR [Accelerated Reading] testing, then I can tell…they are going to be weak (Mary);

- I think science is the second most difficult subject for these students… reading would be the first because they already have poor reading skills due to their language gaps and literary gaps (Terry).
Both Mary and Terry addressed the issues of low comprehension by making statements about their Long-Term English Learners reading levels and gaps. Because their students performed low on benchmarks, fluency, and Accelerated Reading testing, and because they possessed both language and literacy gaps, their reading comprehension was affected. August, Carlo, Dressler, and Snow (2005) found that the reading comprehension of second language learners suggests a strong relationship with language skills. There are many skills students must possess in order to learn and apply literacy skills. However, Long-Term English Learners display several gaps in their academic literacy skills that hinder their learning and application of literacy skills. It is evident that these gaps have affected how teachers provide instruction to these students. Teachers had to make several decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching strategies to use to help these students learn academic content in reading.

Low Self-esteem

Research studies (Goldsmith, 2004; Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2006) found that students’ perceptions of their own academic abilities influence their self-esteem. As mentioned in the section of language needs, teacher participants also connected poor reading skills with low self-esteem. For example Irene noted her elementary Long-Term English Learners “never volunteer to read out loud or go to the board to write something because they are embarrassed that they can’t read or write in English.” In this statement, Irene shared her experiences with Long-Term English Learners hesitation to participate due to their lack of reading ability in English.

Olsen (2010) stated, “Students without command of the language of the classroom would be reluctant to participate. Over the years, non-participation becomes a habit” (p.24). Belinda expressed similar experiences by stating, “I have to find ways to have these students practice their oral reading without them feeling embarrassed that they have low reading skills because
then they will never volunteer to read.” Belinda’s statement displays how she has to consider her Long-Term English Learners’ reading ability, lack of English language proficiency, and their self-esteem in making decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods she will use.

Low self-esteem was a concern expressed by the teachers interviewed for this study. Lack of participation and application of skills from these students disallows them to learn and understand the academic content. It is evident both Irene and Belinda have had to make decisions on which teaching method and instructional approaches they will need to use during reading lessons to motivate these student to participate more in class, and read orally to increase these students’ reading skills.

Poor Writing Skills

Writing involves an extensive range of cognitive skills and processes (Strum & Rankin-Erickson, 2002). The development of writing skills in students presents a significant challenge for educators (National Council of Educational Statistics, 2003). More specifically, it is a major challenge for educators of English Language Learners (ELLs), given that they are not acquiring the range of writing proficiencies needed for advanced academic tasks (Hernandez, 2001).

With poor reading skills comes poor writing skills, another issue teacher participants discussed as a critical literacy need. Poor writing skills were addressed by the participants as a need among these students. Carol stated, “they all generally struggle with the writing…..their lack of writing skills are obvious when I check their journals.” Carol noticed poor writing skills when she reads her students’ journals. Similarly, Terry identified the writing skills of these students by stating, “when I start grading papers and read their writing, I just automatically know these students are my struggling bilingual students.” Because Terry has many years of
experience teaching English Language Learners [25], she can identify ELLs students’ writing characteristic. Melissa connected students’ language needs with their writing needs by stating:

When I see a writing sample of theirs, I cannot understand half of it…their language has not transitioned into English and a lot of the writing is still in Spanish like the phonetic part of it… you can actually tell they are trying to transition.

Melissa described that her elementary Long-Term English Learners are still writing phonetically, another characteristic of an English Language Learner.

Terry was the only participant who discussed spelling. Below she provided a description on her experiences with elementary Long-Term English Learners and spelling, “They pass the Friday spelling test because they studied, but if I were to ask them to use the same spelling words in a composition the following Monday, they would probably misspell most words.”

The poor writing skills of elementary Long-Term English Learners are a serious concern for the teachers interviewed in this study. ELL students with seven or more years in U.S. schools should be displaying some knowledge of English language writing skills. Table 4.2 displays one of several of the Texas Essential of Knowledge and Skills in the area of writing for fourth and fifth grade students.

Table 4.2

4th and 5th Grade Student Expectations for Writing

| TEK 4.20 | Oral and Written Conventions/Conventions. Students understand the function of and use the conventions of academic language when speaking and writing. Students continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. |
| TEK 5.15(A) | (A) plan a first draft by selecting a genre appropriate for conveying the intended meaning to an audience, determining appropriate topics through a range of strategies (e.g., discussion, background reading, personal interests, interviews), and developing a thesis or controlling idea |
Both Writing TEKS for fourth and fifth grade students consist of a variety of rigorous tasks students must master in one school year that include using the conventions of academic language and determining appropriate topics. However, many of the TEKS are a continuation of the writing skills students have learned in previous grade-levels. Both educators and students are accountable for mastering these TEKS. This raises areas of concerns for the teachers interviewed in this study. As described in the interviews, teachers noted that these students are limited in their academic writing skills. It is very difficult for these students to master these TEKS when they possess writing gaps.

In summary, the teacher participants identified elementary Long-Term English Learners as having literacy needs. Because of these needs, teacher participants identified how they decide on which instructional approaches and teaching methods needed to teach academic content to these students. Later in this chapter, those specific instructional approaches and teaching methods will be discussed further.

**Academic Needs**

National and state data trends reveal that English Language Learners fall behind their native English-speaking peers in academic achievement (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007). Many gaps occur across the grade levels and in other curricular areas. Lee, et. al., (2007) found nationally, 70% of English Language Learners read below basic levels. Similarly, the academic needs among elementary Long-Term English Learners were issues brought up by all participants of this study. Data analysis of this study indicated teachers based their decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content on the academic needs of these students. Melissa reflected many of the teachers’ thoughts by stating:
Those that I have taught they do struggle, they struggle a lot trying to catch up. I think that is what they spend their school year doing, they are trying to catch up with the other students and it’s trying for then and as a teacher you are trying to plan your lessons and your activities and many times you bring it down a notch.

Melissa, a fourth grade teacher, addressed many issues regarding the academic needs of these students. She discussed her experiences with the academic gaps of her elementary Long-Tern English Learners and the fact she has needed to modify instruction for these students. Melissa also questioned the role that the early-exit bilingual program these students have been enrolled in is not producing its desired outcomes in her statement below:

They have trouble with the language, are retained, they have trouble succeeding academically, for what reasons, I think for most of them it is language, but if they have been in a program that is supposed to work for them then why are they still not you know achieving that standard?

In this statement, Melissa brought about several other issues regarding this group of students. She questioned the bilingual education program these students have been enrolled in and why they have not attained English language proficiency and why these students are not achieving program standards. Teachers provided further insight into these students’ academic needs. Academic needs teachers addressed were: limited academic vocabulary, academic gaps, poor performance on standardized of standardized tests, retention, low self-esteem, little or no home support, and academic gaps in science.

**Limited Academic Vocabulary**

Although the reasons for the achievement gaps among ELLs and native English speaking students are multifaceted and complex, vocabulary knowledge and acquisition are key factors
ELLs in the upper elementary grades face the challenge of learning core content with specialized vocabulary and academic English at the same time (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Students may become fluent in conversational English relatively quickly, but it takes considerable time to develop the vocabulary needed to succeed in school. It typically takes an English language learner at least five to seven years to acquire the academic language in English needed to perform to the level of native-English speakers (Cummins, 2000b; Thomas & Collier, 1997).

Consequently, there are many implications ELLs face when they do not possess the academic vocabulary skills needed for all content areas. One barrier to student comprehension of texts and lectures is low academic vocabulary knowledge (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). A contributing factor to the poor performance of English Language Learners is the role of academic language in literacy and learning (Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Chinn, & Ratliff, 2001). In addition, ELLs who experience slow vocabulary development are less able to comprehend text at grade level and could result in these students being diagnosed as learning disabled, when in fact their limitation is due to limited English vocabulary and poor comprehension that results in part from this limitation (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). Learning English academic vocabulary is particularly challenging for English Learners, who are still acquiring English at the same time that school tasks require a high level of English usage.

Academic vocabulary was a main topic all teachers discussed during the interviews. Teacher referred to these students having limited academic vocabulary. Irene stated “these students have a hard time with the vocabulary…I have to target the vocabulary in all of the subjects.” Laura added “I concentrate a lot on the vocabulary….it’s all about the vocabulary in my eyes.” Carol stated, “If I can get passed the vocabulary with these students….I think that is
what hinders understanding.” Irene, Laura, and Carol concurred regarding how much they focus on vocabulary teaching with these students. They expressed that if their Long-Term English Learners can grasp the meaning of the academic vocabulary found in the content areas, then these students should be able to understand the content, concepts, and goals of the lessons. Terry stated “For sure they lack vocabulary…if I am just testing on vocabulary words, they will memorize the definitions and do OK on tests but by the following week, they have not retained the meanings of those vocabulary words.” Terry pointed out that merely memorizing the definitions to vocabulary words was not sufficient enough for these students to understand the academic content. These teachers felt strongly that these students need a strong academic vocabulary knowledge base in order to learn and understand academic content. Other teachers provided the following statements regarding vocabulary.

- These students have a hard time with the vocabulary (Irene);
- They must be able connect the vocabulary with the instruction (Belinda);
- They have little to no concept of the vocabulary so we are constantly repeating vocabulary words and definitions (Diana);
- What I focus on is on the vocabulary….so needless to say we are always flying behind because they don’t understand the words (Linda).

It this study, teachers described how their Long-Term English Learners have difficulty with academic vocabulary terms which in turn has influenced the decisions they make to teach academic content to these students. Teachers indicated a large bulk of their daily instruction for elementary Long-Term English Learners is vocabulary-centered, which will be further discussed in this chapter.
Academic Gaps

In addition, teacher participants discussed their elementary Long-Term English Learners possessed many academic gaps in general. More specifically, teachers made statements that these students were academically behind compared to their all English students. Terry listed her concerns regarding the academic needs of these students:

In 5th grade we have so many things we need to teach because they are going to be tested. With these students, they come in with so many gaps that I am challenged because 1) I have to find ways to close those gaps, 2) teach all of the 5th grade content, and 3) help them exit the bilingual program.

Terry listed three challenges she faces as a teacher of struggling elementary Long-Term English Learners. First, she has had to find ways to help close the academic gaps her Long-Term English Learners possess. This has resulted in Terry making decisions on which instructional methods and teaching strategies she will use to teach academic content to her Long-Term English Learner to help close existing academic gaps. Second she noted she was still required to teach all of the fifth grade TEKS, which are very rigorous, to her struggling Long-Term English Learners. Lastly, she has had to work with these students to exit the bilingual program and send them off to middle school classified as a non-LEP. As mentioned in the previous chapter, exiting the bilingual program requires bilingual students to demonstrate academic and English language proficiency in language and state assessments.

In addition, Carol commented, “it’s really hard to push them up, I mean, you can get them to that level of 70/75 and get them to pass, but there needs to be a lot more.” In her comment, Carol described the difficulties to pushing them up and closing the achievement gaps among these students, however, she provided a value of 70 to 75, which could be interpreted as
70 to 75 percent mastery of the TEKS. That leaves a remaining 25 to 30 percent of TEKS not mastered and a significant increase in the gaps among these students. She then mentioned there has to be a lot more but does not specify what a lot more entails.

In sum, the issue of academic gaps was a concern among several teachers. They expressed the challenges they faced in closing the academic gaps such by having to provide effective instructional approaches and teaching methods to get these students to understand academic content, mastering rigorous grade-level TEKS, not deviating to much from the required curriculum, and preparing Long-Term English Learners with the necessary skills needed to exit the bilingual program.

Retention

An individual who is retained at any grade level from kindergarten through 12th grade has an increased chance of not finishing high school (Bowers, 2010; Hickman, Bartholomew, Mathwig, & Heinrich, 2008). Grade retention refers to a student repeating a year in school because of the lack of academic success. It is also referred to as being held back, repeating a grade, and retention. One of the characteristics of an elementary Long-Term English Learner is the possibility of having been retained, adding to the years of schooling in the U.S. Menken and Kleyn (2009) suggested for many Long-Term English Language Learners, their poor academic performance leads to grade retention. Because these students sustain so many academic gaps, those gaps may hinder their mastery of grade-level TEKS resulting in grade retention.

In addition to possessing academic gaps, several teachers noted they faced challenges in teaching retained elementary Long-Term English Learners. Mary stated:
When I check their records they failed 3rd grade and in 4th grade however they still passed them…they should have been retained and given the help that they needed….so now I have to come up with a plan to make sure that I don’t retain them again.

In her statement, Mary expressed concerns regarding how her retained Long-Term English Learners were promoted to her fifth grade class after their records indicated otherwise. She felt that if these students had been retained properly, then they would have received an additional school year of help. She also mentioned how now it is up to her to decide on the necessary instructional approaches and teaching methods to make sure she does not retain the student again. Mary’s concerns are valid due to the rigorous nature of the fifth grade curriculum.

Terry discussed retention in a different format by stating:

Throughout my years as a fifth grade teacher, traditionally, the retained students that I have had tend to be the ones that we are talking about here. One observation I have made is that most of my retained students are the bilingual students, and when I have had to retain students, 99.9% of the time they were my bilingual students.

In her statement, Terry referred to her experiences with retained students. She has noticed a pattern in retention. She noted that some of the students who are retained or she has retained could have been Long-Term English Learners, the focus student group of this study. The possibility of these students having been retained could have been because these students possessed many academic gaps, and they struggle to perform successfully in many of the subject areas. Teachers have had to make decisions on how to provide effective instructional approaches and teaching methods to help their retained Long-Term English Learners.
Home Support and Low Self-Esteem

As previously mentioned, lack of parental involvement in the area of academics with these students is another issue several teachers brought to life during the interviews. Teachers also associated lack of parental involvement to poor academic performance among elementary Long-Term English Learners. Carol stated, “The support generally is not there. The bilingual students I have had that have the support at home are now M1s [M1 students are students who have exited the bilingual program and continued to be monitored for two years].” Carol cited that home support with academics and the support they receive in her campus should suffice in helping elementary Long-Term English Learner bridge existing gaps. Diana connected the issues of academic gaps to poor home support in her statement below:

I think a lot of the issues regarding these students is that they come from low socioeconomic levels and do not have resources at home. They are At-Risk from the moment they register in our schools. I also notice these students jump from school to school and they come in with so many gaps it gets frustrating when they don’t catch up.

In this statement, Diana noted that students jump from school to school indicating this is a cause as to the possibility students having academic gaps due to the inconsistency of schooling. Menken, Kleyn, and Chae (2007) found that Long-Term English Learners who move from back and forth from the USA and their families’ country of origin or move from school to school and program to program, will provide limited opportunities for academic language development in English or native languages. Diana further stated, “I have had these students come into my class with no self-motivation, no parent involvement, they don’t get help with homework, and sometimes have an attitude.” These experiences described by Diana could be a result of these students jumping from school to school. Their learning has been interrupted and inconsistent.
The issue of low self-esteem was also addressed with academic needs as well as with language needs and literacy needs. Mary stated, “They [elementary Long-Term English Learners] are frustrated and have low self-esteem and I have to keep motivating them.” Mary has also experienced her Long-Term English Learners as having low self-esteem. In her experiences, she has to find ways to motivate her students so that they can build their self-esteem and improve academically. It is evident, students’ low self-esteem was considered when teachers were making decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they need to provide their students to build their self-esteem while learning academic content.

*Standardized Testing*

Beginning in the Spring of 2012, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) will execute a new state assessment called the *State Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR)*. The STAAR will begin assessing Reading, Math, Writing, and Science more comprehensively. The following display how the new STAAR assessment will change:

TEA will test knowledge and skills in a deeper way.

- Tests will contain a greater number of items that have a higher cognitive complexity level.
- Items will be developed to more closely match the cognitive complexity level evident in the TEKS.
- In reading, greater emphasis will be given to critical analysis than to literal understanding.
- In writing, students will be required to write two essays rather than one.
- In social studies, science, and mathematics, process skills will be assessed in context, not in isolation (Texas Education Agency, 2011).
Regarding issues with standardized testing, Laura stated:

The decisions that I am making right now are for all of my students because they are all going to have to take the same test. My decision right now is that I am going teach my students as if they were all taking the test.

