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Finding the Sweet Spot: Interpreting Educational Language Policy Within Rural School Districts

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ABSTRACT

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More than 80% of the school districts in Colorado are rural. Three quarters of the school districts on state improvement plans in 2013 were rural. Many of these school districts have more than 10% English learners, some more than 30%. These school districts often lack resources and expertise to provide effective language programs for their English learners. How language program directors in rural school districts can interpret external policy in order to lead positive change within their school districts for English learners is of interest to language program directors, school district leaders, and state policymakers.

From the perspective of critical language policy analysis, this qualitative study resulted in grounded theory about the process of policy interpretation by eight language program directors in rural school districts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and coded. Resulting data were analyzed and interpreted through grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). Findings included the recognition that language program directors play a key leadership role in organizing sense-making for teachers, empowering language teachers as consultants, and connecting the language team with the school district leadership team.

An analytical framework was developed in order to provide insight for language program directors as they navigate the balanced tensions of their position and guidance for school district leaders as they hire, train, and support language program directors. English learners deserve high quality language programs within rural settings. Rural school districts with expert language program directors can create powerful site-based reform for English learners to support their academic achievement, their language growth, and their identities as successful bilingual learners.

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Love and thanks to all of my family for their encouragement and excitement along the way! I wish for everyone I love to experience the satisfaction of this dissertation journey or a similar endeavor in their lives, and I wish this most specifically for my beautiful sons, Ariel, Daniel, and Eliran. Last but not least, my abiding gratitude to my wonderful husband, Jim, for his partnership in this, as in all, and for always.

"Our decisions about language policies in education matter to
the survival of democracy itself."
(Tollefson, 2013a, p. 304)

"It is therefore important to have open dialogues and negotiations about this dynamic process of decisions and practices that are based on an educated view of languages, their impact, motivations, and meaning."
(Shohamy, 2006a, p. 166)

"The river only carves and the mountain only guides, yet in their interaction, the carving becomes the guiding and the guiding becomes the carving."
(Wenger, 1998, p. 71)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At the national level, policy about language learning in public schools permits the use of languages other than English in school though recent education legislation has decreased support for bilingual education through both official and unofficial policies (Hornberger, 2006; Wiley, 2013). At the state level, policies increasingly emphasize the acquisition of English as the exclusive goal for students who are learning English as a new language. This trend is seen by many as a predictable response to accountability systems that rely on the results of standardized achievement tests administered in English in order to judge school and teacher performance (Menken, 2009). Three states, California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, have enacted voter-initiated legislation that restricts the use of languages other than English in programs for English learners. In Arizona, state policy not only severely restricted bilingual education, but also prescribed specific methodologies for teaching English that were strictly enforced (Gándara et al., 2010). Although Colorado voters almost passed a similarly restrictive initiative in 2002, the initiative failed due to a well-run opposition campaign (Diaz, 2008; Escamilla, Shannon, Carlos, & Garcìa, 2003), and to date the state policy in Colorado has remained neutral toward bilingual education. On the opposite end of the spectrum, state legislation in New Mexico and Illinois mandated bilingual education programs in certain situations (López &

McEneaney, 2012). The variation in language education policies from state to state underscores the political context within which local decision-making about programs for English learners often takes place.

There is an "ideological paradox" (Hornberger, 2005, p. 606) in educational language policy that results in students' loss of their first language during their elementary schooling and then requires them to learn a second language in order to meet entrance requirements for higher education (Torres, 2013). This paradox defines a subtractive approach to language education (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006 Stritikus, 2006). In states with a contrasting additive approach, multilingual policies allow instruction in students' home languages, and decisions about which language instruction approach to use fall to school district leaders.

Colorado has a multilingual educational language policy, in which the English Language Proficiency Act (H.B. 14-1298, 2014) allows school districts to implement "bilingual programs, English-as-a-second-language programs, or any other method of achieving the purposes of this article" (p. 15). Similarly, the guidelines from the department of education describe bilingual programs, but do not require or recommend a specific type of program (Colorado Department of Education [CDE], Office of Language, Culture, and Equity, 2015). The CDE guidebook on services for English learners stated the following: "Choosing the appropriate programs for your school/district presupposes a school-wide (and district-wide) decision-making process that analyzes the student population and human and material resources, as well as the larger political climate and context

of the school community" (p. 30). The categories listed for English learner programs were: (a) All-English Instruction; (b) Primary Language Support, Content Reinforcement; (c) Primary Language Support (children learn to read in their first language); and (d) Full Primary Language Foundation: Content and Literacy Instruction in L1 and English (including Late Exit Maintenance programs and Two-Way Immersion programs in which "all students--ELs and those fully proficient in English--are provided opportunities to become bilingual and bi-literate" (p. 30). The difference between categories 3 and 4 was the length of time that the primary or home language was incorporated into instructional programming for students; bilingual programs that continued content and literacy instruction in students' home languages beyond grade three were considered to be supporting students' development of full proficiency in their home languages while they also attained proficiency in English. The term "late exit maintenance" refers to bilingual programs that fit this description, including "two-way immersion" programs that instruct both native English speakers and English learners in two languages, with the goal of developing proficiency in English and the target home language for both groups of students (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition [NCELA] and Language Education Instruction Programs, 2011).

On a related note, the world languages standards for the state describe high school graduation competencies for communicating in a second language at the mid-intermediate level (Colorado Department of Education, 2009). This demonstrates that some policymakers at least are advocating for an increased

emphasis on second language learning for native English speakers, in some cases through dual immersion programs that serve both English learners and native English speakers. In fact, the growth of dual immersion programs even in states with restrictive language policies may be due to the fact that they serve the educational goals of native English speakers as well as of English learner (Morales & Aldana, 2010).

This open policy for language education presents opportunities for site-based decision-making and yet also presents challenges, particularly for rural school districts with fewer resources for appropriating policy and research into effective programs for English learners. A rural or small-rural school district in Colorado is one that has been categorized as such by the state with respect to its distance from any urban center and its student population of fewer than 6,500 students. Although the numbers of total students and of English learners are usually much smaller than non-rural school districts' numbers, the majority of the school districts serving English learners in Colorado fit this description (Colorado Department of Education, 2013b).

Policy studies increasingly focus on the meso- and micro-levels of implementation and emphasize the agency of individuals within the policy process (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Datnow, 2006; Honig, 2006b; Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006; Tollefson, 2013b). The economic recession and the increased federal role in education policy have shifted the power relationships between the national, state, and local levels of "governmentality" (Foucault, as cited in D. C. Johnson, 2013b, p. 118). According to a recent essay published in the journal

Educational Researcher, the increased role of the federal government in education has actually increased the power of states and of local school districts because of variations in situated local practice and the emerging importance of parent trigger laws, intermediary organization, and philanthropic foundations (Marsh & Wohlstetter, 2013). Policy implementation can exhibit "bidirectionality" as school districts either work with their states against the federal authority or simply bypass their states and negotiate policy and resources directly with the federal government. Marsh and Wohlstetter (2013) offered the example of this direct negation is the federal offer of competitive Race to the Top grants for school districts which bypassed state entities and established direct relationships between the federal government and the school districts.

The capacity of school district personnel to interpret external policy into sound programs for English learners within their schools is dependent on their knowledge of language acquisition research, federal and state regulation, and case law, as well as on the quality of the decision-making processes they use to interpret regulations and guidance into local policy. Adding complexity to this decision-making process, the interpretation of policy into localized practice is refracted through the lens of each individual's beliefs about languages at every stage of decision-making. These lenses may affect decisions about the selection of sources of information about English learners and language education programs and also the decisions made every day in the classrooms where English learners are present (McGroarty, 2013; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). The ultimate success or failure of English learners within a school district

depends to some degree on the effectiveness of the language education programs that have been established, making the study of how policy is interpreted within school district organizations a potentially valuable endeavor.

Purpose

The intention for this qualitative study was to discover the sociocultural processes by which external policy related to language education was interpreted into localized policies and practices within rural school districts in which students were learning English as a new language along with their academic content. In the words of David Corson (1999), a theorist who offered guidance to school districts in the formulation of language policy, "every school already has an implicit policy for language and learning" (p. 3). He believed that the policy for language and the policy for learning were one and the same, and that it was a fundamental responsibility of school leaders to formulate and implement these policies in a collaborative, inclusive manner. The intended outcome of this dissertation study was an analytical framework for supporting the role of language program directors or coordinators, referred to in this study as ELL Leads, as they lead reform of the language education programs within their rural contexts. I hope that the resulting framework will help school district leaders–particularly those in rural school districts–establish organizational decision-making processes related to language education that result in well-designed, effective programs for English learners.

Significance of the Study

In an educational environment that currently includes sanctions for schools and school districts when their English learners consistently demonstrate low achievement on standardized tests, it is relevant for school and school district leaders to know which approaches and processes are likely to result in effective language education programs (Wagner & King, 2012). The goal of any educational reform related to English learners is to increase the number of students that learn English well and achieve academically, which enables them to graduate and continue to higher education. Their academic success creates opportunity for economic success and minimizes the risk that English learners will be left behind in a social underclass with little hope of moving up the socioeconomic ladder.

The Colorado Context

The need to increase the growth and achievement of English learners is well-established and the performance ratings of many school districts and schools in Colorado point to the urgency of establishing sound, effective language education programs. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, voters in Colorado narrowly defeated Amendment 31, a voter-initiated referendum that would have eliminated bilingual education and held classroom teachers personally liable for the unauthorized use of home languages in the classroom (Escamilla et al., 2003). Although another voter-initiated referendum could occur in the future in Colorado, for now the result of the 2002 election means that school districts in the state are free to provide intentionally designed instruction

for English learners through any number of language education programs and approaches (Colorado Department of Education, Office of Language, Culture, and Equity, 2015). In this context of language education policy which permits the use of students' home languages as a medium of instruction in Colorado, variety in the types of language education programs can be expected from district to district, therefore, an exploratory design was employed in this study.

In addition to issues around medium of instruction, any educational policy that impacted the educational experiences of students who were learning English as an additional language in the studied school districts was considered in this study to be educational language policy. Initiatives that were specific to language policy included the recently adopted WIDA English Language Development Standards and ACCESS test of English proficiency and these were part of the external policy environment for the participating school districts. The most recent state legislation related to literacy that impacted the school districts in their work with English learners was House Bill 12-1238, Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (Colorado READ Act). In addition, any initiative that measured success using results from state assessments impacted ELLs and was part of the range of policies that had implications for language learners (Shohamy, 2006a). Looking at the policy environment with this wide perspective allowed the research to be focused on the interpretation of general education policy in addition to initiatives that were specific to English learners.

Another aspect of organizational decision-making related to language education is that, in smaller school districts, fewer central office personnel

assume the many different roles required for administration of school districts and may juggle multiple responsibilities within the organization, compared to the assignment of central office roles and responsibilities in larger school districts (Honig, 2006c, 2008). In a recent report recommending improvements to Colorado's program for school improvement, the Buechner Institute for Governance at the University of Colorado Denver (R. Baker, Hupfield, Teske, & Hill, 2013) found that small school districts with increasing numbers of English learners and with minimal central office staff need support in setting up systems for English learners and for identifying quality English language development (ELD) programs for English learners.

Their recommendation for the Colorado Department of Education was the following:

> Several districts appear to be struggling with significant influxes of English language learners, and a coordinated effort to ensure that all districts have access to a high-quality English language development program may allow these struggling districts to stay off Priority Improvement and Turnaround status. While Colorado's districts generally do not appreciate mandates from above, they are very much in need of resources to turn to. This is particularly true for the majority of Colorado districts that are not large enough to have sophisticated central offices. (R. Baker et al., 2013, p. 52)

While central office staff in small school districts may not appreciate being identified as unsophisticated, the authors of the Buechner report did identify a leadership challenge particular to the combination of rising numbers of English learners and a central office in which a small number of administrators handle multiple areas of responsibility.

The challenges for rural school districts are many. As testimony (*Lobato v. The State of Colorado,* 2011) during a recent case on inadequate funding for ELL education indicated, the diminished budgets of school districts around the state have had a strong negative impact on language programs, staffing, and resources. A recent analysis of the effects of underfunded ELL programs on 155 school districts in Colorado on overall achievement found that large funding gaps mean a gradual drop in achievement in reading and math over time. The study presupposed that, since the state had estimated that they provide only about 25% of the ELL costs, school districts with high percentages of English learners would be forced to rob other programs, thereby reducing overall achievement. Their findings raised more questions than it answered because there was not a clear correlation between high percentages of English learners and lower achievement (Ramirez, Carpenter, & Breckenridge, 2014). The topic of the study itself revealed important ideas about the negative effects of English learners on already stressed budgets in Colorado school districts.

Demographics

The number of students needing support for learning English while they also learn content in Colorado's schools is growing. From 2004 to 2012, the number of English learners in K-12 schools in Colorado increased by 38%, compared to an overall student population increase of only 12.6% (Colorado Department of Education, Office of Language, Culture, and Equity, 2015). In 2012, there were 124,701 English learners identified by the Colorado Department

in Colorado's public schools, which was 14.4% of the total K-12 student population in the state.

Varied learning profiles of English learners. Students who are learning English as a new language may be identified as having other learning priorities as well. These needs and assets are part of what local educators must consider as they design and implement programs and services for English learners. English learners can also be immigrants, refugees, or migrants and their families may be struggling economically as a result, including being homeless. In 2011, 83% of English learners qualified for free or reduced lunch (Colorado Department of Education, Office of Language, Culture, and Equity, 2011), indicating that many of these students and their families are facing multiple challenges that educators need to understand. This understanding can provide a foundation for designing programs and services for English learners that are responsive to the needs of the particular students and families in a community in any given year.

Identifying strengths and needs of English learners. English learners can also be gifted or have special needs, and it is important for local educators to have the skills, knowledge, and language resources to identify learning needs accurately, discriminating between what students can do through the medium of English and what the students can do in their home languages. English learners in Colorado spoke more than 200 different languages, and Spanish was the most commonly spoken home language. In fact, 15% of all students in Colorado spoke Spanish, according to the 2012 student count (Colorado Department of Education, Office of Language, Culture, and Equity, 2013). Each of the other

home languages was spoken by less than 1% of the students in the state. The degree to which a particular language group is clustered in a grade level or school may influence the program and support services that local policymakers decide to provide for students and their families. It can also determine the type of bilingual program a school decides to implement, whether transitional bilingual or maintenance bilingual programs, including two-way immersion programs.

Impact of English Learners on Small School Districts

Even a small number of English learners can have an impact on school districts with limited resources, so the percentage of English learners in each school district can often indicate the importance of language education in its strategic planning process. For example, according to state demographic information for 2012, Yuma 1 had 326 English learners, a number which equaled 40% of its 816 students. In contrast, Fountain 8 had 388 English learners, which was a similar number but which was only 4.9% of its 7,840 students. A much larger school district, Academy 20, had 513 English learners, which is a slightly higher number, but which was only 2.1% of its 23,973 students. School districts may have very different ways of organizing their resources to meet the needs of English learners, based on differing levels of impact, but the priority for organizing language education services is likely to be elevated in small school districts with high percentages of English learners. All but five school districts in Colorado with 6,500 or fewer students were classified as rural or small rural school districts, and of the total 179 school districts listed by the Colorado Department of Education in December, 2013, 83% were classified as rural or

small rural school districts (Colorado Department of Education, 2013b). In its report "Why Rural Matters 2011-2012," the Rural School and Community Trust ranked Colorado as having "critical" status regarding "student and family diversity" within its rural school districts (Strange, Johnson, Showalter, & Klein, 2012, p. 9). The need for sound leadership of language education programs is crucial for success in these rural contexts.

Decision-making in Small School Districts

The various ways that these smaller school district organizations in Colorado interpret federal and state policy into their local language education programs could indicate differences between them in terms of their organizational structure, community characteristics, resources, or beliefs about the best ways to educate English learners. The approaches and programs these school districts select and implement may also differ as a result of whose ideas influence the decision-making processes related to English learners. For example, if language education policy within a particular school district is much more restrictive of the use of home languages than the state policy, it would seem likely that local leaders had interpreted language education policy through their own ideological lenses, and the variations possible within permissive state policy might lead to insight into the influences that ideologies may have on the processes of situated policy interpretation. Variation in local language education policies between school districts might also be linked to anti-immigrant sentiment in some communities (May, 2008) in contrast to those in other communities more welcoming toward immigrants. According to Fox and Van Sant (2011), rural

school districts also have very different needs on the Western Slope of Colorado compared to those on the eastern side of the state. In a case in which a school district community has successfully harnessed social capital and alliances to create a progressive language education program within a difficult, politically-charged context, the processes through which educators interpreted policy would be worthy of investigation.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

The technical literature informing this study comes from the fields of language policy and educational leadership. The ideas from the field of language policy that guided the research and analysis as they were conducted include the following theories:

- "Languaging" and "culturing" can show hybridity of identities and loyalties (García, 2012; King & Rambow, 2012; Shohamy, 2006a).
- Language ideology--beliefs and attitudes about languages and their use--can influence choices and decisions related to how people use their languages. The concept of language ideology is relevant to decisions made by authorities regarding appropriate language goals and use of home languages in schools (D. C. Johnson, 2013c; Woolard, 1998, Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994; Wortham, 2001).
- The discourses within educational language policymaking involve the exercise of power (Combs & Penfield, 2012; Cooper, 1989; Corson, 1999; Crawford, 1998; Spring, 2000).

- Language policy can be covert or hidden and it is sometimes created as the unintended consequence of other educational policies (Abedi & Herman, 2010; Bailey & Butler, 2004; DaSilva Iddings, Combs, & Moll, 2012; Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Hakuta, 2011; Menken, 2009; Rumberger & Tran, 2010; Shohamy, 2006a; W. E. Wright, 2006).
- The use and status of languages reveals social hierarchies and power relationships; accordingly, certain approaches to language learning dignify or demean minority groups (Cummins, 2005, 2006; Dumas & Anyon, 2006; García, 2012; May, 2008; Menken, 2013; Shohamy, 2006b; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006; Spring, 2000; Stritikus & Garcìa, 2003; Tollefson, 2013a; Wiley, 2007).
- The multilingual approach to language education is characterized by the belief that knowing more than one language creates value for individuals and for the societies in which they live. It also includes the view that learning in one's home language, especially during early education, is highly desirable and yields better academic results. The dual immersion approach is particularly recommended because it provides opportunities for both English learners and English speakers to become bilingual and integrates cultural groups within schools (August, Goldenberg, & Rueda, 2010; Barac & Bialystok, 2012; García & Menken, 2010; Morales & Aldana, 2010; Spolsky, 2011; Torres, 2013; Walter & Benson, 2012).

Ideas from the field of educational leadership that converged with these central ideal from the field of language policy and that also guided the research and analysis include the following concepts:

- Leadership of lasting change involves addressing organizational inputs, outputs, structure, and culture, among other elements (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Burke & Litwin, 1992).
- Skilled educational leaders create social processes within reform initiatives that take into account members' needs related to the psychology of change (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Reissner, 2010; Smylie & Evans, 2006).
- Responsible educational leaders ensure that social justice is a cornerstone value which guides the reform process, and they seek to identify any unintended negative consequences of reform for vulnerable groups of students. In other words, equity needs to be part of the vision and mission of a school district through reflective teaching, internal auditing, and deep culture change when appropriate (Hakuta, 2011; Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcìa, & Nolly, 2006).

These guiding principles were further established through the literature review in Chapter II of this study and contributed to my interpretation of research findings into recommendations for educational leaders. For the purpose of establishing the ideas that initially guided this dissertation study, I offer a synopsis of the

research and theory relating to second language acquisition, language policy, language ideologies, educational leadership, and policy as practice.

Second Language Acquisition

Although the policy in Title III in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 clearly emphasized the acquisition of English, different approaches to achieving the goal of English proficiency are allowed. One of these uses only English to teach English, while other approaches utilize the languages students have already learned at home in order to support their content learning and their English language development. The benefits of incorporating students' home languages into their learning--as a support for content, as a resource for developing English proficiency, and as an outcome of schooling--have been shown in many studies. These benefits include higher achievement in the upper grade levels (Walter & Benson, 2012); increased college attendance (Santibañez & Zárate, 2014); higher earnings (Rumbaut, 2014); cognitive flexibility (Barac & Bialystok, 2012); and stronger family ties (Portes & Hao, 2002). Education systems that support the development of multilingualism by students are aligned with the principles associated with a human rights approach to education (Spring, 2000) and with the concept of linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006).

During this study, I included information about the types of language education programs in use in the participating school districts, using the terminology and definitions incorporated by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA, 2011) into its report of language instruction programs in use in each state as well as the categories and definitions

provided by the Colorado Department of Education in its guide for ELL programs (Colorado Department of Education, Office of Language, Culture, and Equity, 2015). Although my purpose was not to evaluate the language programs in the participating school districts, my frame for recognizing sound practices had emerged from my current understanding of theory and research in the field. I planned to view the localized practices in relation to sound practice as determined by research in the field of second language acquisition (Dixon et al., 2012; Hakuta, 2011; López & MacEneaney, 2012; Morales & Aldana, 2010; Stritikus, 2006; Torres, 2013).

Language Policy

Decisions made by individuals about which language, register, or dialect they use in a particular place for a specific purpose can be considered as a part of *de facto* language policy as it is enacted through their language behavior, but the term "language policy" more commonly refers to decisions made by authorities about which languages will be used by individuals (Spolsky, 2012). Three orientations toward minority languages on the part of policymakers were described by Ruìz (1984): (a) language as right; (b) language as resource; and (c) language as problem. My approach to this study is built on the premise that fully developing the language resources that children bring with them to school should be part of the purpose of education to the highest degree possible in each educational setting (Garcìa, 2013; Shohamy, 2006b; Spolsky, 2011). This approach to language education defines the use and development of children's home languages as a basic human *right* and as a *resource* that supports their

learning and builds human capital in our society, rather than defining home language as a *problem* that needs fixing (Ruìz, 1984; Tversky, 2011).

Language Ideologies

Attitudes and beliefs about other languages and one's own language held by individuals within an organization are likely to influence the decision-making process for reforming language education programs. In Chapter II of this paper, I offer several definitions of language ideologies, or beliefs and attitudes about languages, but an initial definition refers to the "shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world" (Rumsey, as cited in D. C. Johnson, 2013a, p. 112). A monolingual ideology drives an English-only approach to language education and people with this ideology may view a bilingual approach as an obstacle to student achievement, since the desired outcome of this ideology is fluency in English without regard for the home languages of the students learning English (Ruíz, 1984). Differing beliefs about languages and language acquisition can create conflict for educators as they interpret and appropriate language policy within their local context.

When state policies allow for choice of programming at the local level, a variety of approaches may exist within a single school district or school, particularly when school district leadership has not formulated coherent district-wide language policy. Even when state language policy is prescriptive, variety may exist in the actual practices associated with educational language policy since educators find ways to implement parts of a policy that they believe best for their students and find ways to ignore or resist the parts they believe are not. For

example, principals in Arizona tasked with implementing state policy restricting the use of students' home languages reported experiencing ethical struggles with enforcing this policy within their schools and described their fear of being perceived as insubordinate if they allowed contradictory practices in their schools (Grijalva, 2009). In situations with this type of complexity, Anderson (2009) described a *double consciousness* that leaders may cultivate as they implement policy that they believe to be deficient, even harmful, while they advocate for change. He recognized that leaders must comply with external mandates and maintain their internal commitments to working toward an improved policy over time. This intentional strategy may also apply to educators whose language ideologies align with a multilingual approach to language education but who are teaching within a politically complex environment in which a monolingual approach is either mandated or necessary for political purposes. Language ideologies are very relevant to policy interpretation and implementation and further elaboration of their influence is found in Chapter II of this paper.

Educational Leadership

School district leaders need skills and dispositions for creating sound structures to establish strong school cultures and inclusive decision-making processes. In particular, under-resourced rural school districts with small student populations containing a high percentage of English learners may struggle to implement sound programs and services for these students (R. Baker et al., 2013). Current school improvement efforts in Colorado schools are often focused on English learners' achievement and English language development (R. Baker

et al., 2013), yet many educational leaders have had little preparation in the field of second language acquisition to guide their appropriation of educational language policy into their specific contexts. Adding complexity to the decision-making process, accountability policies sometimes have unintended negative consequences for English learners (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Menken, 2009) which can go undetected during the implementation of reform initiatives within school communities in which no systematic monitoring occurs (Skrla et al., 2006). Aspects of language program administration that relate to social justice, school culture, coalition building, and advocacy are presented in detail in Chapter II.

Policy as Practice

Accountability measures have highlighted the importance for school and district leaders to understand the decision-making processes that may result in effective language education programs. There are many layers in the process by which language education policy is interpreted into practice at the local level (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Also, the *ideological space* within which educational leaders and teachers act to implement policy affords them greater or narrower latitude to act in alignment with their individual values and beliefs (García & Menken, 2010). For this reason, the level of prescriptiveness regarding teaching methodology--and the rationale for a prescriptive approach if one was discovered--was also of interest in this study.

Although some researchers have studied the role of central office administrators in establishing educational policy (Honig & Hatch, 2004), the impact that principals have on the implementation of educational policy

(Christianson, 2010; Grijalva, 2009; Wysocki, 2008), and the responsibility that teachers have for actual practices in their classrooms (Zacharia, 2010; Zhang & Hu, 2010), there is little research into the role of ELL Leads within school districts during educational language policy interpretation. School districts in Colorado have selected various types of language education programs through decision-making processes that may differ from site to site. Little is known about which levels of hierarchy were involved or about how decisions regarding language education programs were actually made within school district organizations. Even less is known about how school district personnel work together to interpret external policy about language education into their own organizational culture in order to reform programs for English learners, especially when other policies, issues, and initiatives may be crowding the agenda. There is a distinct gap in the research with respect to the interpretation of educational language policy within rural school districts and the role of ELL Leads in improving programs for English learners.

Delimitations

This dissertation study was bounded by the contexts of the rural school districts in that the experiences of ELL Leads within rural school districts in the state of Colorado may differ from those of ELL Leads in either large or in very small school districts. Another consideration was that in states with prescriptive policy for language education and strict enforcement measures, educators may experience less autonomy or responsibility for policy interpretation at the district level than did educators in Colorado. Furthermore, readers located in countries

other than the U.S. may not be familiar with education policy and accountability systems that formed the context for this study, which may make it more difficult for them to ascertain transferability of the findings. In addition, the study probed the experiences of educators and excluded the perspectives of English learners and their parents, of English speaking students and parents, and of other stakeholders in the community.

As the researcher, I understood that the study was bounded by my ability to connect with people and to listen to their accounts from a disciplined position. While recognizing the constructivist assumptions of this study, I endeavored to move judgment and interpretation to a future time as much as possible in order to fully understand the experiences and perceptions of those who had agreed to participate in this study (Seidman, 1998).

Researcher Stance

My stance in undertaking this research was one of interest based on experience in several roles in the field of ELL education. As a professional development provider, I had fielded many questions and concerns from educators about second language acquisition program models and techniques. As a content specialist for English language acquisition within a school district, I had observed the challenges that English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual teachers, classroom teachers, and administrators faced while metabolizing a number of policy changes within a short amount of time. Many teachers and administrators had seemed to count on someone in the central office of the school district--usually the ELL Lead--to filter the information about

English learners in the external environment and to communicate to them any actions required by state and federal legislation. At times I had also observed and experienced the relative isolation of ELL issues and program decisions from the central functions of a school district organization. As a result, I had formed a conviction that the ELL Lead position needed to be well-connected with school district leaders and their decision-making processes.

I had also been involved in policy formation at the state level through advisory councils and work teams related to English learners. In these settings, I had witnessed the development of sound policy guidelines but then had watched their implementation falter over time at the local level for a variety of reasons. Some of the obstacles may have been political and structural within a school district organization itself, while others may have been related to the human resource issues experienced by individual teachers, such as the need for time and support. Sometimes the reason for a lack of implementation had seemed to be simply a lack of information about the policy in the first place, particularly in smaller school districts. It seemed to me in many cases that teachers had been too busy teaching to seek out information about the policies. Furthermore, the people with the power to support policy implementation seemed to have been too busy with other initiatives and management issues to seek out the policies on language education and to organize the resources and expertise needed to implement them well.

My experiences in the field of ELL education, policy development, and professional development prepared me to study the role that ELL Leads play

within their school districts with a goal of synthesizing what I would learn into a support tool for educational leaders. It was important for me to balance my conviction that such a tool is needed with a systematic research design so that I allowed the interpretations to emerge from the findings only after a rigorous data analysis process. Since ". . . the study of language ideology cannot be undertaken as a neutral descriptive project but always demands reflexive interrogation of our own ideological commitments" (Collins, as cited in Woolard, 1998, p. 27), it was crucial for me to incorporate both reflexivity and thorough research methods characterizing a grounded theory study into my work.

Assumptions

I entered this research project with the assumption that the participants I interviewed would share their experiences and perceptions with me in a truthful manner, to whatever degree of disclosure they chose. The study was based on the assumption that language education policy had been a matter for discussion and decision-making within the school districts selected, rather than the result of an array of independent actions taken by individual ELL Leads. Finally, my approach to participants in this study assumed positive intent on their part toward English learners, but I also recognized that individual educators' ideas and beliefs about languages and English learners had been experientially constructed over time within their particular contexts and student populations and, thus, may differ from the ideas and beliefs of others, including my own or those in the literature that influenced the initial construction of this study. As already stated, I designed

the study based on the assumption that the role of ELL Lead was the primary conduit of information about language policy into the school districts.

Definition of Terms

It is likely that readers of this paper will have more familiarity with terms and concepts from the field of educational leadership than those from the field of language policy, so there is more emphasis here on the terms entering this study from the field of language policy.

Community of practice. This conceptualization of how individuals make sense of their work was proposed by Etienne Wenger (1998) in his book*, Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Theorists about policy interpretation, including language policy, have drawn from his seminal conceptualization of the shared learning histories of groups in terms of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire.

Educational language policy. Also known as language education policy and language (in) education policy, this term includes English as a Second Language (ESL) programs for English learners learning English, the use of home languages to support English learners as they learn content and as they transition into English, and the instruction of languages other than English to students who already speak those languages at home as well as to English speakers who are learning them for the first time.

ELL Lead. This study was comprised of interviews with school district personnel designated by their school districts as language program administrators. Some of them had a full-time administrative position situated in

the central office of a school district and some of them carried this designated role of responsibility as an additional job duty on top of their responsibilities as a teacher or central office administrator. They may have been called directors or coordinators in their school districts. In the study, I refer to them also as language program Leads or simply Leads when the context is clear.

English learner. There are several different terms that refer to the students who are learning English as a new language: English Language Learner (ELL); English learner (EL); and emergent bilingual (Gárcia, 2009). In this paper, I will use the term English learner most of the time and ELL for the acronym, since this is the one used in much of the literature and it is also used to identify programs and services to meet federal reporting requirements (ELL Lead, ELL guidebook, etc.). The acronym ELL is most often used as a modifier and English learner is used to refer to the students.

Language ideologies. These are the attitudes and beliefs individuals hold about languages and their speakers, whether or not these individuals are conscious of these thoughts and feelings. Individuals' attitudes and beliefs can form a group culture with certain dispositions toward languages, whether toward their own languages or those spoken by members of other groups (Woolard, 1998). The concept is simplified for the purposes of the study into a general orientation to either a monolingual or a multilingual approach to language learning.

Language policy. Language policy is constituted by the decisions made by states, governing bodies, and individuals about the status, use, and teaching of

language (Cooper, 1989). All of these decisions contribute to and influence the language behavior of individuals, whether in the form of overt policy (constitutions, legislation, case law, official rules or guidelines) or hidden policy (intended or unintended; Ricento, 2006; Shohamy, 2006a). Language policy research includes linguistic, economic, political, educational, or psychological studies of language use. Spolsky (2012) chunks language policy into three pieces: (a) the actual language practices of a community; (b) the ideologies the speakers of a language community hold regarding their language or language variety in relation to others; and (c) the decisions made by people and organizations who hold real or perceived authority relating to the use, status, or teaching of languages.

*Restrictive language policy***.** This phrase refers to language policy that limits or disallows the use of certain languages in specific contexts, in contrast with multilingual language policy that allows for linguistic pluralism. In the K-12 educational setting, restrictive language policy limits the ways that students' home languages can be incorporated into their learning at school. Restrictive language policy in Arizona, for example, mandates English-only instruction and even holds educators liable for using any language other than English during instruction (Mahoney, MacSwan, Haladyna, & García, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

English learners are achieving academically at lower rates than their English speaking peers. The NCLB Report Card for 2010-2011 showed that Colorado met only 67% of its targets for Adequate Yearly Progress and did not

meet its targets for English learners in the categories of: (a) proficiency in Reading; (b) proficiency in Math; and (c) Graduation Rate (Colorado Department of Education, Office of Federal Programs, 2011). The report revealed that there was a gap of 31 percentage points between the average graduation rates for students classified as White and those classified as English learners. The largest gap reported in achievement test results was a difference of 40 percentage points between the performance of English learners in Colorado and the state's performance goal in high school math. According to the state department of education, almost half of the school districts in the state were in the three lowest accreditation categories of improvement, priority improvement, or turnaround (Colorado Department of Education, 2013a). In most of these school districts, raising test scores for the ELL subgroup is an important part of their district and school improvement plans (R. Baker et al., 2013). In fact, based on the 2013 final performance ratings for school districts, 76% of the school districts on improvement plans, including priority improvement and turnaround plans, were those classified as rural or small rural (Colorado Department of Education, 2013a, 2013b).

The rising number of English learners in many school districts in Colorado, coupled with their lower achievement and graduation rates compared to their English-speaking peers (Colorado Department of Education, Office of Language, Culture, and Equity, 2015) have focused school improvement efforts on programs and services for this group of students. The capacity of school district personnel to formulate sound, consistent policy that addresses the needs of the

English learners in their school districts influences the quality and effectiveness of the services that English learners receive and determines whether or not they will reach academic success (Christianson, 2010; Corson, 1999; Wagner & King, 2012) There is a need for a clearer understanding of the actions, roles, and attitudes that impact the services and support that English learners receive within their schools.

This study was constructed on what is already known about language policy, language ideologies, and critical sociocultural policy analysis. In this study, I planned to probe the actual reform processes school district leaders use to make sense of the external policy web in order to create internal policies related to English learners and language education programs. In this study's design, I drew from the community of practice approach to understanding how policy is interpreted (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Wenger, 1998) within school districts by ELL Leads.

Research Questions

As I began the study, I sought to understand the experiences of ELL Leads regarding the interpretation of educational language policy within their own school districts. This effort included discovering the context of their actions and interactions and considering how they have made sense of their own experiences. Exploring the lived experiences of ELL Leads through the lens of educational leadership required theoretical sensitivity on my part to roles and processes within the organizational structure. In a similar way, my sensitivity to beliefs and attitudes toward the use of home languages has guided the research

design, the data analysis process, and my selection of the technical literature associated with language policy.

The research question that guided me throughout this study is as follows:

> How is educational language policy interpreted by language program Leads within rural school districts in Colorado?

Within the specific contexts of eight rural school districts in Colorado, I explored the interpretation of educational language policy by asking the following questions:

- What is the context for the interpretation of educational language policy by language program Leads?
- What has influenced the interpretation of educational language policy by language program Leads?
- How have language program Leads understood the interpretation of educational language policy?

The interview questions I developed in order to find out more about the interpretation of educational language policy by ELL Leads are directly related to these guiding questions. Throughout the research study, I tried to be aware of the trajectory of reasoning set by these questions and to organize data collection and analysis around them.

Organization of the Paper

In this introductory chapter, I have offered a description of the grounded theory study I conducted and of its purpose, delimitations, and assumptions. The remaining contents of this dissertation are organized in the following manner. Chapter II contains my review of the technical literature associated with the fields of language education policy and of educational leadership which has framed this

study of how rural school districts interpret educational language policy. In Chapter III, I explain the methodology and epistemology of the study. I report the results of the study in Chapter IV, describe the analytical framework that developed out of these findings in Chapter V, and offer recommendations and implications that emerged as a result of these findings in Chapter VI.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

One of the main sites in which language policy is enacted is public education (C. Baker, 2003; Spolsky, 2009). In this literature review, I offer a view of the underpinnings of the study as it was constructed at the nexus of language policy and educational leadership. Educational leaders engage in policy analysis, interpretation, creation, and implementation (Spillane, 1998; Spillane, Diamond et al., 2002). An examination of the ways through which educational language policy was interpreted within school districts should emerge mainly from the field of language policy using ethnographic methods to reveal the balance between structure and agency at the various organizational levels (D. C. Johnson, 2007).

To restrict the perspectives considered in the study to those specifically related to language policy would have limited the potentially valuable influence of knowledge from parallel disciplines on the study design. I have found valuable insight into the focal point of this study from the perspective of educational leadership. The critical practice approach to policy analysis illuminated the "joint enterprise" and "shared repertoire" within "communities of practice" initially described by Wenger (1998) as the location in which policy interpretation and appropriation takes place (Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009). My

articulation of the interpretive processes within policy implementation at the micro-level, for example, was jointly informed through this literature review by models from both policy analysis and language policy. Critical theory was a unifying principle within these disciplines. A critical approach to research within both disciplines probes societal patterns favoring privileged groups at deeper levels than a surface examination of discourse and practice generally reveals. As the conceptual framework for this qualitative study of language policy interpretation was established through this literature review, findings from policy analysis and educational leadership were woven together with theory and research from the field of language policy.

