

English Language Learners: One Size Does Not Fit All

by

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Abstract

Many general education teachers hold negative attitudes and misconceptions about English Language Learners that affect how they prepare for, instruct, and assess these students. This paper examines what negative attitudes and misconceptions are held by some general education teachers such as the students having a lack of motivation or that they learn better when they only speak English. It also discusses how these attitudes and misconceptions affect English learning students. I also conducted a survey to provide insight on attitudes about English Language Learners that current in-service teachers in Maryland have. Based on these findings and interviews conducted with teachers in Frederick, Maryland, the second half of this paper explains how to better prepare for, instruct, and assess English Language Learners to improve their chances of success in the general education classroom.

Keywords: English language learners, attitudes, misconceptions, Maryland, assessment, instruction

Table of Contents

I.	What is an English Language Learner?	4
II.	Teacher Attitudes Towards English Language Learners	12
III.	Common Misconceptions About English Language Learners	24
IV.	Preparing to Have English Language Learners in the Classroom	29
V.	Instructing English Language Learners	31
VI.	Assessing English Language Learners	40
VII.	References	47

English Language Learners: One Size Does Not Fit All

Research has shown that teacher's beliefs and attitudes can impede effective instruction and assessment for English Language Learners. In some cases, teachers would blatantly refuse to have this subset of students in their classroom. Due to this, the gap of learning between English Language learners and their native English-speaking cohorts is steadily increasing. The first half of this paper will define an English Language Learners and examine how teachers' attitudes affect outcomes of these students as well as common misconceptions about ELL students. The second half of this paper will discuss how teachers can prepare for, instruct, and assess ELL students to assist in removing or avoiding negative beliefs about this group of students and to fuel their success in the classroom.

I. What is an English Language Learner?

English Language Learners are a group of students with language, academic, and socioemotional needs that are diverse in nature. These students are also referred to as Non-English or Limited-English proficient (NEP/LEP), English Learners (ELs), Dual-language learners, English Language Learning students, and bilingual/multilingual students. In the state of Maryland, to be defined as an ELL, a student must have been born in a place where the native language is not English or live in an environment where the dominant language is something other than English (Education Commission, 2014).

ELL students are rapidly increasing in population in the United States. In the fall of 2017, there were 5 million ELL students enrolled in public schools, which is approximately 10.1% of the total public-school population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). The state of Maryland was below the average with 9.2% of their student population being English Language Learners (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). In 2017, there were higher numbers of

ELL students in primary and early elementary grades than the upper elementary, middle, and high school grades. For example, in kindergarten and first grade in Fall 2017, about 16% of students in the United States in those grades were ELL students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

The term English Language Learner is an umbrella term due to variations in languages and English proficiency. English proficiency is the student's ability to use English to communicate meaning in verbal and written contexts. ELL students come from over 300 linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Wolf & Butler, 2017). As shown in Picture 1, the most common home language spoken by ELL students in the United States is Spanish, at 74.8% in 2017 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

Home language	Number of ELL students	Percentage distribution of ELL students ¹	Number of ELL students as a percent of total enrollment
Spanish, Castilian	3,749,314	74.8	7.6
Arabic	136,531	2.7	0.3
Chinese	106,516	2.1	0.2
English ²	94,910	1.9	0.2
Vietnamese	77,765	1.6	0.2
Somali	41,264	0.8	0.1
Russian	36,809	0.7	0.1
Portuguese	33,252	0.7	0.1
Haitian, Haitian Creole	32,655	0.7	0.1
Hmong	32,174	0.6	0.1

Picture 1 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

Yet even students that speak the same language, are from similar cultural and ethnic background, or are at a similar language proficiency level could require different interventions

and supports to be successful. For instance, an ELL student could develop their comprehension skills such as reading or listening quicker than their productive language skills (Wolf & Butler, 2017). This could also be the opposite case for other students, based on their development and skills within their first language (Wolf & Butler, 2017). Thus, it is crucial that teachers learn about the language and academic background of each ELL student in their class. This includes assessing their proficiency in both their first language and English. When a teacher assesses in the student's first language and English, they can compare what information that the student knows in their first language and where the gaps are in their English acquisition. Many of the skills that ELL students have in their first language can be translated into English by activating background knowledge and making connections between the two languages. Without this information, a teacher cannot properly prepare instruction and assessment, nor can they anticipate what areas of learning may be too difficult for their ELL to handle without support.

In addition to diversity within the same language, there many levels of English language proficiency that teachers must assess to better understand their students. According to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), a program that many English Language specialists go through to become certified, there are five levels of language proficiency that fall under this student body category. An English Language specialist is a trained professional that works with ELL students from all backgrounds. They not only assist the student in their language acquisition, they work closely with the general education teachers to help with differentiation of lessons, give guidance on how to support the student in their language and academic goals, and discuss assessment data to determine strengths and needs. Below is a visual from an article by Hoffman & Zollman (2016) of the five levels of English language proficiency that shows what an ELL student is expected to be able to do at each level in both reading and writing.

5

	Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Beginning	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging	Level 6 - Reaching
READING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associate letters with sounds and objects Match content-related objects/pictures to words Identify common symbols, signs, and words Recognize concepts of print Find single word responses to WH- questions (e.g., "who," "what," "when," "where") related to illustrated text Use picture dictionaries/illustrated glossaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sequence illustrated text of fictional and non-fictional events Locate main ideas in a series of simple sentences Find information from text structure (e.g., titles, graphs, glossary) Follow text read aloud (e.g., tapes, teacher, paired-readings) Sort/group pre-taught words/phrases Use pre-taught vocabulary (e.g., word banks) to complete simple sentences Use L1 to support L2 (e.g., cognates) Use bilingual dictionaries and glossaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify topic sentences, main ideas, and details in paragraphs Identify multiple meanings of words in context (e.g., "cell," "table") Use context clues Make predictions based on illustrated text Identify frequently used affixes and root words to make/extract meaning (e.g., "un-," "re-," "-ed") Differentiate between fact and opinion Answer questions about explicit information in texts Use English dictionaries and glossaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Order paragraphs Identify summaries of passages Identify figurative language (e.g., "dark as night") Interpret adapted classics or modified text Match cause to effect Identify specific language of different genres and informational texts Use an array of strategies (e.g., skim and scan for information) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiate and apply multiple meanings of words/phrases Apply strategies to new situations Infer meaning from modified grade-level text Critique material and support argument Sort grade-level text by genre 	
WRITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw content-related pictures Produce high frequency words Label pictures and graphs Create vocabulary/concept cards Generate lists from pre-taught words/phrases and word banks (e.g., create menu from list of food groups) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete pattern sentences Extend "sentence starters" with original ideas Connect simple sentences Complete graphic organizers/forms with personal information Respond to yes/no, choice, and some WH- questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce short paragraphs with main ideas and some details (e.g., column notes) Create compound sentences (e.g., with conjunctions) Explain steps in problem-solving Compare/contrast information, events, characters Give opinions, preferences, and reactions along with reasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create multiple-paragraph essays Justify ideas Produce content-related reports Use details/examples to support ideas Use transition words to create cohesive passages Compose intro/body/conclusion Paraphrase or summarize text Take notes (e.g., for research) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create expository text to explain graphs/charts Produce research reports using multiple sources/citations Begin using analogies Critique literary essays or articles 	

Picture 2 (Hoffman & Zollman, 2016).

The first level is Starting, or Entering, which means that the student has "limited or no understanding of English" (TESOL International Association, n.d.). In this level, students will often respond nonverbally to commands or questions and will use photographs and other visuals for understanding of a topic (TESOL International Association, n.d.). In most cases, they will rarely use English to communicate but when they do, it will be single words or short phrases. Following closely behind is the second level, Beginning. This level is similar to the previous level, but the students are starting to respond to yes or no questions, using sentence starters, and following along to whole group instruction (Hoffman & Zollman, 2016).