In her statement, Laura referred to how she has to make effective decisions as to which instructional approaches and teaching methods she will use to get all of her students to pass the state assessment, regardless the characteristics of her students.

Data analysis revealed that teachers made decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content were based on the intentions of getting these students to pass state standardized tests. Several teachers discussed the lack of academic performance on standardized assessments among elementary Long-Term English Learners as an academic need. Belinda made a strong statement by stating, “It’s all about how students do in the test.” Belinda referred to the accountability issues educators hold. Ana stated elementary Long-Term English Learners are “usually the ones that don’t excel, they don’t do well on standardized tests, or even in weekly tests.” In her statement, Ana characterized her Long-Term English Learner as not having passed previous year’s standardized tests.

Although the focus of this study was how teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to elementary Long-Term English learners, the issue of how these students performed on standardized testing was mentioned several times due to the nature of standardized testing of the upper grade-levels. Fourth and fifth grade teachers have the responsibility of having students pass state standardized assessments at the end of the school year, which also affects schools’ accountability. How these students will perform on state standardized tests influenced the decisions teachers had to make on which
instructional approaches and teaching methods they provided to their Long-Term English Learners.

**Academic Gaps in Science**

Science instruction in the state of Texas also encompasses many rigorous student expectations for the upper elementary grade-levels. When teachers were asked how they prepared elementary Long-Term English Language Learners for science, many teachers touched upon how these students comprised many academic gaps in the area of science. Table 4.3 displays one of many science TEKS students in the upper elementary grades must master.

Table 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4th and 5th grade Student Expectations in Science</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEK 4.7C</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TEK 5.5A</strong></td>
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</table>

Table 4.3 displays two upper grade-level TEKS students must master in a single school year. Granted these TEKS are built upon previously grade-level TEKS, however they in turn display academic vocabulary and knowledge students need to be taught. Students must be able to understand these concepts and be able to retain this knowledge as they are promoted to the next grade-levels.

Terry reflected many of the teachers’ thoughts when she explained how she has to prepare her Long-Term English Language Learner for science: “First and foremost I have to be prepared…it’s just impossible for me to open up the textbook and start reading and expect these
students to understand, internalize, and learn let’s say erosion.” In this statement, Terry described that this group of students will not be able to understand the concept of erosion by reading the textbook. Terry further explained the decisions she makes on the instructional approaches and teaching methods she uses to teach science to her Long-Term English Learners. Those strategies will be described further in this chapter. Linda cited that she has to prepare these students for science by connecting each concept to a personal experience. She stated, “I have to use personal experiences when we are actually doing experiments….I try to let them know when they are going to use it.” In this statement, Linda indicated she has had to make decisions on using prior knowledge and personal experiences to get these students to understand science concepts. Clearly, teachers understood this instructional method has been proven to be effective for all students regardless of their categories and classifications and chose to utilize this approach for their elementary Long-Term English Learners.

Conclusion

Data analysis based on the needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners indicated teachers had to make decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to meet the need of these students. The needs included language needs, literacy needs, and academic needs. Through data analysis, it was also evident that these three needs were closely linked with each other. With these students, language needs affected literacy needs, which affected in turn affected academic needs. Figure 4.1 shows the progression of the needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners. The next section will discuss how teachers based their decisions on the type of instruction they used to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners.
Figure 4.1

*Needs of Elementary Long-Term English Learners*

Research (Gersten & Bregelman, 1994; Gersten & Jimenez, 1998) has been conducted to find which instructional techniques and teaching methods have proved most effective to teach English Language Learners. Instructional techniques such as identifying big ideas, scaffolding instruction, providing visual displays of information, linking prior knowledge and experiences, and verbally interacting with students through their learning processes are effective methods teachers should incorporate when working with ELLs (Gersten & Bregelman, 1994). In addition, Gersten and Jimenez, (1998) found that the incorporation of higher order thinking skills
into classroom instructional approaches promotes the understanding of academic content and reduces the cognitive demands of students needing to memorize the content.

In addition to language, literacy, and academic needs of elementary Long-Term English Language Learners, the data analysis revealed the participants of this study based their decisions of the type of instruction they felt they needed to provide to these students to understand academic content. In the data analysis, I identified three main subcategories to include modified instruction, vocabulary-centered instruction, and differentiated instruction. In the following sections, I will provide an analysis on how teachers decided on specific instructional approaches and teaching methods they provided for their elementary Long-Term English Learners to help them learn and understand academic content.

**Modified Instruction**

When instruction is modified, teachers make decisions to alter or change instruction to make understanding and learning more comprehensible for students. Integrating modified language into content instruction is important and makes discipline-specific language comprehensible for English language learners (Dong, 2002). Teachers discussed providing several forms of modified instruction to include: Using L1 to teach, explain, and clarify, lower instruction levels and shorten assignments, and use reteaching and repetition techniques for these students.

When asked what decisions she has to make when planning instruction for these students. Melissa stated:

When planning lessons for these students, you have to factor into mind if they are going to get it, if they are going to understand the vocabulary, the actual content of your lesson, if they are going to be able to succeed when you give them that quiz……some of these
students are not ready for 4th grade… so when I am doing my lessons, I have to think you have to bring it down a notch and you have to reteach and you are thinking of all these things that you are going to modify.

In her statement, Melissa reflected many of the teachers’ thoughts. She discussed many forms of modified instruction for her Long-Term English Learners. Melissa mentioned prior to teaching a lesson, she has to factor into mind if they will understand the vocabulary words, if they will understand the actual content, and if they will perform academically when assessed. However, based on her experiences with these students, she has had to modify instruction by lowering the level of instruction to make it more comprehensible and reteach the lessons again. It is evident that Melissa has had to make several critical decisions as to how she will deliver the instruction to these students.

Terry shared a similar response, “I also have to pay attention to all of my weak students to see if they are getting it and if they are not, I have to think about how to modify my teaching.” In her statement, Terry described how she assesses her own teaching as she grades her students’ work. If she sees that students are struggling with a specific skill, she starts thinking about how she is going to modify her instruction for her students and teach the skills in a manner they will understand.

The following sections describe the specific forms teachers of this study used to modify instruction for the elementary Long-Term English Learners.

*Using L1 to Teach, Explain, and Clarify*

When teachers were asked to discuss the instructional techniques and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners, all teachers presented rich dialogue and descriptions on this subject area. When reviewing the transcripts
and identifying themes and patterns, one of the main reoccurring themes revealed nine out of ten teachers found themselves needing to use the students’ L1 for instruction. It was evident that teachers used this instructional approach as a form of modified instruction.

Although, using a students’ L1 for instruction is a common teaching method for ELLs, it is uncommon for Long-Term English Learners. As mentioned previously, when a student becomes a Long-Tern English Learner, this student reaches the upper grades with 6 to 8 years of schooling in the United States still classified as an English Language Learner or in this district’s term Limited English Proficient (LEP). Students enrolled in this South Texas school district’s early-exit transitional bilingual program, receive more than ninety percent if not one hundred percent instruction in the English language after several years of participating in an early-exit transitional bilingual program. These students take all standardized state assessments in English in the areas or Reading, Math, Science, and Writing. However, findings of this study have displayed that teachers of elementary Long-Tern English Learners continued the use and need for native language instruction in order to make academic content more comprehensible for these students.

Cummins (1981) and Thomas and Collier (1997) argued that it is crucial for educators to provide English Language Learners with access to comprehensive instruction in their native language. The use of student’s native language in the instructional process is an important part of the teaching and learning environment, and is a mechanism for teaching content and understanding (Goldenberg & Sullivan, 1994; Henderson & Landesman, 1992). Freeman & Freeman (1994) affirmed that it is effective for students to be encouraged to use home language vocabulary when they are not able to find the appropriate English terms. The use of students’ first language is important, because it helps to clarify and elaborate points being made in English

Because teachers identified elementary Long-Term English Learners as having language needs, these teachers made decisions modify content area instruction by clarifying or explaining academic content using their students’ L1.

Belinda touched on this instructional approach when teaching content area science by describing, “I teach everything in English and only translate major words in Spanish to make sure they understand what we are talking about. If a student needs more translation to understand the concept then I would do so as well”. In addition, Belinda allowed these students to embrace their first language by using it as a learning tool by stating “Making students understand that if they don’t understand a word in English asking to get it translated is OK.”

Carol has tried to use this form of modified instruction discretely. She used this approach to help her elementary Long-Term English Learners understand and feel successful while simultaneously pointing out writing in the Spanish language is difficult language to her all English students. She explained below:

I will have them tell me the story in Spanish and we will try to translate it English… also because I want them to feel successful and let them know they can write and are just having trouble writing English and then I have to remind the other students you know let me have you write a composition in Spanish and see how you know.

Other teachers provided the following responses:

- You do whatever it takes to make them understand, English or Spanish, you do it until you finally see the light bulb come on (Mary);
• Do you ask yourself how you will get them to understand? (Researcher);

• Yes…you do and many times what I do is I go back to their native language and say it in Spanish…Y le entendites? Y quefue lo que no?…. (Did you understand? What is it that you didn’t…?). You have to through all angles so yeah…because you are wanting them to be able to understand the different concepts, but if they don’t understand the different concepts in English, then you have to go back to their native language and teach (Melissa);

• When I am planning my lessons, I have to stick to the main curriculum and as I see how these students are progressing, then I make all of my adjustments such as modifying instruction, explaining in Spanish, having additional resources at hand…. (Terry).

In her statement, Mary made a general comment on doing whatever it takes, but was not specific on the teaching methods she has used with her Long-Term English Language Learners. She referred to using English and Spanish instruction as a means of getting her students to learn and understand the content. She then noted, “until you see the light bulb turn on” referring to seeing her Long-Term English Learners finally understand the learning objectives. Melissa also discussed how she has had to provide instruction in her students’ native language and gave two samples of questions she asks her students in Spanish. She referred to having to use this method to help her students understand the academic content. Lastly, Terry shared she does not deviate from the regular curriculum, but does have to make modifications after the lesson has been taught. She also referred to using students’ L1 to explain content to her Long-Term English Learners.

In addition to using these students’ L1 for instruction, two teachers mentioned having to use resources such as bilingual dictionaries and Spanish textbooks that allowed students to look
up unfamiliar words in their native language and read academic content in their native language. Laura noted, “For the one child that I have right now, I gave her a bilingual dictionary for math and one for science to look up math and science terms.” Ana shared, “I get them English/Spanish dictionaries…sometimes those materials are the best things for those kids.” Laura further mentioned she provided Spanish textbooks to her Long-Term English Learners and allowed them to have both sets of books open during instruction. Both Laura and Ana described how they provided their Long-Term English Learners bilingual dictionaries and textbooks to help them relate to unfamiliar English words and content in their native language. This form of modification is common for new and emergent English Language Learners who enroll in US schools. However, it is evident these teachers made decisions to provide their Long-Term English Learners with bilingual resources to assist them in understanding academic content during English instruction.

**Lowered Instructional Levels and Shortened Assignments**

Data analysis of this study revealed that teachers had to make decisions to adapt their levels of instruction to the levels of their Long-Term English Learners’ abilities. Examples of these instructional approaches and teaching methods mainly included lowering the level of instruction, teaching and explaining academic content into simpler terms, and shortening assignments for these students.

Melissa was the most insightful participant regarding this issue. Below she shared her thoughts:

Some of these students are not ready for 4th grade, for that type of instruction, so when I am doing my lessons, I have to think you have to bring it down a notch, you have to reteach and you are thinking of all of these things that you are going to modify. You are
going to take out and know this is hard...because you have to actually look at your lesson and as will it work for these children? Will they be able to get that concept? And when they don’t get it, you’re like I didn’t so something right. I have to go back and reteach it, so you kind of bring on yourself.

In her statement, Melissa shared experiences how she has had to think about how she will teach the rigorous academic content of the fourth grade. She mentioned when she plans her lessons, she knows that her Long-Term English Learners are going to struggle with the content. She mentioned how she knows she is going to have to lower the level of instruction, and will need to reteach the lessons. She also provides an insight into her thought process as she is planning instruction for these students and what she takes into consideration when preparing lessons for her Long-Term English Language Learners.

Carol shared a different perspective when asked about the professional development she has attended that addresses this student group:

I did attend the Sabal Palms writing project and that gave us I mean just tons of ideas to accommodate any kind of learner or even ideas where is would may be a second grade lesson, but it would umm I guess the perfect example of the lesson that I would have used to bring down for any ELL and the reason I focused on that is because of the writing…it is the most difficult and of course readers are writer and writers are readers.

In her statement, Carol, a fourth grade teacher, discussed how her writing professional development allowed her to learn writing lessons that were at second grade levels that she felt she needed to use for her struggling ELLs, which could be her Long-Term English Language Learners. For Carol, using lower grade lessons is a form of lowering the instruction level. She justified her use of modified instruction in writing because writing is a difficult subject for Long-
Term English Learners. She then connected the notion of writing and reading, both difficult subjects for Long-Term English Language Learners. Clearly, Carol displayed the possibility of making decisions to use lower-grade lessons to help her Long-Term English Learners to understand writing.

In addition, teachers expressed their concerns for having to resort to this instructional approach without making it noticeable to the students. For example, Linda discussed having the need to modify instruction through a balanced approach when asked what decisions she has to make when planning instruction for these students. She stated:

I will always look through something my lowest child can be successful in…..If I need to go down, I’ll find something that yes is at a lower level. And the kids they don’t notice and some will be a little more difficult above 5th grade so they are getting a variety, but the purpose is so the child that is struggling will have some success.

In her statement, Linda made decisions to provide instruction that her lowest child will be successful in. In this case, her lowest child could have been a Long-Term English Language Learner. Linda justified her choice in providing lower level instruction so that her struggling students can have some success.

Other forms of modified instruction teachers discussed included having to modify instruction by explaining content in simpler terms and using instructional resources that were at a lower level. Irene stated, “When I see that my Long-Term English Learners are having difficulties, I have had to translate some of the ideas or explain it to them in simpler terms.” In this statement, Irene explicitly states she helps her Long-Term English Learners understand content by translating the content or by explaining it in simpler terms. Mary provides a different perspective by stating, “Let’s say I taught it at a higher level and for that student I am not going
to water it down. I am going to explain it in a simpler way.” In this statement, Mary rationalized that explaining content in simpler terms is not watering down the curriculum rather a means of helping her Long-Term English Learners understand the academic content. Linda described her perspective on explaining content in simpler terms by adding:

I am not using any simpler words that are not used in the other classes you know, I try to use the same vocabulary, but they [Long-Term English Learners] are going to need some background information to go with those words, so if I can give them a word that I know they are not used to hearing, I follow it with a definition and then I say it in different ways so they know, ok, I know what she is talking about so I don’t water it down.

In her statement, Linda described explaining vocabulary word in different forms that will allow her Long-Term English Learners to understand the words and their meanings. Like, Mary, Linda feels she is not watering down the curriculum rather providing a teaching method that will help her Long-Term English Learners.

In addition to this form of modified instruction, teachers also discussed having the needed shorten assignments for these students. Carol mentioned because her elementary Long-Term English learners had poor literacy skills, she was finding herself having to provide these students with shorter and easier fluency passages for homework. However, her rationale behind this is explained:

I find that when I send them with homework that is not at their reading level, it loses meaning because they don’t understand….it wasn’t good practice so what I will do …I give them fluency passages they can read and they are thrilled when their fluency rates go up….they are able to practice in a way that is meaningful and they can feel successful.
In her statement, Carol described how she provided lower level fluency homework assignments to her Long-Term English Learners. She explains her reasons for doing this are to help her students feel successful at their reading ability and make the homework assignments more practical and meaningful.

Melissa is more detailed as to how she shortens assignments for her Long-Term English Learners as she described below:

You have to go back and modify ….they are not going to be able to do 20 questions or not going to be able to do all 20 problems so I tell them to do a couple at a time like 1 and 2 or 1 to 5 and see if you can do it and let me see you independently and then you have to go back and check… so yeah, it’s hard.

Melissa gave a specific example as to how she has had to modify instruction. In her examples, she has had to shorten more the half of some of her assignments for these students. It is evident that Melissa has had to make this decision to gradually shorten assignments for her Long-Term English Language Learners.