Conducting the Review of Literature

A constructivist epistemological approach has guided my actions in this review of the body of knowledge related to the interpretation of educational language policy. I used key terms from this field to search university library resources in order to locate academic journals, books, and dissertations. Through a survey of the literature, I was able to identify recurring themes as well as trace seminal ideas and their authors. Extensive review of citations and bibliographies confirmed these ideas and narrowed my focus while also opening up new pathways of investigation. One such discovery came through reading a dissertation study of policy implementation in an urban U.S. school district (D. C. Johnson, 2007) in which its author described a process of language policy formulation in this school district. D. C. Johnson reported that the first step leaders in the school district took was a survey of colleagues in the field of

language policy for their recommendations for resources to support this process. When the survey resulted in no specific recommendations, the school district leader used a book by David Corson (1999) titled *Language Policy in Schools: A Resource for Teachers and Administrators* to design the process through which the school district's language policy was formulated. At that time, Corson's (1999) book seemed to offer a lone voice on the topic of creating school level language policy, and Corson's ideas have informed the construction of this study of policy interpretation. Another discovery was in the corollary concepts of cognitive frames and language ideologies as they apply to the fine-grained layers of language policy interpretation. Through wide reading of language policy texts and selective reading of policy analysis and organizational leadership texts, I devised this study as a grounded theory study of policy implementation which focused on the interpretation phase of educational language policy implementation within rural school districts. Although its findings and their implications were elucidated through the lens of educational leadership, the study was primarily a critical language policy study, an emphasis that defines the content of this literature review.

Organization of the Literature Review

The description presented here of relevant professional literature excludes a great number of resources that form the wider theoretical context for this study. My purpose in selecting the resources included in this review was to assemble only those that directly support or challenge the conceptual framework for the study. The three topics around which this review is organized are (a) policy

interpretation, (b) language ideologies within policy interpretation, and (c) organizational leadership of educational language policy. The final section on researching educational language policy includes a synopsis of previous research, possible approaches to research, considerations for conducting research of educational language policy interpretation, and a summation of findings from both fields related to the study.

My goal in this review of literature is to establish the conceptual framework for this study by first identifying ideas from the field of policy analysis that have influenced my approach to the study, then establishing the connection of these ideas to the concept of language ideologies, and finally presenting the implications of these connections through the lens of educational leadership within the area of educational language policy. After building this frame for the study, I conclude the literature review with the implications of research and theory on the design of this grounded theory study of how educational language policy is interpreted within school districts by central office administrators who are authorized to lead school district programs for English learners. Throughout this paper, I refer to these mid-level school district administrators who have responsibility for language programs and services in their school districts as ELL Leads.

Policy Interpretation in Education

How do leaders and practitioners make sense of all the information pertaining to English learners and their language instruction programs? Are there certain ways that school districts organize their decision-making processes

related to English learners? How are school district leaders supported structurally as they figure out the programs and practices that best fit their local context? These are some of the questions that this study was designed to answer as its objective was to learn how language policy was interpreted within school districts by ELL Leads. In order to study the situated interpretive actions of people in these roles, it is important to understand the denotations of the term "interpret," and, to do this, I have drawn definitions from the critical sociocultural approach to policy analysis and from the field of language policy. In this section, I establish concepts of sense-making and cognitive framing as they are practiced by both individuals and groups in their interpretation of external policy into localized policy and practices.

The Study of Policy Implementation

Educational policy analysis has historically focused on the implementation of official policy, specifically on policy coherence down through hierarchical levels to actual classroom practices (Honig, 2006c). For example, a study of classroom practices was often compared with the official policy to determine the degree of fidelity, or coherence, with that policy. Policy analysis from this perspective may include: (a) the study of the actual texts of formal policy documents to determine the intention of policymakers; (b) the study of the process of implementation to discover the looseness or tightness of coupling between the policy agents in the line of implementation; or (c) the study of the impact of political interest groups and their competing messages on the adopted policy. Although policy analysis that is concerned with transmission of information and measurement of its

coherence down the line of implementation can result in clear descriptions of the gap between intended policy and actual classroom practices, it does not contribute to a deep understanding of the reasons for any gaps between official policy and its implementation (Honig, 2006b).

Early moments of policy implementation. Recent approaches to the analysis of policy implementation have been focused more on the semiotic processes of individuals and groups. Using these processes, they negotiate meaning from policy signals, from their social networks, and even from their students, and these processes are considered to be an important part of policy implementation (Spillane, 1998; Spillane et al., 2006). In this view of how people take in and understand policy, new information is affected by the history of individuals and groups and by the cognitive frames or mental models they have developed as a result of their past experiences (Lakoff, 2008; Levinson et al, 2009). This process of sense-making by individuals takes into account the policy signals they receive and the specific context in which they live and work. In this perspective on policy implementation, theorists work to ascertain "what agents understand themselves to be responding to" (Spillane et al., 2006, p. 49) in order to capture the earliest moments of policy implementation. Through their research, they attempt to identify the mental models or schema through which policy agents form judgments such as right or wrong and good or bad when they encounter new information.

Policy negotiation and appropriation. Understanding the various influences on how policy is perceived at the early stage of the implementation

process opens up new layers in the process of analyzing policy. Levinson et al. (2009) described this early phase of the policy process as *negotiation*, in the sense of negotiating meaning from policy signals within a field of often conflicting messages. This creative interpretive act "occurs across and within various sites where policy flows and takes shape" (p. 779) as individuals make sense of policy within a specific context. The authors distinguished the phase of negotiation from that of *appropriation* with a timeline, describing appropriation as happening during the "later moments of the policy process" (p. 778) as individuals decide which elements of the policy to weave into their practice. The authors propose that together these two phases constitute the policy interpretation process, and that the continuous, situated policy process by multiple individuals can be envisioned as "one reified instance of a broad chain of sociocultural practice" (p. 778).

Before people select aspects of a policy and begin to incorporate them into their planning and practice, they must first notice and make sense of the information available to them about the policy. In their seminal article, "Education Policy as a Practice of Power," the authors (Levinson et al., 2009) postulated "policy as a verb" in the sense that there must be an initial "will to policy" (p. 771) in order for policy agents to attend to any policy signals in their environment, then to exert creative energy in order to understand the policy, and upon understanding it in their unique way, to decide whether or not to appropriate parts of it into their own practices. In a similar vein, Duemer and Mendez-Morse (2002) offered elements of a framework for investigating the role of the individual in

policy implementation and among these elements were the following points to consider when determining an individual's role in the policy process:

- positive, negative, or neutral orientation toward policy;
- degree of intensity of emotion about policy;
- actions of the individual in support of or against the policy;
- degree of autonomy allowed by the policy;
- the alignment of the policy with societal values and institutional norms held by individual;
- the rationale offered by the individual for his or her beliefs about the policy;
- and other elements not listed here (pp. 5-6).

These aspects of an individual's role in the policy process framed the design of the interview questions.

When trying to understand how individuals make decisions about policy appropriation, researchers may need to consider the attitudes, predispositions, and backgrounds of these individuals (Spillane, Reiser, et al., 2002). People bring their "past organization of knowledge and beliefs to bear in the construction of meaning from present stimulus" (p. 394). Spillane, Reiser, et al., (2002) described an educator's specialization as another influence on how she might interpret and appropriate any given policy, an influence which has been shown to account for some of the variation in how different educators within the same school district can interpret a single policy. It is very relevant to the study of educational language policy implementation that the beliefs, attitudes, and

cognitive frames held by individuals can operate as cultural lenses through which policies and information is filtered, even affecting the degree of attention devoted to whole policies or sections of policies.

The policy process. The socially interconnected policy process described by Levinson et al. (2009) can be viewed as analogous to a synaptic connection in the human brain firing with all of its associations with experience, language, and emotion. Their theory of the policy process was developed with respect to Wenger's (1998) conceptualization of *communities of practice* in which there is: (a) mutual engagement; (b) joint enterprise; and (c) shared repertoire that create a communal history of learning over time. Wenger (1998) explained that the result of these three dimensions in practice is that "even when a community of practice arises in response to some outside mandate, the practice evolves into the community's own response to that mandate" (p. 80). The process by which a community produces objects that "congeal their experience into ‘thingness'" and "create points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning becomes organized" is what Wenger called *reification* (p. 58). According to Wenger (1998), "any community of practice produces abstractions, tools, symbols, stories, terms, and concepts that reify something of that practice in a congealed form" and that any of these can be subsequently reified in moments of renegotiated meaning.

These understandings indicated that the work processes through which this reinterpretation of objects and practices took place in an ongoing way were as much a unit of study as published policy statements (Coburn & Stein, 2006). In a study of how policy is interpreted within a school district, examining this

process of reification might include an examination of guidance statements issued by various departments, of tools that have been created to support related practices, or of internal policy documents. Also, district practices such as routine meetings and informational networks that are concerned with interpreting policy into practice would be of interest to researchers.

Nests of collective understanding. One reason that meetings, routine communication networks, and collaborative work products are of interest in this type of study is that these can reveal the social infrastructure of the group. This infrastructure, which has been described also as social capital, can be built up within a group over time and can contribute to the group's readiness for policy implementation. On the other hand, the solidarity of a group can work against implementation as well (Smylie & Evans, 2006). Another description of this collective thinking and creating is "situated cognition" (Spillane et al., 2006). Wenger (1998) described a similar concept with his term "constellations of knowledgeabilities" (p. 246). The systems of practice that form the social architecture of the work group--or community of practice--can be observed through formal and informal meetings, classroom practices, materials, and staff and student behaviors. These "nested contexts" (p. 58) contain the everyday work of sense-making.

Sense-making in communities of practice. Whether the semiotic process previously described is understood as an individual process or as also a collective process, policy planning that takes it into account and supports it structurally may result in a higher degree of coherence between intended policy

and actual practice (Coburn & Stein, 2006). Not all theorists have agreed with the idea that knowledge is socially constructed, a concept which holds that both the policy agent and the structure within which her sense-making occurs are mutually constituted (Datnow, 2006). In this understanding of sense-making, even when individuals think through a policy decision alone, they are representing the voices and positions of others in their mental models and decision-making process, thus the individual's thinking process remains a social construction. It is generally understood that focusing on how individuals negotiate meaning, appropriate policy, and reify policy through ongoing renegotiation can shed light on the systems and processes within organizations by which meaning is jointly established (Spillane et al., 2006).

Policy brokers and arbiters. It is important to acknowledge that a community of practice can be conceptualized within the policy creation phase as well as within the policy appropriation phase and that the transmission of policy is essentially one community of practice attempting to influence the actions of another community of practice through the use of what Wenger (1998) called *boundary objects*. He described those whose role it is to facilitate this transmission of policy as brokers, whose membership in both communities of practice involves some ambivalence and requires balancing "the coexistence of membership and non-membership, yielding enough distance to bring a different perspective, but also enough legitimacy to be listened to" (p. 110). These descriptions seem to apply to the roles within a school district that connect

decision-making teams with one another and organize their work toward common goals.

Making sense in central office roles. Wenger's (1998) description of distributed cognition and collective sense-making was linked by Honig (2008) to organizational learning theory in relation to central office functions as a subset of a school district organization. The premise of her article was the need for this particular stratum of the organization to function as a learning organization in the same way that school staff members are expected to function as a team. There are certain roles that she attributes to central office personnel that are unique within the organization, such as (a) understanding the needs of school sites, (b) searching the external environment for information and resources to support schools' goals, and (c) the roles of *bridging* and *buffering* in relation to external policy mandates. *Bridging* takes place when leaders bring information and resources into an organization, and *buffering* takes place when leaders select which elements of a policy mandate to introduce into the conversation and planning within the district, ostensibly to protect the organization's members from being overwhelmed with too much new information or from conflicting messages (Honig & Hatch, 2004).

The goal of introducing selected messages is often to link it as quickly as possible to familiar practices and values. In her description of central office roles, Honig (2006a) also described the functions of "search," "use," and "retrieve" as roles that must be balanced in order to serve the interests of the entire organization. In describing the "search" function, she highlighted the need for

central office administrators to search within schools for their goals and needs before searching the external environment for policy and resources to support the school's agenda. This emphasis certainly recognizes the localized concept of policy interpretation.

Critical approach to policy analysis. Although the theory of sense-making in policy interpretation as described by Wenger (1998), Spillane, Reiser, et al. (2002), and others illuminated new layers in the policy process, some have criticized it as lacking explanatory power regarding inequality and the effects of majority interests on implementation (Levinson et al., 2009). Critical theorists delve into the questions of who can influence the policy process and what the policy process could possibly accomplish. In one example showing majority group interests as an obstacle to implementation, Dumas and Anyon (2006) offered a cautionary tale about the pervasive influence on policy implementation of the interests of the majority group in which court-ordered equalization of resources in a New Jersey school district were not implemented even after years of court orders. They pointed out that educational policy is often a site of deep struggle related to class and race and that, unless an equity action also benefits the majority group, it is not likely to succeed, referring to Bell's concept of interest convergence in critical race theory (as cited in Dumas & Anyon, 2006). In their words, "all stakeholders do not have the same access to power in the process of implementation" and "members of the community directly affected by the (non)implementation of educational equity policies" (p. 166) should be engaged by those tasked with policy implementation in a given context.

Critical language policy analysis. In the same manner in which Levinson et al. (2009) extended the concepts of sense-making and communities of practice to include the critical study of sociocultural contexts for policy implementation, parallel calls for a critical approach to analyzing language education practices have been voiced in the field of language policy. Within the field of language policy, a similar sentiment was shared by Shohamy (2006b) who recommended becoming "aware of different notions with regard to language" and of the ways that "languages can be used to discriminate and to exclude" (p. 182). One example of this approach is the historical-structural approach which seeks explanations of current language practices within historical patterns and theories (Wiley, 2013). Tollefson (2006) explained that "a critical approach acknowledges that policies often create and sustain various forms of social inequality, and that policy policymakers usually promote the interests of dominant social groups" (p. 42). He further stated that critical language policy research aims for social change by examining "the role of language policies in social, political and economic inequality" (p. 43). He included schools as a site of institutional reproduction of inequality through their language policies.

The study of language ideologies is relevant to the analysis of language education practices. One of these ideologies is the assumption that each national group has its own language which can be understood as serving the economic, political, and cultural interests of majority groups (Gándara et al., 2010, Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). This "monoglot ideology," as it was termed by Blommaert

(2006), assumes that "a society is in effect monolingual," and he asserted that this assumption has impacted educational language policy, language standardization, individual and group identity formation, and even linguistic scholarship (pp. 244-245). Critical language theory and critical policy analysis then share an underlying assumption that relationships of unequal power must be questioned in any serious study of policy including language policy.

Implications for Educational Language Policy Implementation

Critical theory and research studies that reveal the ways people build knowledge as they appropriate policy into their localized practices may help policymakers design better structures to support policy implementation. For example, Honig (2006a) suggested that the "implementation capacity" of organizations be considered (p. 19) as part of strategic planning for organizational change. Similarly, Coburn and Stein (2006) pointed out that organizational structures of support for communities of practice in their sense-making of a policy initiative can be built into its implementation plan. They also suggested that policy creators build in "negotiability" to the design of a policy so that its recipients must engage with the policy elements in order to negotiate meaning. Local educators then appropriate these elements into their practice by selecting or adjusting the elements as they deem appropriate and relevant to their contexts.

Language Policy

How does policy in the external environment get filtered down the implementation layers to become actual classroom practices relating to language

use and development? What are the beliefs and attitudes about languages or language ideologies which influence this filtering process? How are certain ideologies associated with specific programs? These questions guide the review of theory and research associated with the interpretation of educational language policy in this section.

Implementation of Educational Language Policy

The approaches to researching policy implementation described previously apply also to the area of educational policy that relates to language education. Studies within the wider field of language policy can focus on (a) the habituated language practices of a speech community, (b) its beliefs about using language, and (c) decisions and actions that attempt to influence these language practices (Spolsky, 2004). Studies that have included qualitative study of some of these aspects include D. C. Johnson's (2007) dissertation study of the Philadelphia School District's implementation of educational language policy as well as a number of other studies of policy implementation in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, the three states in which restrictive language policy has been legislated as a result of voter initiatives (Paulston & Heidemann, 2006). The field is also informed by insights from research conducted in sites of language use and education all over the world. Results of these studies have illuminated the agentive power of teachers as the final arbiters of educational policy, including the power to resist policy they believe to be counter to the best interests of their students (Hornberger, 2005; Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007; Shohamy,

2010). Their day-to-day choices instantiate policy as they appropriate or ignore parts of the policy they have both noticed and understood.

Language policy can be influenced by four devices or mechanisms identified by Shohamy (2006a) in her book, *Language Policy: Hidden Agendas and New Approaches*. According to Shohamy, language policy "needs to be understood in a broader perspective that includes mechanisms, policies, and practices as well as the set of negotiations, conversations and battles that take place among them" (p. xv). She identified four types of mechanisms that influence *de facto* language policies: (a) laws and regulations, (b) language education policies, (c) language tests, and (d) language in the public space. As these converge and interact, the implementation of policy is a very dynamic, at times contested, realm. In particular, and because much language policy is *de facto* or unintentional policy, she also advocated for the study of the power structures within society such as the public education system as part of any study of language policy, and noted that these structures are also sites where advocacy can take place. Shohamy defined language activism as exposing these mechanisms in society by (a) examining the consequences of policy to reveal *de facto* language policy and (b) creating democratic, inclusive processes for establishing language policy. This democratic principle of participation meant that "people who experience the consequences of language policy should have a major role in making policy decisions" (Tollefson, 2006, p. 45).

The implementation process is multi-faceted and engages various perspectives. For example, a common artifact in U.S. educational language

policy study is the text of Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001); D. C. Johnson (2011) pointed out the multiple interpretations of the final text negotiated by policymakers at the time, whose motivations were various and whose interpretations of the text were very different depending on their purpose in appropriating the policy. On a smaller scale, his dissertation study of language policy in the Philadelphia school district described the creation of a language policy document that had lost much of its meaning in the hands of a new administrator who interpreted the text very differently from the intentions of its authors (D. C. Johnson, 2007). This study illustrates the complexity and elusiveness of policy implementation at the interpretation phase of the process.

In the words of Harold Schiffman (2006):

> I think it is important to view "language policy" as not only the explicit, written, overt, *de jure*, official, and "top-down" decision-making about language, but also the implicit, unwritten, covert, *de facto*, grass-roots, and unofficial ideas and assumptions, which can influence the outcomes of policy-making just as emphatically and definitively as the more explicit decisions. (p. 112)

Not only is the process of policy implementation sometimes complex and informal, but it can also be thwarted by a lack of attention or motivation, as Levinson et al. (2009) described it, the "will to policy" within organizations is "a matrix of competing and overlapping power relations" (p. 771) that results in windows of opportunity for implementation. All of the potential locations for variations in policy implementation provide areas to explore in a policy implementation study.

Interpreting Educational Language Policy

The different ways that educational leaders and teachers make sense of research, regulations, and resources can result in variations in actual practices. In order to develop an appreciation for the scope of this semiotic process, I have included a brief review of issues within the field of language policy. These issues include the idea of control inherent in planning someone else's use of languages, the use of home languages as a medium of instruction, and the variations in language policy from state to state in the U.S. I conclude this section with a brief description of language policy in Colorado.

Managing languages. Language policy often has to do with managing other people's use of their languages. Cooper (1989) offered this definition of language policy, also called language planning: "Language planning refers to deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes" (p. 45). A straightforward application of this definition would find that modified language behavior and ideologies within family networks as a result of policy enactment could be considered an indicator of successful language policy implementation (Spolsky, 2009), but that view would be hotly contested by advocates of the rights of weaker groups to develop and use their own languages. Spolsky (2009) concluded his book, *Language Management*, with this: "We are left then with two basic questions: can language be managed? And if it can, should it be managed?" (p. 261). The rationale behind his concluding remark was that totalitarian governments would have a better chance of effectively implementing

language policy than democracies, a conclusion that renders the essential value of intentional language planning as "essentially undesirable" (p. 261). This thought is echoed in the argument that revitalizing threatened languages is a coercive act in itself and incompatible with a progressive understanding of the nature of language (Shohamy, 2006a), no matter what the moral defense in favor of attempting to get a community to increase its use of a "dying" language through education. These challenges to the field from experts within it demonstrate the complexity of the field of language policy, also known as language management.

Medium of instruction in international language policy. There are several reasons that using home languages as the medium of instruction has been recommended in international language policy, and these include: (a) ease of learning literacy and basic concepts during the early years of education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2007), (b) increased educational life spans (Walter & Benson, 2012), and (c) gender equality (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2007). The United Nations set eight Millennium Development goals, the second of which was "universal primary education," a goal which includes education in the "mother tongue" whenever possible (UNESCO, 2007).

It seems reasonable to assume that when a language was spoken by a large number of people, its native speakers would likely experience basic education in their mother tongue, but this is not universally true. The online resource on world languages developed by SIL International

(www.ethnologue.com) listed 7,105 languages actively being spoken or signed in the world, and in their chapter in the *Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy*, Walter and Benson (2012) surmised that only 52 of the 97 languages with more than 10,000,000 speakers were being used in education. Common logic indicates that, the fewer speakers a particular language has, the less likely that children who grow up speaking it will experience education in that language, particularly if this language is a "localized oral language," as are 5,439 languages spoken by fewer than 1% of the world's population (p. 282). Walter and Benson (2012) also pointed out international conventions that support the use of children's mother tongue in education. Examples include:

- the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 27 which recognizes the right of minority people to use their own languages;
- the 1989 International Labor Organization Convention 169, Article 28 which gives Indigenous children the right to be taught in the language most commonly used by their communities;
- the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29 which calls for education to respect the child's cultural identity, language, and values;
- the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities, Article 4, which requires states to provide adequate opportunities for people to learn in their mother tongues;

- and the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, Article 6 which defines the educational role of the mother tongue in promoting multilingualism. (p. 290)

Although there was strong international policy in support of early education in the mother tongue, decision-makers should not assume that every community would choose this when available. A counter argument for mother tongue education was explained by the authors in the context of South Africa, where mother tongue education was perceived as repressing the economic and political advancement of its minority groups. Education in the mother tongue that was mandated could be seen as oppressive, which reinforced the need for stakeholder involvement in decisions related to educational language policy. International policy around the use of home languages in the educational setting forms part of the external policy web for localized decision-making, even for rural school districts in Colorado.

Linguistic pluralism in international language policy. One related feature of international language policy is the practice of linguistic pluralism as a society, characterized by many members of a society that speak multiple languages. For example, there are 23 official languages in the European Union (EU), and it is a development goal of the EU that the citizens of its member states develop skills in multiple languages (Ammon, 2012). In Italy and Norway, for example, children study a foreign language from their first year of school onward and may end up studying three or more languages by the time they

graduate from high school. Understanding ideologies and practices around the world can help contextualize language policy in the U.S.

Language policy in the U.S. A nation's language policy incorporates its sociopolitical situation regarding language groups residing within its borders, the beliefs about national identity and language held by its citizens, and their prevailing beliefs about linguistic rights (Spolsky, 2009). In contrast to many countries which have declared one or more languages as their "official" languages, the U.S. has no such declaration. Official languages are those used by governments for education, justice, legislation, and administration, while a national language is one that is adopted for symbolic purposes. Usually when language legislation has been passed, it was the result of political conflict between language groups within that particular state (Faingold, 2004). Faingold's study of the constitutions of the world revealed two categories, a "hands-off" approach and a "hands-on" approach to the officiality of languages. Countries with no designated official or national language and no protective provisions for minority languages fall into the first category. Countries with national and official languages and with specific provisions for minority and majority languages fall into the second. He found that only 29 of the 187 nations he studied, or 15%, were categorized as belonging to the "hands-off" category, and he explained that these countries were "undivided" by unassimilated language groups possessing or seeking autonomy or secession and "have (or declare that they have) a strong sense of national identity" (p. 19).

Currently the U.S. has a "hands-off" language policy, but there have been historical pendulum swings in U.S. language policy from tolerance for multilingualism to repression of languages and language rights. Even in the most tolerant of times, there were no laws protecting language rights in the U.S., with the exception of recent protections for recognized Native American languages (McCarty, 2012; Wiley, 2013). Any legal base for language rights in the U.S. has been established based on the right of access to education through Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the constitutional provisions for due process and freedom of speech (Tollefson, 2013b), and on the understanding that discrimination on the basis of "national origin" was inclusive of language origin as well (Combs & Penfield, 2012; Crawford, 1998; Spolsky, 2011; Spring, 2000; Wiley, 2013). One document that has relevance for rural school districts is the Office for Civil Rights (1970) memorandum which requires services be provided to English learners when a school district has more than 5% English learners in their student population. Even though there were no specific protections in federal law for language rights, Spolsky (2004) pointed out that Executive Order (EO) 13166, entitled "Improving access to services for persons with limited English proficiency" contributed to U.S. language policy in an indirect way by requiring all federal agencies to provide access through interpretation and translation to their services (p. 108). On the other hand, legislation seemingly unrelated to language policy restricting medical and other services to unauthorized immigrants, often at the state level, has been interpreted by some experts in the field of language policy as connected with restrictive language

policies (Tollefson, 2013b; Wiley, 2013). Because language ideologies are individualized and nuanced, Woolard (1998) advised careful study before assuming that attitudes and policies are related to one another.

State-level educational language policy in the U.S. The authority to make decisions regarding the use of languages in education has been handed off to the states by the federal government, and some have argued that restrictive language policies are the result (Wiley, 2013). There is great variation between states in the language policies that the states have instituted, many of these through voter initiatives. In 2005, García (as cited in Rumberger & Tran, 2010) listed the following description of state policies regarding programs for English learners:

- 12 states mandated specific services
- 12 states permitted services
- 1 state prohibited services
- 26 states had no legislation that directly addressed the education of these students (p. 87).

The picture this list drew was of inconsistency between states in terms of the programs and services that their legislated policies required for English learners. It is important to note that even though a state may allow for bilingual or multilingual approaches to education, the resources or political will to support their development may be missing (Paciotto & Delany-Barmann, 2011).

One way to structure a healthy process without being prescriptive about methodology would be that state policy on language education could simply require a communal process to include parents of English learners in the program design (Ross, 2007). An example of this would be a state-mandated,

community-based decision-making process for designing language education programs. The type of state guidance described by Ross (2007) in her discussion of the negative effect of voter initiatives on educational language policy was consistent with recommendations offered by Corson (1999). The idea of inclusive, representative processes for designing and implementing language education programs is in strong contrast to state policies which mandate programs and prescribe specific methodologies for implementation.

In a recent study of the relationship between reading achievement of Hispanic students and state policy regarding bilingual education, López and McEneaney (2012) ranked eight states on a scale from 0 to 5 according to the relative restrictiveness of their policies toward bilingual education, with a rating of 0 representing the most restrictive of policies and a rating of 5 the least restrictive. All eight states had implemented their respective language education programs for at least 5 years, and NAEP reading test data was collected for all Hispanic fourth-graders who took the 2005 and 2007 administrations of the test in the seven states with the highest number of Hispanic English learners in the country plus the additional state of Wisconsin, which was included in the study for other reasons.

- Texas and New Mexico were assigned a ranking of"5" because of their emphasis on bilingual education. Texas, for example, required each school district with 20 or more English learners in the same grade level district-wide to provide bilingual education.

- Wisconsin was ranked as "4" because of requirements on schools to provide bilingual education when there are 10 English learners in one grade level or 20 in grades 4 and higher.
- Florida and Colorado were ranked as "3" since they "neither mandated nor outlawed bilingual education."
- Nevada was ranked as "2" because they had very few bilingual programs.
- California required "sheltered English immersion" by law, but required bilingual education in grade levels where parents of at least 20 English learners have signed waivers. Because of the waivers, California was categorized as "1."
- Arizona had also outlawed bilingual education and instituted a highly prescriptive English instruction program. In order to receive a waiver from the 4-hour daily block of required English instruction, a student had to be proficient in English and be at least 10 years old. Because of these and other restrictions, including punitive action for noncompliance, Arizona was ranked as "0."

The findings of their study will be discussed further in the section on language ideologies, but the data showed correlation between restrictiveness toward bilingual education and lower reading achievement in English for both Hispanic English learners and Hispanic students who were never identified as English learners. In fact, the average score of Hispanic fourth graders in Arizona was 13.5 points lower than the average score of Hispanic students in New

Mexico and Texas, a result that was considered to be more than one year's growth. Rumberger and Tran (2010) also found that "states with restrictive policies tended to have larger achievement gaps than those without such policies, especially at grade 4" (p. 98). Their determination that state policies can impact English learner achievement was based on their analyses of 2005 NAEP test scores in math and reading for fourth and eighth graders. The inference is that state, school district, and school level policies toward students' home languages may have an impact on their academic success for reasons connected with identity and belonging.

Colorado's educational language policy. The state of Colorado currently has policy that allows for school districts to select whichever programs or combinations of programs best fit the needs of the students in schools. This lenient approach can be seen as respectful of localized policy implementation, particularly of the ability of communities to create local systems through inclusive processes. Sources of guidance on language education policy in Colorado include the following:

- Federal regulations, such as Title III and Title I (NCLB, 2002)
- Case law such as *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), *Castañeda v. Pickard (1981)*, and *Plyler v. Doe (1982)*
- *Guidebook on Designing, Delivering and Evaluating Services to English Learners* (Colorado Department of Education, Office of Language, Culture, and Equity, 2015)

- Colorado Revised Statute--English Language Proficiency Act (Section 22-24-105, 2014)

Layers of language policy implementation. The terms "bottom-up" and "top-down" implementation have been described as relative terms, since "governmentality" by Foulcault's definition (as cited in Levinson et al., 2009) exists at every level in society as experienced by individuals. Concepts related to the interpretation of educational policy such as *negotiation* and *appropriation* (Levinson et al., 2009) apply to the way a language policy percolates through a series of policy arbiters within a school district organization. Once it reached the classroom, it gets appropriated in various ways by classroom teachers who were the final arbiters of the policy into practices within their own classrooms (Evans & Hornberger, 2005). Ricento and Hornberger (1996) represented the layers of policy interpretation and appropriation as being similar to the layers of an onion, a metaphor that has had a long life in subsequent years. In their metaphor for language policy implementation, the outer layer signified the formulation of official policy at the federal or state level. The next layer they described is the institutional level at which the policy is interpreted by individuals and groups through various internal layers into the final layer of situated practices by teachers and students at the classroom level.

In another iteration of these layers of implementation, Evans and Hornberger (2005) recommended analyzing language policy implementation at the national level by examining policy discourses to understand their underlying ideologies, at the institutional level with a focus on systems related to

accountability, and at the interpersonal level by studying ESL and mainstream educators' roles and perceptions. Much has been written since about the generous ideological spaces provided by progressive language policies. In stark contrast, teachers and administrators carved out implementational spaces within a context of restrictive language policy in order to support language education through localized practices that contested the official policy (Combs & Penfield, 2012; de Jong, 2008; García, Skutnabb-Kangas, & Torres-Guzmán, 2006; Hornberger, 2006; Shohamy, 2010; Stritikus, 2006).

Dynamic processes of policy implementation. Similar to the trends in policy analysis, there is an increased focus on bottom-up processes of policy making in the field of language policy research, as well as the bidirectionality of policy implementation. "Locality is not just the end point of top-down directives but also the genesis of bottom-up initiatives, which cumulatively and over time transform traditional flows and frameworks of decision-making" (Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007, p. 459). As schools are one of the major mechanisms by which language policy is instantiated (C. Baker, 2003; Shohamy, 2006a), choices made by policy agents at the local level regarding language instruction programs constitute situated language policy. At times, local discourses and choices can influence the wider policy context (Garcìa, 2013; Marsh & Wolstetter, 2013). One example of this has been the exclusion of dual immersion programs from the proscription against bilingual education in Massachusetts, due to local discourses and educator practices (Uriarte, Tung, Lavan, & Diez, 2010). Another example of bottom-up policy making has been the establishment of a Seal of Biliteracy

program to recognize graduating seniors who have attained proficiency in two languages. A school district in California started this practice and it has now been adopted by several states and was identified as a "promising practice for ELLs" by NCELA (http://www.ncela.us/content/29_innov_mar2011).Trends in the field of language policy analysis include studies of language activism by minority language groups to preserve and develop their own languages as a way of highlighting and advocating for these practices (McCarty, 2013; Shohamy, 2010). There are many ways local policy agents can influence policy implementation.

Language ecology. Another metaphor that is often used to organize language planning and policy is an ecology of languages approach to understanding the relative status of the languages being used in any given setting. This involves identifying all of the languages in use and in which settings they are preferred by their users, looking for status indicators and changing patterns of language use that might indicate language shift (Fishman, 2006). Because language groups are increasingly not bound within national borders, it is appropriate to consider relative "use, function and status of the various languages making up the language ecology of the community" (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. 237). Patterns of language use can be examined by location, by purpose, or by groups of users. Analysis of language use and status is the first step in determining whether certain languages – or their speakers – need additional support or increased symbolic value within a community, school, or classroom. This analysis can be applied to dialects and registers within languages as well.

Educational Language Policy and Language Ideologies

There is indisputable logic in the value of developing a common standard language in a society for purposes of communication, social and economic opportunity, efficiency, political equality, and national unity (Robichaud & De Schutter, 2012). However, along with these considerations, there are also "instrumental interests" that support the development of minority languages. These justifications for supporting and building non-standard languages have to do with human dignity and freedom of choice, though this freedom of choice also applies to decisions made by minority language speakers to speak the majority, standard language instead of their home languages. In this section, I present ideas from the literature regarding language ideologies and their possible relationship to various approaches to language education.

Attitudes about Languages and Language Use

When the term language is used, it can denote a single, specific language used by a group of people or it can refer to the general concept of the communicative acts that individuals perform within social contexts, referring to language in general (Shohamy, 2006a). This second use is sometimes called "languaging" and is presumed by many to include basic human rights of self-expression and self-determination and to be worthy of legal protection. Shohamy described language as "open, dynamic, energetic, constantly evolving and personal. It has no fixed boundaries, but is rather made of hybrids and endless varieties resulting from language being creative, expressive, interactive, contact-

and dialogue-based, debated, mediated and negotiated" (p. 6). This quality of fluidity and of individualized experience is counter to the widely held notion of language as a fixed, bounded lexicon, syntax, and writing system, governed by a set of rules and patterns.

The degree to which languages are perceived by speakers and non-speakers as carrying prestige and usefulness may impact choices they make when expressing themselves in one of their languages. Attitudes held by majority group members toward minority languages are often viewed as being confounded with attitudes toward the people who speak these minority languages (Paulston & Heidemann, 2006). This overlap has led researchers to a critical approach which includes the study of politics and the exercise of power when considering language policy implementation. Since education is one of the main sites where language policy is enacted (C. Baker, 2003; García & Menken, 2010), schools and classrooms provide opportunities to understand how and why languages are being used by teachers and students. Researcher Hakuta (2011) described two different approaches to the education of English learners this way: "One set of beliefs honored where kids came from; the other honored where they would end up, as speakers of English" (p. 163). A critical language policy study would likely include a close examination of the choices made within local educational systems for the use of community languages and the rationale for those choices.

Language Ideologies

The belief system that individuals have formed over time can push them toward or away from options in language education. In order to understand their effects on decision-making, I offer here a short treatment of ideologies and describe the impact of language ideology in families and communities, in politics, and in language education programs.

Language ideologies are representations that people hold regarding languages and their variations. Some might view these as simply ideas, but others hold that these assumptions have been embedded in social structures of unequal power and can never be taken as neutral (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). The fine-grained examination of human language use can include multiple points of consideration within the subtleties of how people use language and conceive of its use, Wortham (2001) offered a definition of the field of linguistic anthropology of education in her introduction to an issue of "Linguistics and Education" devoted to the study of language ideology in educational settings.

1) the study of "language in use"
2) the study of "participants' own point of view on their activities"
3) analyzes "specific language used in particular contexts"
4) studies "how language use can constitute aspects of culture and identity"
5) analyzes "patterns of semiotic cues across particular segments of language use"
6) studies the above (1-5) in depth, incorporating both the macro-level "belief systems shared by members of a group about language" and the micro-level "construals that speakers make of particular instances of discourse" (Woolard, as cited in Wortham, 2001, p. 256)

This list of characteristics contributes to an understanding of the many nuanced types of notions that people can hold regarding language in an educational setting and suggests various topics of study related to language use.

Language ideologies in families and communities. People express their identity through language, and often they view their own language as symbolic of their own identity and that of their community (Woolard & Scheiffelin, 1994). The term "mother tongue" is evocative of this close relationship between identity and language, a relationship that can have deep loyalties and emotional ties, but this evocation itself derives from widely held language ideology assuming that each national or cultural group has, or should have, its own unique language. According to researchers Farr and Song (2011),"Since language ideologies are not simply about language, but also involve social and cultural conceptions of personhood, citizenship, morality, quality and value, etc., they have material effects in the world and thus are particularly important to understand" (p. 651). The symbolic value held by a speech community of their language, languages, or varieties of language impacts language practices within that community (Spolsky, 2004).

People outside a speech community may also attribute value--or a lack of it--to the languages used within it based on purpose, location, and formality. Gal (2005) referred to Woolard's analysis of public debate around the use of bilingual ballots in California in the 1980s to illustrate the conflicting attitudes of monolingual English speakers about the use of Spanish in different locations and for varying purposes. Gal established the concepts of "private" and "public" as

differentiating attitudes toward the "acceptable" use of a minority language. The use of the same minority language was viewed by majority language speakers as appropriate in the private space of a family's home but inappropriate in the public domain. The same dichotomy was seen in casual, familiar topics versus more formal, significant topics (Gal, 2005).

