
11-25-2013

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Greenfield, R. (2013). Perceptions of Elementary Teachers Who Educate Linguistically Diverse Student. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(47), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2013.1438>

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Abstract

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Keywords

Language, Linguistic Diversity, Teachers' Perceptions, Teacher Education, Special Education

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Perceptions of Elementary Teachers Who Educate Linguistically Diverse Students

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This study investigated elementary teachers' perceptions of linguistically diverse students (LDS). Using Sociocultural Theory as a lens, nine elementary teachers responded to a case study dilemma about a LDS. This study was guided by the following question: How do elementary teachers from the same teacher preparation program perceive the LDS they educate? Data were analyzed using qualitative methods, including domain analysis. The majority of teachers associated the following perceptions with the LDS case: concern for the student, use of deficit language to describe student, assumption that the student's families had limited English proficiency, and difficulties and assumptions surrounding the identification of LDS with learning disabilities. Related to their perceptions, teachers reported they would engage in varied professional, grouping, and instructional practices when educating LDS. The following five factors lead to predictive patterns within the data: teachers' school setting (urban, rural, suburban), school's percentage of students with native English speakers, school's percentage of students who qualify for special education services, teachers' language education coursework, and the teachers' classroom setting). Implications for LDS, their teachers, schools, and teacher educators are discussed. Keywords: Language, Linguistic Diversity, Teachers' Perceptions, Teacher Education, Special Education

In order to understand teacher practice and learning, teachers' social activities, previous experiences, and teaching context must be considered. Sociocultural theory (SCT) provides a lens to examine these interactions, founded on the belief that "higher-order mental functions, including voluntary memory, logical thought, learning, and attention, are organized and amplified through participation in culturally organized activity" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, p. 220). On a daily basis, teachers are participating in one of society's largest culturally organized activity – schooling. Nested within school cultures are diverse students and families, including those who are linguistically diverse. Therefore, teachers' perceptions are ongoing, derived from their interactions within their school context, which have particular implications for the linguistically diverse students (LDS) they educate. This article reports on the perceptions of elementary teachers from the same teacher education program that educates LDS.

Definitions

Before beginning a discussion about linguistically diverse students and the teachers who serve them, it is important to operationalize the definitions integral to this discussion. A *linguistically diverse student* (LDS) is defined as a student who, at the very least, speaks a language other than English. Some LDS also possess literacy skills in their heritage languages. Finally, a LDS is a student who is learning English in the U.S. educational system. Linguistically diverse students represent a group of high, middle, and low achieving students (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Low achievers often perform much lower relative to their monolingual peers and higher achieving LDS show performance trends that are much

higher than monolingual peers. Their presence in schools expand traditional notions of the normal distribution curve (Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010), meaning LDS under- and over-perform compared to their monolingual peers, expanding the tails of the curve. “Linguistically diverse” is an encompassing term that includes other, more narrowly defined terms. For example, LDS are often referred to as *English Language Learners* (ELLs), *English as Second Language* (ESL) students, *bilingual learners* (BLs), *language minority* (LM) students, and/or *limited English proficiency* (LEP) students. LEP refers to the limited English proficiency of a student, according to the U.S. Department of Education. BLs are defined as students who are developing proficiency and use of more than one language (Brisk & Harrington, 2000). All of the different definitions offered above are distinctive (e.g., not all BLs are ELLs), however, the term LDS provides a broader umbrella, a perspective characterizing the individuality of each LDS.

Broader U.S. Context

From 1980 and 2009, the number of school-aged (5-17 years old) students who spoke a language other than English at home increased from 4.7 to 11.2 million (U.S. Department of Education, 2011) and 21 percent of the school-aged population were defined as ELLs. These demographics and recent policy changes create additional layers of pressure and accountability for both teachers and students. For example, the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires that immigrants be tested in English three years after their arrival to the U.S. Combined with the waning of native language (L1) instruction in states like Massachusetts, Arizona and California, NCLB creates an environment where teachers must provide the vast majority of instruction in English while preparing LDS to be successful with federal and state assessments. While bilingual education has been shown to have positive implications for both learning English and developing a student’s L1 (Cheung & Slavin, 2005; Cummins, 2000; Krashen, 2003; Oller & Eilers, 2002; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005), public opinion of bilingual education continues to be negative (Crawford & Krashen, 2007). The changing demographics and policy landscape in addition to disproportionate numbers of minority students, including LDS, placed in special education (Losen & Orfield, 2002) create a complicated context for teachers.

Disproportionality

For the last 30 years researchers, activists, teachers and administrators have been concerned about the disproportionate numbers of students from “historically underserved groups” (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010, p. 279) within high incidence special education programs (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Losen & Orfield, 2002; Patton, 1998; Reschly, 2009; Waitoller, Artiles, & Cheney, 2010). There are a variety of factors believed to contribute to this disproportionality (Artiles, et al., 2010), including school structures, English language proficiency, and racial and socioeconomic segregation. The context of schools, including the ways schools and teachers refer and determine students eligible for special education services (Hosp & Reschly, 2004), perpetuate this sociopolitical, historical problem. Further, there are few preventative measures in place to reduce this bias (Donovan & Cross, 2002) as well as limited research about the referral and placement of minority students in special education (Figueroa & Newsome, 2006; Klingner, Artiles & Barletta, 2006). LDS are, in particular, over- and underrepresented in special education (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higuareda, 2005), often placed in restrictive environments (de Valenzuela, Copeland, Qi & Park, 2006), and typically receive English-only instruction with limited language support (Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Pendzick, & Stephenson, 2003).

Response to Intervention

As a way to address the disproportionate placement of LDS in special education, current trends recommend the use of Response to Intervention (RTI). Introduced within the reauthorization of IDEA (2004) as an optional and potentially effective way to identify disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006), RTI is a model used to promote preventative, evidence-based instruction, based on formative assessment of student performance, rather than the commonly used intelligence-achievement discrepancy method (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003). Instead of the deficit being placed within the student, RTI offers teachers a structure to examine their own pedagogical practices, including their ability to acknowledge, examine, and include cultural, linguistic and social differences in their classrooms (Klingner & Edwards, 2006).

Reports of RTI's effective implementation for LDS (Burns, Griffiths, Parson, Tilly, & VanDerHayden, 2007; Kamps, Abbott, Greenwood, Arreaga-Mayer, Wills, Longstaff, et al., 2007; Vaughn, Cirino, Linan-Thompson, Mathes, Carlson, Pollard-Durodola, et al., 2006) are promising. Particular for LDS, careful attention to universal screening, increased collaboration among educators, and early intervention within the model are required (Brown & Doolittle, 2008). Garcia and Ortiz (2008) offer a framework that includes educational and behavioral interventions, but demands that RTI implementation acknowledge the underlying political, linguistic, social, and cultural contexts.