In summary, the data analysis revealed that the participants of this study made decisions to use modified forms of instructional approaches and teaching methods that included lowering the levels of instruction, using simpler terms to explain content, and shortening assignments so that these students would be able to understand and apply the academic content they were learning. The data analysis of this study also indicated that some of the participating teachers did not view using these instructional approaches and teaching methods as forms of “watering down the curriculum” rather a means to help these students understand academic content and attempts to close academic gaps.
Reteaching and Repetition

Effective teaching for ELLs is similar in many ways to effective teaching for English speakers. All learners benefit from clear goals and objectives, well-structured tasks, adequate practice, opportunities to interact with others, frequent assessment and reteaching as needed (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010). According to Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2004), the use of verbal scaffolding (paraphrasing, repetition, and questioning) assists ELLs in learning language and content. Also providing additional practice and repetition (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004) are research-based strategies that have been recommended to use with ELLs to help them learn language and content.

However, during interviews teacher participants associated the instructional approaches and teaching methods of reteaching and repetition as forms of modified instruction. Melissa mentioned both the need of reteaching at a lower level: “You know they are not going to get it so you have to go back and reteach it at a lower level.” Ana explained: “I make sure they understand and comprehend what they are reading by questioning them repeatedly and when it comes to assignments, I expect them to repeat the instructions back to me so they understand what they have to do.” As discussed in the previous section, Melissa has found herself making decisions to lower the instructional levels for her Long-Term English Learners. In her statement, she shared she has used the approach of reteaching these students using lower level instruction. Ana discussed her use of repetition as an instructional approach to check for comprehension, understanding, and clarification and expects her Long-Term English Learners to repeat specific assignment instructions back to Ana to make her aware her students understand the assignments. Terry shared a different perspective by stating:
These students need repeated reteaching, I mean I cannot move on until I have all of my students understanding. If I move further, then I am continuing the growth of the gaps. If I run out of time during the day, well guess what, it has to get done during PE time, library time, counselors’ presentations, before school or after school, these students will even get repeated review and reteaching on a Saturday if need be.

In her statement, Terry connects both instructional approaches as a single instructional approach she used with her Long-Term English Learners. She further stated that she uses this approach until she gets her students to understand the academic content. Aside from the regular instructional day, Terry has used this instructional approach during the students’ physical education time, library time, when school counselors came in to present, and during extended day and extended week tutorials. [Tutorials classes for this district are offered before and after the regular school day and on Saturdays.] It is evident Terry has had to make decisions to provide individual or small group repeated review and reteaching to her Long-Term English students when the rest of her class is participating in other educational programs. Other statements made by teachers are listed below:

- If I am seeing that these students are not getting it, I reteach by using another resource….I will sit with my Long-Term English Learners, check for understanding and repeat myself (Irene);

- They have little to no concepts of the vocabulary so we are constantly reviewing and repeating vocabulary words and definitions (Diana).

In their statements, Irene and Diana mention using reteaching and repetition with their Long-Term English Learners. Irene uses reteaching as a strategy in a small group setting. Diana describes having to use consistent reviewing and repetition of the vocabulary words and
definitions she teaches her Long-Term English Learners. These statements reveal teachers have had to make decisions on using repetition and reteaching, sometimes in a small group setting, as an instructional approach and teaching methods to help their Long-Term English Learners learn academic content.

The data analysis revealed teachers made decisions to use forms of modified instruction to assist their Long-Term English Learners in learning and understanding academic content in English. The forms of modified instruction included: using L1 to teach, explain, and clarify, lower instruction levels and shorten assignments, and use reteaching and repetition techniques for these students. Teachers shared many reasons for making these decisions were mainly due to the academic gaps these students possessed and to help them learn and understand the academic content. The next section will discuss how teachers based decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic vocabulary to Long-Term English Learners.

**Vocabulary-Centered Instruction**

English language learners may become fluent in conversational English relatively quickly, but it takes considerable time to develop the academic vocabulary needed to succeed in school. Many factors influence the rate at which academic English is learned, but research suggests that ELLs require five to seven years to obtain the academic language and vocabulary of their native English-speaking peers (Collier, 1999; Fillmore & Snow, 2000). As these students progress through the elementary years, the standards, expectations, and rigor of the curriculum increases. In addition, beginning in the third grade, students begin taking standardized state assessments in reading and math. These tests possess a large bank of academic vocabulary words students must have knowledge in. Analysis of this study indicated teachers made
decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners based on the academic vocabulary needs of these students.

In the previous section, all of the teacher participants stressed these students lacked the academic vocabulary necessary for understanding academic content. Teachers discussed how vocabulary instruction was a critical component of their curriculum. Research question #8 allowed teachers to explain how they prepared their elementary Long-Term English Learners for Science. All teachers immediately responded to the importance of needing to teach vocabulary words for students to understand the rigorous ideas and concepts of science. Several teachers discussed that it is very difficult for these students to understand new concepts and content without understanding the key academic vocabulary associated with this new content. Most participants further tied the importance of needing to teach vocabulary in all subject areas. Carol describes, “If I can get passed the vocabulary with these students, it is a success because I think that is what hinders understanding.” Belinda reflected many of the teachers’ thoughts by stating “they must be able to connect the vocabulary to the instruction.” In addition, teachers cited a number of instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teacher vocabulary: intense vocabulary instruction, using synonyms and cognates, and preparing students to pass state assessments.

*Intense Vocabulary Instruction*

Students have to understand vocabulary to comprehend the academic content they encounter in school. Vocabulary is a central element in language development programs for ELLs (Meltzer & Hamman, 2005). Cummins (2000a) and Scarcella (2002) support the finding that vocabulary is key to academic success. Research focused on school-age second language
learners similarly concludes that vocabulary knowledge is the single best predictor of their academic achievement across subject matter domains (Saville-Troike, 1984). Intensive instruction of academic vocabulary must be carefully orchestrated across the subject areas for second language learners to attain rigorous content standards (Dutro & Moran, 2003; Fillmore & Snow, 2000). ELLs must be provided instructional support to know how to use content vocabulary correctly (Scarcella, 2003; Geertz, 1988).

Several teachers discussed they spent significant amounts of instructional time teaching new vocabulary words. They also discussed the multitude of ways in which they provided opportunities for the students to learn the words through defining, drawing, visuals, and discussion. Terry made an important point regarding how she feels vocabulary should not be taught, “When we are learning new vocabulary words, I need for these students to not just looks up definitions and memorize them for the test…they need to draw pictures, look them up on the Internet, use it in their own sentences, and most importantly use the words in academic class discussions. These students need to know how to apply these words.” In her statement, Terry describes how she provided different forms of instructional approaches to helping her students learn vocabulary words, that include drawing pictures, using the Internet, applying the words into sentences, and providing opportunities to discuss the words in class.

Irene described the instructional approaches she uses to help her Long-Term English Learners learn vocabulary:

I do a lot of vocabulary. These students have a hard time with the vocabulary. I have to use a lot of worksheets with vocabulary, I have them copy definition in their science journals and put up weekly words on the board and I have them work on their vocabulary deck.
Irene further explained the vocabulary card deck:

It’s using index cards to write the definitions, and then they have to use it in a sentence and draw a picture on the back. Then they attach their cards to a ring and that is what they use to study. They are constantly adding to the deck so by the end of the year it’s really thick. I have to target the vocabulary in all of the subjects, especially with these students.

Irene described how she uses journals, worksheets, and vocabulary word decks to help her Long-Term English Learners learn new words. She constantly has her students look up and write definitions in a variety of places and draw the words. She also describes how the vocabulary word deck becomes an instructional resource for her students to refer to throughout the school year. However, Irene is the only teacher who refers to her Long-Term English Learners in her statement. Several other teachers provided their insights as to how they help students learn academic vocabulary:

- I concentrate a lot on the vocabulary…..I try to give them as many words as I can that the might run in to the future in whatever subject I am doing (Laura);
- I use different forms of helping students remember definitions to vocabulary words (Belinda);
- For example, when I am teaching math or reading, I have to target the vocabulary. I have to have students draw pictures, use them in sentences, and have them study everyday (Diana);

Laura, Belinda, and Diana all shared how they help their Long-Term English Learners with new vocabulary words. Laura described giving them more words they might need in the future from all subject areas. Belinda did not provide specific instructional approaches but did
refer to providing different forms of approaches with vocabulary instruction. Diana described how she has to target vocabulary during reading and math lessons and described how she has her students draw pictures, use the words in sentences, and study them every day. Laura, Belinda, and Diana did not refer to Long-Term English Learners in their statements. However, the assumption is being made that they used these instructional approaches with all of their students including their Long-Term English Learners.

It is evident that teachers interviewed in this study believed strongly that vocabulary-centered instruction is critical in the academic success of their elementary Long-Term English Learners. Earlier in this chapter, teacher participants expressed how many of their Long-Term English Learners possessed academic vocabulary gaps. Due to these academic gaps, teachers have had to make decisions on providing intense amounts of vocabulary-centered instruction to their students, including their Long-Term English Learners.

**Using Synonyms and Cognates**

Earlier in this chapter, the teachers discussed the need of having to use their Long-Term English Learners L1, at times to teach, explain, and clarify English academic content. In this section, I refer to this instructional approach by describing more specifically how teachers used cognates as a teaching method to help their Long-Term English Learners understand academic vocabulary in English. Holmes and Guerra Ramos (1995) characterize cognates as vocabulary items in two different languages that are similar both orthographically and semantically. Research (Dressler, 2000; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1996) has shown the use of cognates effectively assists ELLs in understanding the meanings of English words. This research indicates knowledge of the cognate relationships that exist between Spanish and English is a
powerful example of positive transfer in that this knowledge has been shown to facilitate English reading comprehension.

Data analysis of this study found that teachers made decisions to use cognates as an instructional approach to help their Long-Term English Learners learn academic vocabulary. Teachers associated to using synonyms as a similar instructional approach to assist help these students understand English academic vocabulary.

Laura, Carol, and Terry stressed the needed use of using synonyms and cognates, when teaching new vocabulary words to these students:

- I concentrate a lot on the vocabulary and I try to give them as many synonyms I can…….I’ll try to use cognates, too (Laura);

- So what I right away do is come up with a word that they know that means the same thing….a synonym for the word and then try to come up with a picture and use it in a sentence with both the synonym and then the word so it always involves the vocabulary (Carol);

- I always provide synonyms and cognates when I am seeing they have no idea what the word means (Terry).

In her statement, Laura simply stated how she provided both the use of cognates and synonyms to help her Long-Term English Learners understand English academic vocabulary. Carol described having to provide a synonym with a picture and has her students use the synonym and the new vocabulary word in sentences to help them make a connection. Terry described having to use both cognates and synonyms as an instructional approach when she sees that her Long-Term English Learners cannot figure out the meanings of the words. The decisions
to use these instructional approaches were to help these students learn and understand academic vocabulary, an academic need many of these students lacked.

*Preparing for Standardized Exams*

For the past ten years the state of Texas has implemented the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills assessments to account for all schools’ student academic success. These tests exploded with academic vocabulary words students had to master in order to meet passing standards. Researchers have reported the complexity of the language on tests can increase the gap margin between ELLs and English speaking students (Abedi, Lord, Hofstetter & Baker, 2000). In as much, fifth grade students had to pass reading and math assessments in order to be promoted to the next grade-level, a rule that has yet to be determined by the Texas Education Agency.

Furthermore, beginning in the Spring of 2012, upper elementary students will be given a new more complex state assessment as discussed in the previous section. Table 4.4 displays sample questions encompassing academic terms students are expected to encounter with this new assessment.
### Table 4.4

**Terms students will encounter in the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Sample Question</th>
<th>Academic Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>-What evidence from the selection…</td>
<td>evidence, selection, imagery, appeals, sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-The imagery in these lines appeals most to the reader’s sense of…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>-the word chide means to…</td>
<td>chide, theme, infer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-What is the theme of the play?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-What can the reader infer…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>-The arrows in the diagrams below represent light. Which diagram best shows how a glass lens refracts light?</td>
<td>diagrams, represent, lens, refract, process, formed, stalactites, stalagmites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Which process most likely formed these stalactites and stalagmites?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data analysis uncovered that teachers referred to the need of teaching vocabulary in order for students to pass state standardized tests. Passing the TAKS assessments posed a major challenge for elementary Long-Term English Learners in that they had not yet developed the academic English needed to pass the English version of the TAKS test. Carol provided the strongest feelings:

Right away it’s the vocabulary, as a matter a fact I put up the vocabulary for this week and it’s coming from a drama, I found it online but it goes with the STAAR….At the end of the day we are all held accountable. Right now the STAAR has changed everything and I mean these students couldn’t get basic vocabulary questions and now we are raising the level of questions…I think a lot of them still end up falling through the cracks.

In her statement, Carol referred to how the new STAAR assessment has raised the level of questioning in the area of vocabulary. She shared concerns on how her elementary Long-Term English Learners could not master low level questions and will now be facing higher level
questions in the new assessments. She concluded her statement by inferring these students will continue to struggle academically and never catch up as she states, “I think a lot of them will fall through the cracks.”

Laura and Terry provided responses on the need of having to teach vocabulary to help their Long-Term English Learners pass state standardized tests.

- I really have to focus on the vocabulary because that is what they are going to see with this new test (Laura);
- Before I even begin to get them ready for the test, I have to tackle the vocabulary (Terry).

In her statement, Laura referred to providing a lot of vocabulary-centered instruction to her students so they are prepared for the state assessments. Terry stated before she begins test preparation, she has to first teach academic vocabulary to her Long-Term English Learners. Both teachers correlated vocabulary-centered instruction to passing standardized tests for these students. The decisions used to provide intense vocabulary-centered instruction were also based of preparing these students to pass state standardized assessments.

\textit{Differentiated Instruction}

Instructional techniques that are effective for students in general are also effective for English language learners. It is necessary that teachers differentiate instruction for ELL students to accommodate the different levels of language development (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). For example, instruction that is supported by visual aids and direct instruction followed by opportunities to practice are examples of techniques that benefit ELLs. When teachers discussed their instructional approaches, almost all provided a multitude of instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to their
elementary Long-Term English Learner. For example, Irene stated liberally, “I use small group, peer tutoring, preferential seating, checking for understanding, integrating technology, reading and discussions.” Irene’s statement was very similar to all the participants of this study when she was asked which were some of the instructional strategies she provided to her Long-Term English Learners. Laura provided more detail into her thinking process when she shared which instructional approaches and teaching methods she used for these students. She stated, “I think of the different students and how they learn.” She thought about how her students learn best and plans her instruction based on this.

When I asked them how they went about choosing specific strategies, teachers discussed several rationales. Some of those based decisions that included the academic needs of these students, students’ backgrounds, language needs, how the lessons were designed, and providing different learning opportunities for these students to learn academic content. It was evident that teachers had to think about which instructional approaches and teaching methods they needed to provide to this student group with the goal of capitalizing on their growth and success. Terry reflected many of the teachers’ thoughts: “I have to make decisions based on how I am going to get these students to learn and understand what I am teaching them.” Teachers cited a number of instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content used consistently with these students that included: using prior knowledge, using visuals, hands-on learning, supplemental lessons, classroom discussions, using technology, and peer tutoring. The focus of this study was to further examine how teachers of this unique student group came to decide on using those specific instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content. This section aims to provide more in-depth understanding of teachers’ decision making processes.
Using Prior Knowledge and Experiences

Providing students with appropriate background knowledge has been successful in improving student achievement (Gersten, 1996; Short, 2002). August & Shanahan (2006) support background knowledge as important to overall meaning of material. Several teachers referred to having to use students’ prior knowledge and experiences to facilitate learning for their Long-Term English Learners. Melissa stated below:

So a lot of times I try to relate to things they do not know using their background knowledge, building on it because these students find it fun and I have noticed a lot they like to touch on their experiences, language, and backgrounds and when you connect to that then they somehow get what you are talking about, if you are talking about lets say bridges like we did in our science lesson. I had to make it interesting so we started talking about their experiences with that when they cross the bridge to Mexico or when they have crossed a bridge on a train ride. That made it personal to them and they were able to connect to the lesson and ended up liking it. The lesson was on tension and compression.