Although the term language policy describes decisions made by those in authority regarding the use, status, and teaching of languages, these decisions can take place within households as well as in state departments of education. Some have suggested that the use of language in private space is an important consideration in language policy as well, and family-based language policy has developed as a specific research focus. (Caldas, 2012). As "language management efforts may go beyond or contradict the set of beliefs and values that underlie a community's use of language, and the actual practice of language use" (Spolsky, 2009, p. 14), this indicates the need for language activism from within the language communities themselves. Research has increasingly focused on communal efforts to revitalize home languages as a way of supporting these efforts in an ethical manner from an outsider role in these communities (Combs & Penfield, 2012; Hornberger, 2005; McCarty, 2013).

Spolsky (2009) couched language policy within its context of power relations and describes it is as:

> Not autonomous, but rather the reflex of the social, political, economic, religious, ideological, emotional context in which human life goes on. To talk, as some do, about language policy victimizing minorities ignores the fact that language differences account for only a tiny part of prejudice, injustice, and suffering. (p. 9)

This description links back to the instrumental value of minority language development for human dignity and freedom (Robichaud & De Schutter, 2012) and emphasizes the need for understanding which ideologies are being operationalized through *de facto* and *de jure* language policy. This awareness grounds a dynamic approach to educational language policy by educators (García & Menken, 2010) as they advocate for social justice in this policy area on behalf of English learners and their families (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

Politics and language. It is easy to understand then how the use of languages and their status in relation to one another can become highly politicized. The struggles between opposing groups regarding the use of home languages in education illustrates Wiley's assertion that "language policies are as contested as any other major social issue in the contemporary United States" (p. 252). One explanation of the intensity in the ideological battle over bilingual education was offered by García (2012): "Language policy signals ideological positions" and is "enmeshed in social systems of domination and subordination of groups" (p. 85). One of the most prominent ideologies associated with the struggle over bilingual education is the nationalist view, expressed as the need to "Americanize" all newcomers to the U.S. (Wiley, 2007). "The discourse of Americanization has several underlying premises: One language is necessary for national unity; therefore, multilingualism is divisive. Loyalty to the nation is demonstrated by speaking the national language. One cannot have divided loyalties, and, consequently, one must not speak more than one language because bilingualism reflects disloyalty" (Wiley, 2007, p. 254). Hornberger (2002)

used Lo Bianco's representation of "unum" and "pluribus" to describe these competing perspectives of monolingualism and multilingualism (p. 46). Wiley (2007) went on to describe the situation in U.S. language policy as a "crisis of monolingualist ideology" (p. 255) and stated that this "monolingualist perspective fails to grasp the fact that languages can and do co-exist in a multilingual country and a multilingual world" (p. 253).

Majoritarian views of languages and language speakers. Many advocates of linguistic rights attribute negative attitudes toward minority languages to the negative attitudes held towards the minority groups themselves (Spolsky, 2004; Tollefson, 2013a; Wiley, 2013), although one corpus-based study of text in public discourse documents between 1999 and 2007 in Arizona did not find any connection between the two topics of immigration and language policy (Fitzsimmons-Doolan, 2009). Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) referenced Leibowitz and others in their assertion that "symbolic revalorization" of standard varieties of majority languages "often makes discrimination on linguistic grounds publicly acceptable, whereas the corresponding ethnic or racial discrimination is not" (p. 62). In an example of how closely these concepts can be intertwined, Wiley (2007) and others (Woolard, 1998; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994) pointed out that a lack of alphabetic literacy served as a colonial justification for subjugating indigenous peoples in the Americas. As part of his definition of "linguistic culture," Schiffman (2006) described beliefs of superiority and dedication to language purity as examples of underlying ideas about language that are likely to impact the implementation of language policy. Along a similar

line of thinking, nationalist ideologies of language and identities can frame "ethnic struggles to such an extent that lack of a distinct language can cast doubt on the legitimacy of a group's claim to nationhood" (Woolard, 1998, p. 17).

Other studies have shown paradoxical connections between attitudes toward immigrants and toward language education that incorporates minority languages. One analysis of the General Social Survey (GSS) administered by the National Data Program for the Social Sciences in 2000 showed that although 78% of respondents favored English as an official language, 75% also favored second language education in high school (Robinson, Rivers, & Brecht, 2006). Crawford (1998), Gándara and Contreras (2009), and others have referred to the failure of bilingual education advocates to make use of this dichotomy. On one hand, people held nationalistic loyalties to English at the expense of bilingual education programs while on the other apparently valuing the acquisition of a second language as a status marker for higher education.

National identities. During the state elections in California that ratified a voter-initiated referendum, Proposition 227, which restricted bilingual education, an analysis of exit polls revealed patterns of voting by ethnicity. After controlling for social background and political ideology, Hispanics and Asians were more favorable to bilingualism than Blacks or Whites (Citrin, Reingold, Walters, & Green, 1990). The symbolic value of official English was closely associated by all political groups as unifying people around a national identity, but when issues of equality, racism, or ethnic minority groups were raised, conventional political divisions between liberals and conservatives appeared. The authors observed

that "Bilingualism easily becomes a symbol of civic disunity" (p. 557) and recommended framing bilingual education as a "practical compliment rather than a principled challenge to the dominant image of American identity" (p. 558). Torres (2013), Spolsky (2012), Hornberger (2013), and others have decried the national loss of heritage and home languages by entering elementary students and the illogical requirement to add back during secondary education what was subtracted during elementary, and have declared this routine educational practice to be a national tragedy. Instead, they believe that home and heritage languages should be preserved and developed as a national resource as part of a new multilingual policy emphasis in the U.S. (Brecht, 2007; Christian, 2007; Hornberger, 2006; Spolsky, 2011; Tollefson, 2013a).

***Voter initiatives and restrictive language policy*.** The legislation enacted in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts to restrict bilingual education has been the result in each case of voter initiatives. In her analysis of the effects of voter initiatives on educational language policy, Ross (2007) disparaged their use in the United States for this purpose:

> Language education is not the type of issue that should be decided via direct democracy because (1) direct democracy does not give adequate protection to minorities, (2) it exacerbates the tendency to make decisions about sensitive immigration issues on the basis of rhetoric, emotional reactions, and campaign politics, and (3) it gives uninformed drafters and voters the power to make complex policy decisions implementing particular educational methods about which they know very little. . . . Also, by mandating a uniform method of instruction for all children in all communities, the initiative does not have the flexibility to recognize and accommodate the many legitimate interests at stake, including individual children and their families, minority groups, local communities, and the democratic interest of the general public. (p. 1510)

As English learners and their teachers have experienced in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, voter-initiated legislation consistently resulted in restrictive language policy, with negative consequences for these students, their families, and their communities. Researchers in these three states have called for the courts to consider the evidence of ineffectiveness resulting from the restrictive policies in these three states based on the *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981) requirement for evidence of program success (Mahoney et al., 2010; Uriarte et al., 2010; Wentworth, Pellegrin, Thompson, & Hakuta, 2010). It seems clear that the political nature of the debate over bilingual education requires acumen on the part of educational leaders in their advocacy for the use of heritage and home languages in schools.

Ideologies and language education programs. Formulating official language education policy is a complex, convoluted process. Title III of NCLB requires that students in U.S. schools become fluent in English and that any language education program in use has the development of English fluency as its primary mission. However, as mentioned earlier, D. C. Johnson (2011) pointed out the conflicting intentions of policy makers in the process of writing the Title III text and the variety in their later interpretations of the formal text regarding the use of languages in education. He further highlighted the following Title III criteria for determining the success of language education programs for English learners: (a) programs should be based on research-supported models; and (b) local administrators should "believe these to be successful," a statement which he indicated was ambiguous and could be understood to refer to either the

programs themselves or to the research behind them. The fact that the text of the Title III regulation requires policy implementers to "believe" can be seen as an additional indicator of the importance of the negotiation phase of the policy process. Policy actors figure out what they do and do not believe through conscious reasoning and through instinctive judgments based on the mental models they have developed through past experiences. Perhaps the convictions policy actors develop constitute a proof of sorts.

The range of program models for students in the U.S. who are identified as English learners is wide, at least in contexts where state policy allows local educational agencies to select models according to the composition of the language groups and learning profiles of their student population. According to García et al. (2006), a typology developed in 1972 by William Mackey is still valid for describing language education programs in schools, and they described the four main dimensions Mackey proposed as the following:

1. the relationship between the language(s) of the home and the schools;
2. curriculum;
3. the linguistic character of the immediate environment as compared with the wider national environment;
4. the function, status and differences between the languages. (García et al., 2006, p. 18)

The fourth dimension includes the use of one or more languages as a medium of instruction in curriculum as experienced by the students in school. It also includes the linguistic goal of the instructional program (whether maintenance of the languages or transfer from one language to another) and the cultural goal of

the instructional program (whether cultural assimilation into a dominant culture or self-determination of a minority culture).

Using an integrative classification scheme, D. C. Johnson (2013a) provided a synthesis of policy orientations (Kloss/Wiley, as cited in D. C. Johnson, 2013a, p. 38) and orientations toward minority languages (Ruìz, 1984) with various types of language education programs (see Table 1). Understanding the ideologies that can operate behind choice of language education programming is part of an approach to educational leadership that is aligned with social justice and a commitment to equity and human rights in education, including a commitment to linguistic rights to self-expression and development.

Table 1

Language Policy Orientation in Educational Language Policy

Policy orientation (Kloss, 1977/Wiley, 2002)	Program type	Orientation toward minority languages (Ruìz, 1984)
Promotion	Two-way additive	resource/right
	One-way additive	right
Expediency	Transitional bilingual	Problem
Restrictive	Sheltered immersion/ESL	Problem
Null	Submersion (no ESL)	Problem
Repression	BIA boarding schools	Problem
Tolerance	Depends upon local language planning and policy	

Note. From *Language Policy* (p. 38), by D. C. Johnson, 2013, New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan. Adapted with permission.

There are powerful reasons for advocating for more students to experience education in their home languages. Hakuta (2011) described two guiding principles for education in the U.S.

> Language minority students must be provided with an equal opportunity to learn the same challenging content and high-level skills that school reform movements advocate for all students.
>
> Proficiency in two or more languages should be promoted for all students. Bilingualism enhances cognitive and social growth, competitiveness in a global marketplace, national security, and understanding of diverse peoples and cultures. (p. 167)

Analyses of recent developments in education policy in the U.S. clearly show that accountability systems and standardized assessments drive many educational decisions, resulting in the *de facto* language policy experienced by English learners in U.S. schools.

Multilingual approach to education. Multilingual approaches to education value the use of three or more languages being used to instruct subject matter in a single educational setting (García et al., 2006). Hornberger (2002, 2010) offered a well-regarded framework for the development of more than one language at a time with her *continua of biliteracy*. This framework countered the idea that a bilingual brain contains two separate monolingual systems and offered an integrated model of language development between the two languages. Students benefit from instruction that incorporates their home languages, even if they are not participating in a bilingual program (Rodríguez, Carrasquillo, & Soon Lee, 2014). For example, in a study of International Baccalaureate programs in eight high schools with high populations of Latino students, "Spanish heritage students" were "allowed to use their entire language

repertoire" (Aldana & Mayer, 2014, p. 277) to meet the demands of the college preparatory program. The researchers concluded that "before schools cold improve the way that they served their [Latino] students, . . . educators' perspectives needed to change from a deficit-based to an asset-based orientation" (p. 281) toward these students and their Spanish language skills.

A multilingual approach includes the assumption that students' languages need to be considered during assessment as well as during instruction. Escamilla (2006) and others (Shohamy, 2006b) have advocated for a more integrated approach to assessing English learners that is more congruent with a multilingual approach to education, one that involves a holistic view of both of their languages (Escamilla, 2006). Agirdag (2014) found that balanced bilinguals were more likely to be employed full-time and earned significantly more than English speakers, a finding that seems linked to research that showed that Spanish speakers with high fluency in both English and Spanish were more likely to go to college than Spanish speakers that had lost their Spanish during their K-12 education (Santibañez & Zárate, 2014). These indicators should be of great interest to educators interested in improving Latino and English learner achievement.

Policymakers in the U.S. should consider successful language policies in the developing world when recommending language education programs and practices, according to García (2013). The realization that "the U.S. is a multilingual, multicultural society that includes many people with multiple citizenships and identities should be the starting point for considering any language education policy" (Farr & Song, 2011, p. 661). A more global approach

to language education in the U.S. might involve the formal recognition of language rights, support for home languages as a medium of instruction, and integration of national pride with a plurilingual identity.

Organizational Leadership

In this section of the literature review, I present ideas about the importance of policy analysis as a leadership responsibility and also as a crucial component of advocacy for social justice. I include current thinking about how leaders can establish equity and manage change under the current conditions of reform and accountability, and I describe the connections between a critical approach to policy analysis and cognitive framing. These themes are then represented again within the specific area of educational language policy interpretation, and I conclude this section with a description of educational language policy interpretation which includes key concepts from the field of language policy, categories for language policies, and suggestions for studying educational language policy.

Leading Policy Implementation

How significant is the role of policy arbiter within the educational leadership repertoire? How can astute design of the policy implementation process contribute to effective schools? How important is a critical approach to policy implementation and leadership? How does educational language policy fit into leadership of policy implementation within school districts? These are the guiding questions for this section of the literature review. Within the vortex of accountability systems and economic challenges that currently characterizes

public education in the U.S., the resulting pressure for intelligent reform creates opportunity for meaningful change. In order to realize this goal, educational leaders need to become adept at scanning and interpreting the turbulent external policy environment. On behalf of their schools and school districts, they must appropriate information about federal and state regulations and policy, economic, and political trends at the national, state, and local levels, and relevant educational research into a coherent vision for language education.

Particularly when urgent change is called for by the public, knowing *what* to change is a key leadership quality. Operationalizing vision requires policies selected from the external environment to be appropriated into educator practices within a localized context. Within school districts, superintendents, executive directors, and other central office staff all serve as brokers and arbiters of policy as it is appropriated into their school districts' vision and mission. As mentioned previously, the roles of "bridging" and "buffering" by those entrusted with the work of reading the external environment for important information protect school district personnel by screening out the non-essential demands on them (Honig & Hatch, 2004). At times, school districts contract with outside organizations to manage segments of a change process when the time and skill required in order to synthesize the external environment exceeds the capacity of local leadership resources. Hatch (2002) pointed out the potential confusion and inconsistency that can result when multiple initiatives collide with one another in a single context. He described one school district in which "18% of the schools were working with nine or more programs simultaneously" (p. 627), and he

pointed out that this competition between initiatives within a school or school district can result in a lack of coherence for educators. Also true for language education programs, he pointed out that the theories of learning in the school district must match initiatives. If they do not, controversy is likely to develop is applicable. Managing complexity on behalf of the school district organization is certainly an essential quality for effective organizational leadership within turbulent policy environments.

Social capital and frames of leadership. The social processes of decision-making within an organization--who talks to whom about what--are part of its organizational structure; therefore, policy "implementation may involve complex, multilevel systems of relationships that exist not only among individuals within schools but also between schools, central offices, external change agents, policy-making bodies, and other entities" (Smylie & Evans, 2006, p. 192). Creating a similar picture, the Burke and Litwin (1992) model of organizational change describes how inputs from the external environment are incorporated into the organization's work and culture through both transactional and transformational leadership actions. Understandings about the leadership needed to organize and implement language education programs in rural school districts were drawn in this study from Bolman and Deal's (2003) four frames of leadership and also from the perspective of social capital (Smylie & Evans, 2006) as it relates to policy implementation.

Structural frame of leadership. Structural analysis of an organization may reveal that the capture of information about language education from the

external environment may not always take place at the leadership level within an organization and therefore may not be included in the change process of the organization. Pennington (1995) identified even the location of the office belonging to the ELL Lead, which she identified as the ESL (English as a second language) administrator, as indicative of the position and status of the program in relation to the power structure of the school district. If the physical location of the ESL administrator was outside of the main administrative buildings, she indicated that this may have been a visible clue to the less visible isolation of the program from the central processes and core knowledge of school district leadership. Whether the ELL Lead had authority to make decisions and allocate resources was another indication of the relationship of the program with the school district organization as a whole (Pennington, 1995). Any displacement of language education policy from the leadership actions and strategic planning of a school district organization could be identified as a possible structural problem in need of a structural repair (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Political frame of leadership. In addition to considering the problem through the structural frame of leadership, some school district leaders may decide to frame the problem of English learners' underachievement as a political one (Bolman & Deal, 2003). For example, school district leaders who are committed to social justice may work to neutralize political discord and build consensus around how the human brain best learns both language and content. In order to establish language education programs that will last beyond their own tenure, these leaders need to build political coalitions as well as inclusive

decision-making processes, those that include the members of the community most affected by the decisions (Corson, 1999; Dumas & Anyon, 2006).

Advocating for social justice causes often requires argumentation that is built on majoritarian interests (Anderson, 2009; Stone, 2012). In her dissertation, Diaz (2008) described the discourse in public debates leading up to the defeat in 2002 of Ron Unz's Amendment 31 in Colorado, which would have severely restricted bilingual education in the state. Opponents of the bill focused their arguments on the loss of parent choice, higher taxes, severe punitive measures for teachers found to be using home languages, and loss of local control, which was a state constitutional right for local educational entities in Colorado. She noted in her analysis that, as a result of polling results, the campaign intentionally shifted away from arguing "the advantages of bilingual education based on tenets of multiculturalism, linguistic diversity, and civil rights" (p. 214). She recommended that language activists and social justice advocates take note of the successful political strategies that contributed to the narrow defeat of Amendment 31 in Colorado in order to construct sophisticated arguments to advance bilingual education within the specific values and issues of community politics.

Human resource and symbolic frames of leadership. The structural and political frames of leadership are particularly relevant to any critical study of policy implementation, but the symbolic and human resource frames relate to the management of programs for English learners as well. These two frames of leadership can help administrators increase the stability of their schools through

clear vision and supportive school culture. When effective school leaders create strong school culture and cohesion among the staff, even in challenging teaching contexts, teachers are more likely to stay. A recent study of School and Staffing Survey (SASS) data from 5,000 teachers found that teachers in *high* poverty schools who were dissatisfied with both leadership and staff cohesion were more likely to leave than teachers at *low* poverty schools who were equally dissatisfied with both of these factors (Almy & Tooley, 2012).

School leaders build expertise and capacity for teaching English learners through hiring skilled teachers, providing professional development, supporting reflective teaching, and embedding data study into school routines. "The training, qualifying, recruiting, and hiring of teachers becomes a key aspect of managing school language policy. Each of these aspects can be centralized, boosting central authority over language, or delegated or left to various levels, encouraging diversity" (Spolsky, 2009, p. 111). Also, the social fabric of the organization, including the degree to which ELL Leads and specialists feel connected within the school district organization, may have an influence on the outcomes of English learners in a school district (Pennington, 1995; Pennington & Hoekje, 2010). This social capital that is built up within school and district organizations through trust, communication, and community norms is an important component of educational language policy implementation (Smylie & Evans, 2006, p. 193).

Educational Language Policy Models

There are many influences on the way that language programs are designed and implemented, including parent initiatives, community activists, charter school applications, state recommendations, accountability requirements, local experts, and others (Marsh & Wohlstetter, 2013; Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005; May, 2008). Community activists, school district representatives, and civil rights authorities reached agreement about the English language acquisition program in the Denver Public Schools (DPS, 2013), as part of a civil rights court case, *Congress of Hispanic Educators and United States v. Denver Public Schools No. 1,* dating back to 1969*;* this agreement in Denver, Colorado regarding the school district's programming and services for English learners showed how mediation and case law can create educational language policy as well. As a result of the agreement, the Denver Public Schools required all new teachers to complete basic training in second language acquisition and provided annual stipends for teachers and counselors with skills in Spanish and other languages (DPS, 2013). Though the school district's financial commitment to professional development and bilingual skills is the result of this longstanding court case, the formulas developed for bilingual support and programming for a case in which a certain number of Spanish-speaking students attend a particular school can serve as a high water mark of multilingual policy in practice. The symbolic value that DPS has placed on bilingual assistants, teachers, counselors, and students comes out of a court-mandated process of negotiation between the school district and the communities it serves. Smaller school districts around the state may choose to

interpret this symbolic value of bilingual education and second language acquisition programs into smaller-scale versions of the DPS English Language Acquisition Plan (DPS, 2013) within their own specific community's characteristics and constraints.

Community voice in educational language policy. The beliefs and attitudes of people in a language community toward the use of their communal language and also of other languages is increasingly important in language policy research. McCarty (2013) investigated the practices and attitudes of Native American youth regarding their languages and suggested bringing the young people themselves into the process of investigating language use and ideologies as part of the localized revitalization of their languages. This is consistent with Spring's (2000) platform for a human rights approach to education as including a critical study by students of their own societal context. This idea was linked with Corson's (1999) advocacy for critical language awareness as a goal for language education programs.

It seems likely that language policy in the U.S. will remain English dominant, with large pockets of multilingualism (Spolsky, 2009). Rodriguez (2001) argued for approaching linguistic pluralism in the same way that religious pluralism is protected by law in the United States. She pointed out that, similar to language, religion "constitutes identity, shapes the individual's worldview, and represents a defining feature of communities of difference" (p. 137). Her argument was that languages also provided these for individuals and communities and should, therefore, be protected. In her opinion, the "education

sphere is the least susceptible to legal influence" to restrict or protect language rights and therefore is the realm in which multilingualism is more likely to be established as a "good that should be cultivated" (p. 216).

In a similar line of thinking, Corson (1999) argued for minority language communities within a school to participate in the design and reform of language education programs. He advised that criteria for evaluating the success of the program emerge from the cultural values and perceptions of the communities. His advice is consistent with the idea that "a community's cultural structures provide the ‘context for choice' for [individuals] (Kymlicka, 1989, pp. 764-5)" and as such are worthy of preservation (Schmidt, 2006, p. 105).

Reforming educational language policy*.* Positions related to advocacy for a multilingual approach to educational language policy include activism through case law (Losen, 2010), community voice in decision-making (Combs & Penfield, 2012; Corson, 1999; McCarty, 2012; Paulston & Heidemann, 2006), and utilizing school reform initiatives to establish language maintenance programs such as dual immersion (Torres, 2013). Hakuta (2011) recommended focusing reform efforts pertaining to ELL education on the coherent organization and leadership of schools and districts and on the promotion of bilingualism for all students. Gerena (2002), Morales and Aldana (2010), and many others have advocated for the establishment of dual immersion, or two-way immersion, programs as one of the first school reform choices when significant numbers of children speak the same home language. Once language maintenance programs are perceived by mainstream America as contributing to a language-skilled

citizenry, these programs may be implemented for the reason that they serve the majority interests rather than the interests of minority children.

As several authors have pointed out, the politics of language policy are often expressed in how resources are allocated within the society (DaSilva Iddings et al., 2012; Gándara & Rumberger, 2008, 2009) and even within a school district organization (Jiménez-Castellanos & Rodriguez, 2009). Court cases in Arizona, Colorado, and other states relating to this policy area have addressed adequacy of resources rather than effectiveness of instruction, but Losen (2010) has advocated for a new wave of litigation based on the third prong of *Casteñeda*'s test of language programs, which requires evidence of effectiveness after a reasonable amount of time. It is their belief that the evidence against restrictive language policy has clearly established its ineffectiveness with English learners and would contribute to challenges in court on the effectiveness argument alone.

Related aspects of citizenship status, health care, and welfare benefits are areas in which advocacy can take place. Noted educator Linda Darling-Hammond (2010) called for reform on five areas of our educational system, and all of these would have an impact on English learners and educational policy:

1. meaningful learning goals
2. intelligent, reciprocal accountability systems
3. equitable and adequate resources
4. strong professional standards and supports for all educators
5. schools that are organized for student and teacher learning. (pp. 279-281)

Darling-Hammond (2010) included "opportunity to learn (OTL)" standards in the second point of reform, an idea which links for English learners to Bailey and

Butler's (2004) call for these students to have adequate opportunity to learn not only the content on which they are tested but also the academic language associated with the tested content. Abedi and Herman (2010) found that ELL achievement in mathematics was connected to the presence of high-achieving students in the room with them, so access to mainstream and enriched curriculum in integrated schools is indicated as an overall indicator of providing the opportunity to learn for English learners. This finding is particularly relevant for school districts in which instructional groupings are determined based on English learners' scores on state assessments.

Change is an expected result of educational reform, but Gándara and Rumberger (2009) show in their comparison of English learners' achievement in Texas and California that abrupt reform measures may contribute to unnecessary disruption of programs and services for English learners. In their comparison of English learners' achievement in these two states with the highest number of English learners and very different approaches to language education, they show higher achievement for these students in Texas, which has a bilingual education as a common educational practice. The authors believed that the "greater consistency in policy" in Texas may have been a result of the fact that its constitution does not allow voter-initiated referenda and that this consistency benefited English learners. They interpreted the results of their study to mean that much research has been mistakenly focused on this question: Which approach is more effective: bilingual or English-only? Instead, they recommended that research focus on the "critical competencies" of teachers in

any program that serves English learners (p. 777). Gándara and Rumberger's (2009) findings also point toward the need for educators to be able make sense of recommended practices within conflicting policy messages and to be provided the time they need to implement these thoughtfully. Coherence, consistency, and strong learning cultures within school district organizations help educators work out educational language policy into situated practices.

Researching Educational Language Policy

In this section of the paper, I present the guiding ideas from the literature that have influenced this study of policy interpretation. In critical language policy studies, researchers work toward the goal of discovering ideologies, influences, structural issues, or practices that, if changed, could increase the status and achievement of the group they are studying. As Ramanathan and Morgan (2007) put it, "Research on individual beliefs, everyday contexts, and practices casts an instructive light on potential obstacles to policy initiatives and reform" (p. 449).

In his treatise on "Investigating Language Education Policy," Spolsky (2008) identified possible points of inquiry for researchers. The four key questions he suggested for researchers in this field are the following: *What is the policy? Why this policy? How is the policy implemented? Can the policy be improved?* The second question is related to the "set of beliefs (or ideology)" held by those in authority of the best ways for children in schools to use and learn languages. Those in charge of managing educational language policy may disclose their intentions and ideologies through their description of "pragmatic goals" and "symbolic goals," and Spolsky suggested that it is up to the

researcher to draw these out and, when they are absent, to determine who benefits from the policy in order to identify these unarticulated goals (p. 30). In addition to investigating the motivations of those authorized to make decisions about language use in schools, he recommends studying the beliefs and attitudes of teachers, students, parents, and other community members in order to look for conflicts in values and attitudes.

As I was planning research on the topic of educational language policy, my review of the technical literature, beginning with Spolsky's four questions mentioned at the beginning of this section, provided me with the following points to consider:

- What is the policy?
    - What is the status and use of students' home languages within their learning day? (Benson, 2009; Wiley, 2007, 2013)
    - What are the mechanisms that have formed the policy? (formal/informal, hidden, overt, intended/enacted; Bonacina-Pugh, 2012; D. C. Johnson, 2011; Shohamy, 2006a; Spolsky, 2008)
    - How are the resources for English learners' programs and services being secured and allocated? (DaSilva Iddings et al., 2012; Gándara & Rumberger, 2008; Grin, 2006; Jiménez-Castellanos & Rodríguez, 2009; Stone, 2012)
    - How do educators make sense of external policy? What support is evident for this sense-making to occur? (Grijalva, 2009; Honig, 2006a; Stritikus 2006)

  - What are the relationships of educational language policy to other policies, including reform initiatives? How are these relationships discovered? (Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Hatch, 2002; Mahoney et al., 2010; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Skrla et al., 2006; W. E. Wright, 2006; Wysocki, 2008)
- Why this policy?
  - What are the pragmatic and symbolic goals of the program? What are the beliefs and assumptions of policymakers? (Spolsky, 2008)
  - Where is the social capital within the organization relating to this topic? How is it being increased or decreased? (Smylie & Evans, 2006)
  - Who is represented in the decision-making processes? (Corson, 1999; Cummins, 1986, 2005; de Jong, 2008, 2011; Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005)
- How is the policy being implemented? (Hakuta, 2011, Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997)
  - Who is actively participating in a community of practice around English learners and their educational programs and services? (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Hornberger, 2005; Wagner & King, 2012)
  - What is the history of the program and policies? What are the changes that have taken place over the last 3-4 years? What led to these changes? (D. C. Johnson, 2007; Levinson et al., 2009)

- Can the policy be improved? (García & Menken, 2010, Hornberger, 2013)
    - Is there evidence of language activism or advocacy on behalf of English learners? If so, in which levels of the organizational hierarchy is it being performed? (Anderson, 2009; Dumas & Anyon, 2006; Farr & Song, 2011; Gárcia, 2013; Paulston & Heideman, 2006)

These questions formed the basis for my interviews with ELL Leads which explored their interpretation of educational language policy within their rural school district contexts.

Considerations for Research

The field of language policy informed my approach to designing this research project. The following methods have been employed by researchers of language policy: historical-textual analysis; discourse analysis of media or written or oral communication; ethnography, political theory, linguistic analysis, geolinguistic analysis, psycho-sociological analysis; and there are most likely still other methods that have been used (D. C. Johnson, 2013a, Ricento, 2006). D. C. Johnson (2011, 2013c), Canagarajah, (2006), and Hornberger (2013) advocated for critical discourse analysis within ethnography for the study of educational language policy. The specific domains and mechanisms through which evidence of language policy can be detected have been described in many ways, some of which have been delineated earlier in this chapter. For example, the power relations delineated in the continua of biliteracy (Hornberger, 2002) as well as her

reappropriation of Ruíz's three orientations to language are central to this study. The mechanisms of language education and assessment described in detail by Shohamy (2006a) were also formulations of critical analysis of the assumptions and routine practices related to language policy found within educational systems.

Another definition from the field of language policy that informed the study design was Liddicoat's (2004) adaptation of Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997) typology of areas of focus within language policy study (Liddicoat, 2004). Liddicoat (2004) added four sub-components of the earlier typology, and the policies he identified as potential focus areas when researching educational language policy are the following policies: access, personnel, curriculum, community, assessment, methods, materials, resourcing, and evaluation. In his analysis of educational policy in Australia, China, Hungary, and Europe, Liddicoat (2004) focused on their methods policy in order to determine how coherent and prescriptive the methods policies were and what may have contributed to the methods policies as he found them to be. His interpretation was that an increase in prescriptiveness in policy regarding teaching methodologies indicated a public perception of a problem with the teaching and learning in this area of language instruction. He, therefore, highlighted the degree of autonomy in making decisions in the classroom as an important indicator when researching educational language policy. These are some of the considerations that have heightened my theoretical sensitivity as I approach this research of educational language policy interpretation.

In order to capture the situated interpretation of educational language policy, qualitative methods were most appropriate because of their focus on the local decisions of individual language users. Not only do they capture the fine details of a process and its context, but these methods invite the participants to reflect on their experiences and perhaps also expand their perspectives related to the policy. In the critical practice approach, the questions that researchers and participants alike may seek to answer as a result of research are these: "Who can do policy? What can policy do?" (Levinson et al., 2009, p. 30) That is, ideas may develop out of the study for expanding democratic participation in policymaking and implementation, for adjusting beliefs and attitudes about languages, about the potential benefits of various approaches and programs.

The field of educational leadership in the area of policy analysis also influenced my plans for researching educational language policy interpretation. Late in the process of reviewing the literature, I found that a similar view of the link between the critical practice approach to policy study (Levinson et al., 2009) and communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) was taken by D. C. Johnson (2013a) in his formulation of critical language policy study. D. C. Johnson's view of policy as practice emphasized the agency of policy actors rather than the hierarchical structure within which policy implementation takes place. It followed that research of policy implementation from this critical practice approach is typified by a focus on the earlier stages of implementation in which policy actors make meaning of policy signals from their environment (Levinson et al., 2009). This approach examines the social processes and social capital within which this

sense-making occurs and probes the frames and ideologies that may have influenced the policy actors' interpretations of the policy.

Understanding where the authority for decision-making resides within the organizational structure is an important part of studying policy interpretation because it shows the importance placed on a particular policy area, the organization's "will to policy, " using the term coined by Levinson et al. (2009). This view is sensitive to the attention, attitudes, or actions that may be missing from the policy field as well as to the observable actions of participants. The complexity in the environment within which educational language policy is interpreted can lend depth to a study if its design is considerate enough of the multiple loyalties, nuances, relationships, and interests that may influence the participants' experience (Hornberger, 2013).

In Hornberger's (2013) words:

> In confronting methodological rich points arising from the heterogeneity, mobility, diversity, scale-layering, indexicality and polycentricity of research sites, the ethnography of language policy is moving toward a more localized orientation that takes seriously the tensions, ambiguities, and paradoxes of language allegiances and sociolinguistic identities in order to understand and construct policies from the ground up. (p. 111)

Hornberger (2013) also emphasized both the presence of humility when researching educational practices and contexts and of respect for language teachers and learners and for policy makers and agents alike. The interpretation of their experiences requires an appreciation of the challenges they face in their everyday practices. She stated that "crucial to ethnography is the subjective involvement of the ethnographer in mediating between theory and data; and crucial to achieving a holistic and emic view are the processes of inference,

interpretation and induction" (p. 112). Researchers can hold a listening stance throughout data collection and can continuously question the data in order for the thoughtful, cautious interpretation of the data into gradually building theory.

Relationship of the Research Design to Previous Research

The study has built on research that indicates the effectiveness of language education programs that promote bilingualism for all students and that honor and utilize the students' home languages as a tool for learning. Policy implementation studies that have highlighted the unique roles of central office administrators in supporting organizational learning informed the design of the study. Educators learn and grow through reflective practice and supportive social processes; they make meaning of their environment, including the unique students they serve, and they appropriate aspects of the policy into their everyday practices and organizational routines. Blommaert (2006) called the study of "the way in which language policies emerge out of an interplay of actors at very different levels" a "challenging new area of research" (p. 240).

This study has been built with consideration to methodologies, interview questions, and organizational change studies found in the fields of language policy, educational leadership, and educational policy analysis. Liddicoat (2004) indicated the need for further research into the complexity of messages educators receive about teaching methods in second language acquisition and into "how issues of practice are conceived and encoded in policy documents" within educational systems. The design of the study was also inspired by the critical voices of researchers calling for reciprocal accountability, meaning that

educational leaders investigate the soundness of the reform measures that have already been deployed and monitor their consequences to protect English learners from inequitable educational practices.

Summary of Literature Review

The technical literature provided a foundation for understanding a sociocultural critical approach to policy as practice within the specific policy area of educational language policy. The three topics around which this review is organized are (a) policy interpretation; (b) language ideologies within policy interpretation and (c) organizational leadership of educational language policy. The layers of policy implementation were delineated as first negotiating meaning from policy signals and from the professional environment through a lens of personal experience and ideologies. This learning was both individual and collective and was supported by social processes and capital that included the coherent leadership and steady implementation of change which have been shown to support achievement for English learners. At the conclusion of his dissertation study of language policy in the school district of Philadelphia, D. C. Johnson (2007) recommended that "research needs to investigate how local communities engage in democratic policymaking within an egalitarian discourse community which maintains developmental bilingual education" (p. 263). Throughout the literature review, research and theory about second language acquisition and multilingual approaches to language learning have built a definition of excellence in educational practices as well as identified ethical issues from the field of language policy. I have combined ideas from the field of

policy analysis with the concepts such as cognitive framing and language ideologies, and formulated a critical language policy study through the lens of educational leadership.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter describing the methodology of the study, I present the approach that framed this study and the research questions that guided the inquiry. I also describe the context for the study and offer a rationale for the research design and approach I selected in order to explore the ways that policy regarding language education programs is interpreted within rural school districts in Colorado. I include here the means by which I contacted ELL Leads who were in charge of the language programs in their school districts in order to invite them to participate in the study. I explain my reasons for selecting the school districts and participants and describe the data collection procedures used in the study as well as the grounded theory methods I used for analyzing and interpreting the resulting data. I include a description of the measures I took in order to protect the privacy and well-being of participants, to establish trustworthiness for the study, and to respect the research sites. The chapter concludes with a description of my own interests as a researcher as well as what I hope this study contributes to the field of educational leadership.

Relevance of Research

The need to increase the growth and achievement of English learners is well-established and many of the performance ratings of school districts and

schools in Colorado point to the urgency of establishing sound, effective language education programs (R. Baker et al., 2013). State educational policy regarding language education has been influenced differently around the country by the politics surrounding bilingual education, resulting in very different educational language policies from state to state. In states such as Colorado, in which policy toward bilingual/multilingual methods is lenient and allows for localized decisions regarding programs for English learners, constraints from other educational initiatives may result in *de facto* restrictive language policy for English learners even when no clear policy has been established at the school district level. The responsibility for making sense of guidelines, research, and implementation issues rests with the educational leaders at the local level, and, in rural school districts, the ELL Lead may serve in multiple roles or face challenges unique to rural school districts when interpreting educational language policy.

Advocates for bilingual education have called for school and district leaders to recognize "ideological and operational spaces" (D. C. Johnson & Freeman, 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996) within even the most restrictive of state language education policies. Providing the spaces for educators empowers bottom-up policy formation and program design that can often be more inclusive of the home languages present in the community. In the words of D. C. Johnson and Freeman, "The line of power does not flow linearly from the pen of the policy's signer to the choices of the teacher. The negotiation at each institutional level can create the opportunity for reinterpretations and unpredictable policy

appropriation" (D. C. Johnson & Freeman, 2010, p. 24). This study probed into these negotiations and reinterpretations within the various institutional levels in which ELL Leads serve and interact with others in the school district. An exploratory design was needed because of the expected variation of educational language policy interpretation and enactment at the school district level within permissive state policy, and I expected to find variation in structure and process from district to district as well.

Interpretation of Educational Language Policy

The intent of this study was to discover the basic sociocultural processes through which external language education policy was interpreted by ELL Leads within rural school districts in Colorado. During data analysis, I referenced discovered practices to either a multilingual or a monolingual approaches to language education and to the arguments in the literature supporting each. The first approach permits the use of students' home languages and the other restricts their use. Through the techniques associated with a constructivist grounded theory research design (Charmaz, 2006; O'Neil Green, Creswell, Shope, & Plano Clark, 2007), I explored practices that build sense-making into each level of policy interpretation as ELL Leads work with school district leaders, school leaders, teachers, and others to design or reform local language education programs, regardless of which approach they have taken.