While RTI offers promise in terms of improved instruction for LDS, it does not require teachers to examine their own perceptions, nor does it dictate guidelines or recommendations to do so. Implementing RTI without acknowledging teachers' perceptions of LDS as well as linguistic considerations (Klingner & Edwards, 2006) may perpetuate long-standing deficit-based views of LDS (Harry & Klingner, 2007) and disproportionate representation in special education (Artiles, Trent & Palmer, 2004). As Brisk (1998) argues, teachers' attitudes about working with LDS are just as important as teachers' skills and competencies. If teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward students have historically been linked to student achievement, it is essential to examine these attitudes. While determining specific variables that contribute to student achievement has proved somewhat elusive, some researchers (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002) argue that teachers' attitudes predict practices, which in turn, predict academic outcomes. More recent research (i.e., Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2007), identify multiple predictors of academic success, including social and emotional factors (Zins et al., 2007), cultural capital (Roksa & Potter, 2011), classroom social experiences (Flook, Repetti, & Ullman, 2005), socioeconomic status (Capps, Fix, Ost, Reardon-Anderson, & Passel, 2005), and personal relationships (Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel & Martin, 2009). This study examines teachers' perceptions, one probable predictor of academic success for LDS.

Teachers' Perceptions

Research on practicing teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward language and LDS are somewhat limited and data are gathered and examined quantitatively. Early attitudinal surveys conducted by Byrnes, Kiger and Manning (1996, 1997) found that teachers with more positive attitudes toward LDS had participated in formal, organized training to teach LDS, completed a graduate degree, and came from geographic regions where legislature to support LDS was present. In 2001, Youngs and Youngs replicated Byrnes, Kiger and Manning's survey research and determined teachers had "neutral or

slightly positive attitude” towards teaching LDS in the future and identified the following predictors of positive attitudes:

1. coursework in multicultural education or learning a second language;
2. working with LDS;
3. personal experience abroad; and,
4. specific training to educate LDS.

Like Youngs and Youngs (2001), Walker, Shafer and Iiams (2004) found teachers’ attitudes towards LDS were largely neutral, spanning to strongly negative. In this study, 87 percent of teachers surveyed never received professional development or training to work with LDS and 51 percent reported not being interested in training if it became available. Walker et al. (2004) argued that negative attitudes were not necessarily apparent at the onset of teaching, but rather appeared when “unprepared and unsupported teachers encounter[ed] challenges” (p. 153) working with LDS. In contrast to Walker et al. (2004), Karabenick and Noda (2004) found teachers in one district to have favorable attitudes toward LDS; 70 percent reported LDS would be welcome in their classrooms. Karabenick and Noda (2004) reported teachers with more accepting attitudes of LDS believed a student’s first language proficiency positively impacted learning in a second language, bilingualism and bilingual education were beneficial, comprehension is not necessarily impacted by lack of fluency in a second language, and working with LDS does not consume extra teacher time or district resources. Similar predictors included exposure to LDS, specific training to educate LDS, including the understanding of second language (L2) learning.

More recent research identified similar results. In Arizona, García-Nevarez, Stafford, and Arias (2005) found that teachers’ perceptions varied based on their certification, where bilingual teachers were more supportive of native language in the classroom compared to teachers with traditional certification. In contrast to previous studies, García-Nevarez, Stafford, and Arias found that as teachers’ years of experience increased, their attitudes became more negative toward their students’ L1. In Tennessee, McKinney (2008) examined general education teachers’ attitudes toward the inclusion and instruction of ELLs in the general education classroom. Teachers who self-identified as having “adequate expertise” about ELLs (41% identified preservice training as the primary source) and “adequate time” to teach ELLs reported positive attitudes toward ELLs. Lo (2009) surveyed preservice teachers and found that teacher education coursework positively predicted teachers’ attitudes toward LDS. Like McKinney and Lo, Dekutoski (2011) found that language methodology coursework positively impacted K-12 teachers’ attitudes toward LDS. Overall, the paucity of research about teachers’ perceptions of LDS identified personal experiences with LDS, coursework, training, and language certification, as predictors of positive perceptions of LDS.

Teachers with affirming attitudes toward their students, their cultures and their languages play critical roles in the engagement and outcomes of LDS (Brisk, 1998; Nieto, 2000; Valdés, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). These attitudes can affect teachers’ motivation to engage LDS, which can render higher student motivation and positively impact academic outcomes (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). Additionally, knowledge of the sociopolitical aspects of language education and use is essential as teachers educate LDS (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) as well as teachers’ “sociocultural consciousness,” the awareness that their worldview is influenced by class, race and gender.

Knowing that positive perceptions of LDS and their languages positively impacted LDS academic achievement, this study used SCT as a lens to examine how practicing elementary teachers perceived LDS in their classrooms. The following question guided the

study: How do elementary teachers from the same teacher preparation program perceive the LDS they educate?

Framework

This study viewed and analyzed teachers' perceptions through the lens of SCT. One of the four principles underlying Vygotsky's (1978) SCT framework includes the belief that human learning and development cannot be separated from their social context. Therefore, it was important to be able to examine elementary teachers' perceptions of LDS within a school context, where teaching and learning are social activities.

Because of the confines of time and scope, a case study measure was created to capture a LDS profile from which all participants could interact. Then, using SCT as a guide, participants engaged in a verbal discussion about the case study student, which included teachers' reactions, questions, processes, and assumptions for and about this student. Since SCT is predicated on the belief that "developmental processes take place through participation in cultural, linguistic, and historically formed settings" (Lantoff & Thorne, 2007, p. 197), this case study model allowed participants to reveal their developmental processes connected to this particular LDS. Finally, qualitative data analyses utilized SCT by focusing on the teachers' perceptions as they interacted with the case study based on the context of their school setting, personal experiences, and teacher preparation. Since all participants experienced the same teacher preparation program, it allowed the researcher to build the case and analyze the results using their shared preparation context. If teachers' perceptions did have instructional implications, it was essential that the research question and results examined the social interactions between elementary teachers and LDS.

Attention to the sociocultural components of LDS, their teachers, and the teaching and learning context, attempts to add to the growing body of special education scholarship that integrates students' linguistic diversity. Researchers (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005) have called for more targeted qualitative studies in the field of special education, as defined as: "a systematic approach to understand qualities, or the essential nature, or a phenomenon within a particular context" (p. 195). This study sought to examine teachers' perceptions of LDS and to better understand how these may be connected to the phenomenon of disproportionality. Situated within a sociocultural framework and guided by Brantlinger et al.'s definition, this study used qualitative methods to capture and investigate these perceptions.

