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| **ARTICLE** |

English Proficiency or Post-School Success? The Miseducation of English Learners

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Abstract

English learners in the U.S. are academically unprepared at the secondary level, and such systemic barriers lead to limited opportunities for post-school success (Umansky, 2016). Additional research is necessary to examine the correlation between the impact of a school's ethnic diversity on the academic achievement of students identified as ELs. The purpose of this study is to investigate the educational outcomes of ELs at the high school level as a result of the school's ethnic diversity. This study provides quantitative data from the Ed-Data Education Data Partnership. The data is disaggregated by the ethnic diversity index, percentage of enrolled ELs at each school and the graduation rates, dropout rates, and rates meeting college admissions standards of ELs compared to all students at the high school. The findings of this study depict significant discrepancies between the high school graduation rates of ELs and their decreased preparedness for post-secondary admissions. These findings highlight the need for language minority students to receive equitable access to quality education targeting post-school success instead of focusing on English proficiency.

Keywords: *English learners, post-school, success, outcomes*

Introduction

The underperformance of English learners (ELs) on standardized tests can be attributed to the linguistic and cultural barriers impacting their academic proficiency (Abella et al., 2005). Garcia (2011) states that the population of K-12 students in public schools throughout the United States who are not English proficient has grown by 40 percent within the last decade. Similarly, Garcia (2011) identifies the presence of an achievement gap where ELs underperform their English-speaking peers by 30 to 50 percent on national and state assessments. Equitable access to advanced educational outcomes for ELs is limited by the implementation of federal policies perpetuating low expectations for linguistically diverse students (Rance-Roney, 2011). Teacher perception plays a major role in ELs' access to post-secondary success (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). According to Callahan (2005), the limited English proficiency of ELs at the high school level leads to their enrollment in lower level courses and insufficient exposure to the content necessary for success in higher education.

Language influences learning by posing limitations related to academic content and student's performance on assessments. (Lucas et al., 2008). The academic proficiency of students who are identified as ELs ranges in both their native language and in English. At the secondary level, the education of ELs is driven by the need to meet state-regulated achievement standards as depicted by high-stakes tests (Rance-Roney, 2011). According to Thompson (2017), the accountability measures related to ELs focus on the development of

English proficiency rather than prolonged academic achievement. Sharkey and Layzer (2000) synthesize the relationship of language and power to examine the low academic success rates of students with a native language other than English. Thompson (2017) states the significance in the disproportionality between ELs and their English-speaking peers when it comes to post-secondary academic success. As the population of linguistically-diverse students in mainstream U.S. classrooms increases, school districts are responsible for effectively supporting their secondary to postsecondary transition (Rance-Roney, 2011). Limited English proficiency should not exclude students from receiving a quality education (Umansky, 2016). In-depth evaluations of federal policies impacting the K-12 education of ELs uncover the inequitable underlying principles that establish barriers to academic success (Hamann & Reeves, 2013).

The purpose of this paper is to quantitatively explore the correlations between U.S. schools' ethnic diversity, the educational outcomes of ELs at the secondary level, and their level of preparedness for post-secondary admissions. The data used in this study was gathered from the Ed-Data Education Data Partnership and is specific to high schools in a California urban school district. First, I begin with a review of the literature regarding the barriers to post-school success resulting from poor academic preparation of the EL student population at the secondary level. A thorough analysis of the Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) theory will provide a theoretical framework of encouraging student-learning through practical application of knowledge and interaction with community for this study. Next, I present a study that provides disaggregated data on schools' ethnic diversity index, percentage of enrolled ELs and the graduation rates, dropout rates, and rates meeting college admissions standards of ELs compared to all students at the high school. Few studies have examined the relationship between schools' student demographics, student academic outcomes, and the post-secondary success of ELs at the high school level. Finally, I conclude with a summary of implication and recommendations that high schools can implement to ensure the adequate academic preparation of language minority students for attaining increased educational outcomes.

Literature Review

English learners

The cultural and linguistic diversity of ELs in the U.S. makes them a unique group of learners with equally unique needs. The literature informing this paper addresses ELs as learners, the academic barriers they experience, and the necessary strategies to extend their educational opportunities beyond high school. Freeman & Freeman (2003) define the three types of ELs as those who are newly arrived in the U.S. with formal schooling experience; those who are newly arrived with limited formal schooling experience; and long-term language learners. The effective education of ELs requires valuing the cultural and linguistic diversity that will ultimately serve as assets as they progress towards becoming fully bilingual (Ziegenfuss et al., 2014). De Jong and Harper (2005) propose that a misconception exists in teacher preparation programs that exclude bilingual or English as a second language (ESL) courses under the assumption that teaching ELs is only a matter of adapting current instructional strategies. Lucas et al. (2008) argue that linguistically responsive teaching requires explicit knowledge and skills of the second language acquisition process. As a whole, the post-school success of ELs requires intentional partnerships between school personnel and families (Hamann & Reeves, 2013).