As I investigated the process of interpreting policy within rural school district organizations, the following research question was the focus of this grounded theory study: How is educational language policy interpreted by

language program Leads within rural school districts in Colorado? Subsequent objectives for the study that guided the inquiry are the following:

- What is the context for the interpretation of educational language policy by language program Leads?
- What has influenced the interpretation of educational language policy by language program Leads?
- How have language program Leads understood the interpretation of educational language policy?

In order to develop an understanding of the basic social processes involved in the interpretation of external policy into local contexts, I conducted a qualitative study using grounded theory methods. In a recent survey of 108 responding school districts from many different states in the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium, all larger than 2,000 students, the people who were identified as the district ELL Leads reported on their roles, responsibilities, and preparation, only 22% were full-time ELL administrators (Lee, 2012). In addition to the scarcity of full-time, well-prepared administrators, there may be only loose guidance from the state department of education for those responsible for programs and services for English learners. This is the case in Colorado, and, since each school district has the freedom to construct their language education programs differently, this topic of study lent itself naturally to an exploratory research design. My theoretical approach to the study was pragmatic and constructivist (Crotty, 1998). With the understanding that "we construct our grounded theories from our past and present involvements

with people, perspectives, and research practices" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10), I conducted data collection and analysis through a symbolic interpretivist approach (Crotty, 1998). This meant that I refined the data sampling in accordance with theoretical and selective coding which allowed for fluidity and creativity. This aspect of a grounded theory study allowed the research to turn to explore pathways that opened up during the research process. Because the length of time allotted for the study was limited, the amount of theoretical data sampling was limited as well. Instead, I applied this principle by adding questions to the second and third phases of data collection. The interplay of earlier and later understandings was integrated into my approach to coding during the later phases of the study which were influenced by data analysis in the earlier phases.

Approaching the Study of Language Education Policy

There are several potential ways to frame the study of language education policy. The symbolic interaction approach (Charmaz, 2014; McGivney & Haught, 1972), the discourse analysis approach (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012; Duemer & Mendez-Morse, 2002), and others have been used to study group interactions within the policymaking process. Tollefson (2013b) recommended political theory and interpretive policy analysis as effective approaches to the study of language education policy and suggested "ethnographic or other qualitative methods" (p. 306) for analyzing data in language education policy studies.

Further framing the study of language policy in critical theory terms, Tollefson (2013b) poses these research questions to guide the field:

> Under what conditions are the state and other powerful institutions . . . able to impose their will on individuals and communities through language policies? Under what conditions can individuals and communities act as agents in their own language learning and language use? (p. 29)

In order to span the conditional matrix of participants' actions, interactions, and strategies, the interview questions in this study addressed the perceptions of participants regarding the ideal role of the state and district in policy interpretation and also regarding the ideal role of English learners and their families in the establishment of language education programs.

Examining the construct of language education policy involves consideration of areas that may not seem directly related to this area of policy. This is because *de facto* language education policy often results from policies and initiatives, such as those for curriculum reform. The following is a list of the areas identified by Liddicoat (2004) in his adaptation of the framework proposed by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) to define policies for the study of languages within education:

1. Access policy for access to language study at which levels;
2. Personnel policy for teaching standards, teacher qualification, and professional learning;
3. Curriculum policy for goals and content of language learning;
4. Assessment policy for what is to be assessed and how;
5. Methods policy for language teaching methods;
6. Materials policy for textbooks and other resources for language learning;
7. Resourcing policy for levels of funding for language study;
8. Community policy for co-constructing language education program and
9. Evaluation policy for how the impact of the language education policy will be measured and how effectiveness will be determined. (Liddicoat, 2004, pp. 155-156)

This framework highlights the possible components of language education policy that can be explored in any context in order to gain insight into the process of educational language policy implementation.

Description of the Study

In this qualitative study, I sought to discover the means and decision-making processes by which policy is interpreted regarding programs and services for English learners. In order to learn how decisions about language education programs are made, I explored the experiences and perceptions of ELL Leads through semi-structured interviews. In order to provide context to these interviews, I visited classrooms in three school sites in each school district. Any school district documents that participants brought to the interviews also provided contextual referents for the participants during the interviews but were not removed from the interview sites. After my visit to their school districts, most of the participants sent me their school districts' ELL guides and improvement plans.

Description of Participants

One consideration for selecting school districts for study was size. I was interested in studying rural school districts in Colorado because of the various challenges their leaders face as they interpret language education policy and establish or reform programs and services for English learners. As discussed in Chapter I, these challenges may include a lack of expertise, constricted budgets, and small central office staffs. Although the determination of which characteristics qualify a school district as rural may vary in other states,

Colorado's Department of Education defined rural school districts as those school districts that are removed from urban centers and that have 6,500 or fewer students (Colorado Department of Education, 2013b).

The specific criteria for defining school districts as rural were based on their distance from urban areas and the area encompassed by the school district boundaries. The eight school districts being considered for study were classified by the state in 2013 as either outlying city districts, with population centers of between 7,000 to 30,000 people, or outlying town districts, with population centers of between 1,000 and 7,000 people. Within distance and area categories qualifying as rural, school districts with more than 6,500 students were defined as *non-rural*. The state identified *small rural* school districts as those with fewer than 1,000 students and *rural* school districts as those with between 1,001 and 6,500 students (http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvdefine). In order to include a variety of contexts in this study and to narrow the focus of the study, I decided to limit the study to school districts identified by the state as rural school districts, so school districts with fewer than 1,000 students were not considered for the study.

Of the school districts identified by the state in 2013 as rural, 10 school districts had student populations of between 3,000 and 6,500. Five of these school districts were included in this study. Two out of nine school districts with between 2,000 and 2,999 students were included in this study. Only one school district with between 1,000 and 1,999 was included in this study (see Table 2). The 21 school districts with fewer than 1,000 students were categorized by the state as "small rural" and were excluded from this study. The researcher

restricted the study to school districts in Colorado that were classified as "rural" and that had between 1,001 and 6,500 students in order to focus the study on 8 school districts that might share some characteristics while still describing the experiences of ELL Leads within a variety of contexts. There was variety within the eight participating school districts in terms of their geographic location in the state, their language groups, their immigrant populations, and the characteristics of their communities.

Table 2

Number of School Districts Studied within Categories of Size

Total Student Population	1,000 to 1,999 Students	2,000 to 2,999 Students	3,000 to 6,500 Students
Number of rural school districts in this category	24 school districts	9 school districts	10 school districts
Number of rural school districts in this category included in the study	1 school district	2 school districts	5 school districts

Another consideration for selecting school districts for study was the percentage of English learners in the school district, recognizing also that some rural school districts had undergone recent increases in the numbers of English learners attending their schools. Of the school districts identified by the state in 2013 as rural, 6 districts had 25% or more of their student population classified as English learners; 7 districts had between 15% and 24% English learners, eighteen school districts had between 5% and 14% English learners, and 12 school districts had 4% or fewer. At least two school districts were studied in

each of these categories, with the exception being the category of 4% or fewer (see Table 3). One school district in this category was approached with a request to participate in this study, but declined to participate due to other priorities. The comparison point for these school district descriptions is the percentage of students in the state of Colorado in 2011-12 that participated in programs for English learners, which was around 12% (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012). To further frame these figures, only four states had percentages of English learners higher than Colorado's, and these states were California (29%), Nevada (19%), New Mexico (16%), and Texas (15%; NCES, 2012).

Table 3

Number of School Districts Studied within Categories of Percentage of English Learners

Percentage of English learners within the student population	4% or fewer English learners	5% to 14% English learners	15% to 24% English learners	25% or more English learners
Number of rural school districts in this category	12 school districts	18 school districts	7 school districts	6 school districts
Number of rural school districts in this category included in the study	None	3 school districts	3 school districts	2 school districts

One reason for selecting school districts with high percentages of English learners within their student populations is that these school districts were good locations for a study of how they had interpreted educational language policy

because they are likely to have been actively designing or reforming their language programs and services, particularly if the ELL subgroup is identified as under-performing on accountability measures in Colorado. Five of the eight participating school districts had received a district accreditation rating of "accredited with improvement plan" in 2013, and another school district had a rating of "accredited with priority improvement plan" and had held this status for more than three years. The two school districts that had both received a rating of "accredited" were very different from each other in terms of their percentages of English learners and their size. The variety of school districts included in this study provided an opportunity to learn about the interpretation of educational language policy within rural school districts with varying percentages of English learners and with varying degrees of success with these students through their educational programs.

Data Collection

I conducted research on the interpretation of language education policy within a purposive sampling of ELL Leads in eight rural school districts. During the study of each school district, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with the ELL Lead in order (a) to establish the context and history of the language education programs in the school district, (b) to describe the actions, interactions, and strategies used to make decisions about language education, and (c) to establish the meaning that participants had constructed as a result of their experiences with interpreting educational language study. The interviews ranged from 90 minutes to 2 1/2 hours in length and most of them took place in

one sitting, although in one school district, we continued the interview after we had walked together through the schools. I designed the research and data analysis process with a constructivist approach in accordance with grounded theory methodologies, which is characterized by concurrent data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006, Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These methodologies allowed me to refine and expand my interview questions in response to the emergence of patterns or gaps in the data as well as to the discovery of unanticipated ideas or practices.

In order to provide opportunity for initial data analysis to influence the data collection process, I scheduled my visits to each of the school districts in three clusters. This allowed me to develop tentative categories based on interpretation of initial and focused coding and to write memos to explore these categories further. Clustering the interviews into three research phases contributed to the addition of questions in the later interviews that captured information about state audits.

Interviews

The research process began in each school district with a semi-structured interview (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009) with the ELL Lead, using open-ended questions designed to establish the context in relation to the policy. The interview questions were designed to elicit information about the basic social processes of policy interpretation experienced by the ELL Leads within the school district. In addition, the questions were designed to elicit information about (a) the context for their processes of policy interpretation and (b) the influences on their

interpretive processes. Participants were asked to share their understandings about the process of policy interpretation within their school districts. The interviews lasted between 90 minutes to 2 1/2 hours and were recorded for later transcription.

Observations

The observations (Merriam, 2009) in classrooms where language education is taking place formed a minor part of this study, since the purpose was not to search out discrepancies between official and enacted policy through extended observations but simply to visit several locations in each school districts in order to add context to the study. In five school districts, I walked with the ELL Leads through the school sites, but in two school districts the ELL Leads sent me to the schools on my own. In one school district, visiting classrooms was not possible due to state testing. My visits to classrooms were from 5 to 15 minutes in length and I took notes describing what students and teachers were saying and doing, on the physical organization of the classroom, and on wall displays, resources, and assignments. These notes helped me to recall some characteristics of the school districts as I was thinking about the recounted experiences of each of the Leads during data analysis and interpretation.

Memo Writing

Memo-writing was an integral part of the data analysis process from the initial phase of research all the way through the development of the analytical framework. I wrote logistical memos related to the data analysis process itself and analytical memos related to the ideas that I was exploring in depth as the

study progressed. Techniques that I employed were freewriting, clustering, diagramming, and sorting (Charmaz, 2014). Writing memos was the method I used to elevate tentative conceptual categories to major themes. I tried to move back and forth throughout the process of data analysis from an analytic view of the data to a holistic one in order to gain insight from different perspectives.

Document Review

All documents reviewed in this study were useful for preparing me in advance for my visits to the school districts and for helping me understand more about the school districts after the interviews were completed. Prior to the interview, I had asked the ELL Leads to bring their ELL guides and any other materials they would like to show me related to changes over the past four years in their school districts. Most of them brought their ELL guides to the interview and referenced other documents during the interviews.

I collected available data on demographics, achievement, and growth in content and language which provided general context for the study sites (Merriam, 2009). The school districts' performance frameworks, improvement plans, and Title III Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) results were provided on the state website. Most of the ELL Leads emailed me copies of their school districts' ELL guides and Unified Improvement Plans following the interviews. In two school districts, the Leads did not sent their ELL guides because the guides were in a revision process. None of the documents were coded because I considered them a secondary source of information about the participating school districts.

Data Analysis

There have been several schools of thought within the grounded theory approach to qualitative research and I decided to model my data analysis process according to the recommendations given by Charmaz (2006, 2014). Accordingly, data analysis began as soon as the first interview was completed. I wrote and recorded memos following each interview in order to keep a record of the ideas that were coming forward in response to the interviews. As soon as the first transcripts were done, I began initial and then focused coding. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the interviews were organized into three clusters over a 2 1/2 month period of time, which allowed some transcription and coding to take place between each phase. As is characteristic of a grounded theory study, initial data analysis influenced subsequent data collection. Though I selected no additional ELL Leads to interview as a result of data analysis, I did add questions to the later interviews in order to fill gaps that had been revealed and to explore unexpected ideas that had emerged in the earlier interviews.

There was a pause of four months in the data analysis process due to work commitments. When I began a new round of coding, I found that the literature review had receded in my memory, which allowed me to approach the data in a fresh way. My prior analysis had built some tentative conceptual categories that seemed pertinent and useful, and the frames that I had kept trying to use to code the data were easier to set aside than they had been in my earlier attempts at coding. Charmaz (2006) had cautioned against coding with any preset coding scheme in mind and stated that any pre-existing idea or

definition would have to "earn its way" into the data analysis. In the final round of coding and data analysis, I kept the focus on developing conceptual categories and themes from within the accounts and reflections of the ELL Leads without relying on Wenger's (1998) definitions of roles within the community of practice or Spolsky's (2008) questions for investigating language policy, or any other worthy framework. I also followed Charmaz's (2006) advice not to depend on a conditional matrix for discovering relationships between focused codes but to instead search for patterns within the data and build interpretations using my own theoretical sensitivity for the area of study.

Through memo-writing, I developed a working definition of the interpretive process as the participants had described it in their interviews, explored the lenses that participants seemed to be using to interpret policy, and questioned the data from the perspective of each of the sub-questions. I sorted memos on the categories and drew diagrams to represent possible relationships between categories. Through clustering and diagrams I expanded selected conceptual categories into dichotomies or ranges of conditions that would account for possible variations within a theme. I revisited the transcripts and the focused codes in order to place each ELL Lead and her school district within the range of possible cases in these conceptual categories. This process revealed patterns within the school districts as well as themes with explanatory power. In addition to analytical memos that broke ideas into their constituent parts, I wrote memos for the purpose of gaining a holistic view of the data. For example, I wrote memos on each ELL Lead in order to answer the question: What was the unique

contribution of each one of the Leads to this study? Another use of holistic memo-writing was that after all of the transcripts had been coded, I read through a clean copy of each transcript without doing any coding in order to write a memo after each that answered the question: What is really going on here? Through multiple analytical processes, seven themes emerged that seemed to account for the experiences and reflections of the participating ELL Leads. As I continued to probe the themes and search for theory that would describe relationships between them, the range of cases across the participating school districts invited an explanation that would account for the way that each ELL Lead was working to strengthen her language program within her unique set of circumstances. Identifying axes along which these Leads were finding their equilibrium and power over time led to the development of the analytical framework that is presented in Chapter V.

I invited the participants to contribute their reactions to my analysis of the data at three points in the process: after the generation of initial categories related to the process of interpreting policy; after the creation of an analytical framework; and after Chapters IV and V had been completed. This opened up the possibility for participants to challenge or affirm my interpretation of their experiences at more than one phase of the process. These opportunities were congruent with a constructivist interpretivist approach to the study. Once the data analysis process reached that subjective point in time at which it seemed that additional data or analysis would not bring fresh insight (Charmaz, 2006) and that the framework portrayed a useful evaluative tool, the study was concluded.

Ethical Considerations

There were several ways that I worked to ensure that I carried out an ethical study. The first principle that I committed towards the discipline of grounded theory development. This involved a clearly documented thought process of building theory from concepts that emerge through data analysis. I have endeavored to reveal my positionality as the researcher but not to push the study forward according to my values and beliefs, instead allowing it to unfold naturally. Both in the way the interviews were designed and constructed and in the way I approached the resulting data. I endeavored to apprehend the subjective experiences of the ELL Leads who had agreed to participate in the study.

Another part of ethical research is a clean research design and a conscientious approach to data collection and analysis procedures. The research design and data collection procedures were approved by my dissertation committee and by the Institutional Research Board. (See Appendix A for the Institutional Review Board letter of approval.) Also, the well-being of the participants and of the organizations from which I collected data was a priority at each stage of the study. I recognized the delicacy required to investigate the process of language education policy implementation within a micro-political context that might have included conflicting ideologies regarding the use of home languages. There might have been some risk involved in opening conversations about language education policy, but I did my best to build trust with the participants and to maintain the focus of the study throughout the interviews.

Respect for the research site was demonstrated by not stirring up controversy and distrust for leaders within the schools and school districts that are studied (Creswell, 2012). In order to accomplish this, I focused my interview questions on the perceptions of participants regarding the sequence of events, the actions, and the interactions (Charmaz, 2006) linked to the language education policy implementation process and steered discussions away from any concerns that were outside the scope of this study. (See Appendix B for the Interview Guide.)

In order to ensure an ethical study, I secured the informed consent of each participant and protected the confidentiality of their identities and information they provided, including protecting the data during its analysis and long-term storage. (See Appendix C for the consent form.) Each participant signed a letter of consent after a verbal explanation of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time with no repercussions and had an opportunity to read through the study findings to verify that their identities were kept confidential.

Another important aspect of an ethical approach to research involves reciprocity or benefit to the participants (Creswell, 2012). I provided each ELL Lead that participated in the study with an annotated resource list (see Appendix D) and a gift card of $25 to Amazon.com at the conclusion of the study. Each participant would have received these even if they had elected to withdraw from the study at any point.

Trustworthiness of the Findings

In order to establish the trustworthiness of the findings, I collected data in ways that would allow for triangulation (Guba, 1981). I kept a clear chain of

evidence which will allow my work to be audited (Guba, 1981), including records of initial codes and categories, analytical memos, school district documents that are related to language education, interview data, and observation notes. I worked to stay immersed in the data through fragmentation of the data through open coding. I revisited the data systematically and engaged in memo-writing. I developed tentative categories in order to allow theory to develop from the categories through constant comparison, instead of approaching the concept categories with theories already in mind. In order to ensure that the study shows reflexivity, I kept a clear record of my own experiences and thought processes over time as a researcher, including my background, interests, and beliefs relating to the topic.

Throughout the process, I concentrated on the voice of the study participants and on the faithful representation of their subjective meanings relating to the implementation of language education policy in their own contexts. Knowing that evidentiary adequacy is particularly important for grounded theory studies, I included eight rural school districts in the study. Though I was prepared to conduct discriminant sampling during follow-up interviews in each case in which initial interviews yielded data that did not seem to fit into the emerging categories (Charmaz, 2006), I did not find it necessary to do so. Once an interpretive theory had been developed, I compared it to existing theories in the literature and conducted member checks of the theory to see if it made sense to these study participants. The participants had four opportunities to provide their input into the study after the interviews took place. Once I had finished

transcribing the interviews verbatim, I removed all names and identifying information. Participants were given the choice of receiving their transcripts by mail or by email and all of them requested email. I emailed each participant their own transcript as a pdf attachment and requested corrections, additions, or other contributions. Two people sent minor clarifications added as comments within the pdf. During data analysis, I emailed the participants a list of categories and asked for their feedback on how well the list captured their experiences. Five emailed back to confirm the representativeness of the categories and one of the five suggested an additional category. The third opportunity for input was when I sent them the analytical framework and asked for feedback, and soon after that, I sent each of the participants a draft copy of Chapters IV and V. I had marked the files as confidential and asked each of them to confirm receiving them and to verify that their identities had been protected in my presentation of the findings. Five of the participants confirmed that confidentiality was preserved and two of them offered further comment on the analytical framework. I also looked for evidence that the theory could account for experiences in similar cases by seeking confirmation from ELL Leads in other school districts and from colleagues in the field of language education policy. In addition, I sent a draft of Chapters IV and V to two colleagues and requested a review. One of them had served as an ELL Lead for 11 rural school districts through a cooperative educational agency and she affirmed the findings and offered her opinion that the analytical framework represented very well the realities of serving English learners in rural contexts. (See Appendix E for a record of all email correspondence sent to participants.)

Finally, the study benefitted from the guidance of outside reviewers in the form of my doctoral dissertation committee members.

Precautions

The precautions I took to provide readers of this study with trustworthy findings that may be applicable to their own contexts include the following actions:

- Described the contexts for the study in detail, including the regulations and case law that may have guided the local interpretation of language education policy.
- Explained methods of data collection and analysis used in a grounded theory study.
- Recorded analytical memos and followed a systematic process of data collection and analysis, allowing the themes to emerge from the findings, the conclusions to develop from the themes, and the recommendations and implications to flow from the conclusions.
- Established the conceptual framework for the study and disclosed my stance as a researcher.
- Included suggestions for educators' use of this study in the final recommendations.

Situating and describing this study accurately will allow recipients to readily synthesize the elements of the findings and recommendations that they find relevant to their own situations. A clearly described research design can also serve as a starting point in designing a similar, parallel study from the

perspectives of English learners and their parents, English speaking students and their parents, and other members of the community that hold a stake in language education planning.

Contribution to the Field of Educational Leadership

The provision of an analytical framework explaining ways that educational leaders can interpret language education policy within rural school districts may be useful to readers who find relevance in it to their own contexts and can, therefore, draw inspiration and ideas from it. The analytical framework offered in Chapter V may help ELL Leads and other educational leaders understand their roles in designing interpreting language education policy and implementation processes that benefit the English learners in their school districts. Even in states in which language education policies are either restrictive toward the use of home languages in public schooling or prescriptive regarding methodology, the description of sense-making processes within these eight rural school districts in Colorado may provide insight into the needs of school district leaders and teachers as they interpret language education policy. For educational leaders, the results of the study may link the fields of policy analysis and educational leadership to the less familiar field of language education policy. These results may suggest future areas of study within the overlap between advocacy leadership and language education programs that include the use of students' home languages in order to support English learners' achievement.

When rural school districts in the study had undergone a demographic change, it resulted in renewed efforts to create or reform their language

education programs. During this study, perhaps their participation in the interviews spurred new thinking by the ELL Leads about educational policy in their school districts. I hope that the analytical framework that emerged from the research through the interpretation of the data will benefit the participating rural school districts as well as any other school districts with similar challenges.

Researcher Interest

My past experiences as an English language acquisition specialist in a medium-sized school district have taught me the importance of knowledge about English learners and language education programs for district and school leaders. I have seen examples of how leaders' understandings and ideologies can either hinder or help establish strong language education programs. It has been clear in many cases that this policy area was perceived by school district leaders to be relatively unimportant compared to other initiatives. It seems that administrators in small- to rural school districts may experience compounded challenges because they must prioritize competing agendas and interests with fewer resources at hand, including the availability of knowledgeable personnel. Through this study, I had hoped to discover exemplary leaders who exercise advocacy leadership in rural contexts and who were in the process of interpreting language education policy and establishing high-quality, community-based language education programs for English learners. It was very fortunate that the school districts selected for study revealed many examples of excellence which contributed to the richness of the descriptive data and to the power of the analytical framework that emerged from them. I learned from the experiences of

educators in the school districts in which the decision-making processes about language education were not particularly well-developed and in which the language education programs were still very much a work in progress. Each school district and participating ELL Lead contributed much to establishing the themes and I am grateful for the unique value they added to the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter, I present the findings from this grounded theory study of educational language policy interpretation by ELL Leads in rural school districts. The term ELL Lead refers to the person who was responsible for overseeing the language program in each school district. First, I describe the contexts within which the participants worked and that defined their experiences as a way to answer this study's guiding research question, "What is the context for the interpretation of educational language policy by ELL Leads?" Then I present observations about the complexity of the role of ELL Lead within these contexts in order to provide resonance with readers and build a foundation for the study findings.

The findings of the study about the processes related to the interpretation of educational language policy within rural school districts are organized into four sections. The first section contains descriptions of actions and interactions associated with the ELL Leads' personal interpretive process to the extent that it was revealed through the study. The second section contains explanations of actions and interactions associated with the shared interpretive process through which the ELL Leads engaged with educators inside and outside of the school district to figure out how to implement policy. These first two sections are related

to the interpretive process of data analysis and to the sub-question: "How is educational language policy interpreted by ELL Leads within rural school districts?" The third and fourth sections are connected to the following two sub-questions, respectively: "What has influenced the interpretation of educational language policy by ELL Leads?" and "How have ELL Leads understood the interpretation of educational language policy?" The chapter concludes with a presentation of the themes that were generated from this grounded theory study and out of which emerged the analytical framework for the interpretation of language policy offered in Chapter Five.

The findings of this study of how eight ELL Leads interpreted educational language policy within their rural school districts are presented in a holistic manner in this chapter. According to their accounts, these Leads seemed to share many involvements in common. Since it was the purpose of the study to learn from their collective experiences of working within rural school districts, the ideas that came forward through data analysis are not reported here with an emphasis on comparisons based on school district characteristics even though the variety in school district sizes or percentages of ELLs within the student populations mentioned in Chapter III contributed to the descriptive scope of the findings. The characteristics of the participants and the school districts were used to define the commonalities that this group of eight educational leaders encountered rather than to separate them.

Interpreting Language Policy Within Eight Rural School Districts

The external policy environment and the challenges of being a rural school district have been described in Chapters I and II. Elements of the context of K-12 education in Colorado that were mentioned during the research interviews with all eight participants included the following: new academic standards; new English language development standards; new assessments for literacy, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and for English learners, a new assessment of English language development; accountability systems for content and English language development; and the annual cycle of budget cuts and staff reductions due to the economic downturn in the state.

Most of the participants also referred to specific state statutes and grants that had been a catalyst for change in their school district's approach to English learners and their language education programs. The Title III office at the state department of education was mentioned by every ELL Lead as an important source of information and guidance, and the Title III AMAOs (Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives), which are based on the state's formula for measuring the progress that ELLs within the state are making towards English proficiency, figured in as a strong motivating factor for seeking better results with English learners. In fact, four of the school districts in the study had not met their Title III AMAOs for their English learners for the previous five years or even longer, and the ELL Leads in these school districts referred often to the need to "move those ELLs along" in order to meet their school districts' targets and "get off of" their Title III Improvement Plans. In addition to their concern for meeting their school

districts' Title III AMAOs, the state accreditation rating was a very high priority. The process of data analysis and goal-setting required by the Unified Improvement Plan was the sole program evaluation process in most of the school districts, and if a school district had not meet its Title III AMAOs for two years in a row, the plan required a Title III supplemental plan to be submitted as well, with goals addressing the language acquisition data of the English learners in the school district.

In addition to the state and district initiatives that formed the context for the study, trends in the field of language education were part of the policy environment within which the ELL Leads worked to figure out programs and services for ELLs within the participating school districts. One idea that was repeated in many of the interviews was that the pull-out model of language instruction was something to be avoided because it separated English learners from the mainstream classroom and from English speakers. Holly (S2) said, “We definitely don’t approve of pull-out.” Isabel (F3) described a similar view of pull-out ESL, “Segregation. So, like the pull-out. We’re trying to move from pull-out in every situation.” One of the Administrator ELL Leads described the rationale for the recent shift in her school district’s language program from a pull-out ESL model to structured immersion,

> So up until that time we had very much a pull-out ELL model where the ELL teacher would take the kids and try to teach them how to speak English and read and write in 30 minutes a day, in English, read and write in English. And it was *not* successful. So with the new plan for services, we really tried to mainstream our English language learners, if you will.

Beverly (A1) expressed the same idea as she described the language program at the elementary schools in her school districts,

> . . . so our NEP students at the elementary school, probably at the middle and high school too, they have a lot more intensified instruction with the ELL teacher, with the certified teacher. As they begin to move into LEP and we do more push-in with aides and less pull-out. So I think that we still have a ways to go in getting that piece solid.

Language Policy Orientations Within the Eight School Districts

Promotion-oriented programs. Applying the definitions of language policy orientations of Ruìz (1984) and Tollefson (2013b) to the types of language programs in existence in the eight school districts shows a full range of program types and orientations. Only one of the participating school districts demonstrated a promotion-oriented approach to language acquisition, according to the definitions in the language policy field (see Table 1). D. C. Johnson (2013a) correlated two-way additive programs to the view of home languages as both a right and a resource, and one-way additive programs, including heritage language programs, as promoting home languages as a right for bilingual students. The state ELL Guide (Colorado Department of Education, Office of Language, Culture, & Equity, 2015) identified three types of bilingual programs: (a) Full Primary Language Support (including developmental, late exit transitional, or dual immersion); (b) Primary Language (literacy only; could include early or late exit transitional and language enrichment programs); and (c) Limited Primary Language Support (focused on Content Area Knowledge). The first type falls mainly in the promotion-oriented approach, according to D. C. Johnson's (2013a) classification, the second in the expediency-oriented

approach, and the third one in the category of tolerance-oriented or expediency-oriented approaches.

Expediency-oriented programs. D. C. Johnson (2013a) classified transitional bilingual programs as evidence of an expediency-oriented approach to home languages. He interpreted this type of program to be associated with Ruíz's (1984) definition of the view of home languages as a problem to be rectified because the ultimate goal is full proficiency in English without any commitment to maintain or further develop home language skills once the students have transitioned to all-English instruction. The outcome of a transitional bilingual program does not include home language skills, even though the focus of the program is to develop literacy in the home languages. Developing literacy in the home language is seen as a tool for facilitating more efficient English language development for bilingual students, and therefore is characterized as limiting the value of the home language as an end goal for bilingual students. Only one school district had transitional programs in place, though two other school districts either had piloted or were piloting pre-school programs in Spanish.

Tolerance-oriented programs. Whether a program can be considered a tolerance-orientation program depends on the expertise in language and culture exhibited by the ELL Lead and other administrators when instating and implementing policy within their school districts, and the some expertise experienced by ELLs in their interactions with adults during the school day, including teachers, specialists, and paraprofessionals. The loss of bilingual

paraprofessionals due to budget cuts in one of the school districts probably was a loss to ELLs of understanding and support within their school days. In classrooms in which teachers held the state endorsement in ELL education or were fluent in the home languages of their students, these students were more likely to show growth and achievement (Loeb, Soland, & Fox, 2014).

Null- or repression-oriented programs. There were no programs described in the school districts studied that represented a repression-oriented approach to home languages, which was to be expected based on case law and civil rights legislation. However, in those school districts in which the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model was invoked as their program model without evidence of (a) sufficient professional development, (b) support for teachers, or (c) ongoing maintenance of the program, the null-orientation is demonstrated. The de facto program is submersion with no ESL support, except for the rare occasions with an ELL Lead might visit classrooms to offer a bit of push-in ESL support. This determination recognizes that not every classroom within a school district is uniform in its approach to supporting ELLs, and so individual teachers may have created micro-programs within their classrooms, based on their own ELL background and second language skills. Because these are unofficial and unsupported by school district funding or policy, these micro-programs are included within the null category, which is classified by D. C. Johnson (2013a) as corresponding with the view of home languages as a problem to be overcome, rather than as a right or a resource for learning.

Restrictive-oriented programs. All language programs that are exclusively focused on English language development are considered to have a restrictive orientation, since students' use of their home languages as resources for learning and thinking are limited and there is no concern for the development or maintenance of their home languages in the school setting. D. C. Johnson (2013a) aligns all ESL and sheltered immersion programs with the view of home languages as a problem to be overcome. The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition identified the following all-English programs:

1. Sheltered English Instruction, Content-based English, English as a Second Language
2. Structured English Immersion
3. Pull-out ESL/ELD
4. Push-in ESL

The state ELL Guide (Colorado Department of Education, Office of Language, Culture, & Equity, 2015) listed the following as all-English programs that may be used in the state:

1. English Language Development classes
2. Pull-out ESL classes
3. Co-teaching
4. SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol)
5. Sheltered content classes
6. Sheltered English
7. Structured Immersion

8. Coaching model
9. Flexible graduation pathways
10. Newcomer centers

Nine of these programs were mentioned during the interviews with the ELL Leads and the only one that was not mentioned--sheltered content classes--might have been in place in one or more of the school districts and simply was not mentioned in the descriptions given by the participants of their language programs. It is important to recognize that these all-English programs existed concurrently with bilingual programs in the one school district that did have bilingual programs in place.

Language Program Lead Position within the Structure of the Organization

As the eight language program Leads explained how they functioned in their positions within their specific local context, it became clear that there were differences between the ELL Lead positions in the eight school districts that seemed to have some effect on how their jobs were carried out. Where the ELL Lead position was situated within the hierarchy of the organization appeared to define the extent of time devoted to the program, the scope of the work, and the teams within which the ELL Lead worked to make sense of policies and initiatives that affected ELLs. Another determining factor for the position was the commitment of each school district to a certain approach to language education prior to the ELL Lead entering her position. The ELL Leads that also held central office positions were clearly able to make decisions about their programs, and in

cases in which the ELL Lead was not a high-level district administrator, it seemed that a well-designed mentoring program may have served to both develop leadership capacity of the ELL Lead as well as to endow her with authority or authorization in advance to make decisions for her language program. This idea of implied, experienced authorization by the school district leadership team will be discussed further in the section on factors that influenced the interpretive process of these ELL Leads.

Administrator Leads. Three of the ELL Leads were central office administrators who had assumed the responsibilities of the ELL Lead position in addition to the other roles they were responsible for which limited their availability for focusing on the ELL program. All three of them expressed frustration at not being able to devote the time and energy they felt the program deserved. Although they had opportunity to represent the interests and needs of the English learners in the school district, all three of them felt limited by their lack of deep knowledge in the field of ELL education. So, although the contexts of their three school districts were very different, it appeared that their roles as ELL Leads were defined in similar ways, and there were shared experiences between them. These three are referred to throughout this chapter as Administrator ELL Leads (see Table 4). During their interviews, the Administrator ELL Leads mentioned concerns about (a) implementing the READ Act with ELLs, (b) language program reform, (c) district curriculum reform, (d) the impact of budget cuts on the language program, (e) programs for immigrants and migrants, (f) state audits, (g)

the need for benchmark assessments, and (h) the improvement plan for state accountability.

Table 4

Names of Leads by Type of Lead Position

Administrator Leads	Facilitator Leads	Solo Leads
Beverly (A1)	Daniella (F1)	Holly (S2)
Heather (A2)	Isabel (F3)	Rachel (S2)
Helen (A3)	Martha (F2)	

Note. These names are pseudonyms. The information provided in parentheses following the pseudonyms signifies the type of Lead position (A = Administrator, F = Facilitator, and S = Solo) and the percentage of ELLs in the school district. (The number 1 following the A, B, or C signifies the category of rural school districts with between 8% and 14% ELLs, the number 2 signifies between 15% and 24% ELLs, and the number 3 signifies 25% ELLs or higher.)

Facilitator Leads. The second group consisted of three ELL Leads who experienced relatively low status within the school district leadership team. I chose the term “facilitator” to signify that the ways they worked with teams of teachers was similar to the role of a learning facilitator. Two of them had dedicated positions, but one merely had a stipend for the extra work required by the ELL Lead position added to her salary for her full-time teaching position. All three of them had ELL expertise, cultural experience in Mexico, and strong academic Spanish skills. One of them seemed to have a well-defined mentoring relationship with an executive leader and was authorized to make decisions and lead team decision-making processes for her language program, while another ELL Lead described a very different experience. She talked about "being

allowed" to go forward and "waiting to hear" what the school district leadership team had decided to do with her own audit of the ELL program, without having been consulted as to her recommendations for next steps. One of these three ELL Leads was identified by her supervisor as the actual ELL Lead for the school district, even though the official position belonged to the central office representative that served as her supervisor, so theirs was a split position. The supervisor was the channel for all official communications from the state, but otherwise, this ELL Lead was seen as the expert in charge of the program. These three are identified in the study as the Facilitator ELL Leads.

The concerns expressed by the Facilitator ELL Leads included most of those mentioned by the Administrator Leads, with the exceptions being the accountability system and improvement planning process. The Facilitator ELL Leads did not bring up Title III AMAOs or the Unified Improvement Plan during their interviews. They were, however, the only group that talked about parent involvement in more than a passing way and described internal processes for language program evaluation and for revising the district ELL guide. Both groups of Leads, the Facilitator ELL Leads and the Administrator ELL Leads, spoke of the importance of aligning the language program with the current curriculum reform efforts and literacy programs in use within the districts. The district initiatives that were mentioned during the study included (a) curriculum reforms, (b) pilot programs for teacher evaluation and quality indicators, (c) district-wide literacy programs, and (d) language program reforms.

Solo Leads. The remaining two were the Solo ELL Leads, named such because they both stepped into the role with no experience as a language teacher and theirs were the only ELL positions in their school districts, positions that had been created in both cases following staff reductions of any dedicated language teachers or paraprofessionals due to budget cuts. They seemed to have been given very little direction from the school district leadership team or authority to change the language program. During their interviews, the Solo ELL Leads mentioned the same concerns as the Administrator ELL Leads except for immigrant and migrant programs or the need for benchmark assessments. These Leads did not mention the alignment of the language program with district curriculum, probably because the full immersion model meant that there was not a discernable difference between the learning experiences of ELLs and non-ELLs. One concern that was expressed only by this group was the need to find an appropriate way to serve ELLs who had been in the program for many years, but who had not yet met the criteria for exit.