The third level is Emerging. In this stage, students can understand short sentences and will communicate with limited information, making many errors that may make it difficult to

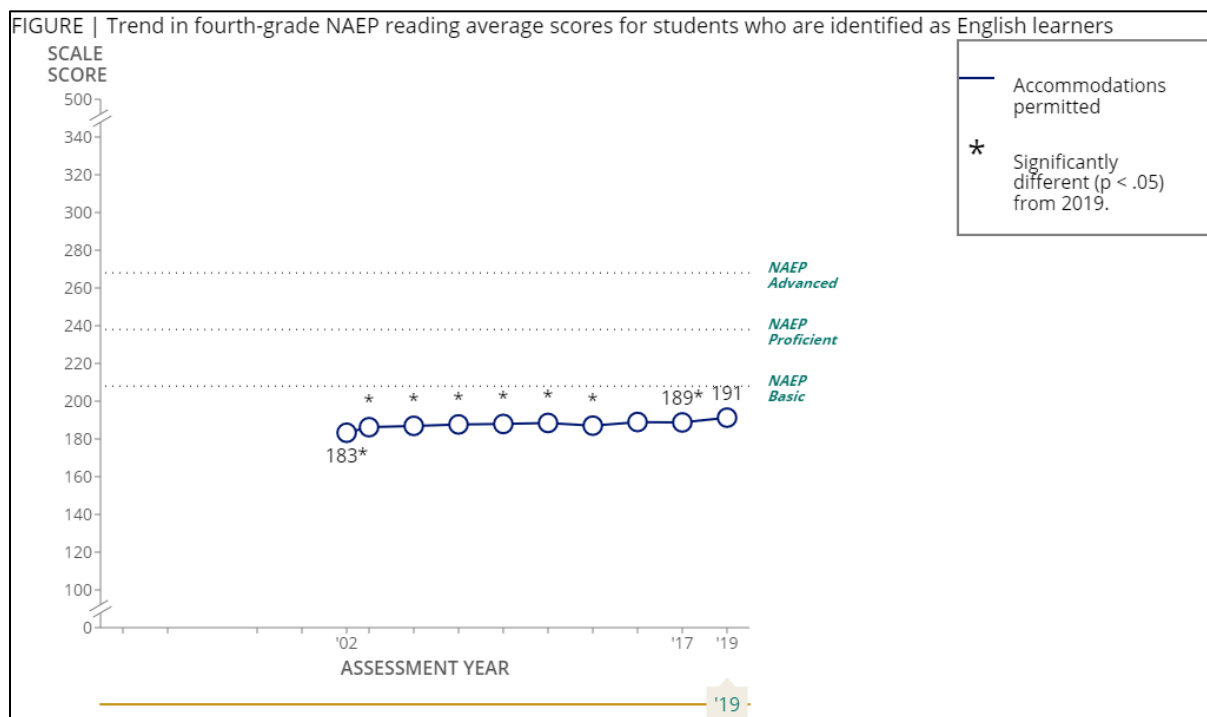
understand (TESOL International Association, n.d.). Level 3, also known as Developing, is defined as understanding some complex speech patterns, but still have difficulty with expression due to limited vocabulary (TESOL International Association, n.d.). For instance, students in this level can speak in simple sentences but will still have grammatical errors and may struggle with reading proficiency.

At the next level, Expanding, students are able to communicate for most daily needs but might still struggle with complex sentence structure (TESOL International Association, n.d.). Students in the Expanding level will have improvements in their reading abilities, but they still may struggle with complex texts and abstract vocabulary. Thus, utilizing books at the student's reading level will still be important while exposing them to complex texts in chunks and pre-teaching vocabulary.

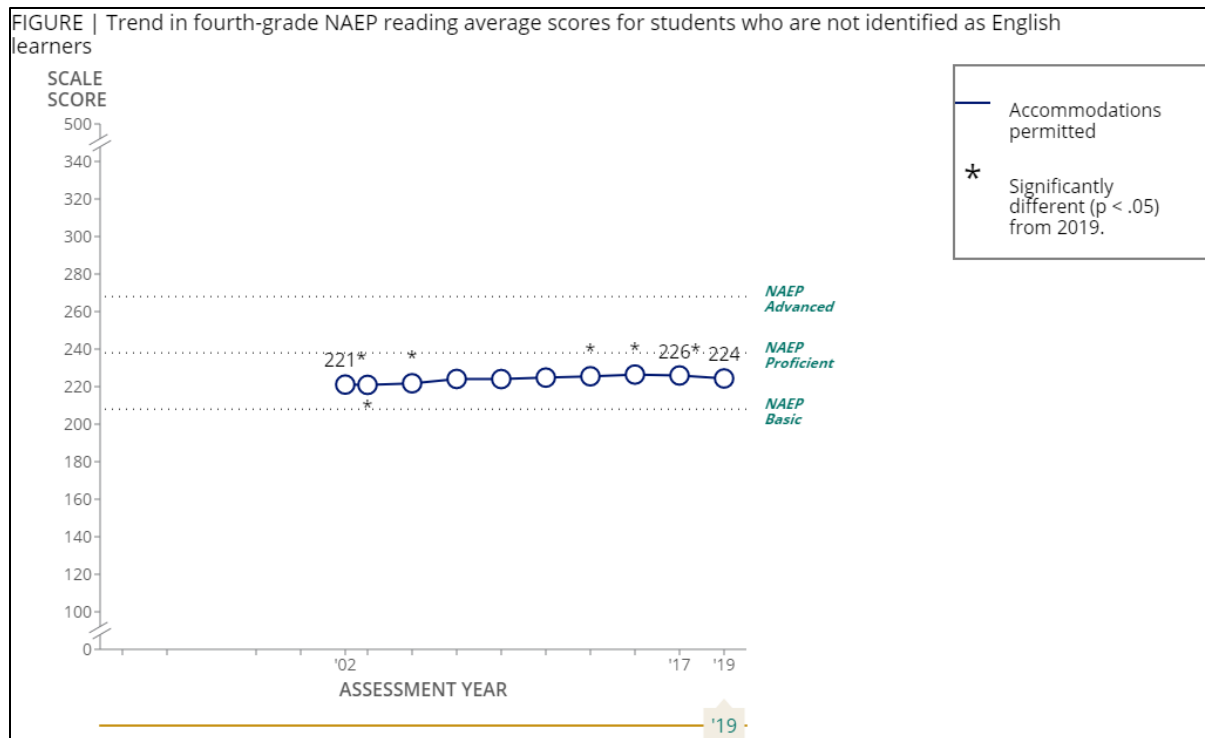
The final level is Bridging. In this level, students can express themselves in a wide variety of environments, utilizing social and academic language in proper context (TESOL International Association, n.d.). All these proficiency levels are estimations and can vary depending on how many languages are spoken at home, how old they are when they start learning English, their educational experiences, first language literacy skills, as well as personal factors (Deussen et al., 2008). Learning about each ELL student to determine what level of English language proficiency they are at will better inform decisions for instruction and development of the student.

Unfortunately, there is a large academic achievement gap for ELL students. One assessment that shows this gap is the National Assessment of Educational Progress. This assessment uses a representative sample of students from across the nation to measure what students in the United States know and can do in different subjects (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2020). On the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 13% of students that took this assessment were ELL students in the fourth grade. Nationally, these students scored 33 points lower than their non-ELL cohorts in reading (Nation's Report Card b, 2019). Picture 3 shows the national average for reading scores for ELL students in the fourth grade. In 2019, the average score was 191. Picture 4 shows the national average for reading scores for non-ELL students. In 2019, the average score was 224. Even the lowest score for the non-ELL students (221) was higher than the highest score for ELL students (191). The same trend occurs for mathematics with ELL students scoring 23 points lower than non-ELL students (Nation's Report Card a, 2019).



Picture 3, The national average NAEP reading scores from 2002-2019 for ELL students (Nation's Report Card b, 2019).



Picture 4, The national average NAEP reading scores from 2002-2019 for non-ELL students (Nation's Report Card *b*, 2019).

In Maryland during the same year, ELL students were scoring 1 point above the national average, but below what is considered NAEP Basic (Nation's Report Card *d*, 2019). In fourth grade reading, the criteria for NAEP Basic is the ability to find relevant information, make simple inferences, and use details to support a conclusion. They should also be able to interpret the meaning of a word that is used in a text. They were also still scoring below their non-ELL cohorts by 32 points with an average score of 192 (Nation's Report Card *a*, 2019). This gap has been the case for the past 17 years of assessment data. In mathematics, ELL students scored 2 points below the national average for this group of students and 24 points below non-ELL students (Nation's Report Card *c*, 2019). ELL students are lagging behind their non-ELL friends with a gap that continues to grow in Maryland and in the United States.