In fall 2015, a reported 9.5 percent of students in public schools throughout the United States were identified as ELs (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.). Meanwhile, there were eight states in fall 2015 where the percentage of public school students identified as ELs was 10.0 percent or more (NCES, n.d.). The learning needs of

ELs are distinct based on the diverse characteristics of immigration and the nature of the language acquisition process (Rance-Roney, 2011). Language proficiency levels can vary from students who are newly immigrant and those who are categorized as long-term ELs (Rance-Roney, 2011). Therefore, educators face the challenge of addressing limited language proficiency alongside the pressure of providing adequate preparation for standardized tests (Sanchez, 2017). Cummins (1979) states that the language limitations of ELs is often viewed as limited intellectual and academic ability despite native-language proficiency.

In a qualitative case study of a seven-year old Mexican-American student and his family (Martinez-Roldan & Malave, 2004), the authors examine the negative impact mainstream classroom practices have on the cultural and linguistic identity of language minority students. In a detailed breakdown of the history of bilingual education in the United States, Gándara and Escamilla (2017) explain the ways in which the U.S. definition of bilingual education tends to emphasize English proficiency instead of full bilingualism. Despite claims of inclusiveness, English-dominant classrooms do more to push away students' native language proficiency than to preserve them (Garcia, 2011). Sharkey and Layzer (2000) conclude that the academic success of ELs is based largely on teachers' understanding of the process of second language acquisition. Grouping language minority students under the umbrella of limited English proficiency discredits various other factors that help comprise their academic and social identity (Short & Echeverria, 2004).

The influence of federal policies on ELs

Garcia (2011) argues that many of the policies related to the education of ELs throughout the United States are more restrictive of educational opportunities than they are inclusive. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 proposed equitable access to quality education to the nation's low-income students in an effort to help close the academic achievement gap (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). The Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968 recognized the growing presence of linguistic diversity throughout the country and made bilingual education a viable option for meeting the needs of ELs (Crawford, 1997). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed in 2001 with the intent of establishing clear accountability measures for the academic achievement of all students (Smyth, 2008). Garcia (2011) argues that NCLB reversed many of the progressive measures made by the BEA through its focus on English proficiency. NCLB outlined grade-level reading proficiency, the presence of highly qualified teachers in the classrooms, and evidence of school's academic growth throughout the school year (Smyth, 2008). Each of these factors tied into the consistent implementation of high-stakes testing through the academic school year (Smyth, 2008). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 replaced NCLB and gave states the liberty to make informed decisions regarding the education of disadvantaged learners including, but not limited to, ELs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016).

Since the ESEA of 1965, federal policies have been implemented throughout the U.S. with the intent of closing the academic achievement gap. The low academic success of ELs has been defined by policies at the federal and state level using pre-set standards measured by standardized tests (Rance-Roney, 2011). However, many of these classification policies impacting ELs do more to impede language minority students' access to academic content that cultivates post-school success (Umansky, 2016). The process of classifying students as ELs incorporates policies that require mandatory services for English language development at the expense of core content such as literacy and math (Umansky, 2016). Garcia (2011) argues that policies involving the education of ELs are reflective of xenophobia and other political ideologies that ultimately block potential. Rather than promoting inclusive practices, EL policies denote the exclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse students in the preparation for post-school success (Garcia, 2011).

A study examining the process of reclassification for ELs (Thompson, 2017) depicts the discrepancies between the measures for initial classification and the limited opportunities for language minorities to exit the services. In *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled for school systems to both identify ELs and “to teach English to those not yet fluent in the language while also providing access to the general curriculum” (Thompson, 2017, p. 333). The issue arises when, under federal language policies, the education of ELs becomes more about assimilation and less about the respect of cultural and linguistic diversity as an asset to learning (Garcia, 2011). The English proficiency requirement mandated by *Lau v. Nichols* ultimately encompasses instructional models that restrict ELs from the mainstream classroom environment and contributes to the increasing academic achievement gap (Garcia, 2011). In considering the educational outcomes of ELs, federal and state policies are perpetuating exclusionary educational practices that deny the quality education promised to all (Rance-Roney, 2011).