Method

The researcher met with nine elementary teachers to discuss a case study student. Then, the researcher employed a qualitative coding methodology identified by Strauss and Corbin (1990), which included domain analysis (Spradley, 1979). This investigation was part of a larger study (see Greenfield, in preparation) examining the relationships between elementary teachers' attitudes, teacher education coursework, and practices for and about the LDS they educate.

Researcher

As this study's researcher, I have a particular viewpoint that needs to be acknowledged. As a special education teacher in both public and private school settings, I came to this study as a proponent of inclusive education models, where, if appropriate, students of varied learning styles are educated in the same classroom. Additionally, it is my

personal view that the phenomenon of disproportionality of LDS in special education does exist. As such, I needed to be aware of these personal biases and how they may have impacted the data collection and interpretation of the study's findings. In order to address these biases, I generated ongoing memos to document what I experienced while completing this research.

I was an "outsider" during this study, meaning I did not work and conduct my research alongside the participants I studied. This stance as an "outsider" provided some benefits, but also served as a detractor. For example, it was beneficial to meet and discuss with teachers about their own personal experiences as an "outsider," because they could answer with confidence and without fear that they would be connected directly to them. One drawback of being an "outsider," was that I had to rely on what the participants chose to report; I did not have an inside understanding of their experiences, but filtered through their personal lenses.

Participants

Research was conducted at Chapman College (a pseudonym), a private university in the Northeast, located near several urban and suburban public elementary schools. The teacher education program at Chapman College offers a traditional four-year undergraduate degree and a twelve-month graduate degree program. There are approximately 100 undergraduates (UGs) and approximately 100 graduate students who graduate from the teacher education program each year. While UGs and graduates are not the same, they were grouped together for this study. They were both included because both had access to coursework in the areas of language education and special education and all shared the same foundational background in elementary education (117-credit program, including an interdisciplinary major). Specifically, language education coursework, leading to a minor or certificate completion, included one course on teaching LDS, a course about second language development and bilingualism, and a semester-long field experience with LDS. While all UGs and graduate students took an introductory course on special education, only one participant completed the special education graduate program (40 credits).

Participants selected for this study came from a larger study ($N=69$) (see Greenfield, in preparation). The larger study utilized a sequential design, where a faculty researcher contacted graduates from Chapman College via email to ask if they wanted to be considered for the study. Sixty-nine elementary teachers agreed, completed the Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale (LATS), and granted permission to review their coursework histories and post-graduation survey data (gathered by the university). Correlation analysis and multiple regression were used to quantitatively examine relationships between attitudes, coursework, and practices. Based on a residual analysis, the researcher randomly selected three participants whose residuals were in line with the predictive model (positive attitudes predicted effective practices). Then, six additional participants with results one to two standard deviations around the regression line were selected. These nine participants were moderately representative of the larger sample and are the focus of this qualitative study (see Table 1).

Four of the nine teachers taught in urban schools, four taught in suburban schools, and one taught in a rural district. Five of the nine teachers took language coursework and one teacher took special education coursework at Chapman College. Eight of the teachers received undergraduate degrees and five teachers earned graduate degrees.

Table 1. *Participant Information*

Participants	School Context*		Chapman College Teacher Education Experience				Professional Role		Demographics				
	Grade level(s)	School Setting**	% of students – L1 English	% of students – receive special education services	Language coursework	Special Education coursework	Undergraduate degree	Graduate degree	Years experience	License type***	Grade / Setting****	Gender	Race
Rachel	preK-8	U	34.5	10	X		X		6	P	preK, Two-Way	F	White
Rita	preK- 12	S	85	16.3	X			X	6	P	6 th , SEI self- contained	F	American Indian
Josephine	preK-8	U	55	21	X		X	X	3	I	5 th – 6 th , SEI	F	White
Megan	preK-5	S	93	11.6	X		X	X	4	I	5 th	F	White
Ann	preK-5	U	89	16.7	X		X	X	4	P	1 st	F	Hispanic
Lauren	preK-4	R	97	19			X		4	P	2 nd	F	White
Troy	preK-8	U	72	19		X	X	X	5	P	6 th	M	Asian
Leigh	preK-5	S	95	15			X		4	P	4 th	F	White
Marie	preK-2	S	73	7.4			X		4	I	1 st	F	White

Note. *All participants taught in public schools; ** U=urban, S=suburban, R=rural; *** I=Initial license, P=Professional license; ****Rachel taught in a two-way (Spanish/English) bilingual classroom, Rita and Josephine taught in SEI (Sheltered English Immersion) classroom

Measure and Procedure

The Case Study Dilemma Protocol (see Appendix A) was designed to capture elementary teachers' perceptions of a LDS. The university institutional review board approved this project and all participants gave their informed consent prior to meeting individually with the researcher. Each participant agreed to audiotape and was assigned a code number to maintain confidentiality. All identifying information was removed from the data and the audio files were transcribed. Responses to the case study took between 45 and 60 minutes. Each participant received a copy of the transcript and agreed on their accuracy.

The researcher constructed the dilemma, similar to case studies described in Harry, Klingner, and Cramer (2007) and Genesee, Paradis, and Crago (2004). Underpinning this case study is a common dilemma faced by teachers – they are expected to educate LDS without specific training and within a culture that typically views LDS through a deficit lens (Delpit, 2002; Harry & Klingner, 2007; Reid & Valle, 2004). Using SCT as a framework to understand teachers' perceptions of LDS, this case study was created to generate a profile from which all participants could respond. Previous research on teachers' attitudes focuses on survey research (i.e., Byrnes, Kiger, & Manning, 1996) gathered in situations detached from the actual student, while this study valued the interaction between the case study and the teacher.

The case provided some information about a student and a few guiding questions (What do you think about this student? What kind of action(s) do you take?). This rationale was three-fold. First, the limited information provided, including the student's English language proficiency (early production) and academic achievement (first grade reading level)

highlighted the student's relative weaknesses. This was done purposefully in order to measure participants' abilities to interpret the case and show their understanding of the relationships between language development, academic performance, and culture. Second, teachers who educate LDS often receive educational and family histories that are limited, incomplete, or focused on deficits (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson, & Beegle, 2004). Given this limited information, teachers still are expected to evaluate, teach and make decisions for LDS. Third, the teachers in the study graduated from the same teacher preparation program. Teachers had a chance to integrate their knowledge and perceptions, which may have been mediated throughout their preparation. This case was not an attempt to perpetuate deficit views of LDS, rather an opportunity for teachers to interact with or counter perceptions of LDS.