In order to carry some inflection of meaning when quotations were included, I chose pseudonyms for each of the participants. In order to protect the participants' confidentiality, these names were used only when little description of their school district's context is given. When detailed descriptions of school district characteristics or practices are given, the type of ELL position is used as the identifier rather than the ELL Lead's pseudonym. When quotes are offered within these descriptions, the pseudonym is usually withheld. The pseudonym is provided in order to respectfully include the individual voices of the eight ELL

Leads when I have determined that providing it will not risk identifying the speaker by the details of her comments or her context. The participants seemed interested in helping me gain insight through their experiences which they shared openly within the promise of confidentiality on my part. Using the terms administrator, facilitator, and solo to designate which of three groups a certain ELL Lead belongs to will allow the reader to contextualize the findings that I report and connect these with each Lead's practices without discovering the identities of the speakers. The way that each school district administration had structured the position within the organization affected many aspects of how each ELL Lead carried out her job. Each type of ELL Lead position shaped the job functions and level of authorization for leading change within the school district. These differences are explored throughout the presentation of the findings. In order to designate the context within which each ELL Lead worked, her group was signified by A (Administrator ELL Lead); F (Facilitator ELL Lead); or S (Solo ELL Lead). In addition, the percentage of ELLs in her school district was signified by 1 (5% to 14% ELLs); 2 (15% to 24% ELLs); or 3 (25% or more ELLs), in order to establish the context within which she worked.

Experiencing the Role of Language Program Lead

In order to represent the range of experiences reported by the ELL Leads in the study prior to addressing the patterns and themes that emerged from the interview data, it seems appropriate to share some of their descriptions of what it feels like to be an ELL Lead within a rural school district. Quotations from participants in this section have been transcribed exactly from the recorded

interviews, with pauses, shifts, and grammatical errors intact since these often serve as indicators of deep or new thinking (Harley, 2001). Italics within their remarks represent their own emphases of intonation and volume on certain words, and when they laughed, I noted this in parenthesis to support the reader's comprehension of their intended meanings. I have adopted the use by participants of the term "ELL" as an abstract noun that seemed to signify the ELL program and the field of ELL education as a holistic concept. When it is used in this way, it appears in quotation marks. The reader can assume that all words and phrases that appear in quotation marks in the chapter without any citation are quoted directly from the participants. The elements that appeared in their accounts included: (a) personal stance toward change, (b) empathy and care for individual students, (c) sense of obligation and feeling responsible, (d) complexities and challenges, and e) ambivalence about language education programs.

Personal stance toward change. In listening to the ELL Leads describe their experiences, there was a general sense of their being enlivened by change and by new learning. Their stance toward change was that they expected it, even wished for it, and expected it to benefit English learners. Martha (F2) said, "I think it's been good throughout these years that, you know, try this new thing or try this committee, or make another one, or see what you . . . what we can come up with." Helen (A3) shared, "We've got new standards, you know, there's just a lot to know, and a lot to learn, and that to me is, um, exhilarating. It exhilarates me."

Empathy and care for individual students. There were expressions of empathy for students and their families, for teachers, and for principals. Martha (F2) described her concern that teachers analyze English learners' academic achievement with a narrow, rather than a holistic view of their needs.

> So I think it's one of the things that probably, sometimes when we think about ELLs, we think about their education, but we don't think about the outside, the box that we need to be in contact with, to see their families' realities and what they go through, and understand, and give them all the resources they need, or guide them.

Isabel (F3) also emphasized the complexity in the task of analyzing data for English learners.

> Um, I think that one thing . . . that I think is a struggle I think for people in the ELL field, is that they, I guess they. I'm trying to think how to put it into words. Your end result is not necessarily indicative of an academic issue, or you know what I'm saying. They'll look at TCAP or they'll look at results from an assessment and say things like, you know, he's not able to comprehend or . . . So they don't always dig deeper. They don't always check to see the language. They don't always know what the experience the child brings with him. They don't always know how the parents, what is happening at home. You know, there are other things that are affecting that child. And so sometimes we'll look at data, or make decisions based on data thinking it's one thing when it really is something else, and we just haven't dug deep enough.

Holly (S2) focused on problem-solving that begins with establishing good relationships with students, parents, and teachers.

> You have to build relationships to understand the struggles the teachers are going through, the struggles that the students and the parents are going through. You have to build relationships to definitely figure out the problems, then you can help them find the tools to give them a good trial and error, and see if it works.

These ELL Leads expressed their care and concern in a way that also implied that the agency during problem solving belonged to the English learners, their parents, and their teachers.

Sense of obligation and feeling responsible. All of the participants expressed feeling responsible for increasing the success of English learners in the school district, as well as for the overall success of the school district and of the teachers working with the English learners in their classrooms. Martha's (F2) expression of responsibility was a district-wide vision for shared ownership, "We need to teach all the students and it's not only the job of the language teacher, and that we're accountable for all our students." Rachel (S2) clearly felt responsible for helping all of the teachers in the school district to support English learners in their classrooms. She explained,

> Just meeting the needs, you know, making sure that I'm doing due diligence to all the teachers. Giving them the support they need, I think I need to create a better plan at being at a building a certain day or certain part of a day or week, and really just be more there.

Several of the ELL Leads talked about balancing their vision for change with their concern that teachers were becoming overloaded with demands for change. Heather (A2) told of her decision to "set 'ELL' aside" for a time in order to give teachers time to process the changes required by new state standards.

> It's a really fragile time right now. And we're a little afraid of taking everybody's attention away from this, from the new standards, and focusing it on ELL. Although there is just such an incredibly tight connection (laugh) between WIDA and the new standards. They're not ready, my teachers are not ready to see that. They can *barely* grasp what they're supposed to be doing with everybody right now. I mean, um, it's tenuous. People have really had to, it's been a hard year, trying to figure out what to teach, and what do the standards mean, and where are my resources, and all of that sort of thing.

Holly (S2) described a balancing point between criticizing teachers' practices with English learners and recognizing the school district's responsibility to provide them with professional development and time to develop expertise.

> It's really quick to point the finger: you need to do this wrong, you need to do this right. It's really easy to do that in this position. However, I got more active in [deleted], and it's made me have to find that balance, because what are we doing to give these teachers the tools to be successful, and the time?

Complexities and challenges. Their experiences as ELL Leads were not all simple and enjoyable, and there were hints in their accounts of the stress their complex work creates for them. Heather (A2) pointed out the need to be vigilant about the impacts of change on English learners, "There are so many moving parts, but ELLs are in *every* one, *every one*, of those moving parts. And you pull a string over here, it has an impact, and will unravel over there." Beverly's (A1) experience of being the school district expert on the ELL program required her to work hard as a learner in order to prepare for each training she gave.

> It's been through . . . incredible . . . trial and error. Intense. I feel sometimes I'm *cramming* because I'll get, you know how you cram for a, or I used to, for finals or whatever, you'd have five subjects or five finals in two days and you're trying to get it all in your brain. Well, sometimes that's how it is when I'm like, getting ready to do a training or I'll listen on the webinars and I'm like . . . Oh my gosh, I'm *cramming* this stuff in here, I hope I remember it . . . you know cuz there is so much. There's a lot of state policy around it.

Holly (S2) was concerned about the inefficacy of working in isolation, "I am the only one. I work alone. . . . I don't want to be a hamster wheel, working on my own way over here. . . . No one has ever sat down with me to evaluate the program." Acknowledging that the current situation in her school district was less than ideal, Rachel (S2) said, "We all know that it's just the way it is right now, and so we've just been doing our best to support these kids."

Ambivalence about language education programs. The policy area of ELL education is fraught with inherent tensions and conflicting interests, and it

was not surprising that the language used by the ELL Leads sometimes evidenced this complexity and indicated a certain level of ambivalence in their attitudes toward the program, the English learners and their families, or their language teachers. One Administrator ELL Lead described the language program in terms that implied a sense of feeling threatened; "It does rear its head often, you know, so the things that come to the front get your attention." Another Administrator ELL Lead saw her role as one of "putting out fires" and repeatedly used the phrase, "break down those silos" to describe the aim of her work with the language teachers. She also used qualifiers like "some" when she described language teachers as being excellent teachers, which indicated that she may have had questions about the competence of the language teachers in general. Furthermore, she described her language teachers as needing "specific, targeted PD that they can then use," which sounded as though she viewed them as being in need of professional improvement plans. Under pressure to reduce positions, this same Administrator ELL Lead had dissolved at least one language teacher position after a teacher left the school district and spoke of her desire to "diffuse that specialized knowledge with the general ed. teachers" as though she wished to obtain the knowledge the language teachers possessed but would perhaps prefer to get rid of their teaching positions altogether. This idea was echoed in the attempt in all eight school districts to avoid "pull-out" as a model of instruction and to emphasize mainstream education for English learners.

These nuanced opinions hint at the complexity of situations within a particular school district, and most of the ELL Leads expressed confidence in

their language teachers' knowledge and skills, but I share these comments as a way of suggesting that not everyone who serves as an ELL Lead within a rural school district is passionate or knowledgeable about second language acquisition nor may they be convinced that their language program or their language teachers are effective. In some cases, participants did not seek the position but were drafted in by their administration because they may have held a state endorsement in ELL education or leadership. In two cases, the creation of the ELL position may have been a stop-gap measure due to pressure from state accountability systems to do more to meet the needs of their English learners.

The Interpretive Process of Language Program Leads

The interview questions to which the participants responded were designed to reveal the attributes, actions, and interactions associated with how the ELL Leads figured out what needed to happen within their school districts for English learners. The collective and individual experiences of the eight ELL Leads as expressed through their responses to these questions during the research interviews created a resource from which categorical codes were drawn out through analytical processes associated with grounded theory studies. The patterns of similarities and differences in their accounts have informed the findings in the next sections on the interpretive processes through which ELL Leads interpret educational language policy, the influences on these processes, and the understandings they have gleaned about how their positions can best serve their school districts and their English learners.

Personal Interpretive Process

During their interviews, the participants described the myriad ways that they find out information and ideas related to English learners. Some differences were evident in their methods and sources, but there were many commonalities that helped establish an understanding of their common practices. The practices associated with their personal sense-making of policy related to English learners included the following: taking in and processing ideas and information; reading to learn; participating in sense-making teams; and designing processes for others to figure out the appropriation of policy into their practices.

Taking in and processing ideas and information. The role of ELL Lead can be seen as a funnel of information and ideas into a school district, and getting good information appears to be a prerequisite step to serving the school districts with up-to-date-guidance, and the accounts of the eight Leads confirmed that was an important early step in their interpretive process. During their interviews, the participants responded to questions about how they find out information about state and federal expectations regarding English learners as well as questions about the perceived sources for any big ideas behind school district initiatives. Their responses revealed differences in what they searched for, how they searched for it, and in the number of sources they consulted.

Common experiences. Each one of the participants felt obligated to locate accurate information and communicate it within their school district teams in a timely manner, and they all referred to state-provided guidance and technical training as one of their trusted sources. Beverly (A1) said that she never missed

a state webinar addressing ELL issues, even if she had to watch the archived version. The state Title III consultant was mentioned by all of the ELL Leads interviewed, and most of them described consulting with other Title offices in the Department of Education as well. The state ELL guide and website were mentioned as a familiar source of information. In short, when it came to regulatory guidance, all eight of the ELL guides depended on the state to provide information and practical advice about how to meet changing expectations.

Distinction between information-seeking and idea-seeking. There were two different emphases within this group of ELL Leads; the emphasis of some participants was on finding information, and the emphasis of others was on finding both information and ideas. The participants that seemed more focused on information spoke about how much they had learned about topics like coding students or compliance with assessment procedures for English learners through their work as an ELL Lead. In fact, compliance was an idea that appeared repeatedly in their conversations. Getting out of improvement status was one of the stated reasons for their focus on finding accurate information and staying on track with state timelines for reporting and accountability. Beverly (A1) said that her motivation was to make sure that there were "no negative surprises" related to the ELL program for the school district leadership team.

The second group, which included two of the Facilitator ELL Leads and one of the Solo ELL Leads, went beyond a focus on procedural guidance and compliance issues and investigated the theory of teaching for English learners. They searched for opportunities to learn from experts and colleagues outside the

school district, to participate in state committee work around state initiatives, and to compare their school districts' ELL program with those in other locations. Besides relying on the state Title III consultant for information, they attended professional conferences, took ELL-related coursework, and read books by the experts they had identified as relevant to their school district.

Distinction in number of sources identified. The ELL Leads who sought procedural guidance for program compliance as their main focus generally identified fewer than five sources of information and ideas during their interviews, but those who were seeking theory, research, and instructional frameworks or practices to inform their school districts' work with English learners usually identified more than 10 sources of information and ideas and one of them identified 30 sources. I noticed that during their description of their ELL programs, the ELL Leads that were idea-seekers generally described their ELL programs with much more specificity and referenced the experts and theory behind these programs whereas the information-seekers described the ELL program in their school district in general terms and at times even ran out of terms to describe it in more detail.

Procedural versus instructional focus. The active stance of the idea-seekers demonstrated their intent to search for what they needed. The overall stance of the information-seeking ELL Leads seemed to be more passive, which may have been connected to their own view of their role within the school district. Helen (A3) told me that people in the school district came to her for procedural guidance, not for instructional ideas, and that she saw her primary role as getting

current regulations and guidance to administrators and teachers in the school district so that their program would be in compliance and that students would increase their growth. This may also be related to the nature of an Administrator ELL Lead's work responsibilities. Since "ELL" is often "just one piece of [their] pie," they seemed to rely more on the ELL teachers to provide guidance on instructional practices. All three of the Administrator ELL Leads said that they depended on the language teachers to be the "experts within their buildings" and that they saw them as responsible for communicating with principals and teachers about ideas and information in order to implement program improvement. This delegation of responsibility for sharing ideas from the field of "ELL" to the language teachers might be why these ELL Leads focus on the procedural and the technical at the administrative level more than they do on theory, research, and instructional practices.

Reading to learn. When comparing the learning activities of the ELL Leads, there seemed to be quite a contrast in the amount of professional reading done by the information-seekers compared to the idea-seekers. For example, one of the Administrator ELL Leads, who was also one of the information-seeking group, described learning from experts at regional conferences, from state representatives on webinars, or in technical trainings but never mentioned reading a book or an article about ELL education. She had entered her position without background in ELL education and she admitted that the depth of her knowledge was still minimal several years later. She told me that her language teachers had tasked her with finding out about ideas and tools in the field, and

her comment during our interview was, "Do you know how hard that is?" Without the wider familiarity of ideas and resources in the field of ELL education, it seemed to feel to her like the proverbial search for a needle in a haystack.

At the other end of the personal reading spectrum, one of the Solo ELL Leads entered her position without any language education background but then pursued an endorsement in ELL education through a state-funded program. She described her wide reading in the field as "research" and showed me her stack of books that were waiting for the opportunity for personal reading that summertime would provide. She let me know that she had not read "randomly," instead, she said that she had identified from online sites like colorincolorado.org and wida.us in order to know what was worth reading. She said that she had not been given a book to prepare for this job but that she had needed to "really become a private investigator" in order to figure things out as she went along. This Solo ELL Lead and one of the Facilitator ELL Leads both described using book studies as a way of launching initiatives or beginning a decision-making process. Extensive personal reading and "research" had moved this Solo ELL Lead from an outsider in the field of "ELL" to an expert in how some research supported her school district's choice of an immersion language program. She gained enough confidence through her study to criticize the state as being "very behind" in the field according to her estimation and to resist automatic compliance with state recommendations with which she did not agree. Her wide reading in the field seemed to have contributed to the development of her expertise over time which then informed her selection of books for professional development within her ELL

team that she hoped would build the expertise of others in her school district and give them what she called an "informed voice" for making decisions on behalf of English learners.

Participating in sense-making teams. In this study, *sense-making* is a term which signifies meetings and consultations during which people try to figure out how to implement educational policy into actual classroom practices through examining its effects on English learners Whether ELL Leads described sense-making related to policy and English learners as the result of implementing a state mandate or as the result of intentional school district processes designed to help school district staff to adopt appropriate policy into their everyday practices, these sense-making conversations were a common experience of the ELL Leads in the study. The Administrator ELL Leads seemed to engage in these "figure it out" conversations within their school district leadership teams more than with their ELL teams, while the Facilitator ELL Leads looked for opportunities to engage in these conversations with their ELL teams and generally limited themselves to an informing role with their school district leadership teams. Because this activity seemed to be a very important role for the ELL Leads that participated in the study, their participation in sense-making with colleagues demonstrated some of their preferred ways of learning and perhaps even showed how they envisioned teaching others how to appropriate and implement policy.

Sense-making outside the school district. As budgets had tightened, opportunities to learn and work together with colleagues around the state had

become less accessible to educators in the study. A Facilitator ELL Lead in the study described participating in the past in conferences, standards-setting for the state language assessment, and many other learning events. She said that their small team of language teachers had been able to travel to many of these events together but that this was no longer possible. During recent years, she reported limiting her participation in state and regional events to required technical trainings provided by the state on topics related to assessment and standards for English learners which she then brings back to her team.

Another Facilitator ELL Lead stated the value of her participation in outside events in no uncertain terms and explained that she tried to participate in every regional training or state committee related to policy and English learners, because it helped her "to be the first to know and the first to put in her voice" as changes in policy began to take shape at the state level. She explained that she was always "trying to be knowledgeable about what's coming down the pike." She recognized that often she could not do anything about a policy until it was officially released, but she had strategies for getting ready for that release: "If I know it's coming, at least, I can have a team formed and be ready . . . on the day that it's supposed to be released or within that week, so that we're ready to jump up and get going." She criticized policymakers for not planning ahead for implementation of policy with English learners, particularly for how success of an initiative would be measured using state-wide accountability measures, since their individual levels of language development influence standard measures of achievement and growth. She explained,

> They don't always think about the different populations it's going to affect. So they go forward, you have to go forward . . . And then afterwards, we've had to backpedal and make quick movements to get onto something new. . . . So I think that's the biggest challenge, and it's not just our district, and it's not just our state, but it's always an afterthought, and it gets released to us, and we need to have things that are in place that should have been in place yesterday.

In response to these experiences, this particular ELL Lead's goal was to figure out how the state was planning to roll out the policy so that she could get her plan in place at the school district level. She admitted to "sneaking in" to regional meetings outside of her area just to get some indication of what the policy-makers and her colleagues in other parts of the state were thinking about an upcoming change. She explained her strategy of committed participation to events outside of her school district by stating, "So I try to go [to Denver for meetings] for everything because I get a lot of information from there."

One of the ways that the Colorado Department of Education supported ELL Leads was an annual conference designed for ELL Leads, the Language, Culture, and Equity Academy. All three of the Administrator ELL Leads admitted that they had rarely attended this conference, but they had attended events on policy related to English learners at the state leadership conference. The Solo ELL Leads did not mention the ELL Leads' conference, although one of them mentioned a quarterly regional meeting of Title I and III directors and coordinators in which they discussed their plans for incorporating impending policy changes within their various school districts. The Facilitator ELL Leads all mentioned attending the Language, Culture, and Equity Academy, though they had not all attended the most recent conference.

With the exception being the ELL Leads' conference, it seemed that the study participants experienced little opportunity for sense-making across school districts with other ELL Leads. All eight of them seemed surprised at their own lack of consultation with other ELL Leads across school districts, and several of them decided while they were talking that they would try to do that more often. These social interactions with others outside their school districts around policy implementation, whether in the leadership or the "ELL" world, seemed to prepare the ELL Leads to return to their own school districts with guidance and implementation plans.

Sense-making inside the school district. Within the eight school districts, there were both positive and negative examples of sense-making. The ELL Leads in the study worked with many groups on figuring out policy for ELLs, and nearly all of them worked with both the language teachers and the school district leadership team, including principals, in order to make sense of implementation. They also reported working with teams such as district-wide curriculum or literacy teams or teams of specialists within the school district. One Solo ELL Lead had formed a district-wide ELL team that included classroom teachers and administrators in the absence of any other language teachers in the school district. All of them described this process of "figuring it out," "thinking through," and "working out" how things were going to look in their specific contexts. Helen (A3) commented about teachers and their implementation of state policy, "Cuz it's about figuring it out." Beverly (A1) described principals of schools where the school district has no language teacher calling when they got

a newcomer ELL, "They're like, ‘What are we going to do?' [Laughs.] Well, we're gonna figure it out." Holly (S2) described the progress her school district had made in considering language goals,

> So you know, we're still working out those pieces of how to read the data, and how to dig deeper into the vocabulary within the different content areas. Um, but we're starting to set some language goals, so that's big. That's really big, to even be talking about language testing, ACCESS and CELA, in general, were just sent home in their end-of-the-year report card. And so that's where we've grown in regards of setting up, making, we have to have these conversations.

Holly (S2) and several other Leads in this study often referred to "having those conversations" as the way that people develop understanding of how to best support and teach English learners. One of the Solo ELL Leads said that one of her school district administrators told her that they had never talked about English learners as much as they did now that she was working in this role. In fact, she stated that she felt obligated to serve on multiple committees in order to ensure that the interests of English learners were considered,

> I'm a barking Chihuahua in this district. I serve on probably 20 committees. And I may be exaggerating on that, but I have to be on many committees, so ELL has a voice. . . . I think it just gets brought up wherever I'm at (laugh). If I'm not there some time, it doesn't get brought up.

The sense of being the only "voice for ELLs" on the school district leadership team was a shared experience by many of the ELL Leads.

In a positive contrast to the ELL Lead as the sole representative of ELL interests, one school district offered an example of a robust process of facilitated data study and team decision-making within each school site. Instead of the ELL Lead or the school district administration making centralized decisions, language teachers were the ones that worked together to figure out their schools' language

programs within their team. Then each language teacher met with his or her principal to further negotiate improvement planning for the school. The process was distinctly bottom-up. Even in school districts without such a structured, bottom-up decision-making process the ELL Leads mentioned that the principals expected the language teachers to be the "experts in their buildings." In some school districts, the ELL Lead had also elevated the status of the language teachers in the school district by having them present district-wide professional development.

One of the Administrator ELL Leads described the language teachers as the only team that engaged deeply in figuring how to improve the school district's programs for English learners and shared her wish that the school district leadership team would invest more time in making sense of state policy for English learners within the context of the school district. She said she felt that "ELL" should "get on the radar more" with the school district leadership team, including the principals. Even though it seemed that the language teachers did a good portion of the sense-making around instruction for English learners, when asked to describe the people with whom they regularly consult in order to figure things out, all of the ELL Leads also identified people within their central office administration. It seemed that their role was often to ask questions of school district leaders while bringing up concerns for the unique needs of English learners. This advocacy seemed to be what two of them referred to as "giving ELL a voice" in the school district.

Regular meetings with language teachers. In three of the school districts studied, the ELL team met at least once a month. Another had at least three meetings each year with her language teachers, sometimes even meeting on their own time. In four of the school districts, there were no regular meetings as a cross-district team at the time of the interviews, although two ELL Leads reported that regular meetings with the language teachers were a desirable practice that had been recently discontinued and that they wished for it to be reestablished. The two Solo ELL Leads had no other designated language teachers to meet with but found other groups to meet with in order to have "those conversations" about English learners, their placement in special programs, and the best ways to support them in their classrooms. Having these opportunities to voice their concerns, share their experimentation with implementing initiatives, and finding support as they go through the process seemed to be a core need for teachers in all eight school districts, according to the participants.

Designing learning processes. The amount of designing that these ELL Leads reported doing in their jobs depended on the way their position was structured within the school district organization, including the purpose for which they were hired. Those that were focused on information and compliance tended to have inherited programs and were working under limitations on change that might require using resources of time or funding. They were communicating mainly with the school district leadership teams, including principals, and with teachers in order to pass along the information they had received. In contrast, established routines existed in several of the school districts in order for

teachers and administrators to make sense of initiatives and plan their site-based implementation. These regular meetings of cross-school and in-school teams usually incorporated data study beyond the state assessment test results, and in one school district, these teams engaged in peer coaching and instructional rounds in order to focus on improvement in instruction for English learners. In three school districts, ELL Leads reported that administrators used a walkthrough tool to examine practices and collect data for analysis, but only one of these school districts used a walkthrough tool that focused specifically on English learners.

Changes in policy often result in changes in expected teacher practices, and teachers often need time for working within teams to appropriate priority practices into their own classrooms in ways that make sense to them (Levinson et al., 2009). The ELL Leads who were focused on ideas as well as information seemed to design yearlong or multi-year processes for teams to learn together, do "research" together, and make decisions together about instruction and assessment for English learners. As a Facilitator ELL Lead described it, this local sense-making was even more necessary because she believed that state initiatives launch without much planning or support for teachers who would be implementing these initiatives with English learners. She would often try to form a team in advance of the policy launch or during the week of its launch in order to provide the time she knew it would take for her language teachers to "figure out" together what the policy would actually look like for English learners within their school district, schools, and classrooms.

These are some of the various actions that the ELL Leads in the study undertook in their preparation to lead the ELL programs in their school districts. The success of this position seems to be very dependent on building relationships and processes that result in activating language teachers and others to think analytically about their English learners' language development. In the next section on their shared interpretive processes, I describe the actions and interactions through which the ELL Leads supported the interpretive process of others in their school districts.

Shared Interpretive Process

The ways that the ELL Leads in the study empowered others to engage in learning about the English learners in their schools and classrooms are the focus of this section. Their specific actions and interactions with others that comprise their shared interpretive process of policy into practice within their school districts included the following:

- working with teachers and administrators to facilitate program improvement
- initiating and sustaining the sense-making work of individuals and teams
- bridging between school district leadership teams and language teacher teams

The amount of systematic processing each ELL Lead was able to organize within her school district may have been related to the extent to which a climate of shared ownership for English learners' success had been established within each

unique context. The idea that these two things might be related was expressed by all of the ELL Leads and seemed to be a primary motivation for "having those conversations" about English learners and the best ways to advance their learning of both language and content.

It is important to note here that the definition of ELL program seemed in all of the school districts studied to include the whole learning day for each ELL rather than a designated 20-90 minute segment of that day with a language teacher. This conceptualization of the ELL program invited a district-wide approach to systems reform to support the academic achievement and language growth for English learners. Thus, even when ELL Leads worked mostly with the language teachers to facilitate program improvement, there was a consistent focus across the school districts on the practices of classroom teachers.

Facilitating program improvement. The mission of all eight ELL Leads was to make their programs more effective, but the way in which they each defined that mission within their unique contexts was very different according to their responses to questions during the interviews and their language choices as they expressed their ideas. In one case the mission was defined as dismantling the old ESL paradigm in favor of structured immersion programs. In another, it was defined as clarifying the practices associated with transitional and maintenance bilingual programs. In both instances the strength of each ELL Lead's influence in the school district depended on her position within the organization and, if she were not an executive administrator, depended on the

degree to which she had been authorized to envision and lead improvement processes for the ELL program.

Working with language teachers. In four of the participating school districts, the ELL Leads met between four to eight times each year with their teams of language teachers. These four districts were also the same school districts that had met their Title III AMAOs for their English learners at least once in the preceding two years. The description of their joint work with the language teachers provided a glimpse into the community of practice they share. The tasks that the ELL Leads were facilitating or planning to facilitate with their language teachers included the following:

- writing or revising the school district ELL guide
- identifying specific students as English learners
- planning the administration of the annual language proficiency test
- studying individual students' language proficiency scores and setting language goals
- deciding on placement in groups and classrooms and setting service schedules for individual students based on their language skills
- studying a book together and sharing their experiences as they applied their learning
- testing an interim assessment tool for language development and deciding if, when, and how to use it as a team
- attending professional development outside of the school district as a team

- visiting another school district to observe valued practices
- sharing results of peer observations, instructional rounds, and walkthroughs within their team
- designing co-teaching practices and sharing their experiences as they went through the year
- planning district-wide communication and professional development
- analyzing patterns in ELL data within schools in school teams
- presenting findings of data analysis and recommendations to other school teams
- preparing to present findings and recommendations to their principals for end-of-year program improvement planning

Four of the five school districts in which the accounts of the Leads indicated that language teachers were activated as deciders and designers were also the school districts that had met their Title III AMAOs at least once in the previous two years. In these school districts, there was a distinct sense that the language teachers were working as a team in order to be prepared to work with the classroom teachers and administrators in their buildings as expert consultants, not simply as direct service providers for English learners.

Working with classroom teachers. Those ELL Leads in school districts with no other teachers or paraprofessionals that were designated as ELL staff had identified other teams and partnerships in which to accomplish some of the tasks listed above. They had found that the amount of joint work they were able to accomplish was limited by their access to teachers. One of the Solo ELL

Leads described her sense of failure in getting around to all of the teachers in the school district that had English learners in their classrooms, and she said she felt obligated to give them as much support as she could during her occasional visits to the classroom. She described going to the library for them or sitting beside English learners in their classrooms to help them. The other Solo ELL Lead seemed to have decided to focus her efforts on establishing a school district requirement that every teacher with English learners meet with her to set language goals for their students who were learning English as an additional language. She also focused on classroom teachers who were providing some language instruction to a group of English learners sometime during their day. She had organized a district-wide team, and they were being educated about ELLs and second language acquisition through a book study. This ELL Lead was not the only one who described efforts to equip teachers with an "informed voice" so that they could engage in collaborative decision-making related to English learners in the school district.

Professional development. Another way that ELL Leads described working with classroom teachers was through district-wide professional development. Sometimes the ELL Leads facilitated these trainings, at times they co-facilitated with language teachers in the school district, and once in a while they were able to bring in an outside expert to provide these trainings. One Administrator ELL Lead reported using the services of two consultants over a period of years, one consultant for systematic program reform and one for professional development that aligned with that reform. She felt that her expertise

enabled her to facilitate problem-solving around ELL issues but that she needed outside consultants to help with the "larger shape of ELL."

Sheltered instruction as a mature initiative or pseudo language program. In both school districts that had no language teachers, the ELL Leads identified their school districts' program as "sheltered instruction" or SIOP, which is a well-known framework for including language instruction in content lessons (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012). In a third school district, the Facilitator ELL Lead credited any success that teachers in her school district were having with ELLs to her establishment over a period of ten years of the SIOP as a framework for defining quality instruction. The literacy team had told her that this had been the most valuable initiative in the school district during the several years preceding the research interviews because they felt that it had helped content teachers understand literacy instruction. This use of SIOP as a mature initiative, one that had been consistently implemented over a 10 year period of time, was much in contrast to the situation described by one of the Solo ELL Leads. She was unable to explain how the school district's language program (SIOP) was maintained or evaluated, and her actions related to the program consisted of talking with teachers about instructional strategies they might use and providing them with "a one-pager" about the SIOP Model when an English learner was assigned to their classrooms. She also stated the reason she thought that her school district had decided--prior to hiring her as an ELL Lead--to cut any ELL staff and go with this language program, as follows:

> I think out of, uh, because we didn't have the, the finances to, to have, you know, bilingual classrooms, or ELL classrooms, I think we had, it was decided to go to this model, to support teachers in that way. That's what I understand.

The SIOP model is a well-respected approach to organizing content instruction for English learners (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012), but these accounts of the way the SIOP model was conceptualized and maintained over time as a district-wide initiative resulted in very different outcomes. In one district, it seemed to be a credible, mature initiative and in another it seemed to serve as a symbolic band-aide used to cover the loss of designated ELL professional and paraprofessional staff members in school districts that had endured financial hardship. This situation left both of the Solo ELL Leads burdened with the welfare of English learners in the school district without a viable system for supporting teachers and administrators in their use of the SIOP model. Holly (S2) explained, "It's really heavy on me right now until I can get more, I guess, professional development opportunities to our staff."

Co-teaching as professional development. Several of the school districts were experimenting with co-teaching, in which a language teacher and a classroom teacher work as instructional partners for a period of time, and the rationale for this model was that it served as an embedded type of professional development for the classroom teachers for the duration of their participation as a co-teacher. Four of the participants mentioned co-teaching as a current, past, or planned practice.

In one district, the ELL Lead contrasted this practice of co-teaching with a push-in approach in which the language teacher works with ELLs on the side:

> The expectation is not the ELL teacher pulls the kids in the corner and does her own thing, I mean they're truly team-teaching. It's been pretty powerful at the high school. So that's another way that we're helping all of our kids are all of our kids and helping break down those walls.

This practice of side-teaching was referred to as "siloing ELLs" by Heather (A2). As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the participants expressed the intent to increase shared ownership as a result of co-teaching. Isabel (F3) described the change she wanted to accomplish through the model,

> It's that every teacher admits that they have ELLs in the class (laugh) and creates ways to build language for every part of that child's day. So it's not necessarily something to remove, but something to be added. That every teacher needs to realize that they're a language teacher, it doesn't just happen in ESL pull-out. And I think the co-teaching is going to help us address that.

The co-teaching initiative was seen by several of the Leads as a move to a more integrated approach to education with English learners.

In one school district that was in its second year of piloting the initiative, there were structures in place for joint learning and reflective practice for both the content and the language teachers. The ELL Lead was hoping for a groundswell of support for the initiative as the result of positive student data, and she envisioned additional schools signing on as pilot sites for co-teaching. She described a partnership between her school district and another to bring in consultants for training on the co-teaching model and had sent two school district delegations to observe in a model school district. She saw this co-teaching initiative as the priority improvement strategy for her school district's English learners.

The various implementation plans that the participating school districts had used to implement the co-teaching initiative impacted the degree to which it succeeded. One of the Facilitator ELL Leads explained that teachers in her school district had attempted to shift to co-teaching but that it had not succeeded. She thought that it was due to a lack of support through professional development, and she reported,

> Well we tried to do the sheltered instruction, the pull-out and the push-in, and uh, I think those are the three that have been more uh, well accommodated in our district because we tried the co-teaching and it really didn't work…. I think they didn't have um, good professional development about it, it was just somebody's idea to do it, to try it. But I don't think they had the adequate professional development. And some teachers hated it, um. Some other teachers, they liked it, so it wasn't like a really structured program.

In this case, the weak implementation plan in this case resulted in the principals in the pilot schools deciding to end the pilot model of co-teaching in their schools.

Working with school district leaders*.* The experiences of the ELL Leads related to the school district leadership team varied according to their status within the team and their credibility as a leader. Participants who were not Administrator ELL Leads in the study described attending meetings at the administrative level in which they remained quiet most of the time. They may have been seen as being more teachers than administrators by their school district leadership teams, particularly if they did not hold a leadership endorsement. All the participants described one-on-one meetings with administrators in which they responded to requests for help or information. They also responded to emails and phone calls asking for consultation about program services, state requirements, instructional practices, and assessments.

Participants who held higher status in the school district described standing up and giving their input during discussions within the school district leadership team. They also offered suggestions and asked critical questions to support a quality decision-making process within the team. At times, they gave presentations in order to make recommendations or requests and even negotiated with the team to enter into a learning process related to English learners, such as a book study or an off-site training. In several school districts, as mentioned previously, ELL Leads described decision-making processes that required participation by both the principal and the language teacher in a school in order to make on-site decisions on program implementation.

Leading and sustaining sense-making within school district teams. One of the marked differences in the roles through which the ELL Leads served their school districts was in the area of facilitating reflective practices with language teachers. Whether or not they had opportunity to work with teachers in this way was dependent on their level of expertise and authorization within the school district as well on the commitment of the district leadership team to supporting this work. In the school districts in which this work was taking place, the language teachers were apparently seen as capable of designing schedules, school-level programs, and services for English learners.

Across the eight school districts was spread a range of cases within this area of leadership, from very limited opportunities for teachers to study student data and generate recommendations to fully authorized processes for joint learning and decision making. In one school district, the Administrator ELL Lead

said that the monthly ELL team meetings were about "sharing practices" and further explained that her teachers were piloting an interim assessment tool, making it clear that it would be their decision to continue or discontinue using the tool. In other settings, language teachers collaborated to produce or revise their school district's ELL guide and to refine their school districts' standard operating procedures for their language programs.

Example of in-district program improvement. Sustained collaborative decision-making about program improvement by language teachers was described in only one of the school districts. The Facilitator ELL Lead described established protocols for collecting and analyzing data through peer coaching, instructional rounds, and annual data retreats. The annual data retreats were designed to share district-level data patterns and related recommendations, facilitate school level analysis of student data, and provide time for school teams to present their findings with each other. Once the language teachers had gone through this full day of data analysis, they were ready to return to their schools and present their findings to their principals. The ELL Lead ended each year with a round of meetings with the principal and language teacher at each school to hear their plans for improving their ELL program the following year.

Characteristics of a strong professional practice within the ELL team across the eight school districts included multiple ways to collect data on classroom practices with English learners, built-in time for collaboration as a team and with classroom teachers within their schools, flexibility for teams to make authentic decisions, and products such as a school district ELL guide that

provided evidence of stakeholder participation. Having clear, established procedures and plans for at least one year in the future were also indicators that an expert ELL Lead was skillfully designing processes that built teacher expertise and provided meaningful decision-making about how they might improve their own practices (Wenger, 1998).

One of the Facilitator ELL Leads shared during her interview that she intended to include participants other than language teachers in the next instructional round, because she wanted more of a variety of perspectives on what they observed, which showed that she sought diversity of perspectives as a way of improving the program. The Lead explained her plan, ". . . next time, I'm going to add more people. Cuz we all had the same view on things, so it all came down to one recommendation. Whereas I think if my principals might have…" She also described the ways that the school teams had been altering their language programs over the years, based on their analysis of student data, and there was significant evidence in her account of change within the school communities in both theory and practice.