English Language Learners can get accommodations for this assessment that make it more inclusive, no matter their English language proficiency. Some of the inclusions include extended

time, one-on-one testing sessions, breaks during the test, directions being read aloud in English or Spanish, and in some instances the use of a bilingual dictionary or a Spanish/English version of the test can be used (National Center for Educational Statistics, n.d.). Another research study done by Keller Miley & Farmer (2017) found that academic content knowledge could be the issue as to why students are struggling on assessments, not their English language proficiency. In this study, ELL and non-ELL students' standardized test scores were analyzed to see if the mean score was significantly different in reading and math (Keller Miley & Farmer, 2017). In this study they had 200 ELL students and 102 non-ELL students in elementary and middle school (Keller Miley & Farmer, 2017). The ELL students' English proficiency levels varied from level 1 to level 5, which are students who have tested out of their ELL program (Keller Miley & Farmer, 2017). Their results showed that there was a significant difference in both the reading and math scores for ELL students versus their native-English speaking cohorts. For example, the mean for the language arts test for ELL students was a 729.07 whereas the mean for the non-ELL students was a 751.84 (Keller Miley & Farmer, 2017). This study found that while ELL students may be improving on their English proficiency levels, they are still behind in academic content knowledge (Keller Miley & Farmer, 2017).

Due to the No Child Left Behind Act that was passed in 2001, teachers and administrators were held accountable for the scores of all student groups, including ELL students, on standardized testing in grades 3 through 8. ELL students are less likely to score at or above level on these tests than non-ELL students as seen in the results of the 2017 NAEP scores (Nation's Report Card, 2019). The No Child Left Behind Act was replaced by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 (Lee, n.d.). The ESSA allows for states to choose how they are going to assess their students' achievement rather than the federal government using a one size

fits all measure (Lee, n.d.). However, they are still held accountable for ensuring that they hit their goals (Lee, n.d.). For instance, academic achievement, academic progress, and English language proficiency are all mandatory indicators used in ESSA (Lee, n.d.). This still puts some pressure on teachers to get their underserved students to reach these goals. The possible effects of this responsibility for teachers of ELL students and the effects on the students themselves will be examined later in this paper.

II. Teacher Attitudes Towards English Language Learners

According to de Jong et al. (2013), teachers' attitudes and beliefs can be influential on student success, or lack thereof. These perceptions can stem from conscious or unconscious biases as well as societal or community influences. According to Walker et al., "teachers cannot help but be influenced by dominant societal attitudes" (2004, p. 131). The community that a teacher works in, or even society as a whole, can influence how a teacher views an ELL student. If a community does not accept people that are linguistically diverse, it is possible that schools in that community, and the teachers who teach in said schools, are not going to accept them or will have a negative opinion of them which will only affect the quality of education that these students are obtaining (Walker et al., 2004). In fact, in a study by Vázquez-Montilla et al. (2014), 75% of the 492 participants agreed with the statement that too much time and energy is being placed on multiculturalism in not only schools, but society as a whole.

These attitudes can also be a part of a self-fulfilling loop as target-based or stereotype-based beliefs. A target-based belief is a belief that is about an individual or "target." A potential target-based belief that a teacher could hold against an ELL student is that due to language barriers, students struggle with the curriculum, thus leading to poor performance (Guyl et al., 2010). This poor performance could then be falsely attributed to the student having lower

intelligence or motivation, leading to fewer opportunities in class and simplified instruction (Guyll et al., 2010). Stereotype-based beliefs can lead to negative attitudes as well. For example, it can be difficult to communicate and get personal information from students who are LEP. This can lead to an overreliance on stereotypes and teachers placing ELL students in special education classes because special education support is better than nothing (Guyll et al., 2010). Or they might avoid contacting the family due to the belief that they are not supportive of their student (Guyll et al., 2010). According to Walker et al., 30% of 422 teachers surveyed believe that ELL students perform poorly in school (2004). This belief could affect how they teach these students which would then lead back into the self-fulfilling prophecy and could still be prevalent to this day (Walker et al., 2004).

One major reason why some teachers have developed negative attitudes is the lack of skills and training to teach students with diverse linguistic needs. According to Walker et al., only 12% of K-12 teachers have been trained to work with ELL students (2004). Those who are not trained to teach these students are overwhelmed and very underprepared. This study also shows that 87% of the 422 teachers had never received training and 50% of those teachers were disinterested in training, even if they had the opportunity to do so because they did not want an ELL in their classroom (Walker et al., 2004). They claimed that ESL training was unnecessary, all they need is common sense and good intentions. Other teachers responded that they would like training, but they are too busy or would only do it if it were during school hours (Walker et al., 2004). One teacher in particular stated that once you “have any kind of special training, you are automatically overloaded with that kind of student” (Walker et al., 2004). The idea of requiring training was followed up in a later study by Vázquez-Montilla et al. (2014) by asking if

regular classroom teachers should be required to have training to prepare to meet the needs of linguistic minorities, to which 86% disagreed.

Some teachers feel angry because they “don’t have the good students” (Walker et al., 2004). This pent up frustration can cause teachers to feel hopeless in their situations. A teacher in an article by Walker et al. said, “There’s got to be something that I can do to help teach these kids better” (2004, p. 142). Add limited knowledge on how to incorporate second language learning strategies because they are not one-size-fits-all onto that to make for more frustration. Even if they were a competent teacher who means well for ELL students, the combination of being overwhelmed, frustrated, and helpless can cause the teacher to deflect negative emotions and theories onto those students and ELL students in the future (Walker et al., 2004).

In the same study, 70% of the general education teachers did not want ELL students in their classroom and 14% clearly objected to ELL students being in their classroom (Walker et al., 2004). These results were shown despite the same teachers claiming that their school embraces diversity. It is called the “welcoming-unwelcoming” where teachers claim that diversity is a good thing and their school accepts diverse students, but when it comes to themselves, they say “don’t you dare put that ELL in MY classroom.” (Walker et al., 2004, p. 141). Teachers are more likely to think working with ELL students is more tedious and difficult than with non-ELL students (Vázquez-Montilla et al., 2014). In addition to this, location can play a small factor into the teaching struggle. It is estimated that 44% of ELL students live in rural areas (Walker et al., 2004). This is often due to the fact that many ELL students are part of migrant families that move to find work as the seasons change. Being out in a rural area, it can cause issues with internet connection, ability to get to and from school, and the ability to access places to get information such as libraries. The combination of lack of training, lack of

experience with ELL students, and lack of access to money to provide the much-needed professional development, is a recipe for disaster.

In addition to this, the No Child Left Behind Act kept teachers and administrative staff accountable for ELL students' progress. If they did not prove that there had been adequate progress, there were consequences. This further put pressure on teachers who were already feeling underprepared. This has since caused a ripple effect and even with the Every Student Succeeds Act, schools are being held accountable for ELL students' success, which can be stressful for teachers who have to find a way to adapt the information for these students.

Adapting to having ELLs in the classroom also seems to be a sore spot for some mainstream teachers. Twenty-five percent of teachers interviewed in a survey stated that they believed it was the ELL student's responsibility to adapt to instruction and school and 20% of teachers objected to adapting their classroom instruction to fit the needs of ELL students (Walker et al., 2004). One reason that many of teachers gave for these claims is that they are burdened with adapting for every other student or that they have enough on their plate as it is (Walker et al., 2004). The respondents in Walker et al.'s study (2004) believe that the time that is taken away from other students and from themselves is unfair. One teacher stated that she believed that the other students were more important because they were the majority (Walker et al., 2004). Adapting instruction would also mean focusing on language and socialization skills for ELL students rather than content learning (Walker et al., 2004). This then creates an issue for teachers because they must find a way to teach these students the content in order to show progress for Every Student Succeeds Act. A survey by Vázquez-Montilla et al. (2014) followed up on Walker et al.'s work by asking 497 teachers if they thought teachers should modify their instruction for cultural and linguistic needs, to which 91% disagreed.