This protocol was previously piloted. First, specific profiles and descriptions of a case study were generated. Then, the protocol was piloted with six in-service teachers who met the criteria similar to those met by participants in the study. Based on the pilot, changes were made to the content, presentation, and organization of the dilemma protocol. For example, five of the six teachers described being confused by the original prompt: Consider the situation in the context presented above. As the teacher, what do you consider when you reflect on this learner? What would you do in this situation and why? In addition, the first two teachers requested more information about the student's academic performance. Therefore, information about the student's current literacy skills as well as the student's performance based on state frameworks for second grade was added to the protocol. Finally, teachers requested specific examples of the student's English proficiency levels and these were added to the protocol. After final revisions, the six teachers piloting the protocol received revisions and were asked for any final feedback. All six teachers reported that the revised protocol was readable, understandable and explicit.

Data Analysis

Data analyses were carried out using HyperRESEARCH, software used to manage and code data. This study employed a qualitative coding methodology identified by Strauss & Corbin (1990). Three types of coding – open, axial, and selective coding – took place during and after data collection. First, open ending coding techniques were used to identify salient ideas, patterns, and concepts within the responses to case study dilemma and interview questions. Second, the data and initial codes were reanalyzed using axial coding. Third, the codes were assigned to broader domains. Next, the researcher looked for similarities in patterns and ideas across all nine cases. Ideas that appeared in four out of nine cases were retained. Then, when appropriate, the researcher identified disconfirming evidence. Finally, domain analyses (Spradley, 1979) were used to identify semantic relationships in the data. Based on the domain analysis, a taxonomy (see Table 2) was generated to build a visual representation of the relationships among and within the data, including superordinate and subordinate categories.

Table 2.
Taxonomy

Perceptions and Assumptions	Family	Deficit language
		Family and schooling history
	Language	Language or LD?
		Achievement in L1
Practices	Professional	Social interactions
		Access ELL teacher
		Access support outside classroom/ “outsourcing”
		Assessment (L1, L2)
		Communicate with family
	Grouping	Pre-referral support
		Flexible or mixed groupings
		Peer or collaborative work groups
	Instructional	1:1/small group instruction
		Use of visuals
		Level literacy materials

Coding into domains.

Results included 32 codes that were reviewed, compared, and then collapsed, based on the domain analysis. Driven by the protocol’s prompts, there were two megadomains:

1. perceptions and assumptions, and
2. practices

The “perceptions and assumptions” megadomain identified:

1. family
2. language

The “practices” megadomain included the following domains:

1. professional
2. grouping
3. instructional

Feedback from participants.

The researcher met with each participant to share patterns, ideas, and domains after data analyses, as well as to answer questions or address concerns. Teachers were reminded that their responses were coded to ensure confidentiality. Participants reviewed results and gave clarification where appropriate. Two teachers asked that some identifying statements be removed from their transcript because they felt their responses could be directly connected to them; they wanted their transcript to be free from anything that could jeopardize their employment. The remainder of this article reports data in terms of the two megadomains generated from data, using thick description (Geertz, 1973).

Results

Participants' responses are presented based on the domain analysis and taxonomy (see Table 2). Results are presented in two megadomains:

1. perceptions and assumptions, and
2. practices. Since this was a case, not an actual student, participants' responses included what teachers *said* they would do, not necessarily their past or future actions.

Perceptions and Assumptions

Family.

Six participants used explicit, deficit-based language to describe the case study student and his family. Josephine said the student "seems to be pretty, pretty delayed," while Troy said, "Across the board in all the subjects this child is below where they should be." Similarly, Leigh stated, "One of the first things, obviously... he's struggling, he's not meeting reasonable expectations," and Lauren commented, "he has huge deficits in reading, math, and basically all of his subject areas." Ann explained, "The problem is everybody else is still moving on and this kid is not really going anywhere." Rita commented, "This student has some linguistic concerns as well as some special education concerns." In contrast, when interviewed, Rachel immediately stated, "Simply because there's no background on his performance in his L1... it sort of looks like is deficit." She explained that he may be able to perform better academically in his native language. The two other participants did not use, specific, deficit-based language.

The majority of participants explained they would reach out to the student's family and had questions about family literacy skills. Some participants assumed that families' English proficiencies were limited, using deficit language. Ann explained:

I would reach out to the parents. I'm not sure how much good that would do depending on the situation, because the parent might have very limited language as well. There's definitely a good chance of that, if the child's language is that limited.

Similarly, Megan mentioned, "Because I know a lot of times when the family doesn't speak much English, a lot of times it's hard to reach out to the parents because they feel uncomfortable. And I obviously don't speak Portuguese, so it might be difficult." Josephine and Troy made some assumptions, based on their previous experiences and knowledge. Josephine said,

I know in Brazil their literacy rate is like 60 percent, so there's a 40 percent chance they don't read at all and therefore probably wouldn't have any access to books in Brazil. If he came to the States when he was seven and had never seen a word before in his life, chances are he's going to start off a little behind

She also wondered if the "parents [we]re illiterate and what sort of educational background he came from, and whether or not he had been in school." Troy suggested trying to assess the family's literacy skills and explained the following assumption: "If they're living in a Portuguese speaking community, I would make the assumption that they rely more heavily on

Portuguese being new immigrants to the country, which means the child's probably not getting exposed to English outside of sort of secondary cultural things as well as their school." Marie wondered aloud, "How much English his family is speaking at home? Or, if they're only speaking Portuguese at home." The perceptions described by six of the participants included beliefs about the family's inability communicate in English and perceived reliance on Portuguese.

Language.

Five of the participants explicitly discussed the difficulties and assumptions that can surround identifying LDS with learning disabilities. Megan noted the disproportionate numbers of minorities referred to special education and describes her professional struggle:

Something that I often struggle with – with students that I've had too – is I know that ELL students are referred for special education more often than students who are not. I struggle with whether there is a learning disability or is it just the language barrier. I feel like that is difficult to figure out.

Similarly, Lauren also identified a "language barrier" as problematic in determining if a student is eligible for special education services, and indirectly identified the same disproportionality Megan mentioned. Lauren said:

For a child like [this case study] it's hard to identify... I would think, if there are any learning disabilities, because of the language barrier sometimes that's difficult to decipher. Is it just the language barrier or is there something else going on too?... It would be a shame if this child really just was having difficulty with the language and not the learning – to have him in special education just because of the language piece... that would be a shame for the child.