Taking into account the range of cases and the roles of language teachers within the various school districts, it seems that, when the ELL Lead designed and sustained a process through which teachers reflected on their own practices in a systematic way in order to select next steps for improvement and implementation, the language teachers were viewed as much more than ELL caretakers. Whereas in some school districts the language teachers were viewed as the ones who cared for the English learners, who understood and served their

needs, and who provided direct language services to them, in other school districts, language teachers were viewed as expert consultants within their buildings for teachers, specialists, and principals. There seemed to be a connection between the amount of sense-making activity the ELL Lead generated among her language teachers and their status and role in the school district. When they were seen as the ones making program adjustments at the instructional level, the language teachers had a more active leadership role within their schools, according to the accounts of their ELL Leads. Daniella (F1) described how change had taken place in her language program over the previous couple of years:

> I think the over-arching for our district is how it's been very individually driven. It hasn't been top-down. It's very much the teachers are the ones coming up with the ideas and working together to find out what works or doesn't work.

In contrast to the school district in which language teachers were activated and engaged in decisions about their own practices and ELL programs, some of the school districts had few or no meetings dedicated to joint work and sense-making, and the role of language teachers was focused on assessing and providing instruction to English learners and little else. In a couple of school districts, the ELL Leads had a vision for building a team and for developing their expertise so that they would then have an "informed voice," but their ideas were still in early planning stages. In these school districts, the standard operating procedures for the ELL programs had been issued from central office staff and there was no process in place for planning changes beyond the Unified Improvement Plan process that was required by the state.

One ELL Lead seemed hopeful that the state accountability system might someday lead to an internal improvement process for the ELL program, since she expected the poor results for their English learners to continue. It appeared that, in the absence of any strong cycles of ELL data analysis and improvement planning within the school district, the best hope was to wait for the accountability measures and improvement plans to be required by the Colorado Department of Education as an external engine that could then drive this improvement process specific to ELL growth and achievement.

Bridging between school district leadership teams and language teacher teams. The concept of bridging represents the accounts of how these ELL Leads connected the work being done in their ELL teams with the work being done in their school district leadership teams. The term "bridging" was used by three of the participants, while another indicated a similar role by acknowledging that she was a "hub" in the school district. Yet another ELL Lead said that she herself was "the primary process" and "vehicle" by which this two-way flow of information between the two teams took place. The term "bridging" connoted the same function of "broker" that Wenger (1998) described when a person with membership in two groups carries ideas, artifacts, and practices between two "communities of practice" (p. 110). The ELL Lead is usually a core member of both groups, although their membership might be more peripheral in one group than the other. Based on their positions in the school district organization, their work was focused more on either the instructional level or the administrative level. This bridging might be as simple as bringing up one group in

discussions with the other group or bringing work products from one to the other. It might involve creating teams that contain representatives from both groups in order to make negotiated decisions about individual students or about district-wide programming.

Four of the ELL Leads were involved in activating both groups in ways that connected them to the work of the other. Creating or revising a district ELL guide involved both teams, at least in the review process. In another instance, one Administrator ELL Lead carried the request for additional language teachers to the school district leadership team and successfully negotiated on behalf of her ELL team, thus coordinating joint problem-solving to meet the needs presented by a sudden increase of immigrant students.

In another case, an Administrator ELL Lead described a strong bridging role during a past reform effort a few years prior to the interview, but there was little that remained of the extensive collaboration between the ELL team and the school district leadership team that had produced significant changes in their ELL program. At the time of the interview, there were no longer regular meetings for the ELL team and there seemed to be a sense of dissatisfaction on the part of the ELL Lead with at least some of the language teachers. Decisions about the program seemed to have been recentralized, and the status of the language teachers had dropped back down to direct service providers from having once been decision-makers and designers in the school district. This seems to indicate that these sense-making and collaborative decision-making processes need

structures and skillful leadership in order to be sustained as a continuous practice.

Influences on the Process of Interpreting Educational Language Policy

Assumptions and Acquired Positions as Starting Stances

Once the basic process of policy interpretation by the ELL Leads had been established, there was opportunity to examine factors that may have influenced their interpretive processes. In this section, several of the assumptions or acquired positions that were demonstrated by the participants are described as possible influences on their policy interpretation. These assumptions included a monolingual or multilingual approach to language education, personal experiences and expertise, level of authorization within their school districts, personal reflectiveness, motivation and vision, and the amount of shared ownership in their school districts for English learners' growth and achievement.

Valuing a monolingual/multilingual approach to language education. The perceptions of the ELL Leads of the instrumental value of home languages showed their ideological stance as being monolingual or multilingual. Whether an ELL Lead held a monolingual or a multilingual approach to language acquisition did not directly correspond to the presence of bilingual programs in her school district, but the depth of their commitment to students' right to use their home languages did seem to vary from participant to participant. One of the ELL Leads in a school district that had established bilingual programs spoke about the policy supporting students' use of their home languages in school by explaining,

> It's in here (the district ELL guide). And it also is a part of every single thing that I do. That kids need to be able to express themselves. If we don't let them express themselves about their ideas, then we are stunting their thinking.

This view of home languages as being an essential part of thinking and self-expression was expressed by only one of the participants, although the ELL Leads in two additional school districts indicated that they valued home languages as a learning tool for students to some extent. There were indications during the interviews that, in four of the school districts, the view of home languages was as a communication obstacle to be overcome. The focus of the ELL Leads in these school districts was on Spanish and other home languages as a resource that the schools needed to obtain in order to communicate more effectively with students and families. One of them also talked about Spanish as a resource for supporting students' emotional well-being and building relationships with new students.

As mentioned earlier, three of the participants had education in Spanish and either extensive cultural experience in Mexico or Mexican national background. Two of these had a bilingual endorsement as well as an ESL endorsement, and one had additional endorsements in Spanish and literacy. These participants' extensive background allowed them to speak precisely and knowledgably about the language acquisition pathways of their students, and their familiarity with a wide range of language programs contributed to detailed rationales for the language programs in use in their school districts in their explanation of the programs and services their school districts provided to English learners.

During the interviews, the ELL Leads shared their perceptions of attitudes toward Spanish and other home languages within the school community and the wider community. Their responses offered a mixture of ideas and sometimes revealed conflicting beliefs. One ELL Lead who expressed a monolingual view of language acquisition seemed less able to identify any ideological tensions around the use of home languages within the school district. She gave this ambivalent description of teachers' attitudes towards students' use of Spanish, "Well there probably are differences because, like I just said, you know you've got both ends, but nothing that I can. There's no conflict around that at all. Not at all."

Dealing with racism in their rural communities. Another example of tension around this issue was that several participants indicated that although they felt that most teachers respected students' use of their home languages, they recognized that the wider community would not be likely to support bilingual education. One spoke of "some community values for English language learners" as the reason that the school district would hesitate to attempt establishing a bilingual program. Others offered similar descriptions of the community context. Heather (A2) observed, "Every year we'll get people who are very upset when we are even sending stuff home in Spanish." She also added her assessment of the school district's readiness for implementing bilingual programs:

> If we had 40 bilingual teachers, I would want to look at a bilingual program. A true, honest-to-goodness, intentional bilingual program. But like I said, the community response to that, and I just, I just don't know. So right now, if I had 40 new bilingual teachers tomorrow, it would still be an ESL sort of program. And I don't want to say that Spanish would be discouraged because it sounds racist. It's not what I mean. Um, it's without

> the right context and training and support, it would not be effective, so until we can get you that, use your English.

Heather (A2) was not the only Administrator ELL Lead to voice concern about the difficulty of implementing high quality bilingual programs even if their school districts had sufficient numbers of bilingual teachers to consider the possibility of bilingual education. In addition to concerns about cost and community resistance, they recognized the need for following proven program guidelines in order for bilingual programs to be effective.

Holly (S2) described the challenges of community racism and framed it as a work in progress:

> I think we're still working on bridging two different cultures together. We've come a long way, I mean. But it's still like this sometimes, a community that is, I hate to say this, but how can I say it: You came here, you need to learn English. I still think we have some of those mentalities, if that's the right word, to break down, and that's tough.

She sees as part of her job "bridging two different cultures together" and breaking down "some of those mentalities" that are anti-immigrant and equate monolingual English as associated with citizenship and patriotism.

The reported challenges and mixed messages about home languages are indicative of language ideologies about English as a symbol of patriotism and nationalism that has been associated with anti-immigrant views and racism (Tollefson, 2013a, S. Wright, 2013). Because six of the ELL Leads implied or described negative attitudes toward immigrants and their languages in the larger community, it seemed to be a common experience in the rural school districts in which they work. One of the ELL Leads who demonstrated a multilingual view of language acquisition and who was fluent in Spanish herself described her

pragmatic approach to considering bilingual programs within her rural community. She shared,

> I think they (language programs) should be developed based on where you are as far as who your population is, what their language levels are, um, the beliefs of that community that you're in, the school community. You know, is bilingual education valued there, you know, is that a good route to take. Just having a picture of what your situation is and making sure that whatever program, whatever you're trying to implement . . . and it can be a change, there's nothing wrong with change, but make sure that it will work in the situation you're in. being willing to make gradual changes in order to get to a long-term goal.

This Lead recognized that it was important to include stakeholders in decisions about language programs, and that in order to establish programs that will last, parents of non-ELLs as well as parents of ELLs should be included. She also described her philosophy of working toward her goals through incremental changes.

Pull-out ESL perceived as discriminatory. One additional consideration related to language ideologies was the association during several of the interviews with stand-alone, pull-out ESL as a discriminatory practice. Many of the participants mentioned how they had tried to avoid pull-out as much as possible and supported full immersion and even "submersion" in mainstream classrooms as the lesser of two evils compared to pull-out. In fact, one of the ELL Leads talked about how forcing high school students with intermediate levels of English proficiency to gather in a room together for an ESL class or to administer the state language proficiency test was discrimination and explained how this had brought up "racial tensions" in the past.

> I guess I'm always cautious when they don't take that second language into consideration before making all these laws and policies. That's frustrating. It's frustrating that you read all these laws about discrimination and all this that are out there but we're discriminating when we put 35 high school students in a room together to test them on their language level. To me that's discriminating, they call it, they call it, I feel bad for them. The minute they walk in they're upset before they even take a test. What is this, the Mexican test? Can we have a Mexican party here today since we have to take this test?

She was working on organizing schedules for the following year that would not "bring up any racial tensions" by "making these kids feel isolated." She also brought up the idea that the standard of English proficiency should be relative to the level of English used in the surrounding community:

> I mean, I don't, that's frustrating to me. There's all these laws about not discriminating, but yet we're doing it by making them take a test that our own native English speakers wouldn't even pass with a proficiency level of 5 or higher. And so that's frustrating.

On one hand, this Lead had criticized the "submersion" program as not meeting the needs of English learners, and on the other hand she criticized "pull-out" for instruction and assessment as discriminatory practice. By sharing her concerns during the research interview, she outlined the extremes between which she had been trying to "find a middle ground."

Focusing on home languages and cultures as assets or deficits. At times, the language the participants used in their descriptions of their programs for English learners seemed to be focused on their home languages as assets needed for full actualization of bilingual students' potential; at other times, some of them used descriptors that were reductionist. For example, instead of describing ELLs as "students" or "language learners" or "bilingual children," some of them spoke about "NEPs" and "LEPs" and about "FEP-ping" students. Instead

of speaking about newcomer ELLs as having emerging levels of English, one of them spoke of these students as "having no language." In two school districts that had experienced an upsurge of immigrant students from African and Asian countries, the ELL Leads spoke repeatedly of "the influx" of immigrants. In one case an Administrator ELL Lead reported on immigrants' experiences with distance and with little reflectiveness about the possibility that certain failures of immigrants employed by the school district could have had at their roots a cultural misunderstanding.

There seemed to be two operating systems of related assumptions at work within each ELL Lead, one that was fueled by accountability and the need for compliance and another that was humanitarian and focused on caring for individuals. The same ELL Lead often reversed her terms from deficit-focused, reductionist terms to asset-focused terms or a more culturally sensitive way of framing a specific challenge that teachers, students, or parents were having. This shifting back and forth from a reductionist, monolingual paradigm to a multilingual one may hint at the learning journey of these ELL Leads. New ideas that they may have been exposed to and that they intended to adopt may not yet have been appropriated into their everyday practices as automatic frames for the situations they were describing.

Personal experiences and expertise. It almost goes without saying that the previous experiences of the ELL Leads influenced their interpretive processes. Those that had extensive background in leadership approached the functions of the position in ways that were different from the ELL Leads without

experience or education in leadership. The same is true for ELL expertise, which in Colorado was demonstrated through a state endorsement in linguistically diverse education. Two of the Facilitator ELL Leads with strong backgrounds in linguistically diverse education were either studying for the leadership endorsement or participating in a structured apprentice program for leadership within the school district. Having combined expertise in linguistically diverse education and leadership seemed to be the ideal state. Heather (A2) stated,

> [Wishing that the ELL Program were] . . . not limited by the resources that are available. Our district just isn't big enough but I have often wished we had a dedicated director of ELL who could really give it the time it deserves.

Heather (A2) also recognized that not only would a dedicated ELL Lead have more time for the program, but a strong background in linguistically diverse education would allow the Lead to advocate more effectively for English learners.

Teaching experience is relevant to the role of ELL Lead as well. Both of the Solo ELL Leads were drawn into the position by their school district administration without ever having been a language teacher. In contrast, several of the other ELL Leads recognized that their past experiences within specific types of bilingual programs enabled them to make more informed decisions in their current positions. In addition, when the ELL Leads had experience teaching in other countries, they had not only gained language skills but also acquired cultural experience that informed their interpretive processes.

Level of authorization within the school district. For an ELL Lead who had relatively low status within the school district leadership team, the degree to which that team had authorized her to lead her program was a key factor in how

much she had been able to accomplish on behalf of English learners. The level of authorization was evident in this study in the way each Lead described her job duties and responsibilities, her participation in the school district leadership team meetings, and the decision-making process for changes to the language program. Having a leader's voice within the school district seemed to rest on proven expertise in both linguistically diverse education and leadership of the change process within her team. It seemed that one ELL Lead in particular had gained credibility through her persistent efforts to increase the amount of collaborative decision-making related to ELLs and the language program of the school district. Another ELL Lead seemed to have gained the trust of her school district leadership team because of her strong connections with the parent community and her Spanish language skills, but she seemed to have only partial authorization for designing and leading program improvement in her school district. Yet another ELL Lead had gained recognition as an expert at the state level as well as within her school district and had been given significant autonomy to set priorities for the ELL program and for professional development for her team.

There may be a variety of routes for ELL Leads to establish credibility for leadership within rural school districts, but in the accounts of the ELL Leads in this study the past actions that gave evidence of credibility included (a) selecting and hiring consultants, (b) sending teams of administrators and teachers to observe practices in other school districts, (c) protecting hard-to-hire positions during budget cuts, (d) hiring new language teachers, (e) assigning joint work to

school teams that include principals, (f) applying for and implementing grants, and (g) establishing routines and expected work products that went beyond state requirements. Based on their accounts, it seems that four of the ELL Leads in the study enjoyed authorization to lead their ELL programs; three of these were Administrator ELL Leads, which was not surprising. Only one of the Facilitator ELL Leads functioned at this level of authorization and impact in her school district, although the other Facilitator ELL Leads and Solo ELL Leads expressed their wish for more decision-making authority within their school districts. One of the Facilitator ELL Leads with relatively low status said that she wished for more leadership for herself and her team. She implied that her own leadership needed to carry more weight within the school district when she said,

> I would like to see more . . . of a an ELL team to have um, more to say or, in the education of the ELL students, and not just follow um, what do I say, the regular classroom teachers and administration say is good for everybody. I think we need to be part of a, have our team, our team, to make decisions about the, our ELLs.

Because there was so much variety within this aspect of the ELL Lead position within the eight school districts, the patterns seemed to depict a full range of possibilities and to provide indications of related impacts on organizational change related to the ELL programs.

Personal reflectiveness. The experienced ELL Leads and those with leadership training showed more reflectiveness during their interviews regarding their roles in the school district than those with less leadership experience. For example, the Facilitator ELL Lead that seemed to have high credibility with within her school district participated in a three-part annual professional evaluation

process with her supervisor that included reflection on the effectiveness of her leadership actions and on what she was learning as she went through the year. Reflective leadership practice was evident in their comments about what had worked best in their role as an ELL Lead, what they would like to change about the position, and what advice that they might offer to a new ELL Lead. One Facilitator Lead reflected on how much the experience of compiling their district ELL guide as a team had empowered them and described how the process had been the catalyst for change in their own understandings over time. She also recognized how important it was to research seemingly successful programs before bringing them to her school district in order to understand the contributing circumstances for successful implementation. She mentioned that her leadership coursework was providing ample opportunity for her to reflect on her past decisions and learn from them.

A reflective approach to leading change was evident in the accounts of the ELL Leads of how they considered teachers' capacity for change when planning for implementation of new initiatives. Several of them spoke of their own stance towards change, recognizing that they enjoyed the challenges presented by the job because of the seemingly constant changes in the field of linguistically diverse education. At the same time, the desire to create coherence in teachers' experiences of change was a recurring theme with the ELL Leads with leadership experience. One of the Facilitator ELL Leads critiqued her own roll-out of professional development as having lacked the tools and supports teachers needed in order to be able to begin implementing target strategies as they were

learning about them. She was also able to imagine a current initiative in terms of what it might look like if it went too far. Through listening to the reflections of the eight ELL Leads, it seemed that those who had designed collaborative processes within the school district had gathered similar convictions about the importance of involving stakeholders in these decisions whenever possible and the value of making decision about students as close to the classroom as possible. Their own reflection on their leadership role seemed to be an important influence on the design of effective team decision-making processes within their school districts.

Motivation and vision. All eight participants spoke openly of their reasons for doing their jobs and their vision for the English learners in the school district. Some of these reasons indicated positive motivating factors and some negative. Helping English learners succeed in school and preparing them for post-secondary careers and studies was a common driver for all of the participants, although some of them focused on the experiences of English learners, parents, and others focused on the experiences of teachers. Isabel (F3) shared,

> There are times when I miss teaching and being with students, but the thing that keeps me going is when I have a teacher that says to me, I tried this, and I learned it from you, and it totally changed everything, and the kids got it! So, that happens, and as frequently as that happens, it keeps me going in this job.

More than one acknowledged that they were very motivated to get things right and that part of their motivation was to be seen, both individually and as a school district, as being a success.

Avoiding conflict and disapproval was another motivating factor, as one of the Leads indicated when she said, "I don't like not being in compliance." She described getting to the point that she had refused to do meaningless work as a symbolic ELL Lead and decided that she was going to do whatever it took to create more shared decision-making around ELLs' instructional programs. She was also fearful of the possibility of exacerbating "racial tension" by grouping high school students together for ELD classes or language testing when these students had been attending school in the school district since kindergarten. Her desire to avoid discriminatory practices gave her the rationale for resisting state recommendations for her ELL program until she could figure out a reasonable compromise. She explained,

> We're getting to the compliance level. Now to the part of my dream and vision, what I have for this district, we're far from that. But we're getting there. . . . We're a work in progress, and advocating takes time. Framing people to a deeper understanding of ELL needs takes time.

Similar to the way this ELL Lead framed the idea of program improvement as being a work in progress, many of the others' expressions of what motivated their efforts were moderated by a recognition of the need for patience, flexibility, and building relationships.

Valuing shared ownership of English learner growth and achievement. There was a strong common theme across the eight school districts regarding the need for shared ownership of English learners' success. This was often the rationale given for the type of program services each ELL Lead described as existing in her school district. One example of this was the rationale for the initiative of co-teaching in one of the school districts as a way of

activating classroom teachers to take full responsibility for language development in a supported way. This shared ownership was one of the justifications for the immersion model and for mainstreaming English learners rather than serving them with the pull-out ESL model. The program choices varied from district to district, but the rationale for whatever approach each school district had chosen was very similar. The ideas were expressed in terms of catch-phrases such as "all of our kids are all of our kids" and "every teacher an ELL teacher."

Conceptualizations of the Language Program Leads Regarding Their Own Interpretive Process

Metaphors Used by Language Program Leads to Capture Their Experiences

Some of the ELL Leads expressed their experiences through figurative language which can be seen as a crystallization of meaning as they reflected on these experiences. The metaphors explained here only appeared in the interviews once, except for the bridge metaphor which was used by three of the ELL Leads to describe their essential functions in the position.

Nature of the language program lead position. Two similar metaphors related to the essence of the job included being a bridge and being a vehicle. The idea of the bridge was that the position connected the school district leadership team and the language teachers with each other through the presence of the ELL Lead as a participant in both teams and her communication as a liaison between the teams. The concept of the vehicle related to her "carrying ELL" to the school district leadership team in order to raise awareness

during strategic planning sessions of the need to also plan ahead for implementation with English learners. These images captured a key function of the ELL position that was described by all of the ELL Leads in one way or another.

There was a sense of franticness in the metaphor of bike racing that one ELL Lead used throughout her interview. She kept using the term "backpedaling" to describe an interruption to forward motion in order to align her program with a new policy that was in the process of rolling out. It seemed clear that she felt that she would not have to make these "quick movements" to adapt state or school district initiatives to the needs of ELLs if policymakers would just think through the ways that the initiatives would impact English learners and their teachers in order to provide guidance and support tools along with the initial rollout. As mentioned earlier, she reflected on her own lack of doing this during a recent training for classroom teachers because she had simply presented the target strategies without also providing examples and models for teachers to follow.

There were also metaphors that captured the difficulty the participants had experienced while carrying out the duties of the position. For example, all three of the Administrator ELL Leads acknowledged their limited availability for the ELL program. One spoke of how "ELL" was "just one piece of (her) pie." Another mentioned wearing "a zillion hats." They all expressed regret that they were not able to devote more time and energy to the ELL program and to the language teachers. The metaphor of a carrying a heavy burden was used by a Solo ELL Lead to describe the weight of responsibility for making decisions by herself. She

had decided after one year in the position that she would no longer make decisions about students or about the program by herself, and she set about creating teams and establishing teacher conferences so that she was no longer making decisions alone. She said that "no one should have the weight of that on their shoulders" and described how she had set about changing that situation for the better.

Trying to be connected and have an impact. Several of the ELL Leads emphasized the importance of participating in multiple committees in order to "give ELL a voice" and one of them described herself as a barking Chihuahua in the school district. She felt that, if she were not present at these meetings, no one else would bring up the needs and interests of English learners. The same Solo ELL Lead talked about how she was very isolated within the school district and that she was trying to avoid "working on (her) own hamster wheel way over there" away from the core decision-making processes of the school district leadership team. She described the school district's decision to forgo applying for an ELL-focused improvement grant for which the state had invited them to apply as one that had not given serious consideration for its possible benefits to the school district and its English learners. Another metaphor she evoked was the theater when she talked about how difficult she had found it to "get on the stage" of in-service and staff meetings at the school level; her use of this term implied that she had experienced not being heard or seen within the district. There was a general sense that this ELL Lead and others had worked hard to build credibility and trust over time so that their input would be heard within the district.

Priorities for the language program. Some of the metaphors showed the desires of the ELL Leads for improving their programs or their satisfaction with it as it currently was. One of the Administrator ELLs pointed out the need for her school district leadership team to become more invested in "ELL" and she used the metaphor of driving a car to communicate that all of the school district's priorities were in the front seat of the car but that "ELL" was in the back seat. She also said that she wished "ELL" would "get on the radar" of the principals more often.

Another Administrator ELL Lead spoke often about silos which referred to the separation of English learners from the rest of students in pull-out ESL classes and side-teaching. She describe the tendency of the language teachers to guard their English learners and keep them close, as she saw it, as "siloing." She believed that the language teachers needed to stop keeping the English learners out of the classroom and needed to start sharing their "specialized knowledge" with classroom teachers so that these students would be getting language instruction all through the day. The repeated use of the term "breaking down" to depict what she needed to accomplish with the "silos," "barriers," and "walls" seemed to indicate a certain amount of conflict and possibly power struggles between the ELL Lead and her language teachers. In contrast, another Administrator ELL Lead referred to her language teachers as "ambassadors" to the principals and teachers in their buildings, inferring that she believed they were prepared for that task.

The idea that English learners are often underestimated or misunderstood was present in one interview through the metaphor of a "box" which signified all of the surrounding circumstances that might influence the academic achievement of English learners. This ELL Lead referred to the need for teachers to widen their view of individual students' academic performance in order to consider their family circumstances, their languages and cultures, and the challenges they are trying to overcome. She wanted to emphasize the importance of considering the whole child rather than reducing the student to a collection of data points.

Reflecting on own level of language education expertise. A couple of the metaphors were connected to their concepts of their own limited knowledge about the field of linguistically diverse education and the efforts they had invested to learn more than they had known when they first started out in the position. One of them said that no one had given her a book of instructions for the job and that she had needed to become "a private investigator" in order to figure out how do to her job and how to lead the school district ELL program forward. Another of the ELL Leads compared her own level of knowledge about linguistically diverse education to a "skiff of snow" to signify how little she felt she knew, even though she felt that she had learned quite a bit through her years of service in the position.

Policy implementation. Two metaphors related to the phenomenon of change working its way through the organization. The first one was of a machine with many moving parts, each signifying an initiative, with "ELL" being in each one of these parts, needing to be considered in the context of each initiative.

Another conceptualization of policy implementation was a weaving or a tapestry. The ELL Lead described making a change as "pulling a string over here," which then means that "something unravels over there". Her concern was for "coherence" or for balance. She also spoke of teachers' experience of a succession of changes as though they were mountain climbers and spoke of their "grasp" on the current school district initiative as being "tenuous." This consideration of teachers' capacity to synthesize multiple initiatives was also a concern of many of the ELL Leads in the study, particularly those with leadership expertise.

Insights and Advice to New Language Program Leads

In order to invite reflection on what has worked best for them in their jobs, I asked the ELL Leads towards the close of their interviews what their advice would be for a new ELL Lead. The collective message from all of them was to create collaborative decision-making processes about individual English learners and about the program itself. Someone also said, "Don't be afraid of change, and don't be afraid to ask for advice." Another participant spoke of the need to build relationships, to build teams, and to build "that greater understanding" in the school district. A couple of the ELL Leads said that they would advise someone new to the position to "join everything" and to "weasel your way in" to every opportunity to find out "what's coming down the pike." Similar to this idea was the advice from several of the participants to research everything, to dig deeper and think critically, to talk to teachers, and to ask questions. Helen (A3) said, "Ask *lots* of questions. Hopefully they're new to the school district or they're new enough to

their position they can ask just out of necessity. But asking questions, services, all kinds of things." Martha (F2) advised,

> I would say, just listen to everybody who's servicing these students. Uh, You know, sometimes I think I'm a very quiet person, but I pay attention to what other people are saying and doing, and then I can make a, a, a decision or analyze a decision, and I don't like to just right away give an answer. I like to think about it. Because we're always are talking about this person, person's life, or success in real life.

These metaphors and the advice the participants offered for new ELL Leads added dimension to their reflections on their own leadership and expertise that were discussed in the preceding section on what influenced their interpretive process. All of these understandings that the ELL Leads had constructed about their role in their school districts contributed to my identification of the themes that emerged from the study.

Themes that Emerged from the Study

Theme 1: Levels of Expertise in Both Linguistically Diverse Education and Leadership

The position of ELL Lead requires expertise in both leadership and in the field of linguistically diverse education. Having expertise in linguistically diverse education allows an ELL Lead to select research, programs, and practices for consideration in the school district and having expertise in leadership enables her to design learning processes that lead to sound decisions on behalf of English learners. Whether one type of expertise is more important than the other is less important than the message that both are needed for this job and both should be cultivated. Those ELL Leads with leadership experience were quite aware of their own lack of specialization in linguistically diverse education, and yet it seemed

that none of them had the time to deepen their own knowledge in the field. The ELL Leads with an ELL background but with no leadership expertise had varying degrees of access to mentoring and training in leadership. One of them was in the process of studying for her leadership endorsement. Another Facilitator ELL Lead, Isabel (F3), described how much she was learning through her participation in the school district leadership team. She shared,

> I get such great ideas, to see whatever their initiative is, whether it relates to me or not, to see how the process of what they think though, it just gives me a different aspect of how to think through things. So, that, I think that's been pretty big at the--how to deliver, how to roll out, how to impact change.

It might be reasonable to expect that it would be easier for an ELL Lead with a strong background in linguistically diverse education to add leadership expertise than for an Administrator ELL Lead to add ELL expertise due to the demands on school district administrators. Heather (A2) reflected on her ability to represent the needs and interests of English learners within the school district leadership team:

> "ELL" is as very much as present [in the leadership team discussions as other programs], but I can't be quite the same advocate because I'm not as deeply trained in "ELL." I'm very deeply trained in [specialized field] and I, it's much easier for me to see these connections and how to do this, this, and that. My lack of expertise I think does a disservice on a district level. It's not that they're on deaf ears or that they don't value it, it's that there is not a person who's got that combo leadership quality, deep working knowledge of the program. And in an ideal world, I'd like to see that person [in the role of ELL Lead for the district].

Finding that "combo leadership quality" and ELL expertise seems to be the optimum condition for ELL Leads to successfully lead reform processes related to ELLs within their school districts. The interviews with all eight ELL Leads in the

study contributed to the generation of this theme through various combinations of their expertise in linguistically diverse education and leadership and how these were associated with their actions and interactions with others in their positions.

Theme 2: The Role of "Bridging" Between the Language Teacher and District Leadership Teams

Participating in teams and leading teams is a big part of what ELL Leads do. Although the ELL Leads in the study participated in a variety of teams, all of them participated in the school district leadership team and, unless there were no designated language teachers in their school districts, all of them facilitated the language teachers' meetings. The one exception in this group was an Administrator ELL Lead who had turned over the facilitation of these meetings to another central office representative and only attended when necessary. In some cases, they also facilitated a district-level ELL team. Their membership and participation in the district leadership team and the ELL team (whether language teachers or a representative group) put them in the position of connecting the two groups and bringing information from one group to another. One ELL Lead described how she updated the principals on the design process the ELL team was working through and gave them advice about how to connect with what the language teachers in their schools were doing. Many of the ELL Leads described bringing guidance from the district leadership team to the ELL team and setting parameters and priorities for their work. This idea of carrying ideas and information between groups was discussed previously through the metaphors of

being a vehicle and a bridge. This theme was present within the interview data of all eight of the ELL Leads in the study.

Theme 3: The Importance of "Practice" in the Policy Interpretation Process

The degree to which language teachers and classroom teachers had been activated to systematically explore their own practices became a distinguishing feature between the studied school districts. This work within groups was similar to Wenger's (1998) description of communities of practice and also to current notions of professional learning communities (Hord, 2009). In several of the school districts, the improvement planning process required by the state when results for English learners had revealed a lack of achievement and growth caused district leadership teams to consider data trends for ELLs and to select improvement strategies. But even with state improvement plans in place, intended improvements took time to impact classroom practices. Teachers needed support in order to figure out how to incorporate valued practices into their personal teaching repertoires, assuming that they had understood these and committed to adopting them. This sense-making is inherently a social process; as Isabel (F3) put it, "We can bounce ideas off each other and figure out the best way to go through things."

Most of the ELL Leads described facilitating some data analysis with teachers, but only one of the school districts had developed routine procedures to support reflective practice related to English learners. Establishing these procedures in this school district had required commitment from the district

leadership team in the form of professional development days. Another example of this support was that, in one building, there was a floating substitute teacher that supported peer observations and coaching. Other evidence the ELL Lead offered that teachers had been engaging in reflective practices and data-focused improvement was that, for years, annual adjustments to the ELL programs at each school site had been decided on by the language teacher and the principal as a team, following the language teacher's presentation of her data analysis and recommendations to the principal. Following that presentation, the ELL Lead met with the language teacher and principal at each school to hear their decisions for the upcoming year. The fact that program adjustments were decided at the instructional level rather than the administrative level showed that the language teachers had been prepared to be decision-makers in their school districts through robust learning processes designed and facilitated by the ELL Lead. This theme was established through positive and negative cases revealed by the interview data from all eight of the ELL Leads in the study (see Table 5).

Theme 4: Monolingual or Multilingual Approach to Language Acquisition

Ideologies are expressed in subtle, nuanced, and sometimes ambivalent language. There seemed to be a variety of assumptions the participants held about the best ways for English learners to be successful. This was apparent in the way they conceptualized success for these students when asked about ideal outcomes for these students. Their beliefs about the right ways to use Spanish and other home languages in the educational process for English learners seemed to be a cornerstone of their personal teaching philosophies and

contributed to their sensitivity--or lack of it--to the cultures of the students and families in their communities. The choices of decision-makers were based on their pre-existing experiences and judgments (Lakoff, 2008), so the beliefs of school district leaders regarding the appropriate or inappropriate uses of home languages for educational purposes were relevant to language program reform. Furthermore, the beliefs of community members, students, teachers, and other stakeholders were relevant to the formation of educational language policy and should, therefore, be explored. Not only were the beliefs about the home languages relevant, but so were the beliefs about the relative status of languages and people groups.

The personal stances the Leads described toward English learners were also shown in their conceptualization of ideal educational outcomes for these students. Two other patterns that contributed to this theme were the linguistic and cultural knowledge skills of the ELL Leads themselves and their perceptions of the prevailing attitudes towards languages other than English in the wider community. This theme was established through the expressions they chose to refer to English learners, language programs, the process of language acquisition, and the contexts for language program reform that were described by all eight of the ELL Leads in the study.

Table 5

Themes Organized by the Types of Lead Positions

	Theme						
Type of ELL Lead Position	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Administrator ELL Lead 1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Administrator ELL Lead 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Administrator ELL Lead 3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Facilitator ELL Lead 1	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Facilitator ELL Lead 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Facilitator ELL Lead 3	X	X	X	X			
Solo ELL Lead 1	X	X	X	X			
Solo ELL Lead 2	X	X	X	X			

Theme 1: Levels of Expertise in Both Linguistically Diverse Education and Leadership
Theme 2: The Role of "Bridging" Between the Language Teacher and School District Leadership Teams
Theme 3: The Importance of "Practice" in the Policy Interpretation Process
Theme 4: Monolingual or Multilingual Approach to Language Acquisition
Theme 5: Activating Language Teachers as Designers and Deciders
Theme 6: Thinking Outside of the School District
Theme 7: State Audits/Grants as Catalysts for Improving Practices
Note: The term “ELL Lead” refers to the position of language program director.

Theme 5: Activating Language Teachers as Designers and Decision-makers

Within the eight school districts considered in the study, there seemed to be a possible link between having activated language Teachers and the presence of an expert ELL Lead who was both available in a dedicated position and authorized by her district leadership team to lead program improvement for English learners. Expertise in linguistically diverse education and also in leadership prepared one of the ELL Leads in the study to design extensive systems to support continuous improvement within schools and across the school district, and these processes enabled her language teachers to make school-level decisions about instruction as well as to contribute to the definition of standard operating procedures for the language programs across the school district. As one of the other Facilitator ELL Leads described it, the process of program improvement began with teacher conversations. She explained,

> So, you know there is, I really don't believe there's a one-size, this is what ELL instruction should look like, and so working with your ELL staff to determine what is ELL instruction to them, what are your outcomes that you're wanting, and looking at, is your program achieving those outcomes. And then, if they're not, then you can have those conversations about changing what your program and instruction looks like, in order to achieve those outcomes. I think that's what the focus needs to be on, what are the outcomes that you are looking for, and how are you going to get there.

It is clear that this Lead understood how to facilitate data-informed decision-making with her teachers.

There were distinct differences between ELL Leads in the study regarding their empowerment and activation of the language teachers within their school districts. Some were unable to accomplish this level of professional work with

their team either because they worked alone or because they had no regularly scheduled work time with their language teachers during the school year. However, those ELL Leads who were supported by their district leadership teams and had a vision for leading language program improvement were able to organize their language teachers into a professional learning community. The ELL Teams in all four of the school districts that had met their Title III AMAOs at least once during the preceding two years were engaged in professional work and data-based decision-making, according to the descriptions of their practices by the ELL Leads during their interviews. Five of these interviews contributed directly to the development of this theme, and the remaining interviews contributed indirectly through the absence of either any role for language teachers in their school district as designers or decision-makers or of any language teachers at all in the school district.

Theme 6: Thinking Outside of the School District

ELL Leads in the study benefitted from their participation in committees, conferences, and collaboration outside of their school districts, but not all of them sought out sources of information and ideas beyond the Colorado Department of Education. It seemed that having a depth of background knowledge in the field of linguistically diverse education helped the ELL Leads select experts and resources for their school districts and therefore prepared them to be the idea-seekers for their programs. On the other hand, the ELL Leads with shallow knowledge of linguistically diverse education limited their search for compliance-related information only and depended on their leadership skills to problem-solve

immediate challenges around implementation of state and school district initiatives. They did not demonstrate much initiative in their search for ideas and expertise to support program improvement in their school districts.

It seemed in the study that the ELL Leads with a strong background in linguistically diverse education were better prepared to design processes leading to program improvement and were able to initiate program evaluation and reflective teaching practices without the catalyst of state accountability systems. Even though it had been difficult and costly to travel to Denver from their rural school districts, the ELL Leads that had been regularly participating in learning and joint decision-making outside of their school districts spoke enthusiastically about the benefits to their leadership of their school district ELL programs. This theme was evident in five of the eight interviews in the study.

Theme 7: State Audits/Grants as Catalysts for Improving Practices

Only three of the ELL Leads described valuable change that had come about in their ELL programs as a result of trying to comply with state audit recommendations, legislation, and literacy grants. All three of these were Administrator ELL Leads, and all three expressed appreciation for the manner in which an external framework served as a catalyst for change within their school districts. It seemed that the ELL Leads with a stronger background in linguistically diverse education were able to design and carry out program improvement without external requirements to do so. Because these external drivers of change were so important for the Administrator ELL Leads, this theme

was included as a way that rural school districts might compensate for a lack of ELL expertise in the ELL Lead position.

These seven themes represent understandings about the role ELL Leads can play related to the interpretation of educational language policy into teacher practices with English learners. These understandings developed through analysis of the data derived from the interviews with the eight ELL Leads who participated in the study. The themes were established through both positive and negative examples within the accounts of the ELL Leads (see Table 5).