In this statement, Melissa discussed how she has had to use students’ background knowledge and experiences so that students could understand the science concept of push, pull, and forces. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills in science for teaching the concept of push, pull, and forces states: *The student is expected to design an experiment to test the effect of force on an object such as a push or a pull, gravity or magnetism* (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, 4.6D). Although it is a general statement, it is the teachers’ job to teach the students the concepts of forces, push, pull, and gravity in a variety of contexts so that students can apply these concepts academically, such as designing an experiment. The TEK itself encompasses a
vast amount of academic rigor that 4th grade students need to know. For students who encompass weak academic skills such as elementary Long-Term English Learners, learning rigorous science concepts can be a major academic challenge for these students. Teachers have had to use the instructional strategy of activating students’ prior knowledge so that these students will be able to make a connection to the academic content.

However, some teachers use this teaching technique for all of their students, Linda shared:

I definitely rely on using my students’ personal experiences because someone always has an experience to share and even though some of my Long-Term English Learners may not have had those experiences, I want them to hear the other experiences of the other students, but I have had many bilingual students who have had amazing and unexpected experiences to share and have helped their peers in learning and connecting to new content.

Linda describes how she uses this strategy with all of her students and has seen the success with her elementary Long-Term English Learners even though they may not have the experiences that some of their peers have. Linda allows the strategy of connecting background knowledge and experiences as a form of peer tutoring to help her Long-Term English Learners.

Freeman and Freeman (1994) noted the depth at which students learn new content is directly related to their background knowledge and/or prior experience. Several teachers recognized that the use of prior knowledge is an effective teaching method for learning and connecting to new knowledge for this student group.
**Hands-On Learning**

Research has shown that the use of hands-on activities help clarify meaning, assist in learning new knowledge and concepts, and allow students to be more engaged in learning using authentic or real objects (Kober, 2003; Facella, Rampino, & Shea, 2005). It was evident teachers made decisions to use this instructional approach to assist their Long-Term English Learner in learning academic content. Teachers provided descriptions as to how this instructional strategy has helped their Long-Term English Learners with learning content. Belinda provided insight as to how she feels about using this strategy with her Long-Term English Learners, “Doing hands on activities to teach the lesson is also helpful…if science is done with hands-on activities, they will be extremely successful in transferring to the English Language….they are seeing as well as doing the activity.” In her statement, Belinda touched on the fact that this approach is helpful for her students for learning content and transferring to the English language, a need that Belinda identified with her Long-Term English Learners. Linda is more specific on her use with hands-on learning:

Sometimes I have to bring objects in like in science the different tools and yes I can show them the picture but if I can bring in the concrete object and have them even if they are just touching it even if we are not doing anything with it but the fact that they held the beaker they are just going to remember it longer.

Linda mentioned the need to have to bring in real objects when teaching science. In this statement, she referred to objects and tools such as a beaker, which is an instrument used to measure in science. Although teachers did not specifically refer to using *realia* as a form of instruction, Linda’s description is similar to the instructional form of *realia*. Melissa shared her personal feelings about using hands on teaching approaches. She states, “I love it when they are
hands on... when they are actually manipulating things. I think it’s a good instructional tool... If kids like what they are doing, they are learning it.” In her statement, Melissa described how her Long-Term English Learners are manipulating things and because they are manipulating things, they are learning too. These teachers have made decisions based on how they see their Long-Term English Learners learn, through the use of hands-on learning.

*Using Visuals*

Using non-linguistic strategies, such as visuals improves the ability of students to extend or represent knowledge by using mental representations and can create a support for ELLs and increase lesson effectiveness (Genesee, 1999). In discussing how teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners decided on the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content to their students, several teachers referred to using visuals. Teachers felt this instructional approach was effective in teaching content to their Long-Term English Learners. Laura simply stated, “Yes, we do pictures, lots of pictures,” but does not provide specific information as to how she implements pictures into the curriculum. Diana described how she used the concept of drawing pictures and graphic organizers for math, “For math, I have to rely on drawing pictures and using graphic organizers.” When Linda was asked which strategies she has found successful with Long-Term English Learners, she stated, “The successful strategies are taking it slow, not assuming, focusing on vocabulary, pictures, lots and lots of pictures any time that I can get a picture, if they are online or something, will help.” In her statement she alluded to needing to provide a visual to her Long-Term English Learners to help her students understand academic content.

Carol described that visuals help her students make a connection. She stated, “Visuals... they always make a connection, it’s like a picture is like a thousand languages... so
they always make a connection with visuals and graphic organizers.” Carol explained how the use of visuals has been successful with her Long-Term English Learners by referring to the fact that pictures help these students learn and understand content. Lastly, Terry described her use of this instructional approach:

I have to use pictures and videos when I am teaching hard vocabulary words…Umm when I see that the students are having a hard time understanding some of the literature that we read, I have to pull out story maps and graphic organizers.

In her statement, Terry described needing to use visuals to teach academic vocabulary. She then referred to needing to used story maps and graphic organizers which are also visual representations that break down content and present the content graphically for her Long-Term English Learners.

Data analysis reflected that teachers made decisions to use visuals as an instructional approach and teaching method, to help elementary Long-Term English Learner connect and learn academic content through the use of pictures, story maps, and graphic organizers, all forms of visuals.

*Supplemental Lessons*

Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2004) suggested supplementary resources help support different learning styles and multiple ways of learning because information and concepts are presented in a multifaceted manner. In addition, using supplemental resources helped ELLs see, hear, perform, create, and apply content to make connections and construct personal and relevant meanings. Supplemental resources provide a real-life context and enable students to bridge prior experiences with new knowledge (Echeverria, et. al., 2004). Students who possess many academic gaps such as elementary Long-Term English Learner benefit from this instructional
approach. Results of this study indicated teachers used this instructional approach to help their Long-Term English Learners learn and understand academic content.

Linda shared how she used supplemental resources with her students during science instruction:

Then we can supplement, you know, if you find something on line, if you find a little video clip… I have used more than ever in 5th grade especially in science. We are using United Streaming [online educational videos] left and right because it’s different. It’s different some of these kids will never get to see it they are not going to go anywhere so bringing that to them.

In her statement, Linda described how she uses video clips from online educational videos such as United Streaming to help her students understand 5th grade science concepts. She describes how this is a consistent instructional approach and further explains she brings this knowledge to her students because it is a different form of learning and seeing academic content.

Terry described her use of supplemental lessons:

I cannot just teach the lesson and then move on to the next you know I need to show these students what they are learning in different ways, so I always make sure to have additional resources to supplement. I may not get to them that day, that week, or that month, but I make sure to review what I had already covered using the supplements at one point during the year.

In her statement, Terry described that she used supplemental lessons as an instructional approach for her Long-Term English Learners to learn academic content differently. She discussed how sometimes she did not provide the supplemental lessons timely, but makes sure to review them before the school year is over.
Data Analysis displayed teachers of Long-Term English Learners used supplemental lessons to help their Long-Term English Learners, to continue maximizing on their learning processes.

Classroom Discussions

In order to be proficient and productive students, English-language learners (ELLs) need many opportunities to interact in social and academic situations. Effective teachers encourage ELLs participation in classroom discussions, welcome their contributions, and motivate them by such practices (Cazden, 2001; Stipek, 2002). In academic settings, both question-answer and conversational formats entail the use of academic language. For Long-Term English Learners this is critical in developing their academic needs. Long-Term English Learners may display English proficiency in basic communication skills; however, even students who are conversationally proficient need exposure to and practice with academic language in order to function successfully at school (Díaz-Rico, 2004; Weber & Longhi-Chirlin, 2001).

The use of allowing elementary Long-Term English Learners to discuss academic content was an additional decision teachers interviewed in this study presented. Terry provided the following insight:

If I am the only one talking or if I expect my students to not discuss what they are learning then I am being unrealistic and unjust to my students especially these students that posses so many gaps as it is…having students discuss their learning has been a successful strategy. It also helps me listen to these students and if they are learning and understanding.

In her statement, she described how she used the instructional approach of classroom discussion as an instructional approach for her Long-Term English Learners. She described this instructional approach assisted in bridging the academic gaps that these students possess. Terry
also used this strategy to assess her students’ learning as well. Stated that she uses this instructional approach to give her elementary Long-Term English Learners an opportunity to “continue developing their language”, a need teachers identified by the teachers. In sum, teachers made decisions to provide their students an opportunities to discuss academic content and opportunities to practice the English language.

Technology

Research shows that English language learners report positive attitudes to using computers for language learning, including lower anxiety and a high interest level (LeLoup & Ponterio, 2003). In addition, research suggests that “the effective integration of technology can improve academic achievement, promote English and native language proficiency, augment positive self-concepts, enhance motivation, stimulate positive attitudes towards learning, and foster higher-level thinking skills” (Chisholm & Beckett, 2003, p. 257).

As teachers discussed which instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content, several teachers stated they used technology as an instructional approach with their Long-Term English Learners. Diana describes how she uses technology as an instructional approach, “Now that I have my ELMO connected, it is so much easier to use the Internet to show videos on certain topics….I use my ELMO and laptop and use programs like Brainpop and United Streaming to show videos.” She refers to her ELMO and laptops as being available to use instructional websites to show videos [visuals] for her students. Carol describes how she searches for PowerPoints that are simple to show her Long-Term English Learners and reinforce specific skills, “That is where [online] the majority of the time I will find a PowerPoint that is simple and I will put them on the computer to reinforce that skill.” Data analysis
indicated teachers optimized on the use of technology as an instructional approach to help Long-Term English Learners learn academic content.

**Peer Tutoring**

Research shows peer tutoring is an effective instructional approach for English Language Learners (Arreaga-Meyer, 1998). The use of peer tutoring as an instructional approach was mentioned by several teachers as a teaching method they use with their Long-Term English Learners. Diana’s form of peer tutoring is described, “I use a lot of cooperative groups so that the students can help each other when they are doing independent work.” However, Diana’s form of peer tutoring is reflected through the use of cooperative groups. Her rationale is for her students to help each other in learning.

Linda is more descriptive in discussing her rationale for using peer tutoring as an instructional approach:

I try to pair them up. I don’t try to do it by ability anymore because one high one low because one was always the high was always taking over so I just you know proximity you go together you go.

Linda explained that she does not pair them up by ability rather by proximity. She uses this approach to allow her Long-Term English Learner to be able to work with everyone in their class regardless of their ability levels. She uses this approach do her past experience of her higher performing students would take over and making the instructional approach ineffective. Mary stated, “I pair them up with somebody who is bilingual but somebody very proficient.” Mary describes pairing up her Long-Term English Learners with someone who is bilingual but proficient, however, does not provide rationale for this decision. The assumption is going to be
made the peer tutor is proficient in both languages and will use that proficiency to assist their Long-Term English Learner peer.

**Additional Instructional Approaches and Teaching Methods**

The above instructional approaches resurrected as reoccurring topics in the data. Furthermore, through the data analysis, teachers had mentioned a few additional instructional approaches they provided to assist their Long-Term English Learners’ academic learning. Irene stated, “I always have to provide them with extra resources.” Diana shared, “When I see these students are struggling with the content, I have to have additional resources.” Both Irene and Diana, shared they have to have additional resources for these students, however, they were not specific as to exactly what those resources were and how they were used. Mary provided the most details on using additional instructional approaches:

You really don’t hear a lot of classes doing chorale reading…sometimes teachers are just playing the tape or sometimes it’s just one student reading and some are not paying attention, and it’s usually the kids that we are talking about…I have to tell them ‘I don’t hear everyone reading we are going to start again…once they realize that I am serious about it its line *nimodo* [too bad] everyone has to read.

Mary described how she used the instructional approach of chorale reading to get her Long-Term English learners to engage in their reading skills. She mentioned how she prefers to have the students read aloud rather than playing the cassette tape, which in her experiences, disengages her Long-Term English Learners from the lessons. Teachers providing these additional instructional approaches displays they are resourceful and knowledgeable in a variety of instructional approaches and teaching methods, a trait that will be discussed in the subsequent section.
Conclusion

Data analysis found teachers had to make decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content based on the type of instruction for elementary Long-Term English Learners. The needs included modified instruction, vocabulary-centered instruction, and differentiated instruction. The next section will discuss how teachers based their decisions on the type of teachers they reflected: effective and responsible.

Types of Teachers

Teacher quality is an important, if not the most important, school-related factor in student academic performance (Rockoff, 2004; Rivkin, Hanuskek, & Kain, 2005). Teachers therefore need to be mindful of their ELL students’ characteristics and needs when designing instruction. The challenges associated with teaching ELLs are a lot greater than teaching the typical student. Teachers must know how to intervene educationally with students whose personal and educational backgrounds are significantly different from the mainstream English-speaking student. All of the teachers interviewed expressed both concerns for these students and how they went about to provide instructional approaches and teaching methods for these students to understand and learn academic content. Data analysis of this study indicated decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods teachers used to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners were based on the type of teachers they reflected: effective and committed.

Effective Teachers

Effective teachers care about their students and demonstrate that they care to their students. Research suggests that teachers who are effective with one group of students are often effective with all groups of students as well (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Terry reflected many of
the teachers thoughts by stating the following, “I have to make decisions based on how I am going to get these students to completely understand the content.” In her statement, it is evident Terry has had to make decisions based on how she will get her Long-Term English Learners to understand rigorous academic content. As presented in the previous sections of this chapter, Terry has shared her decision making process on the instructional approaches and teaching methods she has used with her students. Terry and the other teachers interviewed in this study displayed characteristics of effective teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners that included: resourcefulness, teacher collaboration, professional development, and communicating with parents. These characteristics influenced their decisions of which instructional approaches and teaching methods they have used with their Long-Term English Learners learn academic content.

**Resourcefulness**

One of several findings emerged from this study, indicated teachers’ resourcefulness influenced how teachers decided on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners. The concept of resourcefulness presented in this study, indicates how teachers provided multiple instructional resources and were knowledgeable in a variety of effective instructional approaches. Although the word resourcefulness did not specifically come from the interview transcripts, as I analyzed the data, I kept seeing the reoccurring theme of teachers providing a variety of instructional resources to their Long-Term English Learners and having first-hand knowledge of many effective instructional resources, as seen in Diana’s response:

I do have to make a lot of decisions and I make them before, during, and after the lessons. Before I have to decide which resource I am going to use to teach a specific
lesson. Then I have to decide which resources I am going to use for the students who didn’t get the lessons. I have to make sure they are provided a variety of ways of learning the concepts like visuals, examples, discussion, peer tutoring.

Diana discussed how she makes decisions on which instructional resources she uses before, during, and after instruction. She then described how she needs to decide which resources she will need to provide to her students who struggled with the content. She then listed the instructional approaches she implemented so that her struggling students can be provided additional opportunities to learn the content. In this statement, it is evident that Diana is resourceful through knowledge of providing instructional resources before instruction, she is knowledgeable on which resources she provides to her struggling students, and she is resourceful in the fact that she is knowledgeable on effective differentiated instructional approaches. Other teachers shared the following responses:

- Sometimes we’ll create stuff based on what we have gotten on-line (Carol);
- I even go online like Ebay and Amazon and buy stuff there because now that we don’t have monies, I spend out of my pocket and buy there (Mary);
- I use a lot of the district resources, whatever our principal buys us, the library always has tons of stuff, I will buy things at Gateway or Lakeshore……and I do make a lot of my own worksheets and posters (Terry).

In their statements, Carol, Mary, and Terry shared how they provided resources for their Long-Term English Learners. In Carol’s statement, she demonstrated knowledge of creating instructional resources and using online resources for her students as well. Mary shared she buys instructional resources from online companies and is willing to pay out of her pocket due to the district’s limited funds. Mary demonstrated she is knowledgeable on shopping for instructional
resources online. Lastly, Terry shared how she used the instructional resources provided by the school district, used resources her principal purchased, used instructional resources from the school library, purchased instructional resources from educational specialty stores [Gateway and Lakeshore], and demonstrated knowledge of creating worksheets and posters for her students. Terry also demonstrated how she is able to supplement her instruction with library resources. Carol, Mary, and Terry displayed they are resourceful teachers which is a quality that can influence their decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they can use to teach their Long-Term English Learners academic content.

Teacher Collaboration

Research has shown that teacher collaboration positively impacts student achievement (Goodard & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). Teachers identified collaboration with other teachers as a support that influenced how they decided on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners. Teachers shared how through collaboration, they were able to discuss their students, ideas, and instructional resources.