Standardized testing and ELs

The use of standardized tests to measure grade level proficiency, as required by federal policies, has contributed to a negative teaching and learning climate (Smyth, 2008). Language minority students face the dichotomy of having to master the academic content while simultaneously acquiring the English language. The development of academic language poses an added layer of complexity for both ELs and their teachers (Short & Echeverria, 2004). In order to ensure that ELs demonstrate grade level proficiency on state assessments, educators must have the resources to provide sheltered instruction that makes content comprehensible and fosters the growth of English language proficiency (Short & Echeverria, 2004). As mandated by federal law, school districts are required to provide instructional support to make core academic content accessible to ELs until they are reclassified (Umansky, 2016). However, standardized testing for ELs holds ethical considerations regarding the language of the exams and students’ native languages. Rather than emphasizing the testing of students’ understanding of academic content, standardized tests administered to ELs are prioritizing English language proficiency.

Abella et al. (2005) explains NCLB’s specification that ELs be tested “in a language and form that is most likely to produce a valid measure of students’ academic knowledge” (p. 128). However, less than one third of major U.S. cities reported using a language other than English to administer high-stakes tests (Council of the Great City Schools, 2003 as cited in Abella et al., 2005). The equity and validity of standardized tests administered to ELs raises questions when the relationships between language and culture in the classroom are continuously disregarded (Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003). In a study examining the validity of English standardized tests administered to ELs (Abella et al., 2005), it was found that the results are not a valid measure of students’ knowledge. Testing language minority students in English goes against the practices of second language acquisition (Abella et al., 2005).

Barriers to post-school success

A study conducted to determine the various factors that impact ELL’s access to post-school success (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000) determined that classroom placement plays an integral role in students’ academic achievement. According to Sharkey and Layzer (2000), ELs are most commonly placed in lower track classes given their language limitations. The problem arises when the lower-level track classes limit ELs’ access to interaction with proficient language models (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). Similarly, the proper exposure to language via instruction allows students to experience access to the curriculum that will aid in their opportunities for post-school success (Umansky, 2016). A study conducted to determine the influence of leveled and exclusionary success of ELs (Umansky, 2016) determined that language minority students are more often denied the ability to enroll in honors or higher-level classes. Umansky (2016) concluded that the models of leveled and

exclusionary tracking that is imposed on ELs is harmful for their overall post-secondary opportunities.

Understanding the end goal

The diverse characteristics of ELs throughout the country add to the challenges of ensuring that schools are able to meet their distinct needs. Although passing standardized tests appears to be the ultimate goal of K-12 education, postsecondary opportunities for ELs requires consistent guidance and support (Rance-Roney, 2011). Federal policies requiring that language minority students perform under English-only mandates promotes an understanding of assimilation in order to attain academic success (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). Garcia (2011) provides insight on the ways in which the undervaluing of the cultural and linguistic diversity of ELs becomes apparent through the emphasis on English proficiency. However, the achievement gap between ELs and their native English-speaking peers is widest in U.S. states that implement such restrictive policies (Garcia, 2011).

The education of ELs requires the added layer of language support throughout content area instruction. In order to maximize the learning potential of ELs in the classroom, mainstream teachers require an awareness on the ways in which students' native language can serve as a support as they acquire a second language (Ballantyne, et al., 2008). Rather than negating ELs' academic abilities because of their language limitations, educators must receive tailored professional development on the ways in which they can support language development throughout the process of content instruction (Ballantyne et al., 2008). The role of K-12 education on the post-school success of ELs makes it necessary to have a complete understanding of the population, their learning needs, and the practices and strategies that can aid in the meeting of these needs (Freeman & Freeman, 2003). Educators who subscribe to the restrictive and exclusionary practices of federal policies are doing a disservice to a growing population of students who deserve the same quality of education as their peers (Garcia, 2011).

Secondary to postsecondary transitions

The successful transition of ELs towards postsecondary opportunities encompasses a strategic school and family partnership (Rance-Roney, 2011). Achieving the Dream is an example of an organization that was established by community colleges looking to identify successful factors that contribute to "student retention and achievement" (Rance-Roney, 2011). Students throughout the country, despite their language proficiency, deserve equitable access to the academic content that is required to take and pass college-level courses (Umansky, 2016). Given the fact that ELs are placed in lower-level classes in response to their limited English proficiency, they are being denied the opportunity to take classes at the secondary level that will assist in their transition to postsecondary success (Umansky, 2016). Although tracking is presented as a well-intentioned method of giving ELs the opportunity to progress towards language development, it is also proving to be harmful to their education beyond high school (Callahan, 2005). Many of the college course requirements are the same ones that ELs are not given access to because of their language limitations (Umansky, 2016). Rance-Roney (2011) proposes that school districts and school personnel should have pre-established transition plans, differentiated guidance, explicit grammar and academic English instruction, the option of extended time, and partnerships with postsecondary institutions in order to support the effective transition of ELs. Ultimately, effectively teaching ELs requires the restructuring and reshaping of practices and policies to meet the needs of this growing student population.