Another reason for the lack of adaptation is the fallacies that ELL students would learn better if they do not speak in their native language. Fifteen percent of the teachers in this survey believed that prohibiting the use of the native language would better the student's learning and another seven percent believed that ELL students should be proficient in 1 year of English instruction (Walker et al., 2004). This ideology was echoed in a study by Vázquez-Montilla et al. (2014) when 73% of the participants stated that they believe the rapid learning of English should be a priority for ELL students, even if it means forgetting their native language. This also unveils a common misconception that if the student does speak their native language in the classroom, the teachers would have to learn another language to be able to teach these students (Walker et al., 2004). Walker et al. described a situation where this belief was evident. In this situation, a principal and an ESL coordinator told the ELL students that they were not allowed to speak anything other than English and if they got caught speaking their native language, they would deny them their free breakfast that was funded by the federal government (2004). What this principal and coordinator did not know is that use of the home language is not hurting their ability to learn English. These students came in with an understanding of how language works and that it is used for communicating. Even in a study conducted in 2014 by Vázquez-Montilla et al., 57% of the 492 teacher participants believe that one must speak English to be American and 64% believe that local and state governments should require that all government business is done in English.

Teachers also do not want ELL students in their classroom because they claim that these students bring emotional baggage. For instance, students might have had a prior negative experience with a teacher which could turn them off to the idea of learning. These students may struggle to connect with their new teacher if the teacher does not support the values of their

culture and help them create a positive self-identity. They learn better when they feel like they have a say in their education and that they are partners with the teacher to reaching their goal (Garcia et al., 2010). Outside experiences and the student's culture can influence the student's participation in class as well. Eighty-eight percent of participants in a study by Vázquez-Montilla et al. (2014) believe that having an ELL student in the general education classroom is detrimental to the learning of other students in the classroom. Some ELL students are afraid to ask questions because they do not know how to ask the question they need, or it is considered disrespectful in their culture to ask for help. Additionally, they might not volunteer themselves to talk or ask questions because they are shy and are afraid that they will embarrass themselves in front of the class by saying something wrong. This makes it difficult for a teacher to help them with what they are struggling with, leading to the possibility that the teacher will assume that everything is fine. This silence could also be in response to a culture shock or a response to how the school deals with students from linguistically and culturally diverse students (Harper & de Jong, 2004).

Some teachers believe that ELL students are not their responsibility but that of the ELL specialist or teacher in their school. In a study by Vázquez-Montilla et al. (2014), 73% of the teacher participants agreed that it is unreasonable to expect a general education teacher to teach a student that does not speak English. There is a belief around ELL students that they only learn in the ELL classroom (Walker et al., 2004). They claim that their teaching responsibilities do not include ELL students because they should be placed in a classroom with an expert in the field (Walker et al., 2004).

The studies revealed that some teachers may not want students in the mainstream classroom because the students are not prepared. One teacher stated, "If an ESL student can do the work, I have no problem [having them in my classroom]" (Walker et al., 2004, p. 145). In

some instances, if an ELL student is placed in the mainstream classroom and the teacher does not feel as though the student is capable of answering the question, they will avoid calling on them, lower their expectations, or ask lower order questions (Harper & de Jong, 2004). This further proves that these teachers do not believe it is their responsibility to teach these students because the students need to be ready to do the same work as all of the other students, despite their need for support. ELL students need support in learning the English language as well as in content areas, which can prove to be a difficult task for some, thus making these teachers not want to have them in the class at all. In addition to this, Vázquez-Montilla et al. (2014) found that 40% of teacher disagreed that English language learning should take precedence over learning subject matter.

Finally, the last reason that was given for negatively perceiving ELL students is the lack of support and lack of resources. With language barriers between the teacher and the family, it can be exceedingly difficult to get information and to find out what will best help the student. Some teachers state that families of ELL students are unsupportive, and that the success of the student is determined by the effort of the student as well as the family when the student is at home, despite the potential lack of support the students are getting in the school (Vázquez-Montilla et al., 2014). In addition to struggling with support, finding a way to adapt curriculum to match what the students' needs are and having a lack of resources –potentially due to a lack of training– only makes the job more of a challenge. If the ESL teacher is not communicating effectively with the mainstream teacher, it could be challenging to know what areas the student needs support in and how to effectively adapt the curriculum to teach the content and the language needs.

Survey

Since the information above is soon to be 20 years old with some supporting studies that are more recent, I decided to create a survey that would reflect some current teacher attitudes towards ELL students. To do this, I created a Google Forms survey of 24 likert scale questions and 1 open ended question. In this survey, a response that was a 1 was labeled as strongly disagree, a 2 was disagree, a 3 was neutral, a 4 was agree, and a 5 was strongly agree. This survey was then sent out to 10 teachers in two different Maryland counties: 5 from Frederick County and 5 from Harford County. In Frederick County, I chose my current and past mentor teachers for the survey and for Harford County, I selected teachers that I knew from the county. When I sent this survey out, I requested that they be as candor as possible because their responses would remain anonymous. I chose to leave their responses anonymous to make the teachers that were participating more at ease with expressing how they truly feel rather than worrying about potential backlash for any negative opinions they hold. I got 5 responses from Frederick County teachers and 4 responses from Harford County teachers, which gave me an overall 90% response rate.

According to census information, Frederick County is made up of 11% Hispanic people while Harford County only has five percent (Census Reporter _a & _b, 2019). Additionally, Frederick County has two percent more in the Asian population than Harford County (Census Reporter _a & _b, 2019). When it comes to place of birth, Frederick County has a foreign-born population of 10.6% while Harford County is at 4.8% (Census Reporter _a & _b, 2019). Additionally, Frederick County has more language diversity than Harford County. In Frederick, 85% of children ages 5-17 speak only English (Census Reporter _a, 2019). The rest of the 15% is made up of other languages, including 9% Spanish, 3% Indo-European, and 3% Asian/Islander

(Census Reporter a, 2019). In the same age range in Harford County, 97% speak English, 2% speak Spanish, and 1% speak an Indo-European language (Census Reporter b, 2019).

Results

Statement	Average response on a scale of 1-5	
	Frederick County (n = 5)	Harford County (n = 4)
ELL students are welcomed in my school	4.6	3.75
ELL students are welcomed in my classroom	5	4.75
ELL students bring diverse ideas and experiences to my school	5	4.25
ELL students are successful in my school	3.8	2.25
I feel comfortable working with ELL students	4.4	3
ELL students are positive members in my school	4.8	4.25
I like having ELL students in my school	5	4.5
I like having ELL students in my classroom	4.8	4.25
ELL students are successful in my classroom	4	2.75
I am prepared to support my ELL students	3.8	2
ELL students are positive members in my classroom	4.6	3
ELL students bring diverse ideas and experiences to my classroom	4.4	4
ELL students should be mainstreamed	4.6	3.5

ELL students learn better in an ELL classroom	1.8	2.5
Getting in contact with the families of ELL students is difficult	3.2	4.25
ELL students are responsible for adapting to instruction and school	2.6	2.75
I receive adequate support from the ELL specialist	3.8	2
I receive adequate support for ELL students from the administration	3.6	1.75
I receive adequate support for ELL students through the county	3	1.75
I would do professional development to better support ELL students	4.4	4
ELL students are engaged in my classroom	4	2.5
I am able to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of my ELL students	4	2.25
ELL students take away time from whole group teaching	1.4	2.25
ELL students ask for help when they need it	2.2	2.5

Analysis. In this survey, it was clear that there were differing attitudes within the two counties. Looking at Frederick County, the five teachers that participated in this survey felt more positively about their ELL students. For example, there were 14 instances where the average

response was a 4 or higher. These instances occurred when talking about ELL students being welcomed, the diversity they bring, being comfortable with adapting resources and curricula, wanting these students in the general education classroom, and wanting to do professional development to better support ELL students. Furthermore, three statements got all 5s for responses. These three statements were “ELL students are welcomed in my classroom,” “ELL students bring diverse ideas and experiences to my school,” and “I like having ELL students in my school.” This sample of teachers disagreed with the statement that “ELL students ask for help when they need it,” an issue that arose in prior studies. However, they did not feel that they take time away from the whole class or that they learn best in an ELL classroom, which is reflected in the positive response to having the students mainstreamed. There were neutral responses when it came to support from the ELL specialist, the administration of their school, and the county. The responses for the ELL specialist and administration favored more positively, but the support from the county received more negative opinions, including one respondent choosing strongly disagree. There were mostly neutral responses towards getting in touch with families, a topic that has been an issue with teachers in other research studies.