Language Program Lead Attributes and Actions within the Themes

The themes were then distilled into positive attributes and actions and then organized by the school districts whose ELL Leads who had given evidence of these during their interviews (see Table 6). In order to highlight the possibility that some of these attributes and leadership actions might have impacted the achievement and growth of English learners in their school districts, I added another dimension to the chart, showing the districts that met their Title III AMAOs in 2013 or 2014. In two of the school districts that had demonstrated success with their English learners, all eight of the attributes and actions had been evident in the interviews with their ELL Leads. One indicator of how important it might be to hold regular meetings with the language teachers shows in the pattern that none of the less successful school districts had this practice and all four of the more successful school districts did. I offer these patterns as simple contextual indicators that the themes and the associated actions and attributes may have a positive impact on ELL achievement and growth but, at the

same time, point out that this picture represents a small proportion of ELL Leads in rural school districts in the state and is not intended to establish a claim of correlation.

The organizing principle for presenting the study findings was the order in which the ideas came forward and were developed into conceptual categories and theory. The chapter opened with findings related to the language education programs in use in the school districts and the various ways that the position and responsibilities of the ELL Leads were structured within their school districts. Next, some of the shared experiences of the Leads of serving in this role were presented in order to further frame findings reported later in the chapter. Insight into the interpretive process of the Leads was gathered through data analysis and constant comparison of emerging categories with the data. Their interpretive process was both individual and shared, and findings related to both aspects of the process were reported.

During data analysis, once both aspects of the interpretive process had been established, the focus became identifying what had influenced the interpretive process of the ELL Leads. The understandings the Leads had constructed about their role were also revealed through analyzing the data. Further study developed these initial findings related to the research questions into themes and then into theory about the optimal point of balance for ELL Leads within the context of the rural school districts in which they served.

Table 6

Attributes and Actions of Leads Organized by School District Data Trends and by Type of Lead Position

	School Districts Had Not Met AMAOs for 5 or More Years				School Districts Met AMAOs in 1 of Previous 2 Years			
Attributed and Actions of ELL Leads	District 1 *	District 2 ***	District 3 **	District 4 *	District 5 ***	District 6 ***	District 7 **	District 8 **
1. Authorized to lead program		X		X->	X	X	X	X
2. Language teachers as designers		<-X	X		X	X	X	X
3. Monthly language teachers meetings					[X]	X	X	X
4. Endorsed in leadership		X		X	X	X	[X]	[X]
5. Strong bridging role		<-X	X			X	X	X
6. Endorsed in linguistically diverse education	x		X	[X]			X	X
7. Thinking outside the district				X			X	X
8. Multilingual approach			X	X			X	X

Note 1: X = currently true; <-X = was true in the past; X-> = moving towards being true in the future; [X] = true through alternative means or degree in progress. AMAOs = Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (Title III).

*Note 2: The term "ELL Lead" refers to the position of language program director. The category of the ELL Lead position within each district is indicated by asterisks: * Solo ELL Lead; ** Facilitator ELL Lead; and *** Administrator ELL Lead.*

From the accounts of the eight ELL Leads in this study with different types of positions within their school district organizations, patterns of excellence and effectiveness emerged. Language program Leads with an integrated view of linguistically diverse education and leadership were better able to interpret policy individually and in teams. Their leadership of change involved facilitating sense-making and reflective practice with teachers and navigating competing interests and inherent tensions in order to establish sound programs that advance the language growth and academic achievement of English learners. The findings presented in this chapter have illuminated the value of a trusted expert in the role of ELL Lead within rural school districts. The attributes, actions, and interactions that constituted their interpretive processes have been described here as a foundation for an analytical framework related to the work of ELL Leads that is presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: OPTIMIZING THE LANGUAGE PROGRAM LEAD POSITION

In this chapter, I present a grounded theory about (a) how ELL Leads do their jobs within the unique contexts of rural school districts and (b) how district leaders within rural school districts might organize support for the work of ELL Leads to better advance the academic achievement and language growth of English learners. The development of this theory was based on the accounts of eight ELL Leads in rural school districts of their experiences and on the insights they shared as a result of their experiences. First, I explain the analytical framework for the ELL Lead position, then I offer ways for school districts to think through possible applications to their own contexts. I conclude this chapter with cautions for using the framework in anything but an exploratory manner.

Analytical Framework

Developing the Framework

During the study, I used the technique of cluster mapping to stretch many of the conceptual categories that emerged in the study into dichotomies and to place the accounts of the eight ELL Leads along a continuum describing the various conditions. Through this process, it became clear that there were multiple considerations that framed and influenced their experiences as ELL Leads.

Some of these were related to the processes that the ELL Leads went through individually as they worked to figure out what needed to happen for English learners in their school districts. At times, these processes were joint activities with others in the school district, such as the school district leadership Team or the language teachers' team, and at other times, individual practices both inside and outside of the school district. My focal research question is related to the actions and interactions comprising the basic process addressed by this study: How is educational language policy interpreted by ELL Leads within rural school districts? My analysis of the data in order to explore the following three sub-questions guided the generation of grounded theory about the ELL Lead Position:

- What is the context for the interpretation of educational language policy by ELL Leads?
- What has influenced the interpretation of educational language policy by ELL Leads?
- How have ELL Leads understood the interpretation of educational language policy?

The *context* within which the ELL Leads worked was always a part of defining their practices. For example, as explained in Chapter Four, the differences between the practices of the ELL Leads in the study seemed to some degree be linked to the type of ELL Lead position they held within their school districts: Administrator ELL Lead, Facilitator ELL Lead, and Solo ELL Lead. Also, my analysis of the *influences* on their interpretive process focused on the

educational preparation, previous experiences, and ideologies of the eight ELL Leads. At the conclusion of their research interviews, participants responded to questions about what advice they might give to a new ELL Lead about the decision-making processes related to English learners, and this was a rich source that revealed some of their *understandings* about their own work within the school district.

The explanatory themes that emerged from the study were the foundation for developing the analytical framework for examining the ELL Lead position within the structure and decision-making processes of the school district organization (see Table 7). These themes were then conceptualized as inherent tensions within which the position of ELL Lead is defined within each unique school district organization which allowed me to explore the usefulness of analyzing each of these along a continuum of possible cases. I carefully considered the fit of these with the experiences of the ELL Leads as they had described them to me, and this comparative process led to the development of intersecting lines to represent the various cases within the eight school districts, keeping in mind the advantages and limitations of each case. Further contextualization of the findings with the eight school districts' standings based on the Title III accountability system as well as with the types of ELL Lead positions within each school district added to the picture of how ELL Leads work to support educator practices for English learners. Finally, the resulting gridlines needed to be divided into two sets, one analyzing the internal and individual practices of ELL Leads as they gather information and ideas and design

processes and another set for analyzing their externalized, shared interpretive processes with educators in their school districts.

Table 7

Themes Related to the Interpretive Process of Language Program Leads

Theme	
1	Levels of Expertise in Both Linguistically Diverse Education and Leadership
2	The Role of "Bridging" Between the Language Teacher and School District Leadership Teams
3	The Importance of "Practice" in the Policy Interpretation Process
4	Monolingual or Multilingual Approach to Language Acquisition
5	Activating Language Teachers as Designers and Deciders
6	Thinking Outside of the School District
7	State Audits/Grants as Catalysts for Improving Practices

Through the grounded theory study techniques of data analysis, the themes that emerged were interpreted into ideal characteristics, attributes, or actions of ELL Leads that are still open for challenge and redefinition within specific contexts by the reader. Within all of the various situations for these eight ELL Leads, there appeared to be a convergence of sensibilities about how their position might best be conceived and supported within their school districts. I organized this settled set of sensibilities into a visual representation of a "sweet spot" of balance between outlying cases that seemed to capture the conceptualized efficiency of the ELL Lead position within rural school districts (see Figures 1 and 2).

Analytical Framework: Finding the Sweet Spot for the Language Program Lead Position

When you are playing tennis and you find the sweet spot on your racket during your shot, it feels so great that making the hit can almost be its own reward. The tennis ball goes right where you wanted it to go, and it has more power and speed than you had expected it to have, all because you connected with the ball at the balanced center of the racquet as it was designed to be used. Most likely, when your racquet connected with the ball at its sweet spot, your placement of the shot was true to your intended landing spot on the court. Perhaps it was even the winning shot of the game.

Imagining the sweet spot effect for the language program Lead position. Finding the sweet spot for the ELL Lead position within a particular school district organization might mean that the school district had been able to muster up the will and resources to create a full-time mid-level administrative position and then hire a person with deep knowledge of the field of linguistically diverse education as well as with leadership education, experience, or aptitude. This deep knowledge of linguistically diverse education included cultural experience in Mexico, which is the country of origin for many of the school districts' English learners, fluency in academic Spanish, and experience with both ESL and bilingual program models. This ELL Lead was then authorized to make decisions about her program, to participate in state committees relating to her program, and to lead substantive team decision-making processes with her language teachers. As a result, she designed and supported team decision-

making processes within the schools for the improvement of individual teachers' practices as well as of the school-level and school district level ELL programs. These decisions were responsive to the needs and strengths of English learners, and over the past year, the average rate of growth in language acquisition in the school district has increased at a healthy rate and the same pattern of growth has been observed in these students' scores on the state content assessments, as demonstrated by the school district’s having met all three of its Title III AMAOs.

Overall, because principals and classroom teachers have been included in these data-informed conversations about practices and programs for English learners, there has been an increase in the shared knowledge in the school district about the specific English learners in the schools, about their languages and cultures, and about what seems to be working best to support their growth and achievement. There is clearly shared ownership of the outcomes for English learners, and one indication of this shared ownership has been demonstrated by the substantial commitment by staff members to participating in the opportunities the school district provides for teachers and administrators. This high level of participation means that many educators are working to figure out how to appropriate the valued program practices into their own repertoire of teaching and assessing practices. In short, the district leadership team is convinced that they are utilizing their available resources to derive maximum benefit for English learners through an empowered ELL Lead position in the school district.

Not only have the resources of the school district been well-invested for maximum value, but also the job satisfaction is high for the ELL Lead herself. She is serving in a position that draws on her dual expertise in leadership and linguistically diverse education and that allows her to actualize her beliefs regarding the value that English learners bring with them to their learning, the value of their family and community experiences, their cultural and language knowledge, and their human potential. Her school district leadership team has proven its commitment to quality education for English learners and she has organized the highest quality of professional learning for the educators in the school district. These professional learning opportunities invite teachers to gather data of many different kinds as their impetus for deciding how to strengthen and refine their own teaching practices. The joint sense-making that goes on in all of the teams that make decisions about English learners has created a shared commitment to the success of the English learners in the school district. Language teachers are seen as professional teachers and expert consultants in their buildings, and they are involved in designing and refining the standard operating procedures of the language programs at the district level. Because she sees the impact of her work on teachers and on their students, she derives joy from her work. So this place of effective leadership within the structure and fabric of her organization has become her sweet spot as well.

The purpose for imagining what this sweet spot looks and feels like for a school district and for the ELL Lead is to begin to figure out how to actualize it. During the final stage of this study, the conceptualization of this idealized state of

balance and responsiveness to context emerged. After collecting the themes that emerged from the study of the experiences and reflections of the ELL Leads, I distilled these into desired attributes and effective actions that seemed to support the unique position of an ELL Lead within rural school districts.

Language program Leads' personal interpretive process. There are imagined starting stances in reference to the performance of job duties as an ELL Lead, including a person's prior experiences as well as the beliefs and judgments constructed as a result of those experiences. In order to be prepared to lead organizational change related to English learners within their school districts, ELL Leads act and interact in order to gather and make sense of information and ideas pertaining to the field of linguistically diverse education. These habits and sources of their learning often inform the "larger shape of ELL" in the school district as well as the specific programs that are used.

The polarized considerations within which the ELL Lead becomes ready to do her job include the following continua:

- Instructional focus for English learners on either content or language; often demonstrated by the language program(s) selected by the school district
- Monolingual versus multilingual ideologies; individual and community beliefs about language and culture
- ELL versus leadership expertise; combination of education and experience, including mentoring and induction programs

- Searching out information and ideas versus putting these to good use within the systems of the school district (Note: the need for information often precedes its search.)

The balancing point between these four axes represents the reality of the ELL Lead position (see Figure 1). These are some of the funds of knowledge and personal commitments that influence the ongoing decision-making process required for fulfilling the role of ELL Lead.

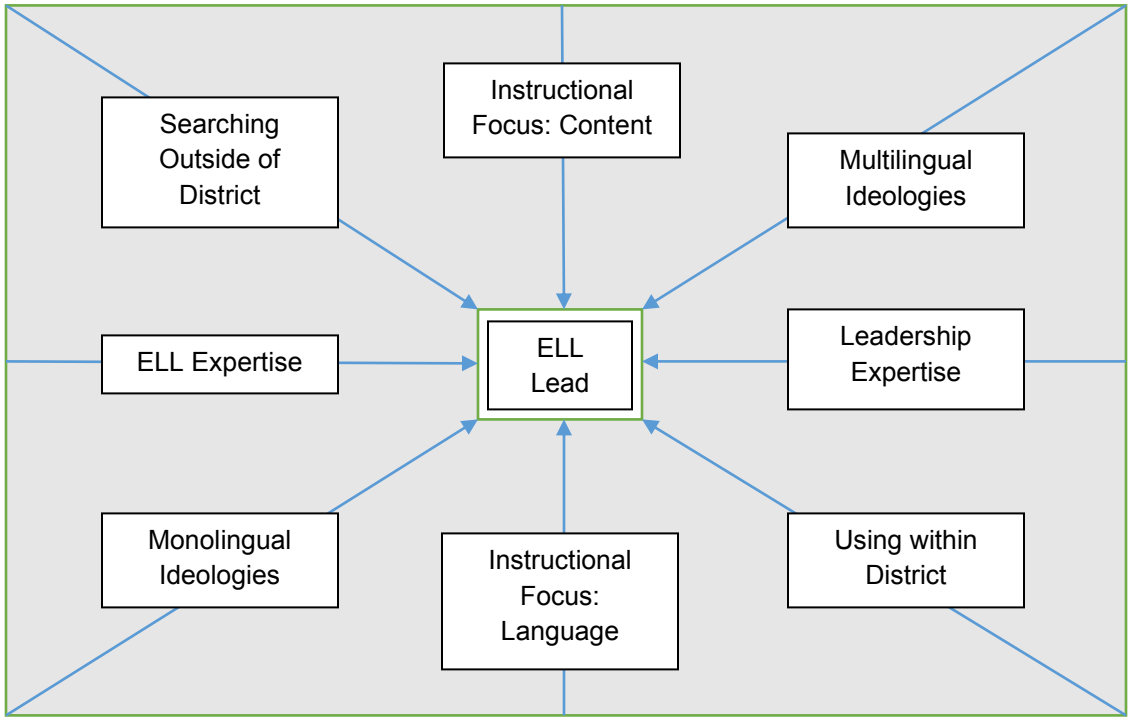

Figure 1. Finding the sweet spot in the personal interpretive process within a language program Lead position

Leads' shared interpretive process. If the personal interpretive process is conceived as the cadence of the cyclist's pedaling exerted on the drive wheel on a bicycle, then the shared interpretive process can be understood as the

particular gear through which the force is being translated into the forward motion of the bicycle. A single speed bike can be compared to the Solo ELL Lead's job of making things happen on her own within the school district; whatever force she exerts on the drive wheel is proportionate to that force that will move the bike forward. A multi-speed road bike, on the other hand, can be similar to the Facilitator ELL Lead's direction of multiple teams and committees that are engaged in instructional planning, data collection, analysis, and decision-making focused on the English learners in their own schools and classrooms, since the gear ratio of the forward energy and motion to the initial force exerted is high.

How much of any target initiative actually gets implemented into classroom practices is often determined by how extensive the interpretive process of teachers has been and to what degree it has been supported. Since every educational policy will be implemented in local situations through the medium of language, most likely English, it can be argued that all educational language policy is also inherently educational language policy. The ELL Leads in the study at times described the implementation of language program improvement and language instruction initiatives, such as co-teaching, but more often they were concerned with the implications of state policy and district-wide initiatives on English learners. Each new wave of change that shifts priorities and practices has potential impact on English learners in ways that may be different from native English speaker students.

When policies get launched without consideration for the impact on English learners, local ELL Leads have an important role in figuring out how a

particular initiative will roll out in their school districts for English learners. This process seemed inexplicably shortsighted to one of the Facilitator ELL Leads in the study, and she described "ELL" as the "after-thought program" at the national, state, and local levels. Her vision was to participate in the advanced planning at the state level for any upcoming initiatives related to literacy, since she expects these to have a strong impact on English learners. She wanted to contribute to strategic planning for English learners so that teachers receive guidance and resources for implementing a new initiative with English learners at the same time that they are receiving their introductory training on it. According to her, this never happens, so she described pulling her teams together at the last minute to try to figure out how to incorporate the wider initiative into the structures of the language program(s) within the school district as her standard response to new policies.

The four axes that aim to capture the reality of the ELL Lead's job as she initiates and sustains a shared interpretive process within her school district are the following:

- The degree to which she has been authorized to lead decision-making processes on behalf of the language program and English learners versus her availability in a full-time support position for classroom teachers and English learners. (Note: Administrator ELL Leads in the study were fully authorized, but not available; Solo ELL Leads were fully available, but had very little authorization for decision-making.)

- The priority and implementation of school district initiatives versus the priority and implementation of language program initiatives
- Time spent supporting individual specialists, teachers, students, principals, and parents versus time spent organizing and facilitating team decision-making focused on English learners
- Decisions about English learners and language programs made at the central office level versus decisions made at the classroom and individual-student level

The balancing point between these axes is suspended between considerations of unique existing circumstances within which policy interpretation is taking place (see Figure 2). Understanding these variations may help school district administrators and ELL Leads think analytically about the process of interpreting policy into practices with impact on English learners.

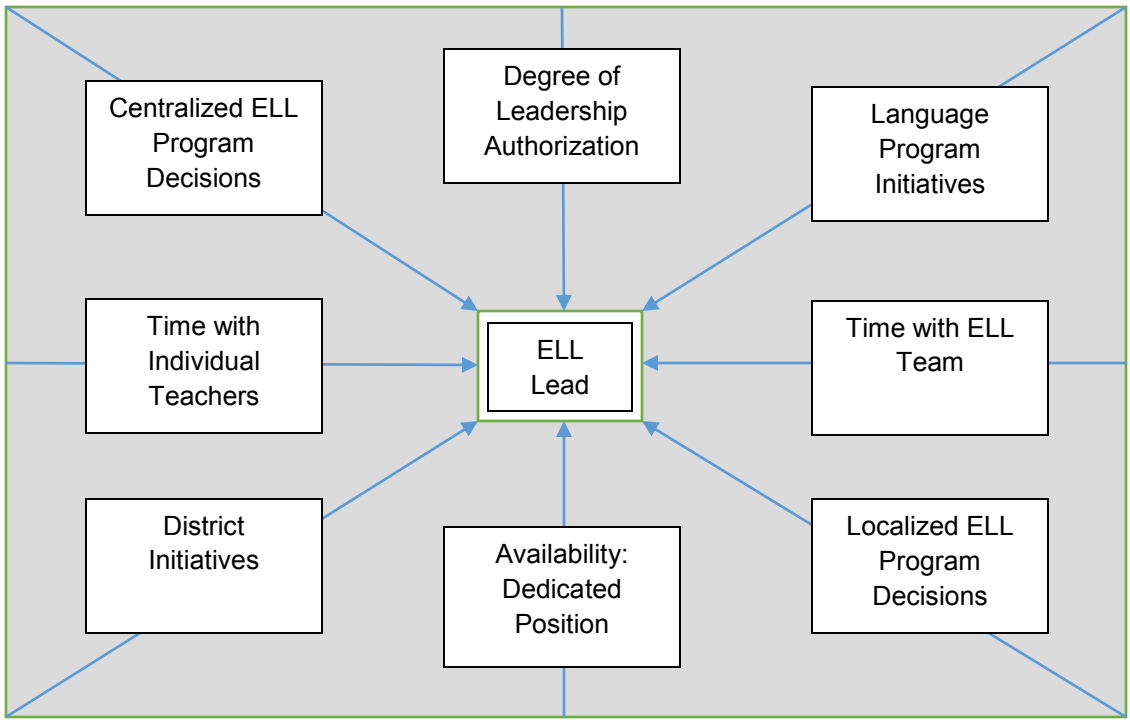

Figure 2. Finding the sweet spot in the shared interpretive process within the language program Lead position

Potential Applications to Practice

Rural school districts can be very different from one another and any model or theory of practice must account for this expected variation. This study has revealed distinctions between three different types of ELL Lead positions, based on their placement in the hierarchy of the organizational structure. The accounts of the eight ELL Leads indicated that the position type of Facilitator ELL Lead might be a "sweet spot" for interpreting educational language policy through personal and shared interpretive process in ways that result in shared knowledge about English learners and shared ownership of their academic outcomes across

classrooms. However, this indication does not lead to the conclusion that the Facilitator ELL Lead position is the only option that should be considered. There are advantages for a school district in each of the three types of ELL Lead position as well as limitations. In order to account for the various configurations in the eight school districts and in so many other rural school districts, I offer the following suggestions for applying the analytical framework above to the three types of ELL Lead positions in order to maximize the value of whichever type of position is currently in place within a specific context:

- Administrator ELL Lead
    - Advantages: full authorization to lead; can think about "ELL" in conjunction with all other district initiatives; access to district leadership team, including principals
    - Limitations: Many competing roles and responsibilities; may or may not have time to meet regularly with language teachers; usually has limited ELL expertise to support advocacy; limited time for learning and sense-making around ELL-specific policy outside of the school district
    - Suggestions: Professional development for Administrator ELL Lead; possible split position with expert language teacher leader with regular goal-setting and collaboration
- Facilitator ELL Lead
    - Advantages: Dedicated position with participation in district leadership team; mentoring in the leadership of change; combined

expertise in leadership and ELL; time to devote to the program; regular meetings with language teachers; participation in state committees and professional development provides updated expertise and shared thinking outside the school district; often given significant autonomy for decision-making

  - Limitations: Degree of authorization determines strength of voice in district leadership team; may lack resources or authorization to meet regularly with language teachers; the autonomy may mean isolation from core district implementation processes
  - Suggestions: Build clear structural relationships to support leadership development; include ELL interests in strategic planning of all initiatives; commit to ELL Lead's participation in events outside of the school district as an important part of her job; establish regular meetings with language teachers and a district-wide ELL Team

- Solo ELL Lead
  - Advantages: Single position is cheaper that multiple language teacher positions; having an ELL Lead position is a symbolic commitment to the English learners in the school district; Solo ELL Lead can participate in existing committees; availability to individual teachers and their classrooms
  - Limitations: not enough time to provide meaningful support to all the English learners and their teachers in the school district; view of

"ELL" as consisting of support and isolated strategies; lack of clarity in carrying out a coherent language program

- Suggestions: Build clear structural relationships to support leadership development; meet regularly with an ELL Team, even if there are no designated language teachers in the school district; revise ELL guide in team to clearly define expected practices in every classroom; support professional development for ELL Lead, including participation in events outside of school district; provide regular integrated professional development and coaching for classroom teachers.

In addition to applying the framework to the existing job description for the ELL Lead position--wherever it is situated hierarchically--educators may want to think critically about the degree to which ELL interests have been represented within district-wide policy initiatives. The axes in the analytical framework can also be used to set goals for whichever type of ELL Lead position is in place within a given school district, in order to expand and consolidate aspects of the interpretive processes that may have been overlooked in the rush to policy implementation.

Caution in Using the Sweet Spot Framework

The purpose of offering this analytical tool was to initiate and lengthen, rather than shorten, a thinking and discussion process. If its use by an ELL Lead or district leadership team seems to be generating more questions than it is answering, then this purpose is being fulfilled. It was developed with sensitivity to

the various contexts and decision-making histories of the eight school districts in the study, and it should be applied with the same respect to the complexities and constraints of each local context for policy implementation. While recognizing the challenges that many of these school districts were experiencing due to budget constrictions, I hope that school district leaders will be able to use this analytical framework to examine ways that they might increase the effectiveness of education for English learners within their school districts by realizing the potential of the ELL Lead position within their organizations.

CHAPTER VI

UNDERSTANDING AND USING THE STUDY'S FINDINGS

Overview of the Study

The intention behind this study was to build a deeper understanding of how external policy is interpreted by ELL Leads, language program directors, within rural school districts and to do this by investigating (a) their basic policy interpretation process, (b) the context in which this process takes place, (c) the influences on their process, and (d) their understandings of this process. In order to explore this interpretive process, I selected eight rural school districts in four of the eight regions in the state, all of varying sizes and with a wide range of percentages of English learners within their student populations. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the ELL Leads in their offices and then, in all but one school district, visited three school sites in order to lend context to their interviews. Key district documents such as the district ELL guides and improvement plans were also shared by the ELL Leads and served to provide additional information about each school district but were not coded or analyzed in the research process.

Following the constructivist, interpretivist model (Charmaz, 2006, 2014), the research design included simultaneous data collection and analysis, though the time frame for data collection was limited in this dissertation study to two and a

half months. The gaps revealed through the first phase of initial and focused coding resulted in additional questions being added to the interview guide for the second and third phases of data collection. I conducted the data analysis in accordance with the sequence of processes recommended by Charmaz (2006, 2014), which included initial and focused coding and the development through constant comparison analysis of selected focused codes into tentative conceptual categories which were then analyzed for their relationships with one another. I reread the interview transcripts multiple times as I sorted focused codes into several variations of categories in order to find those that best fit the data. All the while, I wrote analytical and logistical memos using free writing, clustering, and diagramming techniques to explore emerging themes and to develop theory regarding possible relationships between these themes.

Balancing between breaking down the data and keeping a holistic view of the participants' experiences as they reported them, I wrote memos capturing the unique, positive cases that were described in each interview and juxtaposed these with the three types of ELL positions that I found in the eight school districts: Administrator, Facilitator, and Solo ELL Leads. I brought the themes into this conceptualization and developed axes related to the actions and interactions reported by the eight Leads. These were organized into a two-part analytical framework, one part that depicted the individual interpretive process of an ELL Lead and another that showed the shared interpretive process. My purpose for offering grounded theory about policy interpretation in the form of this analytical framework is to enable ELLs Leads in rural school districts to better understand

their own work processes as well as to promote sound decision-making by school district leaders as they design and support these positions within their rural school districts.

Interpretation of Findings

In the same way that the experiences, insights, and beliefs of the participants in the study influenced their interpretation of policy related to ELLs, my experiences, insights, and beliefs have influenced this study from beginning to end. Through these lenses, I designed the research questions, decided how to best explore the field in search of understanding, collected and analyzed data, interpreted these into themes and frameworks, and now present my interpretation of these findings. In this chapter, I explain the findings in relationship to the fields of language policy and leadership and recommend potential extensions and applications in the hope of supporting rural school districts in their work with English learners. The interpretation of findings is divided into three sections: Preparing for Complexity; Reforming Programs for English Learners, and Scaffolding Rural School Districts. Also, in order to define the lenses through which this study has been refracted, I include reflective analysis of my learning as a result of the study throughout the discussion of the findings.

Preparing for Complexity

Navigating changing external policies as well as the attitudes and interests of various groups in a complex policy environment requires political insight, leadership skill, and the ability to engage in community-sensitive argumentation

(Anderson, 2009; Diaz, 2008; Tollefson, 2013a). This may be particularly true within rural communities, as evidenced by the accounts of the Leads in the study. Leaders need to take into account the attitudes of teachers, leaders, and community members toward the languages and cultures within their schools and the impact of these on the intended and unintended language policies enacted by these schools (Corson, 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Shohamy, 2006a; Stone, 2012). As evidenced in the accounts and reflections of the study participants, some of the dispositions and preparation directly linked to improving educational outcomes for English learners emerged as Themes 1, 4, and 6, and the interpretation of these three themes is presented here according to their logical flow, not their numerical order.

Theme 4: Multilingual approach to language learning. A multilingual approach to language learning can be implied or explicit and is exhibited through personal philosophies, school district vision, and educator actions that support the actualization of learners through the development of their languages (Combs & Penfield, 2012, Corson, 1999; de Jong, 2011). The ideologies the eight Leads expressed through their communication about the use of Spanish and other languages in their educational system contributed to the development of this theme as well as their account of working within the ideologies present in their schools and communities. One Lead who clearly articulated her commitment to a multilingual approach had experience teaching in various types of bilingual programs and had been working intensively to strengthen the bilingual programs that were established in her school district prior to her entering the position. Even

though three other Leads expressed this orientation in school districts without any bilingual programs, their personal stance on bilingual education had resulted in more flexibility at the classroom level. This positive regard for home languages as resources for students' academic success encouraged micro-policy and classroom policies that can be much more supportive of home language use in the classroom than the official school district policy may be.

Program models may seem to vary in response to changing student demographics, staff turnover, and budget decisions, but local decisions can be buoyed along by underlying beliefs about language. A monolingual ideology is associated with (a) English-only approaches to language education and (b) restrictions on bilingual education. English learners in schools that operate under the assumption that English proficiency is the only desired outcome may lose out on life-long benefits of being proficient in two or more languages. In addition, these students may experience losses in their everyday lives at school beyond the gradual loss of their home languages. Their previous knowledge and home languages may go unrecognized, they may not understand instructed concepts taught only in English, and they may be perceived as deficient in knowledge or intellectual capacity when all they are lacking is the time it takes to become fluent in English. In exchange for these losses, these students may gain an understanding that their cultural ways and their languages have little value or status in school, which leaves them with only sad, difficult choices to make.

In school environments where the wider community has supported a multilingual approach to education, educators view their English learners as

possessing multiple assets of language, culture, family, and community and find ways for students to use these to connect to curriculum concepts. Their full identities are valued and hybridity of culture and language is assumed. If they are fortunate and live in a community in which bilingual programs exist in their home languages, they can experience basic education and uninterrupted cognitive development using the language they already know and use. When their use of English is playful and based on problem-solving and their home language is available as a learning tool, they develop both languages as they continue through the school curriculum. Some of these bilingual students are able to continue learning curriculum concepts and enjoying literature in both languages all the way through to high school graduation, which means they are able to meet entrance requirements for world languages at prestigious institutes of higher learning.

The multilingual approach is supported by language acquisition research, by notions of personal and communal linguistic rights, and by democratic, pluralistic ideals for schools and society (de Jong, 2011; Gárcia, Skutnabb-Kangas, & Torres-Guzmán, 2006; Shohamy, 2006a). In the study, four participants implied or expressed a multilingual ideology but in only one of the school districts was there evidence of a district-wide, community-wide commitment to this educational approach. Ideally, the ELL Lead shares this ideology with her district leadership team and with teachers and is able to devote her time to establishing quality programs instead of arguing methods and approaches.

School district administrators are powerful agents of language policy (D. C. Johnson, 2013a). Several of the participants expressed the positive or negative impact that the ideology of a superintendent can have on systems that support English learners. Administrators contribute to or dismantle language programs through personnel actions as well. Hiring decisions are an important part of building a more asset-based view of English learners across the school district. Valuing teaching experience and educational preparation in language education may mean that a small rural school district hires a language teacher with the state endorsement in linguistically diverse education even though state regulations do not require it.

Many inequalities are cloaked with commonsense, so leaders must uncover the language policy implications of general education initiatives. This uncovering took place through audits of English learners' growth and achievement under changing conditions and through systematic probing questions about who actually benefitted from as a result of implementing each initiative. One way to clarify the vision of the school district is to use the improvement planning process in order to revise the school district's Title III ELL plan. There are federal and state self-assessment tools for language programs which address the program design, but there are also tools that promote deeper conversations about equity, social justice, and institutional racism (Corson, 1999). Going beyond the mandates and beginning the process of defining a clear language policy is an important step for a school district to take in the direction of

multilingualism because this step opened up conversations about language, cultures, and inclusive practices.

Theme 1: Expertise in both leadership and language education policy. In the study, there were clear differences in the way that ELL Leads with leadership training approached their jobs compared to the way that ELL Leads with language education endorsements approached theirs. The various proportions of the two specializations within the group of ELL Leads also contributed to this theme when considered in relation to concerns and successes within each school district. The three Administrator ELL Leads were experienced district leaders who all expressed regret concerning (a) their lack of deep knowledge about linguistically diverse education and (b) their lack of availability for the language program as a result of their multiple roles and responsibilities. Some of the other ELL Leads had expertise in the field of linguistically diverse education but lacked leadership training and seemed disconnected from their district leadership teams.

When considering leadership development for ELL Leads, capacity is an important consideration because leadership skill can be added to ELL expertise. Career pathways and time limitations make it more likely for an ELL-endorsed Lead to add a leadership endorsement than for an experienced district leader to add an ELL endorsement. When a participating ELL Lead had been integrated effectively into her district leadership team, given structured mentoring, and authorized to lead her program, her on-the-job training had prepared her very well for her responsibilities. Also, as her program leadership had informed the

work of the district leadership team, there was evidence of increased oversight and ownership on the part of the district leadership team for the language program.

Organizational leadership of change characterizes the primary responsibility of ELL Leads. The field of English language teaching is changing, program models go in and out of favor, cognitive science reveals insight into language learning, and political realities shift support for language programs. One of the participants affirmed this theme by explaining that her lack of leadership training meant that she struggled to lead change even when she had a clear vision: "I usually know exactly *what* is needed, but I don't always know the best way to get there." The complexity of the political and policy environment is a challenge for ELL Leads and without the skill and credibility to lead teams in decision-making processes related to English learners, the specialized knowledge an ELL Lead possesses might be squandered.

Theme 6: Thinking outside the school district. The extent to which the participating ELL Leads were involved in sense-making and policymaking relating to English learners was a surprising, yet strong, theme that emerged from the study. Perhaps the ELL Leads who participated in committee work at the state and regional level were perceived by school district leaders as credible experts and were therefore supported to do this work. Another possible related aspect was their availability and funding for travel to Denver where most of the committee, conference, and training events seemed to take place. What was clear was that all the ELL Leads were responsible for bringing fresh insight and

current information into the school district and those that were involved in joint work outside their school districts were better prepared to serve their school districts in that capacity. They were tasked with locating programs of excellence, instructional resources, and language assessment tools. Their accounts and reflections showed that their level of expertise in linguistically diverse education and their familiarity with the field hindered or enhanced their ability to scan and select relevant language program resources and strategies.

For rural school districts, the cost of travel may be prohibitive. However, the advantages to the school district of an ELL Lead who is participating in policymaking on behalf of English learners could be worth the investment. These advantages could include advanced warning of future state initiatives, details about how to implement a specific policy with English learners, and representation of rural school districts' unique challenges within the policymaking processes of the state. It is vital that ELL Leads have opportunities to collaborate with job-alike peers, attend conferences and trainings, and participate as much as possible in state committees and development projects. These activities also afford leadership development opportunities within the field of language education.

Reforming Programs for English Learners

Even the school districts whose accountability measures were showing satisfactory results for their English learners were intent on improving instruction and assessment for these students. Most of the ELL Leads in the study expressed a commitment to helping content teachers understand and provide

integrated content and language instruction. Without exception, all of the ELL Leads felt that their school districts could do a better job of engaging the parents of English learners and building relationships. Whether focused on fidelity of implementations with a mature language instruction initiative or focused on designing and implementing a completely new initiative, leaders of systemic change need to understand the psychological effects of change on teachers. Not only understand, but they need to build social processes that provide support for the experience of change, communicate clear expectations and timelines by which to measure success, and exhibit knowledgeable flexibility as implementation unfolds. The study rests on convictions about change theory, policy as practice, and the communities of practice concept so similar to the familiar structure of professional learning communities. The experiences and reflections of the ELL Leads revealed positive and negative cases that contributed to the understandings about reforming language programs that are evident in Themes 3, 5, and 2.

Theme 3: Importance of "practice" in policy implementation. In the study, the work of leading change on behalf of English learners involved supporting teachers in their sense-making as they experimented with policy implementation within their daily classroom practices. This approach is supported by insights from the field of policy implementation (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Levinson et al., 2009) and the psychology of change (Reissner, 2010; Schechter & Qadach, 2012, van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Schreurs, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2009). As mentioned earlier, professional learning communities within schools

are where much of this social learning can take place as teachers examine student work and figure out techniques, support, and interventions that their students need. The work of teachers in professional learning communities is well-represented by Wenger's (1998) communities of practice model, particularly in the descriptions of teachers' "mutual engagement," "joint enterprise," and "shared repertoire" as they "negotiate" meaning (p. 73).

The most commonly stated aspiration of the participants in the study was for a team that would help them make decisions on behalf of English learners. One Lead had formed a team from interested classroom teachers and specialists and was developing their expertise, their "shared repertoire" of common understandings, by leading them through a book study. This was her way of preparing them for the "joint enterprise" of the decisions ahead of them as a team. The Leads with a clear vision of team decision-making created routine meetings and systematic processes to ensure the "mutual engagement" that would build social capital for their team. Within a school district organization, leaders must recognize the value of team decision-making and invest accordingly in order to provide time and space for this to take place.

These social processes are the basic processes by which policy is appropriated and instantiated into individual teacher practices. The disruption that change causes to the self-perceived competence of teachers needs to be recognized and permission given for time to experiment, reflect, and improve (Reissner, 2010). As one Lead in the study expressed regarding her experimentation with the design of the language program, "It's been great playing

around with it." In addition to time and support for experimentation, teachers need clear guidance and models of excellence against which to gauge their own progress and success. Without these, the sense-making process can take much longer and may also result eventually in more variation in practice than policymakers could have ever conceived while they were writing the policy.