Troy and Leigh suggested conducting more assessments. He reported, "[Assessment in the student's L1] would give me an idea of whether or not the child was struggling because of a language issue or struggling because of a more pervasive academic issue." Besides assessment, Ann suggested that there be ample time for LDS to be in school before referring them to special education (her district's policy required students to be educated in the district for two years). Ann said, "I think [the district mandate] is necessary because you don't want to just assume that there's something wrong with the child or they have learning, special learning needs, based on a lack of language knowledge."

In addition to concerns about LDS with suspected disabilities, teachers made assumptions and asked questions about the student's achievement in their L1. Leigh asked about academic history, including "what kind of schooling he had the year before," while Rita asked whether or not the student was reading in their L1. Like Leigh, Troy wanted to know about his academic performance in Brazil. He wondered:

I would've liked to see some indication of how the student performs in Brazil during the first couple years of their education. There wasn't any sign of testing. I'm sure this child would test very low, especially given the production. I wonder if the child was tested in Portuguese, to see what their academic abilities and levels would be.

Rachel noted that there was nothing presented in the case about the student's abilities in L1, but was hopeful about his abilities in Portuguese. She said:

Simply because there's no background on his performance in his native language, it all sort of looks like it is deficit. I'm sure that he can, I mean I'm not sure, but he can identify the school's name, the city and town where it's located in English, so hopefully he can go quite a bit further in Portuguese.

Rachel continued to wonder about abilities in L1, including the likelihood that literacy skills would transfer (see Cummins, 1979). She said, "Does he need a ton of oral language development and understand that the transfer will happen, or does he need a ton of work in literacy just as literacy regardless of language in approaching texts?" Four of the participants considered the student's achievement in Portuguese.

Four participants considered the student's social and peer interactions in relation to the student's ability to communicate in English. Lauren asked, "Was he able to make friends? If so, is that impacting his learning in the classroom? If he has a hard time communicating, are the other children interacting with him?" Similarly, Leigh wondered "if he has friends, if he's able to communicate with his classmates, because if he's feeling left out and kind of ostracized then that's going to get in the way of classroom performance." Ann conveyed her concern saying, "I also worry about this child's functioning in terms of getting along with peers." Megan added that she thought LDS who were social were able to "pick up on the language so much faster." She continued, suggesting social interactions that generated friendships helped LDS create their own language brokers.

Practices

Professional.

Participants reported they would engage in a variety of professional practices, including conducting assessments, communicating with families, accessing their colleagues and garnering support outside their classrooms, and utilizing the special education pre-referral process. Assessing English language skills was important to Leigh. She said, "If it hadn't been done, then my first step would be to assess his English skills." Rita wanted to know the results of the student's state language assessment and Rachel and Troy both reported they wanted the student's achievement to be assessed in Portuguese. Taking in further, Troy said:

I would try to get some special education testing if the testing in Portuguese revealed that there is a greater academic issue as a means of getting the child more support, potentially being placed in the best possible setting for that child.

In contrast, Megan said, "If he's coming in with [the achievement listed on the case], I wouldn't want to assess too much... like running records... and tracking to make sure there is progress."

The majority reported they would attempt to communicate with the student's family, either to gather more data, or to build relationships. Josephine, Rachel and Troy wanted to access the family to gather information about the student's academic achievement in Brazil. Rita, Marie, Megan, and Lauren suggested face-to-face meetings and written communication with families, accessing translators when necessary. Ann mentioned that she would "go

through my ESL teacher with kids like this because sometimes they know the families and they know what the situation.”

Besides Rita, Rachel and Josephine, who teach in bilingual or SEI classrooms, the six remaining participants reported they would access the language specialist (i.e. ELL teacher, ESL teacher) in their building or district. Participants reported wanting to access this language specialist so they could administer language proficiency assessments, conduct classroom observations and gather information about the family. Except for Rachel, all participants reported they would seek support from colleagues, including reading specialists, math specialists, Title 1 reading specialists, guidance counselors, school volunteers, language/ESL teachers, and/or after school program teachers. The data were replete with examples of how teachers would “outsource” the student’s assessment and instruction, including Leigh who said, “If I was the teacher I’d be looking to see what resources were available in the school to help.” Ann explained, “I would try to get support from around the building and see who could take him for different things,” and Marie said she would “make sure he was getting reading support and maybe the math tutor could come in.” Lauren suggested that if the student “were at this level in second grade, he would hopefully be starting services, or already receiving language arts pull-out with the special education teacher.” Megan explained that if students received language support, it would take place outside of the general education setting. She said, “I think it’s really important that [LDS are] in the classroom as much as possible. I would love it if [the ESL teacher] could come into the classroom— for special education we’re inclusion, but not for ELL.”

All the participants taught in schools with explicit pre-referral processes. Lauren, Marie, Megan, and Rita reported they would bring this case to their school pre-referral team (i.e. Child Study Team) in order to work with the team to best educate the student. Lauren explained that she would move to the next step and refer this student to special education. She said:

I’d probably speak to my principal and have her find out the guidelines for a child like this – who speaks English as a second language – to see if we have to give him a certain number of years before we even refer him for testing. If he only needed a year of being at the school and we could refer him, then I would probably go ahead just because even if it wasn’t a total learning disability and still was a language barrier for him... it would hopefully get him some inclusion teaching or some pull-out instruction.

Troy, too, explained that the only way to get support would be to refer the student to special education. He said:

[Special education testing] would be the means to getting the child some additional support at least in [this city], that’s going to be the best way to get the child additional support they clearly need... Whether it be in a SEI classroom, getting resource support, getting put into like a sub-separate classroom.

Troy clarified, saying that to assemble support for this student, it would be through an ESL teacher within an SEI classroom, support within special education, or a combination of both.

Separate from referring to special education, two participants reported they would consider retaining the case study student. While these are outlining data, they provide disconfirming evidence; these data are important because of implications connected with this

type of decision and the student's future school experiences. Troy, in particular, discussed extensively his logic behind retaining the student. His response to the case study included:

I wondered why they were in second grade if they're clearly showing that they're in pre-K and kindergarten level. I wondered why they were promoted to second grade... You can tell if the student's at grade level or not in that amount of time and if they're not there, there's no point in making them further behind... Age-wise, certainly, it would be appropriate to hold them back... to be a nine-year-old second grader is not completely uncommon. I don't think it would hurt the child.

Like Troy, Lauren said, "I'd wonder at this point if it would be better to have him stay back."

Grouping.