On the other hand, the four Harford County teachers that participated in this survey appeared to have more negative attitudes towards ELL students. There were only 8 instances of responses that were an average of a 4 or higher. These responses had to do with welcoming and liking having ELL students in the classroom, the diversity they bring, and wanting to take professional development classes to better help their ELL students. There was a strong response to the difficulty of getting in contact with the families of ELL students, with an average response of 4.25. This sample of teachers had neutral responses to the statements of ELL students being positive members in the classroom, feeling comfortable working with these students, and the

idea of mainstreaming ELL students. In fact, when it came to mainstreaming and the students learning in an ELL classroom, each respondent had a different answer. There were 12 instances where the responses were 2 or less. These teachers do not feel prepared to work with ELL students, they do not feel that they are successful in the classroom, and they do not feel like they get enough support from the ELL specialist, their administration, or the county. In fact, the statements “I feel prepared to support my ELL students” and “I receive adequate support from the ELL specialist” were the only two answers that received a unanimous response with all 4 respondents choosing a 2.

Discussion. It is important to note that since the sample sizes for these surveys were small, I cannot draw conclusions for the population of these two counties. However, it is evident that the five teachers that responded to the survey in Frederick County felt more comfortable, better prepared to accommodate, and more likely to accept these students into their class. This could be due to the fact that they have more exposure to cultural diversity and to people who speak a language other than English as their first language. The four Harford County teachers that participated in the survey, on the other hand, had more negative responses to the survey. Again, this could be due to the lack of experience with students who are linguistically diverse, a lack of preparation and professional development in this area, or a negative experience the teachers had. In the open-ended response, a Harford County teacher disclosed that they do not feel as though they are adequately trained to support ELL students and they are not informed that a student is learning English as a second language unless it is obvious. This can make it difficult for teachers to fully support these students if they are not prepared and they are unaware of the students that need extra interventions and guidance. Additionally, this would cause more of a gap in academic achievement because the teachers would not be able to scaffold lessons to meet the

student where they are. Frederick County teachers disclosed in the open-ended responses that virtual learning has made it difficult to connect with the students and accurately assess them. After observing in a third-grade classroom, this has proven to be a valid issue because the ELL students were not present in most of the Google Meets, they were not checking their messages, and the teachers had to rely heavily on messaging apps that translate to get in connect with families. Additionally, another Frederick County teacher said that using a scripted program such as the Really Great Reading program is not an effective instructional strategy compared to a hand-written phonics lesson. This would tie into the point that one size of interventions and instructional strategies do not fit the needs of all students, especially those with special needs. This teacher further explained that when she uses her phonics lessons to meet her students' needs, she can make it more multimodal and active for these students and make stronger connections to their background knowledge. With a scripted program, there is only so much that she is able to do without getting rid of the script completely.

III. Misconceptions about ELL students

Misconceptions about ELL students can lead to negative attitudes towards them as well as ineffective teaching strategies (Harper & de Jong, 2004). Harper & de Jong (2004) argues that teachers must address their own biases and misconceptions, curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies in order to fully serve the ELL community. If they do not, they will only partly meet the needs of these students. Some teachers believe that they can use a one size fits all strategy when it comes to learning English. This is simply not the case with ELL students. This section will analyze misconceptions and disprove them with facts and research.

The first major misconception is that exposing students to English through interactions will be sufficient enough for the students to learn English. The idea is that students will develop

English naturally through interactions with other students who are proficient in English. While the opportunity for interactions is vital for all students, the language acquisition of a first language and a second language differs, and the process is not identical (Harper & de Jong, 2004). Students who are learning a second language can benefit from these interactions because it supports critical thinking skills and content learning (de Jong et al., 2013). However, they also need to be exposed to academic language while paying closer “attention to grammatical, morphological, and phonological aspects of the English language” (Harper & de Jong, 2004, p. 153). In other words, these students need assistance in noticing the form and function of the second language that they are learning. They also need to be explicitly taught the language skills they need to perform a given task (Harper & de Jong, 2004). In addition to this, it cannot be assumed that simply pairing an ELL student with a native English-speaking student will be enough practice to achieve language goals. While it will be beneficial for the student’s receptive knowledge of the language, the two students might still have a limited conversation based on the ELL student’s proficiency and ability to “question, agree, disagree, interrupt, present an opinion, and ask for clarification or assistance appropriately” (Harper & de Jong, 2004, p. 154). These students need practice and support that the teacher can supply through asking questions that fit the student’s proficiency in English, giving appropriate feedback, and rephrasing or suggesting words to clarify errors in written expression without dumbing down the material (Harper & de Jong, 2004).

Another misconception that comes from the one-size-fits-all mindset is that all ELL students learn English at the same rate or in the same way as others (Harper & de Jong, 2004). However, this is not the case since ELL students come from various backgrounds, school experiences, and speak different languages. Students who are learning English as a second

language need the information to be presented in a way that is comprehensible to them at their level of proficiency. This ties in with the idea that children learn languages quickly and easily. In a study by MIT (2018), the best period for second language acquisition is between the ages of 10-12. However, this does not mean that they should be taught in the same way as other students because they will still need support while working their way through the levels of English proficiency.

Tagging along in this misconception is the belief that ELL students will develop social language skills before academic language skills (Harper & de Jong, 2004). Social language skills are the ability to have a conversation with a friend, communicate needs and wants, and otherwise communicate on a day-to-day basis. Academic language skills, on the other hand, fall into more content specific skills such as being able to infer, interpret a picture, ask questions about a text, and more. The skills are associated with language demands, which are specific ways to communicate and demonstrate understanding. So, while this may be the case for some ELL students, it cannot be assumed that it is the case for all. There are multiple factors that can affect the student's ability to develop academic or social language skills, some of which include educational foundation, social, and affective factors (Hou Chang, 2015). For instance, personal factors such as personality or motivation can directly influence the progress a student makes in acquiring a second language (Hou Chang, 2015). Other affective factors such as attitudes toward the language and cultures could also affect the outcome (Hou Chang, 2015). Teachers are responsible for learning about their students. In the case of ELL students, they must learn about their linguistic and cultural experiences both in school and outside of it to better help the student succeed.

Misconceptions surrounding social and academic language can also affect how teachers correct errors and grade ELL students' work. Errors in written expression might be seen as deviations from the English language rather than understanding that these errors come with the development of a second language and are likely influenced by their first language (Harper & de Jong, 2004). These errors could be linked back to prior education experiences or fluency in their native language. The mistakes that an ELL student is making could even be linked to how the student is learning English. For example, students may learn better through oral expression, such as listening to a conversation in English and speaking in English and may struggle with written expression such as reading and writing. Other ELL students may have the opposite problem because they may be able to read and write in English, but they struggle with verbally expressing themselves.

The third major misconception that appears in Harper & de Jong's article (2004) is that good teaching for native speaking students should be good for ELL students. Again, this is not always the case, but this belief is strongly influenced by the fact that curriculum is geared towards students who are diverse yet still are fluent in the native language, English (Harper & de Jong, 2004). The curriculum could misguide teachers if they are not differentiated to fit the needs of the students in their classroom. The reason for this misguidance is that a teacher may believe that since it was developed by the county or state they are in, that it should be fitting for all students. However, since ELL students come from different language backgrounds and have different learning needs, they may need additional supports added into the lessons to make them more comprehensible.

Additionally, putting ELL students into a group with struggling readers and assuming that the intervention will work the same for these two subgroups of students could be

problematic. Most often, ELL students are struggling with vocabulary and comprehension, not decoding and basic skills that native-English students typically struggle with (de Jong et al., 2013). However, some ELL students need practice in applying literacy skills from their first language to English, while other ELL students might need support in word-recognition skills or developing letter-sound relationships. In writing, they may need support with their grammar due to differences in grammatical style between their first and second languages (Harper & de Jong, 2004). All of these are on a case-by-case basis of what that specific student needs and they cannot be lumped together with a group of struggling native-English readers.