Supporting ELs in and out of the classroom

ELs require differentiated guidance as a result of targeted training that highlights the ways in which their cultural and linguistic diversity can be viewed as assets to their learning as opposed to limitations (Rance-Roney, 2011). Although academic success is an important

component of the education of ELs, educators must find a balance between meeting their cognitive needs as well as their affective needs (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). Neglecting the affective needs of students in order to solely focus on the cognitive needs has harmful effects on their overall education (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). Supporting ELs in and out of the classroom requires the respect and valuing of diversity as it relates to language learning (Garcia, 2011). The lack of respect and value of linguistic diversity in the classroom setting perpetuates the notion of assimilation over acceptance (Garcia, 2011). A study focused on exploring the impact of teachers' beliefs about teaching ELs at the secondary level (Gleeson & Davison, 2016) found that the practice of team teaching, where ESL teachers serve as a resource, is influential in allowing content teachers to provide instruction while understanding the process of second language acquisition. Overall, teachers of ELs require additional professional development beyond those that target mainstream classroom learners because teaching ELs bridges content with language (Gleeson & Davison, 2016).

Additional research is necessary to provide the correlations between school's student demographics and the postsecondary success of enrolled ELs. Few studies have looked into the ways in which the teaching and learning of ELs is impacted by the presence of certain student subgroups. This study addresses the gap in the literature by analyzing disaggregated quantitative data that depicts the relationship between graduation and dropout rates, and the meeting of college admissions standards by ELs and other subgroups. The data used in this study provides a breakdown of the ways in which ELs are performing in these previously mentioned criteria in comparison to other student subgroups. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the discrepancies in the teaching of ELs who are being pushed towards English proficiency over post-school success as depicted by the literature.

Theoretical Overview

The legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) theory will be used to guide this research. Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1999) established this theory extending the notions of the situated learning theory. Under LPP, Lave and Wenger explain that authentic knowledge takes place in learning communities that allow for collaboration and participation (Flowerdew, 2000). According to Lave and Wenger (1999), situated learning is not merely the social interaction during the learning process, but also the practice of fully joining the learning community (Lave, 1991). Learning that takes place through the LPP theory develops what Lave and Wenger describe as a discourse community where learners acquire knowledge through meaningful participation (Flowerdew, 2000).

Green et al. (2018) describe the three major tenets of LPP and situated learning. The first tenet is *authentic context*, which explains that learners need to be engaged in classroom activities and assessments that establish meaningful connections to real-world experiences (Green et al., 2018). According to LPP and situated learning, learners learn best when they are able to take what they have learned in the classroom and apply it outside of the classroom. The second tenet is *social interaction*, which emphasizes the practice of multiple opportunities to share ideas and learn from one another in the educational context (Green et al., 2018). The tenet of social interaction is focused on the increased likelihood for attaining understanding through interactive opportunities with other learners. The third tenet is *constructivism*, which focuses on giving learners the opportunities to build their learning through experiences (Green et al., 2018). Learners are able to maximize the quality of learning that takes place when they are given the chance to take ownership of the experiences that contribute to their knowledge development in the classroom.

The legitimate peripheral participation theory and the situated learning theory explore the ways in which learning is constructed in a social context. Therefore, denying students the opportunity and the access to the proper social resources through leveled and

exclusionary tracking is lessening their chances of experiencing post-school success. In regard to ELs, leveled and exclusionary tracking removes them from mainstream classes and places them in lower-level class in order to adhere to their language limitations. According to LPP and situated learning the removal of language minority students from mainstream classes is more harmful than it is beneficial for their overall academic success. Sharkey and Layzer (2000) explain Lave and Wenger's definition of LPP as an individual perspective on learning instead of as a strategy that can be implemented. Educators must be aware of their bias and perspective on the role of language and learning in order to grasp a full understanding of the ways in which the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities are detrimental to the long term educational outcomes of ELs. LPP and the situated learning theory are used to guide this research because they explain the ways in which language is used as power in mainstream classrooms throughout the country.