In addition to engaging in professional practices, participants reported they would employ some variety with grouping practices. Four participants said they would use flexible or mixed groupings. Josephine said she would group students "in mixed ways," and Megan explained her school used "flexible groups because we try to assess and move [students] as often as we can." As an extension of her outsourcing, Leigh explained: "Our Title I reading specialist can cross group between classrooms in the same grade level, because we have common literacy blocks for each grade level." Five participants suggested using partner or collaborative work. Marie and Rita explained they would match the student with another Portuguese-speaking student, to increase interaction, while Rachel said she would buddy the student with "somebody who is strong in the English language." Besides Troy and Rachel, all of the participants recommended small group and one-on-one instruction. Lauren, Marie, Rita, Ann, and Megan reported that they would provide one-on-one support. For example, Ann said, "If I felt like the child still really wasn't picking anything up, I think I would start pulling them one-on-one and just start teaching sounds, very basic vocabulary around the room, letters..." Josephine recommended one-on-one support, but suggested that instruction come from elsewhere. She said she would "try to get some one-on-one support with this kid and just teach him some social language, to get him speaking." Leigh said she would group the student with others with a similar profile. She said, "If there were any other students who ha[d] the same profile – of being an English language learner, as the classroom teacher I would definitely be looking at small group guided reading instruction." Both Lauren and Ann commented that while important, it would be difficult to incorporate one-on-one instruction due to time constraints.

Instructional.

Participants reported they would use visuals and leveled literacy materials. They suggested matching English and Portuguese vocabulary. Rita, for example, said, "I would do some more word banks, visuals, pictures, cognates with Portuguese and English." Marie and Leigh both highlighted that this would be important for content area learning. Marie said:

I would label everything in the classroom with the English words and pictures so he really understands what they are... especially for math, science and social studies, having a word wall that has the word and the pictures and maybe the Portuguese word.

Similarly, Leigh explained she would “always have visuals to go with the science vocabulary so that if he knows the word in Portuguese, then seeing the visual would help associate it to the English word.” Additionally, Leigh suggested using picture cues for directions and schedules, and Lauren said she would use visuals to support sequencing activities. While Rachel did not explicitly say she would match Portuguese with English words, she emphasized that she would use visuals extensively. She would “giv[e] tons of visuals, paired with the written,” and “use lots and lots of picture, visual cues, to ensure that the material is there so that the language can come.” Five participants explained that they would secure literacy materials appropriate for the case study student. Rachel suggested sending home books on CDs to increase exposure to English, while Lauren, Megan and Josephine focused on classroom materials. Lauren and Megan said they would gather books from first grade and kindergarten teachers. Josephine directly addressed the need to have books at the student’s independent reading level. She said:

[I would] try to get a good, leveled library in my class so that he can feel, during silent reading time and conferencing and mini-lessons, that he has some comfortable texts so that he doesn’t feel like he’s reading baby books and everyone else is reading fun books.

Data from this study show that teachers have distinct perceptions about LDS. They identified specific grouping and instructional practices for the case study student. A discussion of the two identified megadomains follows.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how elementary teachers perceive the LDS they educate. Researchers agree that, regardless of when, where or how attitudes are generated, teachers’ attitudes have a direct effect on students’ motivation, self-esteem, and educational outcomes (Cummins, 2000; Nieto, 2000). In addition, previous research examining the intersection of English language acquisition and learning disabilities highlight the deficit-based orientation in policy and practice as well as continued disproportionality (Artiles et al., 2010; Harry & Klingner, 2007). Findings from this study provide insight about elementary teachers’ perceptions of and practices for LDS.

Key Findings

Perceptions and assumptions.

As viewed through a SCT lens, data show that teachers made assumptions about the student, their family, and their language. While all participants conveyed concern for the student, five teachers used specific, deficit-oriented language to describe the case study student and their achievement. One explicitly acknowledged that the profile “sort of looks like is deficit,” because it did not include all necessary information (i.e. achievement in L1). These results show that when presented with a description of LDS that omits the student’s L1 achievement and assessment, five participants described the student using deficit-based language. Additionally, the majority of participants reported they would reach out to the family in order to garner information and support. Six of the participants perceived the student’s family as unable to communicate in English, with reliance on Portuguese. Based on the limited information provided, including the student living in a Portuguese-speaking community, participants assumed the student and his family had “limited language” and/or

“*feel uncomfortable.*” In this way, participants perpetuate the English-dominant ethos within schools, where speaking English is associated with power and knowledge (Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006).

One striking result in this megadomain was the discussion around whether or not LDS are struggling to access the curriculum because of their English language acquisition, or because of a disability, and whether or not to refer LDS to special education. Megan and Lauren, both suburban teachers with limited exposure to LDS, used the term “language barrier.” Instead of describing the student’s language acquisition, they position the student’s L1 as a barrier to learning. This view of learning language stands in opposition of Cummins’ (1979) underlying proficiency theory, which shows that growth in L1 improves L2 acquisition.

Troy and Leigh explain that assessment in L1 is essential to help them decide whether to refer LDS to special education. This finding supports recommendations by Cummins (1989) who explained that assessment in both languages (i.e., Bilingual Verbal Abilities Tests ([BVAT]) is necessary to make referral decisions. While participants acknowledged needing to complete L1 assessments, they continued to use deficit-language to describe the student. These results show that while teachers may report understanding the relevance of assessment practices for LDS, they can simultaneously perceive LDS from a deficit perspective.

Four participants focused on the student’s social and peer interactions. They focused on the student’s inability to speak English and their possible social difficulties. Instead of focusing on their concerns, teachers could be more productive by suggesting ways to increase social interactions. While some participants suggested peer work, their suggestions were vague; however, researchers have explicitly stated ways for teachers to facilitate social interactions in academic settings, including: pair LDS with more advanced speakers (Ernst-Slavit & Moore, 2002), assign a “language buddy” (Dragan, 2005), and to pair LDS with native English speaking peers (Brisk & Harrington, 2000).

Practices.