According to Harper & de Jong (2004), a final misconception that occurs when thinking about ELL students is that the best way to support them is to give them nonverbal, or visual, support (Harper & de Jong, 2004). Giving ELL students a visual can be a useful technique for vocabulary words. However, on their own, these visuals are not fully supporting the student. In order to make visuals a useful tool, they need to be explicitly taught what it is, what the visual is being used for (i.e. directions or vocabulary), and need to be used consistently. A better way to support this group of students is to provide them with comprehensible input that can encourage them to use the academic language necessary for the task (Hou Chang, 2015). Comprehensible input consists of “vocabulary [that] ELLs recognizes, supported by pictures and objects, and/or connected to things they have previously learned in their own language” (Deussen et al., 2008, p. 8). It also requires planning on the teacher’s part of what the language demands are, promoting the use of academic language in the classroom, and explicit teaching of what the visual support or physical support being implemented is as well as the vocabulary that the student would need (Harper & de Jong, 2004). Often, this would include scaffolding to meet the needs of this special group of students by working through a gradual release of responsibility. Other times, it could be

useful to teach the ELL student with bilingual materials because it will help them make connections to their first language and the second language that they are learning. According to Deussen et al. (2008), research shows that students who were supported in their literacy learning in their home language and English scored better on a reading assessment than those that were taught in just English.

IV. Preparing to Have English Language Learners in the Classroom

How can a general education teacher best support their ELL students? There is plenty that a general education teacher can do to learn about and support their ELL students within and beyond instruction and assessment. Having a positive attitude, being open-minded to having them in the class, and adapting the curriculum to fit the needs of these students is part of what teachers should do. In extension, teachers should also prepare, communicate, understanding the second language acquisition process, and find what teaching strategies work best for the ELL student in question.

The first step to better support ELL students is to get to know them. This includes their linguistic and cultural experiences as well as their home life (de Jong et al., 2013). Learning about the linguistic and cultural knowledge will give the teacher an understanding of the students' first language and the language(s) that their family speaks at home, their literacy levels and practices in their native language as well as English, and what level of proficiency they are at in (de Jong et al., 2013). Learning about their home life will also give insight into the student's funds of knowledge (de Jong et al., 2013). Funds of knowledge is what a student knows, not only about academic subjects, but about life. For instance, a student who lives on a farm would have funds of knowledge that are centered around farms, farming equipment, crops, farm animals, and more. An ELL student will have funds of knowledge surrounding their culture, their

language, and whatever they have been exposed to in their home life as well as prior educational experiences. All these aspects can influence how a student who is an ELL participates and learns within the general education classroom as well as how the teacher is able to identify the language development of a student who is an ELL (de Jong et al., 2013). This information can come from families of the student, from past schools or teachers, or from the student themselves.

Outside of instruction, teachers need to prepare for their students. Research reveals that many general education teachers are unaware of foundational knowledge surrounding ELL students, even though 88% of these teachers teach them (de Jong et al., 2013). What de Jong et al. is saying in this research is that general education teachers are unaware of what skills these students hold in their first language and how their prior learning experiences can translate over to the language they are learning. These teachers would have a better understanding if they were to attend training for these students, but evidently some teachers are against this idea.

Once the teacher understands the student's background and experiences, they need to plan for the student. When planning lessons and taking into account the student's language proficiency, scaffolding and creating cooperative learning experiences are needed to ensure that the ELL student is getting the opportunity to participate and use the academic language that is being presented to them (de Jong et al., 2013). Examining the lessons and curriculum can help a teacher find what concepts are being taught, what language demands there are, and what vocabulary is being used that could be unfamiliar (de Jong et al., 2013). Additionally, teachers of ELL students should support the development of their vocabulary by showing them how vocabulary can be interdisciplinary through modeling and practice in small groups (de Jong et al., 2013). By doing this, they can help these students work towards their language goals as well as content mastery. Along with planning, these teachers need to know how and where to access

information and resources for ELL students that are culturally and linguistically appropriate and representative (de Jong et al., 2013).

Not only is it important to plan lessons, but it is also important to plan the environment to ensure that it is a literacy-rich environment that is safe and supportive for the student in question, as well as the rest of the class, to learn in. For primary grades, it is important to set up an environment that supports the instruction that the students are receiving (Ford, 2016). These students will then use their environment to guide them on what they are supposed to do in that area (Ford, 2016). This ties in with ensuring that there are daily routines that the student can become familiar with so they can anticipate what is going to happen on any given day (Ford, 2016). Utilizing a visual schedule for these students as well as physically modelling and explaining what is going to happen throughout the day can also help them remember what is going to happen on a daily basis.

V. Instructing English Language Learners

Once teachers are prepared for ELL students, the next step is instructing them. While there are many instructional strategies that can be used to enhance ELL students' learning experiences, one model has gained popularity: Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). The SIOP model was created by researchers as an evaluative tool to help teachers determine if their lesson was meeting a list of criteria for sheltered instruction (Daniel & Conlin, 2015). Sheltered instruction, according to Brown University, is the use of direct and simple English combined with strategies for scaffolding that allow for comprehensible content learning input (Brown.edu). Activities in sheltered English instruction include building upon prior knowledge and collaborative projects that are adapted to meet their English proficiency level (Brown.edu). They also supply opportunities for ELL students to use all four language domains: listening, speaking,

reading, and writing (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). This does not mean that the teachers are watering down the curriculum or the lessons being taught, but they are modifying them to meet the needs of the ELL students. The SIOP model is now used in multiple ways, including planning, observing, and reflecting on lessons and activities used for ELL students (Daniel & Conlin, 2015). The goal of this model is to guide teachers in helping their ELL students in learning content area knowledge as well as language knowledge through eight specific components (Daniel & Conlin, 2015). According to Daniel & Conlin (2015), those components are:

1. Making lessons with objectives for content area and language that use meaningful activities and materials.
2. Building upon students' background knowledge by emphasizing and linking key academic language and concepts to their prior schema.
3. Providing various methods of comprehensible input.
4. Using scaffolding and questioning strategies to encourage the practice of learning strategies.
5. Supply student interaction opportunities.
6. Utilize manipulatives and activities for students to apply the content and language knowledge they are learning.
7. Using an objective-aligned lesson with high amounts of student engagement.
8. Reviewing the key concepts and vocabulary within the lesson and assessing the student's comprehension of these concepts and vocabulary.

Content and Language Objectives

Creating lessons with content objectives are something that most teachers do on a daily basis. These are created based on state standards and they explain the skills or knowledge that students are going to learn in that lesson and how they will prove that they have learned that content (Markos & Himmel, 2016). However, creating language objectives to guide instruction for English Language Learners is a new concept for many. Language objectives define what academic language function they need to master in order to be able to participate to the fullest capacity in the lesson being taught and to meet the content standards (Markos & Himmel, 2016). By including a language objective, it helps both the student and the teacher understand the language demands of the lesson and what is required of that student. It is important that teachers share the objectives at the beginning, middle, and end of the lesson with the students because it helps the students take possession of their learning and allows them to be able to self-assess (Markos & Himmel, 2016). Utilizing images can make the academic language that appears in these objectives more child-friendly (Markos & Himmel, 2016). In an interview with a preschool teacher, a third-grade teacher, and an English Language Specialist in Frederick County Public Schools, they expressed that they use images to aid with academic language load (Personal communication, March 4 & 15, 2021). These objectives must be measurable and written in student-friendly language, as well as be focused on the largest, most essential language skill that is being used in the lesson as the basis for the objective (Markos & Himmel, 2016).