This paper explores the ways in which ELs compare to other students in the areas of graduation and dropout rates, and the meeting of college admissions standards. Using the LPP and situated learning theories as a framework, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: Does a school's ethnic diversity index impact the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level?

H1: The ethnic diversity index of schools impacts the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level.

It is predicted that the academic achievement of ELs will be impacted depending on the ethnic diversity index due to the availability of and access to educational resources. It is hypothesized that ELs will perform better academically at schools with less diversity in student enrollment because the quality of education provided at these schools will be enhanced.

Methodology

This quantitative study focuses on the correlations between schools' ethnic diversity, the educational outcomes of ELs at the secondary level and their level of preparedness for post-secondary admissions.

Data

The quantitative data collected for this study was gathered from the Ed-Data Education Data Partnership. According to the website,

Ed-Data is a partnership of the California Department of Education, EdSource, and the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team/California School Information Services (FCMAT/CSIS) designed to offer educators, policy makers, the legislature, parents, and the public quick access to timely and comprehensive data about K-12 education in California. (Ed-Data Education Data Partnership, 2020)

All of the data in this study was from the 2017-2018 school year as reported on the website. The schools selected for this study were the high schools in the San Diego Unified Schools District. The San Diego Unified Schools District was selected for this study because of their increased enrollment of ELs. This study provides disaggregated data on 20 high schools in this district. This study focuses on high schools because of the focus on post-school or postsecondary success. The high schools chosen for this study were those with data available for all of the variables examined. The first variable examined in this study was the ethnic diversity index for each school. According to the website, the Ethnic Diversity Index reflects how evenly distributed these students are among the race/ethnicity categories. The more evenly distributed the student body, the higher the number. A school where all of the students are the same ethnicity would have an index of 0. The second variable examined in this study was the percentage of enrolled ELs. The third variable examined in this study

was the percent of cohort graduates at each school for all students and for ELs. The fourth variable examined was the percentage of cohort dropouts at each high school for all students and for ELs. Lastly, the fifth variable examined was the percentage of all students and ELs meeting the University of California and California State University course requirement upon graduating from high school.

Procedures

The data was collected from the Ed-Data Education Data Partnership site. The county selected for this study was San Diego. The district selected was the San Diego Unified Schools District. The 20 schools selected for this study were those within the district that have complete data available for each of the variables examined for the 2017-2018 school year. For each school selected, the demographics section was expanded to gather the percentage of enrolled ELs and the schools' ethnic diversity index from the data provided. The data for the remaining three variables examined in this study, graduation rates, dropout rates, and rates of students meeting college admissions, was gathered from the expanded College and Career Readiness section. Within this section, data for all students is provided under each of the remaining three variables examined. Then, the criteria English Learners was selected from a drop-down menu for each variable.

The data collected for this study was compiled into a table (see Table 1) which will serve as the source of analysis. The table provides the name of each high school analyzed in this study. The ethnic diversity index and percentage of enrolled ELs is provided for each school. The table also provides data comparing the graduation rates, dropout rates, and rates of students meeting college admissions standards for all students and ELs during the 2017-2018 school year for each school included in this study.

Methods

The method of analysis used to fit the research question for this study is a descriptive analysis of the quantitative data gathered. Descriptive data analysis is used to describe the basic features of the data in the study. Through the use of this analysis method, the data is summarized in such a way that allows for the identification of patterns that might emerge. This method was chosen in order to provide a summary of the data collected to test the research question and the hypothesis provided for this study. The ethnic diversity index at each school will be analyzed to establish conclusions in each of the variables studied. In reference to the research question presented in this study, the ethnic diversity index at each school will be used to determine the impact diversity has on the academic achievement of ELs at each school. Through the use of descriptive analysis, the ethnic diversity index will be used to correlate whether ELs performed better in each of the variables examined at the schools with an increased diverse presence of student enrollment.