When asked how they obtained information on improving their instruction, all teachers responded through collaborating with their colleagues as one method. Ana shared, “From my coworkers, exchanging ideas because I mean you learn every day. You learn how other teachers are helping their struggling students.” In her statement, Ana used teacher collaboration as a form of learning new ideas to help her struggling students. Terry shared:

I make sure to network when I go to in-services and give out my email to teachers I meet so that we can share… but a major plus is that I share with my grade-level ….I really rely on them sometimes.
In her statement, Terry implied that she used opportunities to collaborate with other teachers during in-services, continued the sharing of ideas by exchanging email addresses with other teachers, and how she relied on her grade-level to help her improve instruction. Linda provided the most insight on collaboration:

Literally every morning we stand out in the hallway and all we talk about is what we are going to do and try that day….like I’m gonna try this and I found this online and it’s funny sometimes because I spend a lot of time preparing my lessons and planning for the next day and sometimes just from hearing my grade-level talk about what they are going to try that is new or different, I’m hooked and all that planning goes out the door…but it’s OK because I trust them and they are not going to give me bad ideas.

In her observations, Linda described how through her collaboration with her colleagues, she has sometimes had to make decisions that change her original lesson plans so that she can be able to try different approaches to teaching her students. She also mentioned how she trusts her grade-level enough to provide her with the most effective ideas. It was evident through collaboration with their colleagues, teachers were able to continue learning more about instructional resources and instructional approaches that they can utilize with their Long-Term English Learners and continue capitalizing on their resourcefulness. In addition, teacher collaboration can influence the decisions teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learner on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they will use to teach academic content, as seen in this study.

Professional Development

An increasingly large body of research has established that teachers with good professional preparation make a difference in students’ learning (Darling-Hammond, 2002;
Haycock, 1998; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Many teachers have reported that they need long term professional development in order to use effective instructional practices and address the needs of ELLs (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Tellez & Waxman, 2006).

It is critical for the success of all ELLs that teachers provide them with the most effective teaching strategies that will maximize and capitalize on their academic learning. Teachers who stay current and attend professional development opportunities show attributes of taking responsibility for their profession. In this study, teachers identified professional development as a support that influenced how they made decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used for their Long-Term English Learners.

When teachers were asked if they had attended professional development that specifically, addressed Long-Term English Learners, all teachers responded no. Only six teachers discussed having some form of professional development in which they took the information learned and applied it their instructional approaches and teaching methods for their Long-Term English Learners. Surprisingly, only two teachers referred to being trained with the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Echeverria, Vogt, & Short, 2004) SIOP model that has been proven and effective model for teaching English Language Learners. Other forms of professional development teachers mentioned were being trained on English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), which are the former TEKS for second language acquisition in the state of Texas, professional development on curriculum programs provided by the district, and observing their colleagues to gain ideas on instructional approaches and teaching methods.

In their descriptions, Laura and Diana described how they felt about the SIOP trainings and some of the SIOP strategies they used for their Long-Term English Learners.
• The SIOP training I thought was very good…very interesting where you have to use their prior background knowledge and all that stuff but it was a good training (Laura);

• I have only had ELPS trainings and SIOP training…. and they mainly showed us strategies on how to teach ELLs….and a lot of information on breaking the language barrier. We learned a lot of strategies on how to help acquire the language. There were some real great ideas for the classroom and I try to use some of the strategies (Diana).

Laura provided insight as to what she liked about the SIOP training; it was the strategy of using students’ prior knowledge. Diana shared that she tried some of the strategies she learned from the SIOP training with her Long-Term English Learners but does not specify as to which strategies she has used. It was evident that both Laura and Diana have been trained on effective strategies for ELLs however, only Diana shares she had made decisions to use effective researched-based instructional strategies to help their Long-Term English Learners learn academic content.

Another form of professional growth teachers used to maximize their teaching skills is the observation of each other. Terry stated, “I am also open to observing other teachers to get new ideas…with all of the new changes in the STAAR assessment, I have to be ready and stay current.” Terry, a veteran of 25 years, shared she is still open to observing other teachers to get further ideas, prepare for the new assessments, and stay current on instructional approaches and teaching methods. Terry demonstrated that she is still willing to grow professionally by observing other teachers, being prepared for new changes, and staying current in educational issues.

Ana, a veteran of twenty-seven years, shared, “It doesn’t matter how experienced you are or if you teach a certain way…if I go and observe another teacher it is so advantageous.” In her
statement, Ana described observing another teacher as advantageous. These teachers made decisions to continue growing in their professions so in return they can provide effective instructional approaches and teaching methods to their students. The impact of professional development can influence teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learner on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they will use to teach academic content, as seen in this study.

*Communicator with Parents*

Research on effective teaching of ELLs supports the importance of communicating with parents (Tinkunoff, 1983). In discussing how teachers decided on the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners, participants’ shared their experiences with these students’ parents. Earlier in this chapter, teachers discussed their frustrations on the part of parents when they were unable to assist their children with their academics and English language development. Therefore, lack of parental support was identified as a need of Long-Term English Learners. Several teachers were vocal about the need to communicate effectively with parents on their child’s progress. Through this bridge of communication, teachers are able to provide parents with ideas and suggestions on how to help their children with homework assignments and studying skills.

Mary shared “I’m having parent conferences all the time. I have to keep the parent abreast of what is going on.” In her comment, Mary points out that she is always conferencing with her students’ parents and keeping them informed about their progress. Terry shared:

When I conference with them [parents], I give them some ideas on how they can help at home. I also send them with our parent liaison so that they can be provided with assistance in helping their children with homework.
In her statement, Terry described her proactive approach on how she conferenced with her parents about their child’s progress and how she assisted her parents with ideas on how to help with their child’s homework assignments. In addition, Terry described how she involved the school’s parent liaison as another resource in helping parents gain further ideas on how to help their children’s homework assignments.

Irene was more specific on her experiences with her parents. She shared:

Parents of these students come in and ask for help…so I show them all the books that we read, samples of work that we do, and if I have extra resources like readers [story booklets], I will let them borrow them.

In her statement, Irene shared how she explained to her students’ parents the resources and type of work she used with her students. She even allowed her parents to borrow school resources to help their children at home. It is evident that Mary, Terry, and Irene used parent communication as a source of support that influenced their decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use to help their Long-Term English Learners.

In sum, data analysis of this study suggested that teachers made decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to their Long-Term English Learners based on the type of teacher they characterized: effective Committed Teachers

Teacher commitment has been identified as one of the most critical factors for the future success of education and schools (Huberman, 1993). Teacher commitment is closely connected to teachers’ work performance and their ability to innovate and to integrate new ideas into their own practice, as well as having an important influence on students’ achievement in, and attitudes toward school (Firestone, 1996). Belinda reflected many of the teachers’ thoughts in her
statement, “I do what is necessary for these students to pass.” In her statement, Belinda shared her thoughts on the success of her Long-Term English Learners. In the previous sections of this chapter, Belinda has shared how she has worked with the Long-Term English Learners. Belinda and the other teachers interviewed in this study displayed characteristics of commitment to the academic success of their elementary Long-Term English Learners teachers that included: doing whatever it takes, bridging the gap, motivation, and patience. These characteristics influenced teachers decisions of which instructional approaches and teaching methods they have used with their Long-Term English Learners learn academic content.

Doing Whatever It Takes

During data analysis, I found several teachers stating they do whatever it takes to get their Long-Term English Learners to succeed academically. This idea showed that teachers interviewed in this study are committed to getting their Long-Term English Learners to succeed academically. For example, Irene shared the following:

Yes….it has come down to doing whatever it takes to get these kids to pass. Sometimes it’s very hard and frustrating because it makes no sense as to why these students have been here or were born here and have been coming to school and exposed to the English language and they still can’t exit bilingual...But I have to treat all of my students equally and have a lot of patience.

In her statement, Irene states she will do whatever it takes to get her Long-Term English Learners to pass even though she got frustrated that her students possessed so many academic gaps that has affected their bilingual status. Terry stated, “Pretty much as stressful as it gets, I cannot give up on these students and lower my expectations for them.” Terry too shared feelings of stress but displayed the commitment to continue providing her Long-Term English Learners
effective instructional approaches and teaching methods and not lowering her expectations for them. Mary shared, “as a teacher you feel frustrated because they [Long-Term English Learner] are not at the level that they are expected to be….so you do whatever it takes to bridge the gaps.” Mary shared a response similar to Irene’s by stating she has also had feelings of frustration, but is willing to do whatever it takes to bridge gaps for her Long-Term English Learners. Irene, Terry, and Mary displayed the willingness to do whatever it takes has influenced their decisions on selecting instructional approaches and teaching methods for their Long-Term English Learners to learn academic content and succeed.

_Bridging the Gap_

Effective teachers of ELLs know how to integrate language and content objectives (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Montes, 2002; Echevarria et al., 2004). When teachers are able to provide instructional approaches and teaching methods that facilitate their ELLs learning of the content and the English language, they are supporting their ELLs academic success. Earlier in this chapter, several teachers addressed the issue of elementary Long-Term English Learners possessing academic gaps. In this section, I present statements teachers made that displayed how their decisions on using specific instructional approaches and teaching methods assisted these students in addressing those gaps.

Belinda stated, “So far everything that I have used has helped at least one student understand a concept or a word.” In her statement, Belinda shared how the decisions she has made on the instructional approaches and teaching methods to use with her Long-Term English Learners have helped at least one of her students understand a concept or word. Diana shared, “I call on these students more so that they can practice the language more. And I have them read, read again, and reread for homework.” In her statement, Diana shared an instructional approach of calling on
her Long-Term English Learners more to give them opportunities to practice the language. She then described the approach of using repetition to allow her students the opportunity to practice their reading skills in class and for homework. Although not explicitly stated, both Belinda and Diana are helping their students close existing gaps through the instructional approaches they provide.

Linda provided a more detailed description as to how she applied the instructional approach of connecting learning to personal experiences with her Long-Term English Learners below:

I try to let them know where they are going to use it…when we were doing perimeter, I tell them where they are going to use perimeter like if they were going to build a little area for their dog outside a fenced in area you would need to know perimeter you need to how long you need to know the why… for multiplication and division I always use you are going to plan parties … you are going to plan parties and they are not always going to be small parties you are going to plan big parties and you are going to have to start dividing or have this many of whatever you start doing the division and or the multiplication I need five of these boxes each box had the many so I have a total of this many and when you go to HEB [Grocery store] you start estimating because if you only have 20 dollars so you start rounding as you are going along cause you have to hit that 20 ….bringing it real…you are going to use this.

In her description, Linda provided an example of how she has taught perimeter, multiplication, and division by connecting the concepts to real-life examples. Clearly, Linda has made a decision to use the instructional approach of background knowledge and personal experiences to make input comprehensible to her Long-Term English learners. Using effective
strategies assists ELLs in closing academic gaps. Terry provided a different perspective. Terry mentioned:

Obviously there is a gap somewhere and it needs to be mended. I mean the expectations have increased and the pressures are even higher so we need to start targeting instructional programs that are hindering rather than helping these students.

Terry described the existing gaps among her Long-Term English Learners. She also referred to increasing pressures and demands of the TEKS and how they will be assessed. She shared a concern on how instructional programs need be examined carefully to ensure these students are making progress. In their statements, teachers described how they provided effective instructional approaches and teaching methods to their Long-Term English Learners to facilitate their learning. Teachers displayed how notion of closing achievement gaps influenced their decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used for their Long-Term English Learners.

**Patience**

Teachers of ELLs need to have reasonable expectations for their students to avoid disappointment and frustration on both sides. Teachers, who are committed to their students, display the attribute of patience. Although a few teachers explicitly stated they were patient with their Long-Term English Learners, through data analysis, seven teachers displayed the attribute of patience when they discussed their experiences with this student group. For example, Linda shared the following:

I think we are going more for quality than quantity. And that makes a big difference. And it will with those kids. And if we are not ready on Friday test then we are not ready. And
you can’t push that. Because then they shut down. Because if I keep going and going and
going but I’m leaving some behind they are going to shut down on you.

In her statement, Linda described that she focused more on the quality of her teaching rather
than the quantity. This statement can be interpreted to reflect that Linda focused more on getting
her Long-Term English Learners to learn academic content by providing them with effective
instructional approaches rather than teaching the lessons, assessing on Fridays, and moving on.

It is evident that Linda made decisions not to move further until all of her students have learned
the content. She also referred to her Long-Term English Learners shutting down on her if she
just keeps teaching lessons and testing every Friday resulting in widening academic gaps.

Through her statements, it is apparent Linda is patient with the amount if time it takes for of her
Long-Term English Learners to learn academic content. Ana shared a similar response by
stating, “I make sure to cover everything, I pace myself, and not move forward until they [Long-
Term English Students] get it.” In her statement, Ana showed her patience through paced
instruction and not moving on until her Long-Term English Learners understand and learned the
academic content. Linda and Ana both revealed how being patient with the learning of their
Long-Term English Learners through paced instruction and providing ample time for learning
content influenced their decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they
used to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners.

Motivation

Motivation is a powerful influence on the learning process. Opportunities for students to
experience success are an important part of creating classrooms conducive to potential learning.
The learning environment can support and change student motivation. Practices implemented to
encourage motivation include providing relevant instruction that actively engages students and
helping students form positive peer connections (Ainley, 2004). Motivating students consists of making students receptive to and excited about learning, as well as making them aware of the importance and value of learning itself.

In terms of motivation, Diana shared, “Well, motivating these students has been successful. I have had these students come into my class with no self-motivation, no parent involvement, they don’t get help with homework, and sometimes have an attitude. I have to sometimes bribe them or make deals with them and promise them free time of a movie.” In her statement, Diana shared how motivating her Long-Term English Learners through tangible reward has helped her students academically. She described how her Long-Term English learners lacked motivation, prenatal support, homework skills, and poor attitudes. Diana has had to use motivation as an instructional approach to help her Long-Term English Learners academically. Mary described

I have to search for things that will motivate them… I noticed they love anything that’s in the computer like Study Island [educational software] because of the games, but I don’t let them go the games until they have finished the lessons first.

In her statement, Mary described her use of motivation by using computers and computer software. She figured out what her Long-Term English Learners love and used it as an incentive for finishing their lessons. Both Diana and Mary displayed how motivating their students influenced their decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use to teach academic content to their Long-Term English Learners.

Closing Remarks

The aim of this study was to discover how elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English
Learners. In reviewing the interview transcripts, several comments made by the participants of this study stood out regarding personal feelings about this type of student and the educational programs they are enrolled in. Carol shared the following:

I will say that I do think it’s really sad a lot of these kids what happens to them you know I have a little girl that has been here since PK and um and its sad to see it’s not her fault…It’s sad to see her struggle so much when she has been given the same opportunity…this one little girl I mean her agenda is always signed, she always has her homework whether its right or wrong, she listens, she does everything that she is supposed to do to get to where she needs to be and I think it’s so discouraging.

Carol’s statement does not mention the word patience, rather her concerns with one of her Long-Term English Learner. She described feelings of disappointment and discouragement to see her student struggle after she has been given the same educational opportunities and sees that her student does all that is expected of her. However, as disappointed and discouraged as Carol seemed to be, she has shown determination and commitment to help her Long-Term English Learners succeed academically by choosing effective instructional approaches and teaching methods that will help her students learn academic content.

Terry shared the following:

So there have been many times when I have wondered why students who have been with us since PK still struggle with the language and are low academically when they reach 5th grade, so we teachers have questioned what went wrong throughout the years. Is it the program [early-exit transitional]? Is it the teachers? Is it the administration? It would be very interesting for someone to look into the program itself.
Terry described how she and her 5th grade colleagues have encountered Long-Term English Learners in their classes. She and her colleagues have questioned the bilingual program, teachers and administrators. She conveys that research should be done on the bilingual program itself. Through her statement, Terry seeks answers to understand how English Language Learners are transformed into elementary Long-Term English Learners.

Analysis of this study suggested that teachers made decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to their Long-Term English Learners based on the type of types of teachers they characterized: effective and committed.

Chapter Summary

Analyzing the series of interviews using a six-step analysis process allowed me to obtain a deeper understanding of how elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners. The themes discussed represent the most common findings relating to the research question.