Building Upon Background Knowledge

Building upon background knowledge can be useful for any student, but it is especially useful for ELL students. Connecting new learning and concepts to students' knowledge and past learning experiences because it can help students learn references to unfamiliar references as well as help the teacher learn what the student's prior knowledge is, misconceptions they may

have, and potential learning gaps (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). An English Language Specialist from Frederick County stated that finding the learning gaps to be able to reteach a skill or clarify misconceptions is important for helping students towards reaching grade-level goals (Personal communications, March 15, 2021). By acknowledging what these students know, teachers can either use the student's first language strengths or anticipate potential issues the student may have within the lesson (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). This will also open up the floor for the student to share a unique perspective on a content topic (Markos & Himmel, 2016). Teaching using the SIOP model might take extra time since students may have little or no background knowledge in the content that is being taught (Markos & Himmel, 2016). Thus, building onto student's knowledge by integrating interests and cultural experiences into the content learning will also help students connect new concepts to their previous schema (Markos & Himmel, 2016).

Comprehensible Input

In the SIOP method, it calls for providing comprehensible input. Kareva & Echevarria (2013) claims that information can be presented in ways that ELL students cannot understand, such as speaking too quickly or using texts that are above the student's reading levels with very few to no pictures in it will make the input incomprehensible. In an interview with an English Language specialist in Frederick County, she added, "Many teachers do not realize how fast they talk in English and their English Learners may not be able to keep up with the language within the instruction" (Personal communications, March 15, 2021). It is crucial to make the information in a lesson comprehensible and accessible for all students. Some examples of how to help ELL students with essential information in a lesson is to use language that is appropriate for the student's English proficiency level, to rephrase or repeat, and to preview and review

important vocabulary and concepts in a lesson (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). Furthermore, using visual representation to a language-based explanation will add to the level of support these students are receiving (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). Modeling and demonstrating can also make concepts clearer to ELL students (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). For instance, a teacher may need to model what tasks are needed to be completed and what process they will go through during the task. The teacher may also need to demonstrate how to follow the routines in the classroom, using visual or movement cues to assist learners. ELL students also need the opportunity to engage in roleplaying and interaction with other students (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013).

According to the English Language Specialist I interviewed, allowing students to have these opportunities will be beneficial to them because they learn from peer language models. In addition to this, ELL students need to have access to other comprehensible input such as visual and auditory information like pictures, real objects, illustrations, audiobooks, or CDs (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). In interviews with a pre-kindergarten teacher and a third-grade teacher in Frederick County, both teachers stated that they use images or real objects to allow for comprehensible input and to stimulate background knowledge (Personal communications, March 4 & 15, 2021). They can also receive help from hands-on activities where they are given the opportunity to experiment and discover new things (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013).

Learning Strategies

Depending on the student's educational background, ELL students may or may not be familiar with learning strategies that will further enhance their learning (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). Students may need to be explicitly taught learning strategies, both cognitive and metacognitive, to help them with their learning in all settings. A popular strategy that teachers use is scaffolding instruction (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). Scaffolding is part of Vygotsky's

theory of instruction. In this instructional strategy, the teacher breaks a lesson down into manageable steps, providing supports where needed. Then, as the student shows mastery of what is being taught, the teacher will remove the support for that level and prepare the student for the next step (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). The end goal of utilizing scaffolding is that the teacher will gradually release the responsibility to the student so that, in time, the student will be able to work independently (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). The third-grade teacher that I interviewed said she “chunks assignments,” meaning that she breaks them down into smaller pieces so that the ELL student is not overwhelmed by the language and content demands, and so that they can be supported in each step of the assignment (Personal communications, March 15, 2021).

Another popular learning strategy that teachers use in the SIOP method, according to Kareva & Echevarria (2013), is questioning. It is a common misconception that ELL students can only answer lower order questions, but this is a fixed mindset (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). In order for any student, including ELLs, to develop the critical thinking skills and apply language skills that they are learning, the teacher needs to ask higher order questions that require the student to think deeper about the answer they construct, even if it is only a few words (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). Additionally, teachers can ask follow-up questions after a student answers that will help them elaborate more on their understanding of the content area (Daniel & Conlin, 2015).

Student Interaction

The idea of student interaction was touched on previously in this paper, but Kareva & Echevarria (2013) highlight the importance of utilizing student interactions to enhance academic proficiency. Allowing ELL students to use oral language skills in pairs or small groups gives them the opportunity to develop or deepen their knowledge about a content area, support their

reading and writing, practice vocabulary and language structures, and learn how to ask for clarification or elaborate on an idea (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). The pairings or groups should be planned out to help the students feel comfortable in engaging and so that there is support and modeling from peers for expressive and receptive language skills (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). The teacher should be observing how the ELL students are interacting while in the pair or group and how engaged they are with the task because this observation will aid in reflective practices such as asking how the task can be changed to get students more engaged (Daniel & Conlin, 2015).

Opportunities for Practice

English Learners need opportunities to practice what they are learning. Some teachers might make the mistake of teaching new material to a class and then not giving them the opportunity to practice the new knowledge or skill that they have been taught (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). For ELL students, this is not beneficial to their learning path. In the SIOP method, teachers encourage students to use the content-based skills as well as the language skills that they are learning through hands-on manipulatives and group or partner work that allows them to practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). For example, in science, a hands-on experiment would be a great chance for an ELL student to practice their content and language skills (Markos & Himmel, 2016). In this experiment, they could be supported with visuals, posters, diagrams, or explicit teaching of the steps (Markos & Himmel, 2016). The third-grade teacher that I interviewed from Frederick County touched on this topic, saying that she uses manipulatives in her math and reading lessons to help solidify the content and language learning that the student is partaking in (Personal communications, March 15, 2021). She also uses visuals for vocabulary and for instructions that she has explicitly taught

to help guide her ELL students (Personal communications, March 15, 2021). In addition to practicing the content and language skills, the students also need the opportunity to repetitively practice the learning strategies, such as the cognitive and metacognitive strategies, that are being taught to them in these lessons that will enhance their content learning (Brown University, n.d.).

Engaging Activities

Using engaging activities during a lesson will further enhance the student's learning (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). Prior to starting the lesson, the teacher would share the language and content objectives as touched upon earlier. But how do students meet these objectives? The task or activity that the students are working on should connect directly to the objectives set in place (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). In the SIOP model, teachers engage, or reengage, students in a meaningful activity that appeals to them. According to Brown University, students should be engaged in an activity for 90-100% of the lesson. During this activity, the teacher will provide latency so that the ELL student(s) have the opportunity to process (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). The teacher will also pace the lesson so that it is not moving too fast that the ELL students cannot comprehend the key concepts or that it is not moving too slow that the ELL student, or the rest of the class, loses interest in the lesson (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). According to Brown University (n.d.), the pace should be challenging but workable for all students. Then, allowing the students to check back after the activity to see if they met their learning objectives would be a great chance for the students to practice reflection and take ownership of their learning, as previously noted.

Review and Assess

The final component of the SIOP model is reviewing and assessing the ELL students' comprehension of the key concepts taught in the lesson (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013).

Assessment can take place at any point in the lesson. For example, the lesson may start with a diagnostic assessment to review previous learning or to activate background knowledge on a specific topic (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). During the lesson, the teacher is using formative assessment to check if explanations or re-teaching of a concept is necessary (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). These informal assessments also provide the chance to provide feedback to student responses or work that can be immediate, respectful, and goal-oriented to keep the student on-track (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). The teacher would also continuously use and review key vocabulary and concepts during the lesson or activity to assist the assimilation of these concepts into the student's knowledge. Finally, a teacher following the SIOP method would review the vocabulary and concepts that the student learned and practiced at the end of lesson. Brown University also states that assessing ELL students' development should be continuous and interactive because the traditional whole-class assessments might not capture all of the ELL students' progress and learning capacity. Some of the assessments that are recommended that could be used as a combination or replacement for traditional assessments are: "Conferences, take-home reflections, oral retell, learning logs, graphic organizers, content inventory, cloze exercises, or dictations" (Brown University, n.d.). Other assessments that are used for progress monitoring of content knowledge and academic growth include programs that schools systems use such as the Performance Matters or DIBELS in the beginning, middle, and end of the year (Personal communications, March 15, 2021). DIBELS is an assessment for grades K-8 and it measures students' early literacy skills such as letter-naming fluency, phonemic segmentation fluency, nonsense word fluency, and word reading fluency. In Frederick

County, DIBELS is used in grades K-2 (Personal communications, March 15, 2021).

Performance Matters is a series of standardized tests in math and reading that analyze the student's strengths and needs and the better a student does on the questions, the more questions the test will have. In Frederick County, the Performance Matters tests are used from 3rd to 5th grade.