Connected to perceptions, teachers reported that they would engage in a variety of professional, grouping, and instructional practices when educating LDS. Five participants agreed they would engage in assessment practices, including the student’s achievement in Portuguese. This practice, in addition to accessing the family to glean educational histories and build relationships, is typically recommended (Brisk & Harrington, 2000; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). Six of the participants reported they would access assessment and instructional support from their colleagues. Interestingly, the remaining three participants teach in SEI or bilingual classrooms. Suburban teachers in the study, who rarely educate LDS, said they would outsource their struggling LDS, compared to the urban teachers who discussed ways they would reevaluate their instruction and/or collaborate with colleagues about how they could best meet the needs of the student. This suggests that classroom settings and school contexts influence teachers’ need to access colleagues, or that teachers in language classrooms need to access colleagues’ support less frequently. Further, four teachers reported they would bring this case to their pre-referral team to monitor and assess progress, which supports previous findings by Linan-Thompson, Vaughn, Prater, and Cirino (2006), who reported the effectiveness of using progress monitoring in assessing the needs of LDS. Two teachers said they would refer the student for special education services in order to get support and two teachers reported they would consider retaining the student. These outlier data are important to report to highlight disconfirming evidence (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Troy, who also reported that he would refer the case study to special education, was emphatic that the student should be retained. These results are in direct contrast with researchers who

argue that retention could harm a LDS' developmental and psychological needs (Horan, 2004) and highlight that schooling begins at different ages in different countries and interrupted schooling could impact experiences. Additionally, the National Association of School Psychologists (2003) report higher retention rates for students who struggle who to read, including LDS, and argue that retention results in increased behavior problems.

Grouping and instructional practices reported in this study align with recommendations given by bilingual and language education researchers. For example, four participants reported they would utilize mixed and/or flexible groups, while five teachers said they would engage their students in peer work. Marie, Rita and Rachel suggested pairing the case study student with a peer who spoke the same L1. Instructionally, five participants said they would secure appropriate literacy materials and four teachers would use visuals paired with English vocabulary. However, the suggested practices reported were insufficient. To effectively teach LDS, according to a growing body of pedagogical research (Brisk & Harrington, 2000; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004; Gibbons, 2002; Horan, 2004; Perego & Boyle, 2005; Schleppegrell, 2004), teachers must engage in a variety of instructional strategies specific to LDS. Recommendations include, but are not limited to: previewing content and vocabulary, using dialogue journals, reading predictable texts aloud, many opportunities for oral discussion, conferencing with students, teaching academic language, using graphic organizers, creating theme-based units that draw on students' background knowledge and generate schema, and providing books-on-tape.

Patterns and Interpretations

To identify patterns in the data, it was necessary to examine the key findings in light of the participants' school context (setting, percentage of students with L1 English, percentage of students who qualify for special education services), teacher education preparation (language or special education coursework or neither), professional role (certification, grade/classroom setting, years of experience), and demographics (participant-identified gender and race). Five factors were associated with patterns in the data, including the participants': school setting (urban, rural, suburban), school's percentage of students with L1 English, school's percentage of students who qualify for special education services, language education coursework, and the class setting/context. Predictive patterns appeared within seven key findings.

Deficit language.

The six participants who used deficit-based language were teachers in schools with higher percentages of students who qualified for special education, compared to Marie (7.4%) and Megan (11.6%) who did not use deficit language and Rachel (10%). Teachers' school setting, the percentage of students with L1 English, language coursework, and class setting were not factors when determining the teacher's use of deficit language. This could suggest that schools with larger percentages of students who receive special education generate a culture where deficit language is used to describe students, including LDS.

Language or LD?

Both school settings and the percentage of students with L1 English were tied to teachers' discussions about the difficulties that can surround identifying LDS as having learning disabilities. The rural and three suburban teachers referred to the student's L2 as a "barrier," or assumed special education needs, and verbalized their difficulties making

decisions for LDS. In contrast, three urban teachers requested more assessments and suggested delaying decisions about determining eligibility; they took more of a “wait and see” approach. The rural and suburban teachers identified in this domain teach in schools with large percentages of L1 English speakers (Lauren, 97%; Megan, 93%; Leigh, 95%; Rita, 85%). While they had less exposure to LDS than the urban teachers, their suggested decisions were more definitive and two reported that the student’s L2 could serve as a barrier to learning. These patterns suggest that urban teachers with more exposure to LDS tend to seek more information through assessment before making decisions about beginning the pre/referral process.

Assessment.

Both school settings and the percentage of students with L1 English L1 were tied to teachers’ request to have L1 assessments. Urban teachers with moderate percentages of L1 English speakers (Rachel, 34%; Troy, 72%; Josephine, 55%) requested L1 assessment and wanted to gather school history and testing information from the student’s family. Other teachers in suburban and rural areas highlighted the importance of assessing English language skills.

Support from ELL teacher.

The teacher’s classroom role and language coursework determined whether or not they would seek support from a language teacher to administer assessments, conduct observations, or gather information about families. Rachel, Rita and Josephine were bilingual or SEI teachers who never sought support from outside their classrooms. These patterns suggest that teachers who completed specific language coursework, which ultimately allowed them so serve in a bilingual or SEI teaching role, were better prepared to make instructional and assessment decisions for the LDS they teach.

“Outsourcing.”

Similarly, Rachel, the bilingual teacher, was the only participant who did not report wanting to “outsource” the student’s assessment and instruction. Her classroom role was a predictive pattern. Working as a bilingual teacher suggests she did not have an option to outsource, rather, she had to be self-reliant in a bilingual setting.

Prereferral Support.

While all of the participants could identify the pre-referral process used in their schools, it was three suburban teachers and teacher in the rural setting explained they would bring this case to their prereferral team. The percentage of students who received special education services within schools where teachers would refer this case ranged from 7.4 to 19 percent. This suggests that the percentage of students receiving special education cannot be directly linked with these data and that individual teachers, especially those in suburban and rural settings, were more likely to refer this case to the prereferral team.

Referral and Retention.

Both teachers who suggested referring the case to special education, after moving through the prereferral process, and retaining the student share the same school percentage of

students who receive special education (19%). While conclusions are difficult to draw within this domain, it is also important to note that Troy completed special education coursework, but neither he nor Lauren completed language coursework. These data were included to show disconfirming evidence.

Patterns within the instructional and grouping practice domains were not evident. This suggests that regardless of school setting, the percentage of students with L1 English, the percentage of students receiving special education, special education coursework, and language coursework did not predict patterns of teachers' instructional and grouping practices. Practices are varied with all participants across all factors.

Limitations

This study's limitations are connected to the context, sample population, design, and research assumptions. The study included graduates from one teacher education program. Chapman College educates their preservice teachers based on a sociocultural foundation and this context is important to acknowledge when analyzing participants' responses. Further, teacher graduates who completed their programs in 2004, 2005, and 2006, and only those who agreed participated in this study. My experiences and assumptions as a special educator, teacher educator and researcher may have influenced the way data were analyzed and interpreted.

The design of the study could have been strengthened by incorporating observations of teachers' classroom practice and student interviews, to offset the teacher-reported data. However, strategies were put in place to increase credibility, including member checking (after initial transcription and after analyses), thick and detailed description (Geertz, 1973), identifying researcher's biases and assumptions, and the use of disconfirming evidence.