The data presented in this chapter, clearly suggest that teachers proceeded through several multifaceted decisions on selecting the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners. The data revealed that the needs of elementary Long-Term English learners played a major role in the teachers’ decision making process. In addition, teachers made decisions of the types of instruction that were meaningful to the students’ learning. Lastly, their commitment to provide effective teaching for the academic achievement of these students influenced the decisions these teachers made on selecting instructional approaches and teaching methods. The next chapter presents the findings and the
interpretation regarding how teachers decided on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to their elementary Long-Term English Learners.
CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research study was to determine how teachers of elementary Long-Tern English Learners decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content to these students at a South Texas school district. This chapter brings this dissertation study to a close. The first section discusses a brief summary of elementary Long-Tern English Learners and how the study was conducted. The second section reviews the findings based on the data analysis. Based on the findings of this study, the next section reports my conclusions on the findings related to the research question which lead to numerous. The conclusions found in this study lead to a number of educational implications that will be presented in the section following the findings. Finally, suggestions for future research are provided.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners in a South Texas school district. Of particular interest was how teachers worked on getting this student population to be academically successful and close the achievement gaps among these students. Studies on Long-Term English Learners have mainly focused on secondary students. However, this type of student also exists at the elementary level. This study sought to add to the body of research on elementary Long-Term English Learners and their teachers.

Research (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercurri, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Olsen, 2010) found that Long-Term English Learners are orally proficient for social purposes in English and
their native language. However, their skills in academic English are several grade levels below in reading and writing and all other subject areas, resulting in poor overall academic performance. As a result, although Long-Term English Learners are orally bilingual when using language social contexts, they typically have limited academic literacy skills in English or in their native languages. In a definition of academic literacy proposed by Short and Fitzsimmons (2007), Long-Term English Learners typically have limited academic literacy, which impacts their performance in language arts as well all other subject areas where instruction is rooted in an assumption that high levels of academic literacy have previously been attained (Menken & Kleyn, 2009). In general, very little research exists about this student population (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri 2002, Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix 2000), and there is even less research on elementary Long-Term English Learners and on elementary teachers of Long-Term English Learners.

The research question that was addressed in this study aimed to understand how teachers decide on instructional methods to help Long-Term English Learners to be academically successful. The research question was:

How do elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods to Long-Term English Learner when teaching academic content to these students?

This study was conducted in a South Texas school district with approximately 22,000 students enrolled in the elementary grades. Over 96% percent of the population is Hispanic and 33% of these students were classified as “Limited English Proficient”. The teachers who participated in this study are teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners. Ten teachers were selected to be interviewed based on set criteria.
In Chapter 1, I introduced my study and my interests in teachers who work with elementary Long-Term English Learners and the problem statement. In discussing the context and the research problem, I reviewed information on the little research that has been done on Long-Term English Language Learners, the academic characteristics of these students, and the issues and concerns teachers of Long-Term English Language Learners have encountered in teaching these students. I then: provided a brief description on the setting, participants, and research methodology that would be used in this study; and then discussed the research problem, methodology and the purpose of the study. The main objective was to explore how teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners decided on the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content to these students.

In Chapter 2, I provided a review on the literature related to my research question: How do elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Language Learners? Chapter 3, provided a review of the research methodology implemented in this qualitative study. My main method for collecting data included using semi-structured interviews (Brenner, 2006; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Merriam, 2009) with the ten teacher participants from a large school district in South Texas.

Furthermore, in Chapter 3, I described the six-level process of data analysis to uncover specificities of how teachers decided on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners. The analysis was grounded in a qualitative interview approach, which enabled me to gain an insider perspective as to the decision processes these teachers go through when deciding how to teach academic content.
The first level of analysis included transcribing verbatim all of the interviews and I began reading and rereading the transcripts from the ten teacher participants to gain a general sense of the data (Cresswell, 2009; Ladapat & Lindsy, 1999). In this step, interviews were transcribed in a sentence by sentence or phrase format that allowed me to read each sentence and phrase in detail and begin locating key terms. In the second level of analysis I created a second column to the interview transcript to begin pulling out key terms form the interview statements. All identified key terms were placed on this column. I then created a second table in which I placed all key terms under each research question to allow me to view the data in an alternate way. In step 3, I then began to categorize all of the key terms into topics by adding a third column to the transcripts. In this step I also grouped my interview questions into three main topics to allow me to organize the data.

In step 4, I categorized my first topic to create one theme that I called experiences with elementary Long-Term English Learners. In this step I also categorized all topics into subtopics using Spradley’s (1979) semantic relationships in creating the subcategories. In steps 5 and 6, I used the exact same steps I used in Step 4 to create the other themes of type of instruction and types of teachers. Employing multiple steps of data analysis allowed me to systematically analyze the data one step at a time to uncover information on how teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods used to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Language Learners. As I conducted each level of analysis, I found that it was necessary to continue analyzing data to obtain more in-depth understanding about how teachers made decisions on teaching academic content to this student group.

In chapter 4, I present how I analyzed the data using the transcribed interview transcripts. Reoccurring themes in this study showcased that teachers made decisions based on the needs of
elementary Long-Term English Language Learners, types of instruction, and types of teachers. The teacher participants described the language, literacy, and academic needs that elementary Long-Term English Language Learners encompassed, the type of instruction these students needed to learn academic content, and the type of teachers these teachers characterized as: effective and committed.

Findings and Interpretations

Long-Term English Learners are students who have attended schools in the U.S. for seven or more years and still require English language support that hinders the academic performance in the English language (Menken & Kleyn, 2007; Olsen, 2010). These students are commonly found in secondary schools; however, Long-Term English Learners exist in elementary schools, mainly in the upper grade-levels. Very little research exists about this student group or on teachers who work with these students. In order to address this issue, the dissertation study explores how elementary teachers of Long-Term English Learners decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods for these students to learn academic content.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the research question: How do elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners? In analyzing the interviews to gain insider understandings about how elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods the use to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners, I used a six-step process of analysis. This analytic process enabled me to probe progressively more in depth into what the teachers were saying. By analyzing interviews one by one and then examining common themes across teachers’ experiences and decision making, I was able to identify three
overarching themes and their subcategories. The three themes were “Needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners”, “Type of Instruction”, and “Types of Teachers.”

In this section, I present major findings for each theme. For needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners, I found that teachers made decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content based on the language, literacy, and academic needs of their students. For types of instruction, I found teachers made decisions to provide a variety of instructional approaches and teaching methods that were centered around modified-type of instruction, vocabulary-centered type of instruction, and differentiated-type of instruction. Lastly, for types of teachers, I found teacher made decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used for their Long-Term English Learners based on the types of teachers they characterized: effective and committed. The following sections will provide more description on the findings of this study.

Findings Related to Needs of Elementary Long-Term English Learners

In most of the interviews, when teachers referred to their experiences in teaching elementary Long-Term English Learners, they described the many needs that these students possessed. Teachers shared the needs their Long-Term English Learners encompassed. The needs were very similar to secondary Long-Term English Learners (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercurri, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2009). These needs were categorized into three subcategories that included: language needs, literacy needs, and academic needs.

Findings of this study indicated teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners based their decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content on the language needs of these students. More specific language needs
included no control of the languages, lack of knowledge of the English language, using L1 a lot, low self-esteem, not practicing the language, little or no parental support.

Several discussed they found their Long-Term English learners had not developed their first language accordingly therefore resulting in weak control of the English language. Teachers cited having no first language foundation as a reason these students have language needs. In addition, teachers found that these students applied weak English language skills in both social and academic settings. They felt their students lacked knowledge of basic English language structures hindering their learning of academic content. Several teachers discussed how they heard their elementary Long-Term English Learners use their L1 to ask questions, give answers, and in expressing themselves in the classroom even though their instruction was all in English. The use of L1 for answering, participating, and talking is very uncommon for this student group given their status of the bilingual program they were enrolled in and the exposure to the English language they have received in their schooling.

Teachers addressed their Long-Term English learners’ lack of English language proficiency influenced their self-esteem. Teachers shared these students avoided classroom discussions, reading aloud, and participation due to their English language proficiency skills. Teachers felt that their elementary Long-Term English Learners still did not practice the English language in the classroom after being provided with many opportunities to do so. In addition, teachers cited that lack of parental support of English language development has played a major role in these students not acquiring English language proficiency after so many years of schooling in the US. As the findings indicate, teachers had to consider their Long-Term English Learners’ language needs when deciding the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content.
Another important factor I identified while analyzing the transcribed data is revealed during the teachers description of the literacy needs of their Long-Term English Learners. Findings of this study indicated that the participants, teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners, based their decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content on the literacy needs of these students. These needs included: poor reading skills, little or no comprehension, poor writing skills, and low self-esteem. Teachers were able to describe how they noticed their Long-Term English Learners lacked many critical skills needed for reading fluently, reading all genres, comprehending, and learning and understanding new vocabulary in the English language. Teachers found these students possessed weak and poor reeding skills. Teachers described these students lacked basic phonics, word reading skills, and fluency. As a result of poor reading skills, teachers described their elementary Long-Term English Learners also possessed little or no comprehension skills. These students lacked comprehension skills they needed to understand reading passages, academic content in textbooks, and internalizing new knowledge.

Like language needs, teacher participants also connected poor reading skills with low self-esteem. Teachers discussed students’ rarely read aloud and avoided having to read. Teachers correlated poor reading skills with poor writing skills for these students. Teachers discussed how the academic writing for these students was extremely weak. Teachers felt they lacked the cognitive requirements necessary to produce academic writing. As findings indicated, Long-Term English Learners limited literacy skills was were determining factors on how teachers decided in the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content.

Findings of this study indicated teachers based their decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners’ on
their academic needs. Academic needs teachers addressed were: limited academic vocabulary, academic gaps, constant modified instruction, poor performance on standardized of standardized tests, retention, low self-esteem, little or no home support, and academic gaps in science.

Teachers noted the high demands of academic vocabulary in all the subject areas and cited these students as having extremely limited academic vocabulary that hindered their learning of academic content. Teachers felt academic vocabulary is vital to learning academic content and centered around their daily teaching. Teachers noted their Long-Term English Learners were academically behind compared to their all English students. Teachers discussed the need to find ways to fuse existing academic gaps in order to ensure academic success for their Long-Term English Learners.

Several teachers noted they faced challenges in teaching retained elementary Long-Term English Learners. Retained Long-Term English Learners posed major challenges to the teachers interviewed in this study due to the severity of the academic gaps they encompassed. Teachers expressed needing to make critical decisions on providing these students the most effective instructional approaches and teaching methods so these students would not be retained further. Teachers also associated lack of parental involvement to poor academic performance among elementary Long-Term English Learners. They identified the importance and power of parental support of their children’s academic success. Like language needs teachers felt their Long-Term English Learners lacked the parental support they needed to continue their academic learning in their home environments. Like language needs and literacy needs, teachers felt these students possessed low self-esteem that influenced their academic needs. Teachers referred to these students reach a level of frustration that greatly influences their motivation to participate in class and engage in lessons.
Due to the nature of state standardized testing in the fourth and fifth grade levels, teachers brought up how these students generally do not meet passing standards on English state standardized tests in the areas of Reading, Math, Writing, and Science. Due to the rigorous state standardized testing and the issues of accountability, several teachers discussed the lack of academic performance on standardized assessments among elementary Long-Term English Learners as an academic need. It was evident the state standardized assessments influenced the decisions teachers made on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they provided for their Long-Term English Learners. When teachers were asked how they prepared their Long-Term English Learners for science, many teachers touched upon the challenges of teaching this subject because of how these students had many academic gaps in this subject area. Academic gaps in this subject area were associated with language and literacy needs these students lacked. Teachers felt these needs influence to their learning and understanding of scientific concepts.

As a final analysis of the needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners, it was evident that each need influenced each other in a systematical form (Figure 4.1). The determining cause of this can be interpreted as follows: When students lack the foundation of their first language, it will hinder their development of their second language. When students lack development of English language proficiency, it will deter their development of their literacy skills. When students lack literacy skills, it will interfere with their performance in academic setting. Teachers interviewed in this study were able to discuss their teaching experiences with Long-Term English Learners and identify three major needs these students encompassed: language, literacy, and academic needs. Due to the identification of these needs, teachers had to make decisions of the instructional approaches and teaching methods used to teach academic content to their Long-Term English Learners.
Findings Related to Type of Instruction

When teachers were asked to discuss the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used for their elementary Long-Term English Learners, they provided rich dialogue and shared many experiences. Analyzing the data led me to conclude that elementary teachers decided on specific instructional approaches and teaching methods based on the type of instruction they felt they needed to provide to these students to learn academic content. I found teachers made decisions to provide a variety of instructional approaches and teaching methods that were centered around modified-type of instruction, vocabulary-centered type of instruction, and differentiated-type of instructions.

When teachers began to discuss the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to their Long-Term English Learners, many referred to using modified-type instructional approaches and teaching methods. Teachers discussed providing several forms of modified instruction to include: using L1 to teach, explain, and clarify, lowered instructional levels and shortened assignments, and use reteaching and repetition techniques for these students. One of the main reoccurring themes revealed in this study was teachers found themselves needing to use the students’ L1 for teaching, explaining, and clarifying. As mentioned in the previous findings, teachers addressed the notion that their Long-Term English Learners used their L1 in both social and academic settings. As teachers assessed their students’ learning, they found that they needed to continue to use the students’ L1 consistently to assist in their learning and understanding of academic content. Teachers felt strongly about using this instructional approach as a means to facilitate learning for their Long-Term English Learners.

Teachers also identified decisions to provide lowered levels of instructional and teaching to help their elementary Long-Term English Learners. In this form of modified instruction,
teachers referred to the use of teaching content using simpler terms or using instructional resources that were at a lower level. Teachers justified this method as providing instruction at their level and scaffolding from that level rather than “watering down the curriculum.” Teachers felt this was detrimental in helping their Long-Term English Learners to begin understanding rigorous academic content. Data analysis also revealed teachers implemented the instructional approaches and teaching methods of reteaching and repetition as forms of modified instruction. Teachers felt that in order for their Long-Term English Learners to really internalize the instruction they were receiving, teachers needed to provide additional reteaching and repetition of the content. They felt this form of instructional assisted their students in retaining information.

In addition, findings of this study indicated all teachers made decisions on using vocabulary-centered instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic vocabulary to Long-Term English Learners. Teachers connected the need to learn and understand academic vocabulary to learn and understand academic content as an inevitable need for these students. In as much, teachers addressed a number of instructional approaches and they used to teacher vocabulary: intense vocabulary instruction, using synonyms and cognates, and preparing students to pass state assessments. Several teachers discussed they spent substantial amounts of instructional time teaching new vocabulary words. Vocabulary teaching was described to be explicit, direct, engaging, and differentiated. Opportunities to learn also included defining, drawing, visuals, and discussions. It was evident teachers felt they needed to provide comprehensible instructional approaches to teaching academic vocabulary to their Long-Term English Learners. In continuing the need to make academic vocabulary more comprehensible to their Long-Term English Learners, teachers made decisions to use cognates and synonyms as an
instructional approach. The influence of state standardized assessments was also a determining factor on why teachers provided intense vocabulary-centered instruction. Teachers referred to the need of teaching vocabulary in order for students to pass state standardized tests. These experienced teachers were aware of the immense amounts of academic vocabulary words state standardized tests encompassed. They displayed assurances that indicated students would meet passing standards on state standardized tests possessing a strong academic vocabulary bank. It was evident the teachers within this study made decisions to provide multifaceted means to give students access to academic vocabulary words in ways that went beyond looking up and reciting definitions.

Furthermore, when teachers were asked how they went about choosing specific strategies for their Long-Term English Learners, they provided several rationales. Some of those rationales were based on the needs of these students, students’ backgrounds, lessons’ goals and objectives, standardized testing, and providing different learning opportunities for these students to learn academic content through differentiated instruction. Teachers cited a number of instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content used consistently with these students that included: using prior knowledge, using visuals, hands-on learning, supplemental lessons, classroom discussions, using technology, and peer tutoring. Several teachers referred to having to use students’ prior knowledge and experiences to facilitate learning for their Long-Term English Learners. Teachers were aware that their students come in with their range of backgrounds and experiences. Teachers capitalized on students’ background knowledge and experiences so that students were able to make connections with new content, engaged in the lessons, and make the learning become more meaningful and relevant for them. It
was evident teachers made decisions to use this instructional approach to assist their Long-Term English Learner in learning academic content.