VI. Assessing English Language Learners

As seen in the SIOP method, assessment is necessary to ensure that any student, including ELL students, are making academic progress. Assessment can take place at any point throughout a lesson or unit and it is necessary to provide important information that will guide instruction. Adding onto the assessment strategies from the SIOP method, ELL students must also be assessed on their English language proficiency. In order to do this, 40 states, including Maryland, use the World Instructional Design Assessment's (WIDA) Assess Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) test (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011). In the 2019-2020 school year, 2,150,925 ELL students took the WIDA ACCESS test. This test assesses social and academic English in the four domains of reading, writing, speaking and listening (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011). It also covers English skills that are used in academic subjects like language arts, math, social studies, and science (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011). The WIDA ACCESS test relies on TESOL's definitions of the five language proficiency levels, which was defined previously in this paper, to determine the student's English language proficiency level (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011).

This test is given in grade clusters of Kindergarten, 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011). The ACCESS assessment also has three vertical tiers that align with how well the student is doing on the assessment within each grade cluster (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011). These

tiers are A, which is for beginning ELL students, B, and C. Students who take the ACCESS test will move from Tier A questions to Tier B or C questions based on how well they are doing, similar to the Performance Matter Series that the students take for content knowledge. In the listening and reading section, all of the questions are multiple-choice and are scored by a machine (Kim, 2021). The speaking and writing sections are rated by over 700 professionally trained raters based on the WIDA speaking and writing scoring scales. For example, below is the speaking scoring scale that a rater would use to score a student's speaking portion of the ACCESS test.

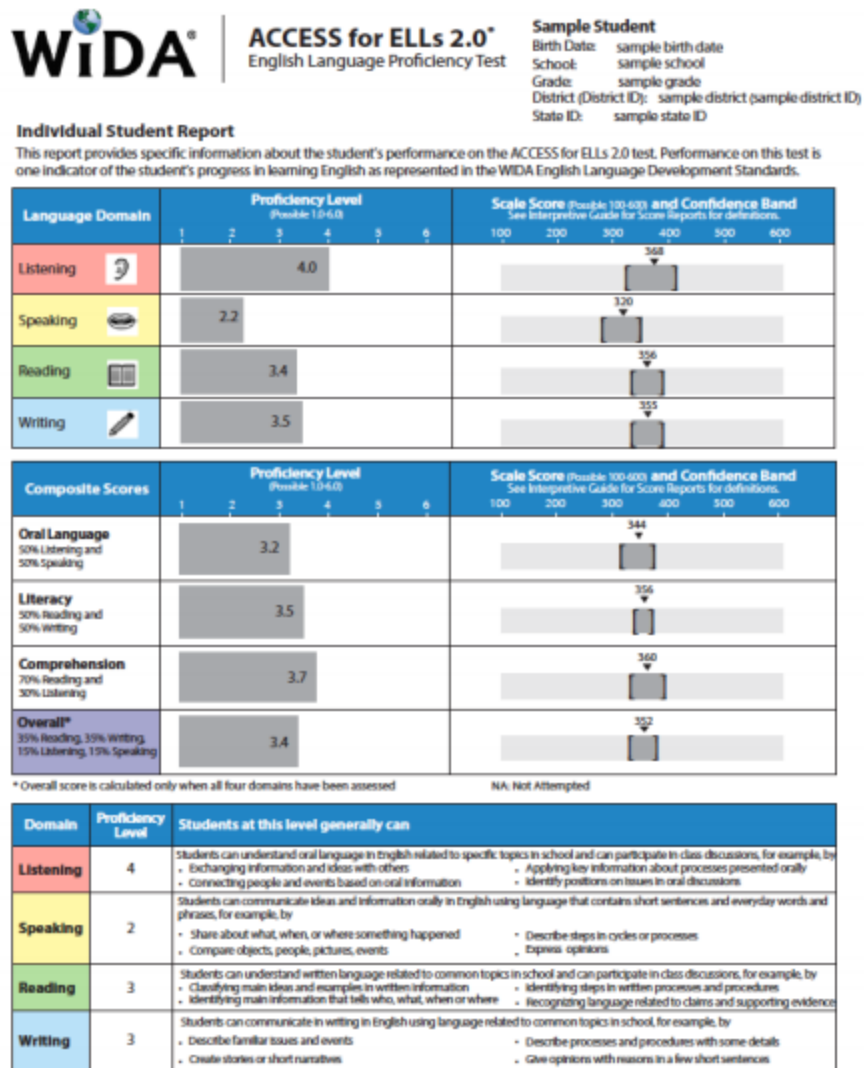
ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Speaking Scoring Scale		
Score	Score point	Response characteristics
4	Exemplary use of oral language to provide an elaborated response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language use comparable to or going beyond the model in sophistication - Clear, automatic, and fluent delivery - Precise and appropriate word choice
3	Strong use of oral language to provide a detailed response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language use approaching that of model in sophistication, though not as rich - Clear delivery - Appropriate word choice

2	Adequate use of oral language to provide a satisfactory response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language use not as sophisticated as that of model - Generally comprehensible use of oral language - Adequate word choice
1	Attempted use of oral language to provide a response in English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language use does not support an adequate response - Comprehensibility may be compromised - Word choice may not be fully adequate
0	No response (in English)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does not respond (in English)

Table 1 (Kim, 2021)

After the assessment has been completed, there will be three separate scores. The raw score will show the number of items or tasks that the student responded to correctly out of the total number of items that were on the test (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011). Since the number of items may fluctuate due to how well the student does on the items or tasks, there will also be a scale score from 100 to 600 (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011). This score is used for making comparisons across grade levels and to monitor student growth (Kim, 2021). The third score is the proficiency level, which is from 1-6, and can be used to describe student performance in a specific grade and domain (Kim, 2021). In order for a student to be reclassified as “English proficient” in the state of Maryland and to be moved out of the English Language program at their school, they must have a proficiency level of 4.5 (Kim, 2021).

After assessing, it is important to share information about the student's learning progress and need with relevant faculty, families, and other stakeholders (de Jong et al., 2013). In most instances, this would occur in some type of conference, such as a phone conference or a face-to-face one, with the family. An English Language Specialist might be involved as well if they work with the student(s). According to the third-grade teacher I interviewed, student work and assessment data would be shared in this conference to show content knowledge and how they are working towards their grade level standards (Personal communications, March 15, 2021). In the case of the WIDA ACESSS assessment, the data from the student's assessment would be presented as an Individual Student Report seen in picture 7 (Kim, 2021). In this report, it would include the student's proficiency levels in the four domains of speaking, listening, reading, and writing and at the bottom of the report is an explanation of what the student is capable of doing based on their proficiency level in each of these domains (Kim, 2021).



Picture 7 (Kim, 2021).

It also holds their scale scores as well as their composite scores of oral language, literacy, and comprehension (Kim, 2021). The composite scores are a combination of the four domains that are assessed in the ACCESS test. The chart below shows the breakdown of each of the three composite scores and how they contribute to the overall proficiency level score. Explaining this data and what it means for the student, the family, and all the school staff that work with this student will help get all the stakeholders on the same page when it comes to English language acquisition.

Type of Composite Score	Contribution of Language Domains (by Percent)			
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Oral Language	50%	50%	-	-
Literacy	-	-	50%	50%
Comprehension	30%	-	70%	-
Overall	15%	15%	35%	35%

Table 2 (Kim, 2021)

Conclusion

Based on the literature review in this paper, negative perceptions of English Language Learners can negatively impact their academic achievement. This negativity can be in the form of not wanting the student in the classroom, not taking the proper preparation steps and training, or even refusing to modify lessons or adapt environments to create a more welcoming atmosphere to learn in. While correlation is not enough to prove causation, misconceptions about ELL students will continue to grow with a negative prerogative of these students and the academic gap will increase due to lack of support of these students in the cases of teachers believing they are not going to be successful and not providing them with comprehensible input. However, the misconceptions in this paper have been disproven, with a follow-up of how a teacher can properly prepare themselves and the learning environment, instruct using the SIOP

method, and assess a student's content knowledge as well as in their English language proficiency.

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