Theme 5: Language teachers as designers and decision-makers. These creative, situated teacher choices associated with sense-making seem to be cultivated by organizations in which (a) decisions about students are made as close to the classroom as possible and (b) decisions about language programs include stakeholders with an "informed voice." One way to establish the social structures needed for this interpretation of policy into practice within a school district is to engage language teachers to participate in analysis of student data and decision-making at the classroom, school, and school district levels. As Wenger (1998) envisioned, this type of teaching and learning "construes learning as a process of *participation*" and "engages communities in the design of their own practice as a place of learning" (p. 249). This type of participatory program design and reflective teaching allows teachers to influence the language policy of their schools and school districts (Gárcia & Menken, 2010) instead of merely serving as "soldiers of the system" (Shohamy, 2006a, p. 76). When these conversations involve both language and content teachers, decisions about program placement and interventions are more likely to be based on authentic positive gains or patterns of concern. Students will also benefit from their teachers' combined view of their content and language learning needs. Language

programs that encourage regular joint planning and data study include co-teaching and coaching, and several of the school districts were experimenting with one or both of these models.

In the study, regular team meetings of language teachers were linked with the status of the teachers within their school districts, as evidenced by the descriptions of their work with students. These meetings were for "sharing practices," in the words of one Administrator ELL Lead, and for analyzing data in order to refine the language program within each school site. The ELL Lead in one school district mentored her language teachers in data study through a daylong data retreat, which then prepared them to present their analysis of their school-level data to their principals. In those school districts in which the district leadership team and the principals viewed the language teachers as experts and consultants, the teachers' roles included much more that simply providing direct language support services with English learners. Language program Leads in rural school districts and their district leadership teams may want to consider ways to empower language teachers to share their expertise within teaching partnerships and professional learning communities.

Theme 2: Role of bridging between groups. The term "bridging" was used by three of the ELL Leads to describe the way that they served as a connection between groups, specifically between the district leadership team and the ELL team. As described in the literature review, the term is also used in educational policy implementation literature describing the roles of school district administrators as "bridging" and "buffering," meaning that they both bring in

information to their school districts and they make protective decisions about what is essential for their school district and what is not. One of the Leads described "bridging two cultures together" as part of what she does, and another described the term to describe her work of connecting the parents of English learners within the schools. This essential function is identified by Wenger (1998) as the role of *broker* between two distinct communities of practices in which the broker has membership. Brokers need to navigate their loyalties to each group as they join the work of the teams into boundary objects that communicate ideas both groups agree on. The ELL guide might be seen as a boundary object since it generally goes through a review process that included district administrators. If the ELL team had contributed to the improvement planning process at the district level, this would have creates another joint product in the intersection of their two groups. These are processes that the ELL Lead within a school district would likely organize and facilitate since these groups meet separately.

Carrying updates from one group to the other and providing similar messages to both is also a role of the ELL Lead. There was also a persistent theme in the study of the need to represent the interests of the English learners and their families to the district leadership. Three of the Leads described negotiating with the district leadership team to either protect bilingual, ELL-endorsed teachers during budget cuts or to add additional language teachers. The strength of their voices as leaders within their school districts was observable through these negotiations. The role of "bridging" seems to be an important gear for connecting the work of language teachers with the wider view

of district priorities as well as gaining support from the leadership team for the collaborative projects of the ELL team.

Scaffolding Rural School Districts

Each of the participating school districts was very different from the others, but there were common themes that seemed to be associated with being rural school districts. Some of these included: (a) being "small," (b) losing staff due to budget cuts, (c) negative attitudes of the community at large toward immigrants and their languages, (d) central office administrators serving in multiple roles and carrying responsibility for multiple programs, (e) being far away from Denver which made travel (particularly in winter) an obstacle for both district and state representatives, and (f) being skeptical of models of success with English learners that did not approximate their own contexts.

One of the themes that was present in the reflections of only the three Administrator ELL Leads was Theme 7: State Audits/Grants as Catalysts for Improving Practices. From their descriptions of the processes set in motion by state visits and grants within their school districts, it was clear that they saw these as the primary catalyst for change within their school district regarding English learners. In three other cases, ELL Leads mentioned wistfully that scheduled visits to their school districts from state representatives had been cancelled or moved to online communication due to winter weather or other reasons, inferring that they saw them as potentially valuable events. In cases in which ELL Leads lack deep knowledge of linguistically diverse education, one way that they may be able to initiate change processes for their school districts'

language programs might be to apply for a grant or to volunteer for a state audit of their program. Using outside expertise and a structured process with built-in accountability measures may then be one way to scaffold limited resources or expertise within rural school districts.

Implications for Social Change

Using every available resource wisely is critical in rural school districts, particularly during times of financial strain. It is my sincere hope that district leaders will use this grounded theory about the prime functions of the ELL Lead position and how these functions might be balanced in order to increase the overall effectiveness of the position and of the language program within their rural school districts. English learners have a right to the best education possible in whichever communities their families choose to live.

When English learners receive the excellent instruction they need in both content and language, they are better equipped to succeed in subsequent grades, classes, and educational programs. When their identities as bilingual and multilingual students are affirmed and their critical language awareness (Corson, 1999) is cultivated, the following things happen:

1. English learners develop powerful skills for career and citizenship (Corson, 1999);
2. The strength of their families' bonds are strengthened which provides them with increased resilience (Portes & Hao, 2002);
3. Their cognitive flexibility is increased (Barac & Bialystok, 2012);

4. Their projected earning power is increased (Agirdag, 2014, Rumbaut, 2014);
5. They become critical consumers of language and information (Cummins, 1986); and
6. They are able to build on their strengths to acquire new knowledge and skills (Aldana & Mayer, 2014).

All of these things increase the likelihood that these students will go on to enjoy productive lives that include higher education, meaningful work, a comfortable income, and full participation in the democratic processes of their communities, states, and nation (Combs & Penfield, 2012, Darling-Hammond, 2010, Farr & Song, 2011, Hakuta, 2011, Menken, 2013).

The students themselves are not the only ones that benefit from their academic success. A knowledge society thrives on creativity and innovation, and “biocultural diversity” (Réaume & Pinto, 2012) and bilingualism contributes to creativity (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). At the classroom level, the quality of learning within each classroom that welcomes and engages diversity will be enriched, and the multicultural capital of all students will be increased. While recognizing the conundrum of adding privilege upon privilege for some in programs such as dual immersion, the generosity of spirit that characterizes a multilingual approach can also contribute value to society as a whole. In any case, this would be a reasonable price to pay for increasing the opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse children in U.S. schools.

Cultivating equity within the U.S. educational system requires educators to practice a healthy skepticism which leads them to engage in responsible questioning of assumptions, practices, and routines. Because school district administrators, central office administrators, school leaders, and teachers are all active participants in interpreting and appropriating policy into practice, they need to be adept at examining "educational policies that generally overlook knowledge about language acquisition" (Shohamy, 2006a, p. 144). They need to consider how thoroughly the interests of the least powerful have been considered in critical decision-making and find ways to include those who will be most affected by a language policy during its construction (Corson, 1999; Tollefson, 2013a). Finally, learning together across groups creates social capital, builds common understandings, and develops an "informed voice" that is so needed for advocacy and socially just educational systems.

Recommendations for Action

The most important stance an educator can take is to view all educational policy as potential language policy. Examining the "mechanisms of language policy" within general education initiatives then becomes a standard critical thinking response (Shohamy, 2006a). This willingness to examine policy and practices to find the best way forward, one that builds on students' assets of culture and language, can be applied in a cyclical program evaluation plan for a language program. Corson (1999) stated that "a policy responsive to the school's dynamic, social, cultural, and political context should partly self-destruct about

once a year" (p. 70). This ensures the flexibility to match a school to its students instead of the other way around.

In response to the study's findings, I recommend that district leaders consider carefully how they can get maximum value from their ELL Lead position within the school district organization, including leadership development and support for outside policymaking activities. They should also evaluate the status and responsibilities of the language teachers within the school districts with a view to expanding their reach in working with classroom teachers in new ways. Understanding the value in communities of practice for helping teachers figure out how to implement initiatives, district leaders should fully invest in (a) professional learning communities focused on English learners, (b) language policy planning, and (c) partnerships between language and content teachers. Also, district leaders should demonstrate an advocacy approach to leadership by building a community that welcomes diversity, sets high expectations for all students, and ensures participation and voice during governance processes of the school district for the least powerful groups in the community.

This study was all about the important role that ELL Leads have within their school districts as a conduit for information and ideas about education for English learners. My recommendations for ELL Leads is that they compare their experiences to those of the Leads in the study in order to understand the collective "sweet spot" that emerged as a conceptualization of their ideal practices and dispositions. This may lead to personal goal-setting or to advocacy within their organizations for a more powerful role for themselves and their

language teachers. Understanding the idealized role of the ELL Lead within rural school districts portrayed in the analytical framework in Chapter V might lead them to seek leadership development and mentorship within their school districts or participation opportunities in state task forces related to policy and English learners. I hope that they will be encouraged to ask for support for attending state conferences and professional development as well as for collaborating with other ELL Leads in their region and state.

My recommendation for English learners and their parents is to seek opportunities to learn about their school districts and their language programs. Parents should hold the persistent attitude that a lack of information is not ignorance and should work both to share and acquire information about the teaching and learning their children are experiencing. There are parent advocates at the state and regional level that can offer lists of questions to ask during parent-teacher conferences or parent accountability meetings. Even asking for translation or interpretation assistance when it is needed can improve services over time. Finally, the real value will come when parents share their best hopes for their children's language development and these are honored within the language programs and classrooms in which their children are learning.

The importance of expertise in language policy for leaders will hopefully be interpreted by faculty members of leadership programs as a challenge to deepen the exposure of their students to (a) a multilingual approach to language education, (b) systematic equity reviews, and (c) case studies within the field of language policy. Within teacher education programs, the implication of this study

is that all teachers, and particularly language teachers, need to acquire deep knowledge of language policy and be able to use supportive tools for bottom-up policymaking within their future schools and classrooms.

There are three important messages that state policymakers can take away from this portrayal of sense-making within school districts around educational improvement for English learners. The first is that they should include ELL experts and practitioners in policy development so that each initiative is released with an accompanying guide for implementation with English learners. The second is that they should build negotiability into initiatives, meaning that teachers within each school district will have flexibility to experiment and select from a menu of possible options (Honig, 2006b). The final message is that state policymakers should require evidence of meaningful participation of stakeholders, including parents of English learners, into the formulation of language policy and district or school improvement plans pertaining to their children's education. Mandating an inclusive process for establishing a school district's language program may accomplish much more diversity and excellence than prescribing methodologies and approaches from the state level (Ross, 2007).

In response to the unique challenges that rural school districts face, I offer the following recommendations, many of which were shared by the ELL Leads in the study. Rural school districts experiencing financial stress can still set high standards for their language programs as they adjust to the constraints of budgets and staff resources. There is opportunity in difficult situations for creative

responses and solutions. For example, when there is a long-range plan in place for building the language resources of office, school, and administrative staff, even a small school district can make progress over time in supporting cultural and linguistic diversity. When funding for professional development is limited, school staff members can engage in book studies, sign up to participate in a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) together, or create professional learning communities that explore ways to support the development of academic language within content learning. There may be opportunities to develop grant-funded career pathways for minority-language speakers from within the community so that a bilingual paraprofessional has the opportunity to become a classroom teacher. A local college or nearby university may be able to serve the school district with an ELL endorsement program that is delivered partially or fully online. Neighboring school districts may have similar professional development needs and may be able to pool funds to provide training to teachers in both school districts. The local library may be able to provide free access for language learners of English, Spanish, Swahili, or whatever community languages are spoken within the school.

Teachers are the primary agents through which educational language policy is enacted, so their responses to the study's findings will hopefully encourage them to seek expertise about English learners and language acquisition. I expect them to take any recommendations I offer according to their best judgment of what will fit their teaching assignment and individual needs. Within a school site, teachers and principals can read through the state ELL

guide and explore the resources the state provides for parent engagement and equity training. They can contact a regional equity assistance center for free consultation and resources. Classroom teachers can volunteer for co-teaching and coaching with the language teachers in their schools and together develop new ways of planning and teaching English learners. Everyone can at least learn the greeting words and courtesy phrases in the community languages and use them with students and families, and some might choose to study a second language in earnest as a way of building their own multicultural capital.

Recommendations for Further Study

In any grounded theory study, the purpose is to generate theory that future researchers may test. There are many ways in which this might be accomplished to gather deeper insight into the role of the ELL Lead within rural school districts. One way to further explore the role of ELL Leads within rural school districts is explore similar objectives within an expanded number of rural school districts. It might also be worthwhile to compare the roles of ELL Leads in rural and non-rural settings in order to further define essential characteristics and actions. Another direction for research might be to investigate the actions and interactions of the ELL Leads from the perspective of the language teachers or from the perspective of the district leadership team. During this study, I focused on processes of change as described by the participants in order to explore processes of policy interpretation. This exploration could be bounded by one single policy as it goes from policymakers to the classrooms, with specific attention to the roles of ELL Leads across the state.

Discourse analysis research might prove an effective tool to explore the development of the Unified Improvement Plan in school districts on Title III improvement plans for English learners since this approach aims to understand the intentions and ideologies that influence local policy and decision-making. The same type of study might also focus on how teams work together in school districts that undertake to develop language policy or to revise their ELL guide. One of the lesser themes that emerged in the study was engaging parents of English learners. If a school district were to undertake a yearlong process of developing local language policy according to Corson's (1999) suggestions, including substantive input from ELL parents on criteria for evaluating the language program's success, a case study illuminating this meaningful parent engagement would contribute to the field by demonstrating culturally inclusive decision-making. In order to explore the suggestion that certain characteristics and practices by the ELL Leads were associated with greater success on the Title III AMAOs, a mixed method study might incorporate the analytical framework as a tool for self-assessment or goal-setting by ELL Leads to establish a connection between certain practices and successful program results with English learners.

As this study drew to a close, there was a significant policy change in the state that resulted in new funding for school districts with English learners. I would have liked to have extended this grounded theory study over a longer span of time in order to explore how decisions within these eight rural school districts were made as a result of this policy change. This sudden increase in state

funding for language programs and professional development related to English learners resulted from the reauthorization of the English Language Proficiency Act (2014) and increased the length of time that school districts could receive state funding for English learners from two years to five. Funding amounts were increased as well; the sum of the funds that were distributed to the eight participating rural school districts during the 2014-15 school year exceeded $2,000,000 according to public records provided on the Colorado Department of Education's website: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefisgrant/elpa-fy14-15-allocations. Knowing how financial hardship had impacted language programs in some of the participating school districts, I was very curious to know what decision-making processes might have been set into motion with the sudden arrival of new funding and what the effects might eventually be on the language programs that were already in place in these school districts. Such a study would likely reveal competing ideologies and power structures as well as successful advocacy models and program improvement processes for English learners.

Researcher's Reflection

I realized through this study why my former position of an ELL facilitator had ultimately been unsuccessful; at the same time, I became aware of how much I had benefited as a result of my school district's support for my participation in state committees and projects. Honig (2006c) described the three primary roles of a mid-level administrator as searching, using, and retrieving stored information. Upon reflection on my nine-year tenure with the Colorado school district in which I had served, it was clear that I had learned a great deal

about assessment, standards, and instruction for English learners through my avid participation in state level policymaking opportunities. At the same time, because our ELL department was structurally disconnected from the core processes of the district leadership team, we lacked credibility within our school district for leading change. Any expertise I had gained was not useful within the school district organization because the decision-making processes within the ELL department were like the "hamster wheel" described by one of the Leads in the study. Our great ideas and dedicated efforts simply did not connect with school district initiatives or long-range planning. In short, most of my actions and interactions took place in the "searching" function and too little of them were in the "using" and "retrieving" functions. Though I was grateful for all I had learned during those nine years, I now understand the need for balance between "searching" out and "using" information.

Experiences such as the one just described have influenced my beliefs about organizational leadership of change as an ELL Lead, as has the literature review that preceded the study, which in turn have both contributed to my interpretation of the patterns and their properties into theoretical codes. I have imagined the "sweet spot" for policy interpretation by ELL Leads in rural school districts in the analytical framework presented in Chapter V. I believe that this idealization of the ELL Lead position has conceptual density, but even my judgment of theoretical sufficiency was formulated through the lens of my perceptions. As Charmaz (2014) explained, "The theory depends on the researcher's view, it does not and cannot stand outside of it" (p. 128). In order to

establish the foundation for interpretive theorizing, I have followed a gradual process through data analysis and interpretation until the idea of balancing polarities within this "sweet spot" of policy implantation "wove the fractured story back together" (Glaser, as cited in Charmaz, 2014, p. 68). The insight I had during the literature review 2 years ago regarding "searching" and "using" may have emerged in the portrayal of two separate diagrams in the analytical framework, one to depict a personal interpretive process and a second a shared interpretive process. I hope that my experiences and insights, coupled with the experiences and reflections of the eight participants in the study, have produced a useful tool for ELL Leads and their school district leaders.

Conclusion

Leading reform in rural school districts that has a positive effect on English learners requires combining insights from the fields of language policy and educational leadership into a critical approach to policy implementation. School and district leaders need to recognize the language policy implications within general education initiatives. For maximum impact on the growth and achievement of English learners, the ELL Lead for the school district must possess expertise in the field of linguistically diverse education, including teaching experience in various programs, and needs to either hold a leadership endorsement or receive effective mentoring in leadership from district administrators. In order to become a powerful driver of change, the ELL Lead position needs to be fully integrated into a school district's leadership team and core processes; this not only builds the knowledge of central office administrators

about linguistically diverse education but also allows for the ELL Lead t to advocate on behalf of English learners and to thereby improve the equity and quality of the school district's decisions. Furthermore, the district leadership team needs to grant full authorization to the ELL Lead to lead change in her program so that she can prepare language teachers to be designers and decision-makers.

A school district commitment to professional learning communities as they work to improve education for English learners supports the best possible kind of professional learning for teachers. Together, language and classroom teachers figure out new ways to integrate content and language instruction for English learners that fit their unique students and contexts. Teachers can then build on the cultural and linguistic assets that their students bring to the learning within whichever language program and strategy is in place. As a result, their English learners experience supportive, rigorous instruction that communicates high expectations for success.

Finally, the ELL Lead needs to participate in collaboration with peers outside her school district and in policymaking at the state level. This ensures that (a) the Lead is able to design team processes to support implementation of general education initiatives with the needs of English learners in mind and that (b) the interests of rural school districts and the English learners studying within their schools are well-represented in state planning and policy implementation. When these systems are aligned to focus on the success and well-being of English learners, the school district has created the greatest opportunity to learn for every one of its students. All in all, a sweet spot to be in.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO

Institutional Review Board

DATE:	February 24, 2014
TO:	Jennifer Daniels
FROM:	University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB
PROJECT TITLE:	[555669-2] Interpreting Educational Language Policy within Rural School Districts in Colorado
SUBMISSION TYPE:	Amendment/Modification
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	February 24, 2014
EXPIRATION DATE:	February 24, 2015
REVIEW TYPE:	Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB has APPROVED your submission. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of February 24, 2015.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

Explanation

Thank you for meeting with me today. Thank you for agreeing to share your experiences and insights related to how you and your school district figures out what to do for ELLs. Please keep in mind that you are free to choose whether to respond or not to any of my questions and you may choose to go beyond their scope when you think it necessary. You may also withdraw your participation in this study at any time.

I would like to explain this research project to you as an ELL colleague because I believe that it will help establish the purpose of this interview. First, here are the research questions that have guided the preparation of the interview questions and that will guide my analysis and interpretation of the responses that you offer:

How is educational language policy interpreted by ELL Leads within rural school districts in Colorado?

- *What is the context for the interpretation of educational language policy by ELL Leads?*
- *What has influenced the interpretation of educational language policy by ELL Leads?*
- *How have ELL Leads understood the interpretation of educational language policy?*

I would like you to know before we begin the interview that this is a qualitative study, specifically a grounded theory study, and I plan to share some key sources from my literature review with you and to debrief any related concepts with you once the research has been completed.

I will be recording this interview and taking some notes as you speak. Later, I will transcribe this interview and then these transcripts—along with the transcripts from interviews with other ELL Leads—will constitute the data for my qualitative study. In order to protect the confidentiality of this interview, I will give pseudonyms to you, to your school district, and to any person or place within your school district that you mention during our conversation as I transcribe the recording of this interview. I will then share the written transcript of this interview with you so that you can confirm its accuracy or correct it to make it so. You will be able to notice in the transcript you receive that all identifying names, numbers, or places that you mention in your interview today will have been changed to minimize the chance of someone identifying you or your school district from any communication resulting from this study. When I write the dissertation or write for any purpose about this topic, I will not include any specific demographic or

achievement data that might allow readers to identify you or and of the other participants in this study.

In order to help you to feel comfortable in sharing your experiences with me, I would like to add that I am here to listen and learn from your experiences. This means that any professional role in which I have served and through which you know me is not relevant to this conversation. I'm simply a graduate student learning how to be a researcher, hoping to learn from you and the other ELL Leads I interview in order to contribute understanding to educational leaders regarding your roles in serving English learners in your school districts.

I hope that you will benefit from your participation in this study, but there may be some risks that you should consider as well. Here is the consent form showing that you understand these risks and are willing to participate in this study. Please take your time to read through this letter of consent.

Do you have any questions about the study or about the confidentiality of this interview? If you are ready to consent to participating in this study, please sign this form. Here is a second copy for you to keep.

Initial Open-Ended Questions

1. Describe some of the highlights you've experienced as an ELL Lead. What are some of the challenges you've experienced?

2. Explain how English learners experience their learning day in the school district at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

3. What are the unique features of the programs and services for English learners in your schools?

Intermediate Questions

1. What would you consider to be ideal outcomes for the English learners in the district's schools?

2. What would you say are the big ideas behind the programs and services your school districts has established for English learners?

    a. What are the sources for these ideas?

    b. How have these been expressed into practices? (actions, routines, schedules, etc.)

3. How do principals and teachers figure out what is recommended or required for English learners?

4. How do you find out information about state and federal expectations of your district's schools regarding English learners?

5. Are there written sources that describe school district policy and guidelines?

    a. What were the reasons that these documents were created?

    b. How were these documents created?

    c. Who had a say in their creation?

    d. Who was involved in the process of developing these policy documents?

6. Describe any possible influences on this process.

7. What are the guidelines for the following:

    a. Classification of ELL status

    b. Instructional materials for English learners

    c. Schedule for English learners

    d. Qualifications of teachers (recommended and required)

    e. Location in which ELL programs and services are delivered

    f. Languages used in ELL programs and services

    g. Assessment and assessment accommodations for English learners

    h. Identification for program placement for English learners

    i. Determination of English language proficiency

8. Whose ideas were included in the decision making processes that resulted in these guidelines?

9. Are there ideological differences (disagreements) within the district regarding English learners and their programs? If yes: How have you worked with these differences?

10. Describe a past decision-making process that related to the ELL program.

    a. What initiated it?

    b. Who was involved in it?

    c. What were the steps in the process?

    d. What were the results?

    e. How were they communicated?

11. With whom do you work closely to determine the needs of the English learners in the district and to plan how to meet these needs?

12. With whom do you communicate often regarding programs and services for English learners? What are some examples of these communications?

13. When you aren't sure what to do, with whom do you consult?

14. Who comes to you for guidance and support when they are unsure of what to do with English learners?

15. Which school improvement measures or educational initiatives may have impacted the educational experiences of English learners? Explain your observations.

16. In which contexts within the district is the Spanish language used or taught? (how, when, for what purpose)

17. What are the perceptions about the proper use of Spanish within different contexts in the school districts? What is your understanding of the rationale for these perceptions?

18. Are there ideological differences within the district regarding the use of Spanish?

    a. If yes: How have you worked with these differences?

19. Have there been any changes in these ELL programs in the past four years? If so, what contributed to those changes?

20. In an ideal world, what changes would you like to see in the ELL programs and services that your school district provides to English learners?

21. In this ideal world, what changes would you like to see in the decision making processes that relate to English learners? Whose ideas would you like to see represented?

Ending Questions

1. In your experience as an ELL Lead, what are the most important considerations in deciding what to do for English learners?

2. What have you learned about making decisions about educational programs and services for English learners?

3. What advice would you offer to a new ELL Lead about the following:

    a. how to figure out what needs to happen in the district for these students

    b. the process of making decisions about English learners

    c. the specific ways that the program should run

4. Is there anything else you would like me to understand about how the ELL programs in your school district were developed?

5. Is there anything that occurred to you during this interview that you would like me to know?

6. Is there anything that you would like to ask me?

Questions that were added to the later interviews:

- How did you come to this position? What is your story of how you came to this job?

- Has this district ever had an OCR visit or a CDE audit regarding ELLs?

- Out there in the district, what are the routine data study practices that exist that might pick up on ripple effects of something that's happening in the district for English learners?

- Are the parent communities involved in your policy coordination or significant changes in the district? Would you say that you have parents of the English learners involved in school or district governance?

- How connected are you as an ELL Lead with the core decision making processes of the district?

- How did your plan appear on the radar for the leadership team and how did you get their permission?

- If you were talking with teachers and looking for evidence that your program is functioning, what are some of the things they would be saying that would show you that they are doing it? What are some catch phrases or understandings that you would be listening for?

- Do you ever get a chance to learn with, or learn from, other ELL leads in Colorado?

- Do you have a record of what you came up with? Whether it's a written statement or a guidance statement. How do you make sure that that doesn't go away? If that was an important understanding that you co-created, where would that live?

APPENDIX C

STANDARD CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Interpreting Educational Language Policy within Rural School Districts in Colorado
Researcher: Jennifer J. Daniels, graduate student, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department
Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx E-mail: dani4676@bears.unco.edu

Purpose and Description: The purpose of this study is to discover the ways that you understand external policy and practices related to English learners and then work with your colleagues within the school district to interpret these into local policy and practices. I will ask you a series of questions in this interview and, if your schedule allows, go with you to visit some of the locations in the school district in which programs and services for English learners are taking place. The interview will be divided into two parts, if possible. The second part of the interview may take place in any location you choose after my(our) tour of the ELL programs and services in the school district, on the same day or on the following day, or by phone if your schedule does not allow for us to meet in person after the tour. I may contact you by phone or in person with follow-up questions after the interview in order to confirm or correct my understanding of your experiences.

The central question being asked through this research project is this one: How is educational language policy interpreted by ELL Leads in rural school districts in Colorado? The interview questions are designed to answer the following sub-questions:

- What is the context for the actions and interactions of ELL Leads related to the interpretation of educational language policy?
- What influences are there on the interpretation of language policy within rural school districts?
- How have ELL Leads made meaning of their experiences related to the interpretation of educational language policy?

Interview Logistics: For this interview, I would like to meet with you in your district office. The interview will consist of approximately 30 open-ended questions about how you and your various teams have figured out what to do in terms of educational programming and support services for English learners. This interview will be flexible and may take us around two hours. I will be asking for you to show me the formal and informal ways that you and your team members have communicated the school district's expectations relating to English learners, including your school district website and related documents. Also, if you are able to show me some of the locations in which ELL programs and services are taking place in the district, I will take notes that will help provide background to my study. If your schedule does not allow you to travel to each site with me, I will be glad to visit the sites you direct me to on my own.

Accuracy in Representing your Thoughts and Experiences: Once I have transcribed your interview, I will send the written transcript to you by registered mail. If you request the transcript as a pdf attachment to an email, I will send it to your home email address with a request for acknowledgment of receipt. I will ask you to read through the transcript and correct any mistakes I may have made and confirm the accuracy of the transcript as a representation of your thoughts and experiences. During the final phase of this study, I will send you whatever model or framework results from data interpretation and invite you to offer comments and observations about the model.

Confidentiality: I will take every precaution to protect your identity during every phase of the research. The identity of your school district will not be disclosed during the research or in any subsequent publication of findings from this study. The study will include information from interviews with nine ELL leads in nine rural school districts and any specific descriptions and study findings will be reported in aggregated form.

Risks: Potential risks in this project are considered to be minimal in that they resemble the risks that educational leaders face as part of their job performance on a day-to-day basis. These include the possibility of your psychological discomfort resulting from others' disapproval of your speaking with an outsider about the ELL program, particularly if there have been disputes about the program in the past. Your superintendent has given permission for you to participate in this research project. However, there is always a slight change that perceptions of disloyalty might threaten your job or status within the organization.

Benefits and Compensation: I hope that your participation will give you the opportunity to reflect on this aspect of your job and that you will experience benefit as a result of your speaking with me about how you have interpreted

educational language policy within your school district. Also, once I have completed the research in your district, you will receive an annotated list of literature related to this study and resources that may support your decision making as an ELL Lead. I would be happy to debrief this list with you by phone, by email, or in person if we can arrange it. Along with the annotated list, you will also receive a $25 gift card to use on Amazon.com.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-2161.

_____ _____

Subject's Signature Date

_____ _____

Researcher's Signature Date

APPENDIX D

ANNOTATED LIST FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Annotated List for Study Participants

Part 1: Support for Decision-making Related to ELL Programs

1. Comprehensive guidebook for PLC work and strategic planning teams regarding English learners, their achievement, their language development, and their programs.

   Wagner, S., & King, T. (2012). *Implementing effective instruction for English language learners: 12 key practices for administrators, teachers, and leadership teams.* Philadelphia, PA: Caslon Publishers.

2. Excellent guidance for auditing equity for minority and high-risk populations, including specific ways to determine student success.

   Skrla, L., Scheurich, J. J., Garcìa, J., & Nolly, G. (2006). Equity audits: A practical leadership tool for developing equitable and excellent schools. In C. Marshal & M. Oliva (Eds.), *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions in education* (pp. 251-278). Boston, MA: Pearson Education

3. Guidebook to support critical thinking about student performance within systems and initiatives with specific tools and suggestions for implementation.

   Johnson, R. S., & Avelar La Salle, R. (2010). *Data strategies to uncover and eliminate hidden inequities: The wallpaper effect*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

4. Advanced curriculum and assessment guidance for educators thinking about using portfolios and other tools to gather evidence of English language development. The publisher has made pdf forms available to support the content of the book.

   Gottlieb, M. (2012). *Common language assessments for English learners*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press. Retrieved from http://www.solution-tree.com/authors/margo-gottlieb/common-language-assessment-for-english-learners.html

5. Report submitted to the USDE that recommends states examine their achievement test data for patterns over time to determine expected outcomes for English learners based on bands of English language proficiency (plus time in program). This report helps to contextualize any high-stakes decisions that are based on standardized test scores for English learners.

Cook, G., Linquanti, R., Chinen, M., & Jung, J. (2012*). National evaluation of Title III implementation supplemental report: Exploring approaches to setting English language proficiency performance criteria and monitoring English learner progress*. Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Education website: http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/title-iii/state-local-implementation-report.pdf

6. Data describing patterns of English learner achievement across the state which allows districts to understand the performance of their English learners and select reasonable and rigorous goals for these students.

Colorado Department of Education, Office of Federal Programs. (2013). *Data dig on EL students*. Retrieved from the Colorado Department of Education website: http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/ ELDataDigsHowtoTool.pdf

Colorado Department of Education, Office of Language, Culture and Equity. (2013). *2012 EL data statewide public tables.* Retrieved from the CDE website: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cde_english

7. Guidance specific to English Learners in Colorado

Colorado Department of Education, Office of Language, Culture and Equity. (2015). *Guidebook on designing, delivering, and evaluating services to English learners (ELs*). Retrieved from the Colorado Department of Education website: http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/ default/files/ELsG-book.pdf

8. Online resources

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) http://www.ncela.us/resources

World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA): RTI^2 Guide; Focus Bulletins: Language Arts, Growth, Group Work; Differentiation; webinars; standards; etc. http://www.wida.us/resources/

Part 2: Support for a Multilingual Approach to Education

1. Excellent book by Colorado experts on bilingual education.

Escamilla, K., Hopewell, S., Butvilofsky, S., Sparrow, W., Soltero-González, L., Ruíz-Figueroa, O., & Escamilla, M. (2014). *Biliteracy from the start: Literacy squared in action.* Philadelphia, PA: Caslon Publishing.

2. Great articulation of the 21st century skills activated through bilingual competence that is applicable to English learners acquiring English as a second (or third/fourth/etc.) language.

   Colorado Department of Education. (2009). *Prepared graduate competencies for world languages*. Retrieved from the Colorado Department of Education website: http://www.cde.state.co.us/CoWorldLanguages/WL_PGC.asp

Part 3: Literature Review for Research Project

1. Accessible summary of the field of language policy.

   Johnson, D. C. (2013a). *Language policy.* New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

2. Book that offers a critical approach to language policy and suggests that actual policy is often informal and that it is the result of mechanisms such as assessment practices and language acquisition programs, among others.

   Shohamy, E. (2006a). *Language policy: Hidden agendas and new approaches*. New York, NY: Routledge.

3. CDE's definition of rural school districts in Colorado

   Colorado Department of Education. (2013b). *Rural definitions.* Retrieved from the Colorado Department of Education website: http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/ruraledcouncil/download/ruraldefinitionspreadsheet032913.pdf

APPENDIX E

EMAIL AND GIFT CARD MESSAGES FOLLOWING INTERVIEWS

Communications to Participants by Email

Dear ____,

Thank you for responding to this email.

Your transcript is attached to this email. My hope is that you will read it with soft eyes, looking at the ideas you shared, and then adding any comments that you have to extend or clarify any of the ideas you communicated during the interview. If you would like to clarify anything, just insert your comments and email the PDF back to me as an attachment. Just a word of caution about reading interview transcripts--when there are pauses, uhs and ums, sentence fragments, and even grammar mistakes, these are evidence of deep thinking and the formation of new ideas. The presence of any of these makes the idea being expressed even more interesting to me, and so please don't look twice at these, or worry about how it sounds These patterns are common to all of the interviews, and they're in my questions, too, when I departed from the interview script in order to follow a line of thinking with you.

The annotated resource list is also attached, and I would be happy to have a phone conversation with you if you have any questions about items on the list. Sometime later today, you should receive a gift certificate from Amazon. You are free to spend it any way you like. It's simply a thank-you for participating in the interview.

I plan to email you again in early January with findings and recommendations, which you will be most welcome to comment on.

Thank you very much.

Jennifer Daniels

<u>Text of Amazon gift card:</u>

Thank you very much for your participation in my dissertation research project. I appreciate your time, your reflection about your job, and your care in communicating your ideas. Your insight and experiences as the ELL Lead for your district have provided valuable ideas about the educational leadership of ELL programs.

Best of success in all your endeavors,

Jennifer Daniels

Email on January 5th:

Dear ___,

As I work my way through the data analysis process for my dissertation, the following categories seem to represent many or most of the actions related to the interpretation of educational language policy as described by the eight ELL Leads I interviewed:

1. interacting with others over time
2. taking in/processing information and ideas
3. bridging between groups and teams
4. responding to situations and perceived needs
5. balancing tensions/interests
6. supporting classroom instruction for ELLs
7. communicating and informing

In order to proceed with my final analysis and my reflection on this study, I would very much appreciate your response to the following questions, if you would be so kind:

1. To what degree each of the categories above represent your role in your school district, particularly in regard to the ways that you figure out what to do for English language learners in your schools?

   Do you see a category that I may be missing? If so, I welcome your suggestions.

2. Please describe any positive or negative effects you have experiences as a result of your participation in this study.

3. Please share any comments or questions you have regarding your transcript and annotated resource list/gift card.

Thank you very much.

Jennifer Daniels
Telephone: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Email on January 16, 2015

Dear ____,

As a participant in my dissertation study of how ELL Leads interpret educational language policy within their rural school districts, I would like to share with you the analytical framework that I am proposing as a distillation of what I was able to learn through the study.

The first illustration shows the factors that need to be balanced in the ELL Lead Position in terms of the stances, preparation, and processing that goes into the job. This refers to the internal, personal interpretive sense-making process the ELL Lead experiences in her job, while the second graphic shows the work of the ELL Lead in facilitating the sense-making of others regarding ELL policy, programs, and practices.

As always, your input is most welcome. If you have any questions or comments, you may call me or email me.

It has been a pleasure and an honor to learn from your reflections and explanations of your job as an ELL Lead. Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study.

Best of success in all your endeavors,

Jennifer Daniels
Telephone: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Email on Jan. 25, 2015

Dear ____,

As a participant in this study, you may be interested in reading the findings of the study. These findings emerged from my analysis of the data generated from interviews with eight ELL Leads in eight rural school districts around the state of Colorado, including your interview.

I have taken care to keep descriptions of district characteristics or practices away from quotations that are identified by pseudonyms, in order to protect your identify. As you read these two chapters, you will discover what pseudonym I've given you because you will recognize your words and thoughts. But if you have any concerns at all about someone else being able to figure out who you are by reading these chapters, please let me know right away and I will do my best to further separate any identifying information from your quotations.

Chapter IV contains a summary of the findings from the eight interviews and Chapter Five offers an analytical framework by which district leaders and ELL Leads might be able to understand how to better support the ELL Lead positions within their rural school districts. The goal of increasing the effectiveness of the position is that ELLs in the district will increase their growth and achievement.

I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to have learned from your experiences and reflections. I'm left with more questions than would fit into this short study, but I consider these new questions evidence of what I've learned from all of you.

The final draft of this paper will be submitted to my committee on February 10th. Please take the time to review these two chapters in order to (1) confirm that your identity has been kept confidential; and (2) if you choose to do so, share your own reflections and learning as a result of reading. I would be honored to receive your reactions to the ideas that emerged as a result of this study as well as to know if any of these ideas have confirmed your experiences as an ELL Lead or brought you insight into future goals for yourself and for your district.

With gratitude and respect,

Jen Daniels
xxx-xxx-xxxx