Several teachers referred to using visuals as an effective instructional approach for their Long-Term English Learners. Teachers stressed using visuals such as pictures, graphic organizers, and story maps were valuable in allowing students to understand and internalize academic content and academic vocabulary. The use of supplemental lessons with Long-Term English Learners was another form of differentiated instruction teachers referred to during the interviews. Teachers described the use of supplemental lessons as a need for these students to be able to view and learning content by providing a wide range of supplemental teaching. Teachers linked students’ alternative learning with this instructional approach.

Allowing elementary Long-Term English Learners to discuss academic content was an additional decision teachers described. Although it was not explicitly stated, it was evident that teachers provided opportunities to discuss content so that these students could develop their academic registers. Teachers did state they provided these opportunities for their Long-Term English Learners to develop their English language proficiency and to learn the academic content. Opportunities to discuss content also served as means to help with students who had low-self esteem build their self esteem to the point where they are comfortable enough the participate more in class.

While Long-Term English Learners may have difficulty with academic skills, they display proficiency when it comes to the media literacies necessary to go on-line and communicate via different technologies. As teachers discussed which instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content, several teachers stated they used technology as an instructional approach with their Long-Term English Learners. The forms of
technology teachers referred to in this study consisted mainly of incorporating Internet videos and websites, teaching with PowerPoints, supplementing with computer software programs, and utilizing ELMOs and document readers. Teachers used these instructional approaches to capitalize on the students’ literacies and allow their Long-Term English Learners to learn content in an alternative way. Lastly, the use of peer tutoring as an instructional approach was mentioned by several teachers as a teaching method they use with their Long-Term English Learners. The forms of peer tutoring varied between teachers. Teachers discussed their use of peer tutoring to also include cooperative learning. It was evident they used a ‘peers helping peers’ approach whether it was in the form of pairs or groups. Teachers mentioned their preferences as to how they implemented peer tutoring to include Long-Term English Learners with native English speakers, Long-Term English Learners with other ELLs, or Long-Term English Learners with students sitting next to them (proximity). All in all, teachers made decisions to implement this instructional approach as a means to help their Long-Term English Learners.

While the effective instructional approaches for Long-Term English Learners is still an area where greater research is needed, based on the findings of this study, I found that elementary teachers based their decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content were based on the types of instruction they felt their Long-Term English Learners needed to succeed academically. It was evident teachers chose these instructional approaches and teaching methods to aid in the needs listed in the previous section.

**Findings Related to Types of Teachers**

Findings of this study indicated decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods teachers used to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners
were based on the type of teachers they reflected: effective and committed. Through data analysis, it was evident all teachers fell into these two categories.

1) Effective: All teachers have made decisions to provide effective instructional approaches and teaching methods that amalgamate language, literacy, and academic needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners.

2) Committed: All teachers are committed to the academic success of their elementary Long-Term English Learners. This commitment influences the decisions teachers make on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to their Long-Term English Learners.

Teachers interviewed in this study displayed characteristics of effective teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners that included: resourcefulness, teacher collaboration, professional development, and communicating with parents. One of several findings emerged from this study, indicated teachers’ resourcefulness influenced how teachers decided on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners. Resourcefulness in this study referred to the knowledge teachers comprised in instructional strategies and instructional resources. Through data analysis, it was apparent; teachers provided an array of instructional strategies and resources to the identified needs of their Long-Term English Learners.

Teachers identified collaboration as a support that influenced how they decided on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners. Through collaboration teachers shared they learned more, acquired more, and gained more knowledge in their teaching profession. It was evident teachers trusted and relied on their colleagues and capitalized on each other’s strengths as a
means of providing the most effective instructional approaches and teaching methods to their Long-Term English Learners. Professional growth in this study was identified as attending professional development opportunities alongside observing other teachers. Teachers made decisions to continue growing in their professions so in return they can provide effective instructional approaches and teaching methods to their students regardless the number of years teaching they had. Also professional development served as an opportunity for teachers to be open to new ideas, prepared for change, and stay current in their fields. Lastly, teachers showed they were effective in that they used parent communication as a source of support that influenced their decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use to help their Long-Term English Learners. Teachers described how they formed relationships with their students’ parents to be able to support parents in reinforcing language, literacy, and academic support of their Long-Term English Learners.

Furthermore, teachers interviewed in this study displayed characteristics of commitment to the academic success of their elementary Long-Term English Learners teachers that included: doing whatever it takes, bridging the gap, motivation, and patience. Teachers displayed the willingness to do whatever it takes as an influence in their decisions on selecting instructional approaches and teaching methods for their Long-Term English Learners to learn academic content and succeed. As teachers discussed how they provided effective instructional approaches and teaching methods, teachers constantly reminded that they will do whatever it takes to get their Long-Term English Learners to pass. Teachers displayed how the notion of closing achievement gaps influenced their decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used for their Long-Term English Learners. They displayed this notion as they described the type on instruction they provided to their students to help them understand
academic content. Although they shared at times, their students’ progress was minimal; they still continued their commitment to help these students succeed. Teachers revealed how being patient with the learning of their Long-Term English Learners through paced instruction and providing ample time for learning content influenced their decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners. Even though teachers discussed the many needs of their Long-Term English Learners, the rigor of the TEKS, and high stakes testing, it was evident teachers remained patient with the learning of their students and through their commitment, made decisions to provide instructional approaches and teaching methods that allowed them to pace their instructional, cover all grade-level content timely, prepare students for state assessments, and bridge academic gaps. Lastly, teachers displayed how motivating their students influenced their decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to their Long-Term English Learners. They found motivation as a useful approach to help students build up their self-esteem, participate more, and improve in their academic performances. Even though teachers described motivating students consisted of tangible rewards, they found this method to be effective with the learning of their elementary Long-Term English Learners.

In sum, findings of this study revealed decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods teachers used to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners were based on the type of teacher categories they reflected: effective and committed.

*Findings Summary*

A common characteristic of Long-Term English Learners is that they are not doing well academically. They are not progressing in English language development as would normatively be expected, and they struggle with the academic work expected of them. Long-Term English
Learners struggle academically at several years below grade level. In addition, Long-Term English Learners have weak academic language and significant gaps in reading and writing. Long-Term English Learners typically have been enrolled in U.S. schools for at least seven years, yet still have not reached the criteria for reclassification as fluent in English due to their poor academic performance in language and academic content. They have spent most or all of their lives in the United States and do not share the newcomer’s unfamiliarity with the culture or lack of exposure to English.

Due to the nature of this student, this study was designed to investigate how teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content to these students. Analysis of semi-structured interviews revealed teachers made decisions based on the needs of their Long-Term English Learners: language, literacy, and academic, types on instruction: modified, vocabulary-centered, differentiated, and types of teachers categories they characterized: effective and committed. Figure 5.1 provides a graphical representation of the research questions and findings of this study.
The analysis of the findings have led to three closely related conclusions. The first single conclusion that can be drawn from the findings of this dissertation is that it is difficult for teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners to teach rigorous academic content in English when these students possess so many gaps that need to be bridge to facilitate learning and understanding academic content. The second conclusion drawn form this study is that teachers of elementary Long-Term English were capable of providing balancing approaches by providing different types of instruction using students’ L1, develop students’ academic English language proficiency, and teach academic content simultaneously. And thirdly, effective and committed teachers are those who tackle the difficulties to make effective decisions and believe Long-Term English Learners have the capability of being academically successful, are
knowledgeable and resourceful, and provide effective instructional approaches and teaching methods that target the needs of these students while teaching academic content.

**Difficulties for Teachers of Elementary Long-Term English Learners**

The first conclusion drawn from this study is that it is difficult for teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners to teach rigorous academic content in English when these students possess so many gaps that need to be filled so that they can begin to learn and understand academic content. The first finding of this dissertation described the many challenges elementary teachers faced with this student group. Teachers shared their Long-Term English Learners encompassed language needs, literacy needs, and academic needs that interfered with their learning and understanding of grade-level English academic content. Research (Freeman, Freeman, & Mecurri, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2007, Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007) has found secondary Long-Term English Learners encompassed similar needs. The teacher who expressed several concerns was Melissa, “they still don’t know their sounds…..they still don’t know basic reading...they are still at a level that is two grade levels below, so sometimes it’s just baffling.” Based on the findings of this study, teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners have to make the most appropriate decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods to implement in their teaching for their students to learn academic content. Teachers have to consider language, literacy, and academic needs when making those critical decisions. Consequently, no conclusion can be drawn as to how their students became Long-Term English Learners. This conclusion is consistent with research (Menken & Kleyn, 2009) that examined the needs of secondary Long-Term English Learners.
Using a Balanced Approach

Although teachers described their Long-Term English Learners with so many gaps, they were able to provide in-depth accounts as to how they made decisions to provide specific instructional approaches and teaching methods to meet the needs of their students while teaching academic content. The second conclusion drawn from this study is that teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners were capable of balancing instruction by providing different types of instruction using students’ L1, develop students’ academic English language proficiency, and teach academic content simultaneously. Even though several teachers provided modified types of instruction, it was evident the reasons for making those decisions was to assist in closing academic gaps and making academic content comprehensible for these students. With the other types of instruction teachers provided, vocabulary-centered and differentiated, teachers made decisions to implement these approaches to allow their Long-Term English Learners to learn and understand academic content through use of their L1 while building their literacy skills in English, and being provided different opportunities to learn content and language skills.

Teachers showed they were capable of balancing different forms of instruction to meet the needs of their students and teach academic content simultaneously. This conclusion is consistent with research (Hite & Evans, 2006) that found teachers who used students’ native language instruction with a wide variety of effective teaching practices with ELLs, were successful in making content comprehensible for their students.

Effective and Committed Teachers for Elementary Long-Term English Learners

The research on expectations and student achievement in general supports the importance of high expectations. ELLs will achieve more when teachers send the clear message that they can, and will, succeed (Garcia, 1987; Samway & McKeon, 1999), as do these participants. This
research is consistent with the third conclusion drawn from this study. The third conclusion drawn is effective and committed teachers are those who tackle the difficulties to make effective decisions and believe Long-Term English Learners have the capability of being academically successful, are knowledgeable and resourceful, and provide efficient instructional approaches and teaching methods that target the needs of these students while teaching academic content. Although the teachers interviewed in this study described many needs their elementary Long-Term English Learners possessed and shared feelings of frustration, they still displayed effective and committed attributes that allowed them to make decisions on providing these students with effective instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content and bridge academic gaps. In as much, they displayed knowledge and showed their resourcefulness on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they employed with their Long-Term English Learners. Also, teachers showed their commitment by not lowering their standards and expectations, treating students equally, and doing whatever it takes to bridge gaps for these students succeed academically.
Implications

The three findings from this study have direct implications the students, educators, and family members who want to help. Additionally, there are political implications.

**Implications for Elementary Long-Term English Learners**

The implications for elementary Long-Term English Language Learners, based on the research conducted in this study, are directly related to language, literacy, and academic needs that have show to be detrimental in closing academic gaps. The focus on these gaps begins with effective and committed teachers providing instructional approaches and teaching methods necessary for these students to learn academic content. The primary implication for all elementary Long-Term English Learners is to succeed academically. The implications for students are outlined below.
(1) Elementary Long-Term English Learners need to be engaged in learning

Teachers in this study shared their Long-Term English Learners tended to be quiet, rarely participated in class, and were not inquisitive when learning academic content due to their nature of having language needs, literacy needs, and academic needs. Students possessing language, literacy, and academic gaps need to be engaged in learning which allows them opportunities to practice the language, increased literacy skills, and assists in closing academic gaps. Teachers must decide on which instructional approaches and teaching methods target students’ needs and simultaneously allows these students to learn English and learn academic content. In as much, teachers have to provide motivational strategies that entice these students to want to learn, want to participate, and want to succeed academically. It is a rather difficult and demanding task on the teachers’ part; however, meeting the needs of this student population halts the trajectory of these students becoming secondary Long-Term English Learners.

(2) Elementary Long-Term English Learners need to be provided supports that allow students to want to succeed academically

Effective and committed teachers know how to provide supports such as teaching study skills, motivation, and mentoring to students who lack interpersonal skills needed to achieve academically. Teaching students effective study skills allows students to take those skills and apply them independently when they are working on assignments, testing, or doing homework. Effective study skills facilitate students to understand and learn academic content. Examples of effective study skills should include silent reading, asking relevant questions, outlining information, taking notes, revising work, and knowing how to think about academic content. Teachers’ resourcefulness should include knowledge of effective study skills. Motivating and mentoring students to succeed is a craft effective and committed teachers possess. Building self-
esteem and listening to and accepting mentors’ advice are powerful tools that allow students to build interpersonal skills they can apply to their learning.

(3) Elementary Long-Term English Learners need to develop their L1

Content, strategies, and instruction focused on literacy skills are important but not sufficient. Long-Term English Learners need development in all four domains of their native language and the English Language (speaking, listening, reading and writing). An ELL’s native language plays an important role in their overall language and literacy development. The degree to which it is developed impacts mastery of English literacy as well. Schools have to implement mechanisms to support home language as well as English, and to teach students issues of connecting and transfer across the two languages. Students cannot be expected to develop high levels of literacy for academic work in English if they are not engaging their home language.

Implications for Educators

State and school districts have a legal responsibility to provide appropriate bilingual education programs that meet the needs of all ELLs by developing their English language proficiency and English language academic proficiency to the level required for participation in an English taught curriculum, provide effective teaching strategies, and provide teachers professional development opportunities that address the many needs of ELLs.

(1) Educators must stop the trajectory for ELLs becoming Long-Term English Learners

In order for this to occur, educators need to be able to identify the types of ELLs they serve and know the needs these students have. By knowing the types of ELLs enrolled in schools, it is easier for educators to decide what kind of instructional needs these students will need to help them succeed academically. School administrators have to prepare their teachers to be ready to work with this unique student population. Districts have to invest in their teachers by
providing them a lot of professional development opportunities to include knowledge of second language acquisition, effective teaching practices, and bilingual education models. In as much, school administrators have to closely monitor the bilingual programs to ensure students who are enrolled are transitioning successfully and not building academic gaps. Administrators must provide teachers the opportunities to vertically align bilingual program goals and objectives to ensure ELLs receive consistent and effective bilingual instruction in order to close the gaps that lead to ELLs becoming Long-Term English Learners.

(2) Educators must allow Long-Term English Learners opportunities to continue developing their L1

In addition to increasing the understanding of how teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods of elementary Long-Term English Learners, findings of this study highlight the importance of offering bilingual programs that will allow these students to better develop their first language proficiently. Because the trajectory of Long-Term English Learners begins at the elementary grade levels, it is necessary to examine bilingual education programs to ensure ELLs are developing their L1 accordingly so that learning L2 is successful for these students. It is evident from the teachers’ interview data, one of the characteristics they provided was their Long-Term English Learners have not been able to experience academic benefits that come when their native languages are developed (Cummins, 2000a; Thomas & Collier, 1997). In result, Long-Term English Learners are found to lack the academic literacy skills upon which their performance so heavily relies. Teachers in this study continued the use of students’ L1 as an instructional approach when teaching academic content. This poses as major challenge for upper elementary grade teachers who face rigorous curriculums and state standardize testing and accountability. However, building the skills and addressing gaps of
Long-Term English Learners has to become the responsibility of the entire school to include: administrators, counselors, support teachers and classroom teachers.

(3) *Educators must provide effective and targeted instructional approaches and teaching methods for Long-Term English Learners*

In order to ensure academic success of Long-Term English Learners depends upon instruction that is designed and tailored to meet their many needs. This means that educators must pay attention to the expectations about what effective instruction looks like, professional development in how to implement effective instruction, attention to the depth and demands of the academic tasks students are assigned, and curriculum materials that facilitate differentiated instruction for the varying levels of needs. Effective instruction for Long Term English Learners begins with teachers having information. First, teachers need to know they have Long Term English Learners in their classes, and have access to assessments that pinpoint the specific gaps in language development and literacy and academic skills they need to fill. Teachers need to understand the language demands of the content they are teaching and make careful decisions as to how they will carry out instruction that targets both language development and academic content.