Implications for Future Practice

This study reveals educational implications for LDS, the teachers who educate them, and teacher educators. Results from this study confirm that teachers' perceptions dictate professional, and in some cases, instructional practices. Therefore, if teachers' perceptions are deficit-oriented and they have trouble determining whether or not LDS have disabilities, teachers' professional practices may include inappropriate and disproportionate referrals to special education. In order to combat persistent disproportionality (Artiles, et al., 2010; Donovan & Cross, 2002), teachers, school districts, and teacher educators must examine and reexamine their own perceptions of and practices that impact LDS. Recommendations linked to the key findings follow (see Table 3).

Teachers' propensities to "outsource" LDS students will negatively affect students' school experiences. Shuffling students out of the general education classroom and into separate settings reaffirms some LDS's belief they are outsiders and makes it more difficult for them to create peer relationships and have access to classroom instruction. If classroom teachers do not feel prepared to educate LDS (Batt, 2008), they will continue to "outsource." This can lead LDS to believe they are unwelcome or difficult to teach.

Teacher educators need to increase and differentiate the preparation for general education teachers (Gebhard et al., 2002; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2002). Coursework must address teachers' referral practices as well as ways to support LDS with (suspected) disabilities and their families (Lo, 2012). Lucas and Villegas (2011) offer a comprehensive teacher education framework to address the complexities identified in this study – structures in place for teachers to reflect on their beliefs and practices, support to

identify appropriate instructional strategies, and comprehensive fieldwork and coursework – in order to prepare teachers to educate in linguistically responsive ways.

In conjunction with the Lucas and Villegas (2011) framework, the implementation of RTI offers ways to remedy some of these challenges. However, it is essential for RTI teams to include language experts to support teachers' instructional and referral decisions for LDS. "Outsourcing" students may decrease as schools work collaboratively. In sum, in order to change the documented deficit-based patterns for LDS students, teachers and teacher educators need to make changes to their current perceptions and practices.

Table 3. *Implications for Teachers, Administrators, and Teacher Educators*

<i>Finding</i>	<i>Implications</i>
<i>Deficit Language</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrators and teachers must set aside time to reflect on practice, including perceptions of and attitudes toward LDS. Professional learning communities (PLCs), which include year-long seminars, or monthly planning time can support teachers' reflective practice.
<i>Language or LD?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary schools should use collaborative, problem-solving pre-referral and RTI teams that include a professional with knowledge of L1 and L2 development. Teacher educators must provide specific language and pedagogical knowledge to teacher candidates (Gebhard, et al., 2002; Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2002).
<i>Assessment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools to participate in problem-solving structures like RTI to receive support to make assessment and instructional decisions for LDS. Educators must gather information about LDS, including L1 achievement, family and education histories.
<i>Support from ELL teacher</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom teachers need to engage in their own assessments to measure LDS academic success and then work with ELL teachers to make instructional decisions.
<i>"Outsourcing"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instead of "outsourcing," classroom teachers must support LDS in the classroom (i.e. peer and collaborative work, opportunities to use L1, opportunities to build oral language, use of visuals, increased focus on English vocabulary and comprehension development). Schools need to generate a culture where teachers have ownership and responsibility to educate all students, including LDS, in order to decrease "outsourcing;" shifting from "outsourcing" practices to collaborative practices, like RTI, which includes time allotted for teachers to meet, problem-solve and teach with each other.
<i>Prereferral support</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RTI teams, which include language experts, will allow teachers to make informed and effective assessment and instruction decisions for LDS.
<i>Referral and Retention</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools need to provide professional development to support teachers when/if they make special education referral decisions for LDS.

Conclusion

Results reconfirm that perceptions of and attitudes toward LDS do impact professional practice. While the case study student does not actually exist, he personifies a probable and complicated case for elementary teachers. Reactions to this case revealed that stakeholders, including teachers, schools, and teacher educators, must engage in continued work in two specific areas:

1. examining perceptions of LDS and,
2. engaging in collaborative, research-based instruction to educate LDS.

Instead of redirecting the responsibility of addressing both areas, all stakeholders need to be committed to their examination and remediation. The deficit language, for example, used to describe the student and their family signals cause for concern and more importantly a call for teachers, schools, and teacher educators to support pre- and in-service teachers' (re)examination of their perceptions and attitudes. This examination must occur across all settings and with all stakeholders. In addition to examining perceptions, all stakeholders need to engage in collaborative work to educate LDS. This means pre- and in-service teachers need exposure to and interaction with coursework, professional development, and experiences that will enhance their pedagogical and theoretical understanding of educating LDS. Again, this needs to be facilitated and offered by all stakeholders, both within teacher education programs and school districts. For example, teachers in this study said they would engage in professional and instructional practices to support LDS, but their responses indicated a need for greater support in terms of professional and pedagogical knowledge. There is a possibility that engaging in the suggested reflective practices and working collaboratively will push educators to more effectively educate all students, including LDS.

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Appendix A: Case Study Dilemma Protocol

Student information:

- 8-year-old boy; second grader
- Native language: Portuguese
- Attends your English-speaking school; lives in a Portuguese-speaking community
- Struggles to access the general curriculum

Timeframe:

- The student arrived from Brazil one year ago with his family.
- It is now March and the student has been educated in the general education classroom for the past year.

English Language Proficiency	
<i>Comprehension</i> <i>Listening & Reading</i>	<i>Production</i> <i>Speaking & Writing</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows one-step directions • Understands basic sight words • Demonstrates limited vocabulary • Can sequence up to three events (beginning, middle, end of a story) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses memorized chunks of language (<i>My name is...; On the playground...</i>) • Using visual cues, can produce verbal phrases and short sentences (<i>I go bathroom?</i>) • Difficulty retelling stories (written and orally)

Academic Achievement			
<i>Language Arts</i>	<i>Math</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Social Studies</i>
Reads and comprehends at a DRA: 4 (early 1 st grade) DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency: 21 WCPM (high risk: 0-69/2 nd grade text)	Understands concepts of whole and half (preK-K standard) Can count to 10 and identify 1:1 correlation (preK-K standard)	Can identify the seasons (preK-2 standard) Can differentiate between living and nonliving things (preK-2 standard)	Can identify the school's name and city/town where it's located (preK-K standard)

Consider this student in the context presented above.

What do you think about this student? What kind of action(s) do you take?

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Article Citation

Greenfield, R. A. (2013). Perceptions of elementary teachers who educate linguistically diverse students. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(94), 1-26. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR18/greenfield94.pdf>