*Implications for Family Members*

The academic support Long-Term English Learners or any ELL learner receive at home, plays a major role in these students’ academic success. Implications family members of elementary Long-Term English Learners can be drawn from the findings in this study. Family members, especially parents, were consistently mentioned by the teachers in this study as not supporting their child’s language, literacy, and academic needs. For family members who want
to help their child succeed academically, the implications provided an explanation as to how they can make an impact in their child’s education.

(1) **Parents must be involved**

Findings in this study revealed, elementary Long-Term English Learners lacked parental involvement and support in their learning. It is vitally important parents are involved in their child’s academic success. The earlier in a child’s educational process parent involvement begins, the more powerful the effects (Cotton & Reed Wikelund, 2001). Although parents may not know how to help their children with their education, with guidance and support supplied by educators, they may become increasingly involved in home learning activities and find themselves with opportunities to teach, to be models for and to guide their children (Roberts, 1992). When parents are empowered with knowledge on second language acquisition, curriculum, and effective strategies, they will have tools to help with their children’s learning. The most effective forms of parent involvement are those, which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities at home (Cotton & Reed Wikelund, 2001). While elementary Long-Term English Learners receive support and school, it is critical they receive support at home so that bridging the gaps continues at home.

(2) **Parents should build partnerships with teachers**

Research (Clark, 1993; Epstien & Dauber, 1991) has found parent and teacher communicative relationships positively impact student achievement. Teachers’ resourcefulness allows them to effectively communicate with their elementary Long-Term English Learners’ parents on students’ progress, effective instructional resources such as websites, books, or family assistance programs, critical study skills, keep parents informed on the scope and sequence, and so much more. Teachers can also provide parents information on where their children possess gaps and strategies and instructional resources parents can use at home to assist their children’s
learning. It is critical for parents to take the information and help their children at home, however, this cannot be accomplished when teachers and parents establish communicative relationships.

**Implications for Policy Makers**

In addition to student, educator, and family implications listed above, this study revealed two implications for policy makers. Implications derived in this study are from the shared experiences teachers provided for this study. These implications must be addressed to ensure the trajectory to Long-Term English Learners is halted at the elementary level.

1. **Provide a definition or category for elementary Long-Term English Learners**

   Although Long-Term English Learners are commonly found at the secondary levels, this unique student group is also found at the elementary level. At the elementary level, native-born or immigrant students enroll in full-time Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classrooms and are placed in an early-exit transitional bilingual program that allows ELLs to begin exiting starting in the first grade after students have shown English language proficiency. Immediately, students are exposed to massive amounts of the English language in social and academic settings. However, as students progress through the grade-levels and reach the upper grade levels still classified as a LEP student, this indicates students have yet to show English language proficiency and English academic proficiency. In as much, ELLs who are retained add additional years to the number of years in US schools. There are instances, these students are retained more than once and reach the upper grades over age and with academic gaps. Teachers interviewed in this study shared their experiences working with such students.

   Olsen (2010) recommended the state of California adopt a definition for Long-Term English Learners who make up a large percentage enrolled in California public schools.
Borrowing from this recommendation, it is recommended state of Texas or Texas’ districts policy makers adopt a definition or category for elementary Long-Term English Learners and require districts to collect and report numbers, data, progress, and achievement on these students. This should start in the fourth grade. Educators should ‘flag’ LEP students who are not performing based on academic expectations and begin specialized individual intervention plans to assist these students in their academic learning. Although the state of Texas does measure the progress of English language proficiency levels yearly and records the number of years in US schools, the state of Texas does not recognize the term “Long-Term English Learners’ in either elementary or at secondary levels. This is a necessary implication in that there are elementary Long-Term English Learners who remain stagnant on their English language progress, or decrease in their English language proficiency.

Adopting a definition or category allows educators to recognize these students, evaluate their needs and plan and target instruction to foster specific needs. In as much, this will also help teachers immediately know they have Long-Term English Learners in their classes and can begin making decisions on implementing instructional approaches and teaching methods that target instructional and language needs from the first day of school. This is more efficient than teachers having to discover needs as the academic year progresses.

(2) Adhere to clear and consistent English language proficiency policies

The second implication, exemplified by Melissa, is of great concern:

They have trouble with the language they, are retained, they do have trouble succeeding academically, for what reasons, I think most of them it is language but if they have been in a program that is suppose to work for them then why are they still not you know achieving that standard?
Schools must be required to adopt and adhere to clear, consistent school wide language policies, so they are able to provide their ELLs with consistent and constant programming (Menken, Kleyn & Chae, 2007). The state of Texas provides English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) for school districts to provide ELL students. School districts provide state approved bilingual education programs to implement the ELPS in their programs. Both programs and policies are currently in place, however, there are inconsistencies as to how educators of ELLs are implementing program models and ELPS given the existence of this student group. Research (Menken et. al., 2007; Olsen, 2010) has found secondary Long-Term English Learners have received weak or no first language development opportunities throughout their schooling. These findings suggest secondary students were also provided minimal L1 support at the elementary levels.

As mentioned in previous implications, ELLs must have the opportunities to develop their L1 as soon as they enroll in schools so that can build a strong L1 foundation to succeed in second language acquisition. Employing inconsistent bilingual education programs will only impede ELLs language development resulting in poor academic success and begin the process of formulating Long-Term English Learners. Districts and schools must pay careful attention as to how educators are implementing language support programs. Districts and schools must invest in informing, training, and supporting teachers in the nature of the English language learner, federal guidelines, state guidelines, district guidelines, and bilingual education program guideline. In addition, districts and schools need to provide teachers with the tools necessary to begin aligning both English language development and learning English academic content in the most effective manner. These tools should include effective professional development,
knowledge of effective instructional approaches and teaching methods, knowledge of valuable instructional resources, and knowing how to create supportive relationships with parents.

Summary of Implications

The aforementioned implications demonstrate that there are multiple ways to help educators of elementary Long-Term English Learners succeed. Implementing some of these recommendations can aid all stakeholders in focusing on how to better serve the needs of this student group and teachers of this student group. By understanding how teachers make decisions and work with these students, it is possible to find better ways to serve them.

These teachers’ perspectives brought awareness to a student group in great need and provided insight as to how other educators with similar student characteristics can begin to understand these students and their needs and make decisions on providing effective instructional approaches and teaching methods. Furthermore, teachers of ELLs need to be ready to work with students of this nature by possessing knowledge on L1 and L2 acquisition, bilingual education models, effective instructional approaches and teaching methods for ELLs, instructional resources, and building positive relationships with parents.

For me as a school administrator, conducting this study made visible how teachers make critical decisions daily on how to provide the most effective education to a student group who is severely At-Risk. Most importantly, it made me aware that as an elementary school administrator, I have great influence on empowering teachers of ELLs with knowledge of on L1 and L2 acquisition, bilingual education models, effective instructional approaches and teaching methods for ELLs, instructional resources, and building positive relationships with parents. I learned that providing teachers with knowledge and resources is an effective means to begin helping this student population. The elementary school I currently work at has several Long-Term English Learners and many students are classified as LEP. As I conference with their teachers daily, I hear the almost the exact same concerns teachers in this
study shared. If we at the elementary levels begin to provide our teachers with the tools necessary to work with ELLs effectively, then we bring to an end the trajectory of these students becoming Long-Term English Learners. It is imperative that educators do not give up on their students. Educators must refuse defeat and ensure that all students are provided with the best education and all the strategies needed to be successful in their school careers.

Contributions

This study provides insights for addressing the issues of elementary Long-Term English Learners, addressing these students’ academic needs through effective instruction, and preparing teachers to teach this student group. First, identifying the needs of these students helps teachers make critical decisions on which instructional approaches and teaching methods they need to provide these students to learn academic content. Identification of their students’ needs allows teachers to implement the initial stages of closing academic gaps among these students. In as much, it allows teachers to better prepare their elementary Long-Term English Learners for secondary education. The findings of this study show that when teachers are able to identify their students’ many needs, they can make decisions that will impact the instructional approaches and teaching methods teachers will implement with this unique student group. Additionally the findings challenge the theory of second language acquisition and how it is vital for ELLs to develop their L1 prior to learning their L2 (Thomas & Collier, 1997; Cummins, 2000a) and the importance of teachers providing those opportunities to students to develop their L1.

This study also informs ways teachers can implement specific instructional approaches and teaching methods to target the many needs to elementary Long-Term English Learners. The findings show teachers were able to provide specific instructional approaches and teaching methods with specific learning outcomes based on the needs they had identified from their Long-
Term English Learners. Teachers shared the multifaceted instructional approaches and teaching methods focused on students mastering specific skills.

Through examining teachers’ decision making on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they used to teach academic content to their Long-Term English Learners, I was able to provide evidence of how effective and committed teachers used specific types of instruction to target specific needs of their Long-Term English Language Learners.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this study, the findings indicated teachers made decisions on the instructional approaches and teaching methods to teach academic content to elementary Long-Term English Learners, were base on the needs of these students, types of instruction teachers felt students needed, and types of teachers the teachers characterized: effective and committed. However, success of elementary Long-Term English Learners is dependent on providing effective instruction that targets these students’ needs from teachers who are effective and committed to ensuring these students succeed. This study was conducted in one district, over a short period of time, with ten teachers. There is an opportunity for future research on how teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods for Long-Term English Learners to learn academic content that goes beyond the parameters of this study.

I propose three recommendations for further research. It would be useful to conduct a study to gain a perspective on the elementary Long-Term English Learner’s academic and learning experiences. Interviews in this study provided the basis to understand how teachers plan instruction for this severely ‘At-Risk’ student. Through these interviews, teachers repeatedly mentioned the needs these students encompassed and how they strived to meet those needs by providing instruction geared to their academic success. Therefore, further studies could
be done to make visible the perspective of the elementary Long-Term English Learner. This would allow educators to further understand how to examine their instructional programs and prepare teachers to provide effective instruction that fosters their many needs.

Another recommendation for research would be to observe teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners to provide further insight as to how they plan and implement instructional for these students. This form of research would be beneficial and would contribute to this field of education. In addition, it would allow the researcher first-hand access to see the day to day development of these students, specifically of the skills, and how they learn academic content. This form of research would allow the research to examine the exchange between teacher and Long-Term English Learner from an instructional context.

A final recommendation for future research is to conduct a quantitative study to compare the standardized assessment scores of experimental and control groups of Long-Term English Learners after being given effective instructional treatments or being provided with specific curriculum programs in the areas of Reading, Math, and Science. This study can contribute by finding specific positive correlations to specific treatments.

Summary

Long-Term English Learners are a student group that occupies a unique status in today’s schools. These students are not emerging ELLs nor are they compatible to native-English speaking students. These are students who have been enrolled in US schools for seven years or more and still have not reached the academic English proficiency to be reclassified as native-English students. Although Long-Term English Learners are commonly found at secondary school level, this type of student exists at the elementary level mainly in the upper grades. Characteristics of these students include: struggle academically, have distinct language issues
such as high functioning social language but very weak academic language, and encompass significant deficits in reading and writing skills.

The majority of Long-Term English Learners are “stuck” at Intermediate levels of English proficiency or below, although others reach higher levels of English proficiency without attaining the academic language to be reclassified as native English proficient (Olsen, 2010). Long-Term English Learners have significant gaps in academic background knowledge. In addition, many have developed habits of non-engagement and invisibility in school. Research has found Long-Term English Learners possess poor literacy skills that hinder their ability to experience academic success because they were not provided the opportunities to develop their L1 (Menken & Kleyn, 2008). Research supports for the argument that ELL students who have the opportunity to develop and maintain their native languages in school are likely to experience academic success, because the skills that students learn in their native language, such as literacy skills, are found to transfer to English (Baker, 2006; Cummins, 2000a; Krashen & McField, 2005; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Due to the nature of this student, it is necessary to examine teachers who teach these students and how they go about making decisions as to the type of instruction they will provide to them. There is little research on how teachers work with secondary Long-Term English Learners and no research on how elementary teachers teach elementary Long-Term English Learners. Teachers are the main key to the academic success of these students and halt the paths to ELLs becoming Long-Term English Learners. What teachers have to say about their experiences and how they make decisions to provide instruction to these is a contribution to the field.
The purpose of this dissertation was to learn how elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods they use to teach academic content to Long-Term English Learners. For this study, I interviewed ten teachers who teach or have taught Long-Term English Learners. These teachers shared their experiences with Long-Term English Learners and how they made decisions on the type of instruction they provided to these students to learn academic content. The data gathered for this student was analyzed using qualitative methods and yielded answers to the following research question posed in this study:

How do elementary teachers decide on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching academic content to Long-Term English Learners?

In response to the research question, three findings emerged as to how teachers made decisions on the instruction they provided to these students. Through a six step data analysis process, I found teachers made decisions based on the needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners, type of instruction they felt these students requires, and were based on the type of teachers they characterized: effective and committed. The first finding, needs of elementary Long-Term English Learners, I found teachers identified three types of needs: language, literacy, and academic. In the second finding, type of instruction, I found teachers provided three forms of instruction: modified instruction, vocabulary-centered instruction, and differentiated instruction. The third finding, type of teachers, I found that teachers made decisions based on the teacher type they characterized: effective and committed.

The findings of this study led me to three distinct conclusions: (1) it is difficult for teachers of elementary Long-Term English Learners to teach rigorous academic content in English when these students possess so many gaps that need to be filled so that they can begin to learn and understand academic content; (2) elementary teachers of Long-Term English Learners
have to provide multifaceted types of instruction with embedded English language proficiency objectives to keep developing English language proficiency while learning academic content simultaneously; and (3) effective and committed teachers are those who tackle the difficulties to make effective decisions and believe Long-Term English Learners have the capability of being academically successful, are knowledgeable and resourceful, and provide effective instructional approaches and teaching methods that target the needs of these students while teaching academic content.

Based on these three conclusions, the implications for elementary Long-Term English Learners, educators, family members, and policy makers are readily identifiable. The implications for elementary Long-Term English Learners include be engaged in their learning, be provided with supports that will want them to succeed academically, and must develop their L1. The implications for educators include stopping the trajectory to becoming Long-Term English Learners, implement a strong bilingual program, must allow Long-Term English Learners to continue developing their L1, and provide targeted and effective. Implications for family members include parental involvement and building supportive partnerships with teachers. For policy makers implications include providing a statewide or district wide definition for elementary Long-Term English Learners and adhering to schoolwide clear and coherent English language proficiency policies.

The findings of this study are localized and specific to the participating teachers, but their responses and the decisions they have made have been to help this unique student group succeed academically and can be replicated and can provide recommendations for helping educators of elementary Long-Term English Learners make effective decisions to help these students. My hope as a researcher and practitioner is that the findings of this study can help educators of Long-
Term English Learner provide these students what they need to succeed academically in the education systems of the United States.
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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

The purpose of this study is to examine your decision-making for planning instruction and teaching content to long-term English learners. A long-term English learner is a student who has been educated in US schools for at least 7 years or more and continues to be classified as a bilingual student, LEP, or English language learner. Despite being educated in US schools for several years, these students have not met the criteria needed for exiting the bilingual program or for reclassification as an all English student. Can you please take a moment to reflect upon your experiences teaching long-term English learners? Please feel free to ask for more clarification or questions regarding this study or to write down notes. The interview questions will focus on your planning, teaching, and experiences with long-term English learners. The entire interview will be tape-recorded. Remember, everything you say will be confidential and only I the researcher will work with the interview data. Do you have any questions for me at this time?

Questions

1) How do you identify a Long-term English Learner?
2) Please describe your experiences with long-term English Learners?
3) What professional development have you attended that addresses long-term English learners?
4) How do you get information on improving your instruction?
5) What is your decision making process when deciding on the instructional approaches and teaching methods when teaching content to long-term English learners?
6) What are some of the instructional strategies you have implemented with these students?
7) What has been successful/unsuccessful?
8) How do you prepare long-term English learners for Science? And any other content areas?
9) What decisions do you have to make when planning instruction for these students?
10) Where do you find your instructional resources?
11) Is there anything else you would like to share?