Results

Table 1 depicts data from 20 San Diego Unified High Schools on the ethnic diversity index, the percentage of enrolled ELs, cohort graduation rates, cohort dropout rates, and the percentage of ELs meeting college admissions standards during the 2017-2018 school year. Out of the 20 schools presented in this study, 12 of the schools reported having an ELs student population of 10% or higher. There are 8 of the 20 schools with a 10.0% or higher difference between the graduation rates of ELs and other students. A total of 4 schools showcased ELs graduation rates of less than 50% of the student body. Only one of the schools reported having ELs graduate at equal or greater rates as their peers. Similarly, only 5 of the 20 schools reported having ELs dropping out at equal or lesser rates as their peers. Therefore, 17 of the schools reported higher percentages of ELs dropping out as compared to the entire student body. Of the 20 schools analyzed in this study, 16 reported having a

10.0% or higher difference between the meeting of college admissions standards between ELs and their peers. There were 17 out of the 20 schools with 50% or less of ELs meeting college admissions standards. These findings contribute to the phenomenon that ELs are not being prepared at the same levels as their English-speaking peers for postsecondary success.

Table 1. *San Diego Unified High Schools Data 2017-2018*

School name	Ethnic diversity index	% English learners	% Cohort graduates	% Cohort dropouts	% Meeting UC/CSU
Audeo Charter	45	9.7	All: 39.1 ELs: 33.3	All: 9.9 ELs: 14.3	All: 15.3 ELs: 0
Charter School of San Diego	38	13.7	All: 30.5 ELs: 18.8	All: 7 ELs: 7.1	All: 27.5 ELs: 23.8
Clairemont High	45	7.3	All: 94.3 ELs: 83.9	All: 2.4 ELs: 9.7	All: 62 ELs: 34.6
Crawford High	54	35.3	All: 78.2 ELs: 66.7	All: 9 ELs: 15.8	All: 65.4 ELs: 48.7
Garfield High	11	26.4	All: 35.5 ELs: 33.8	All: 16.9 ELs: 18.5	All: 16.4 ELs: 18.2
Health Sciences High	36	18.7	All: 98.7 ELs: 95.7	All: 0.6 ELs: 2.2	All: 77.6 ELs: 63.6
Henry High	57	3.2	All: 95.7 ELs: 88.2	All: 1 ELs: 2.9	All: 76.3 ELs: 50
Hoover High	27	22.3	All: 86.9 ELs: 74	All: 3.5 ELs: 8	All: 58.9 ELs: 45
Kearny College Connections	51	15.9	All: 100 ELs: 100	All: 0 ELs: 0	All: 67 ELs: 37.5
King-Chavez Community High	2	34.5	All: 89.6 ELs: 83.7	All: 6.7 ELs: 10.2	All: 47.5 ELs: 34.1
La Jolla High	46	3.8	All: 98 ELs: 85.7	All: 0.6 ELs: 4.8	All: 87.1 ELs: 50
Learning Choice Academy	43	10.4	All: 90.4 ELs: 87.5	All: 0.9 ELs: 0	All: 32.7 ELs: 21.4
Lincoln High	32	32.1	All: 78.7 ELs: 65.8	All: 11.1 ELs: 15.4	All: 61.6 ELs: 51.9
Madison High	51	7.9	All: 93.3 ELs: 90.3	All: 0.9 ELs: 0	All: 71.2 ELs: 46.4
Mira Mesa High	71	9.1	All: 92.4 ELs: 79.7	All: 1.5 ELs: 3.8	All: 64.5 ELs: 34.9
Mission Bay High	43	8.3	All: 98 ELs: 97	All: 0 ELs: 0	All: 66.8 ELs: 31.3
Morse High	58	13.6	All: 93.2 ELs: 89.8	All: 2.8 ELs: 4.1	All: 46.7 ELs: 34.1
San Diego Business/Leadership	16	25.4	All: 74.1 ELs: 56.4	All: 12.6 ELs: 25.6	All: 44 ELs: 36.4
Serra High	57	4.6	All: 94.6 ELs: 89.7	All: 1.9 ELs: 0	All: 68.7 ELs: 68.6
Twain High	42	21.8	All: 15.8 ELs: 10.3	All: 12.8 ELs: 14.1	All: 25.5 ELs: 25

Note: From Ed-Data Education Data Partnership.

Discussion

RQ1: Does a school's ethnic diversity index impact the academic achievement of LLs at the secondary level? H1: The ethnic diversity index of schools impacts the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level.

The findings of this study do not support H1. The data on the academic achievement on each of the variables examined in this study are inconsistent as they relate to the ethnic diversity index of each school. There are schools with high ethnic diversity indices that resulted in low academic achievement of ELs just as there were schools with low ethnic diversity indices that resulted in low academic achievement of ELs and vice versa. Overall, there were no consistencies in the data to depict whether or not the ethnic diversity index had an impact on the academic achievement of ELs.

Although the inconsistent nature of the data interferes with the ability to draw linear conclusions regarding the impact of schools' ethnic diversity index and the academic achievement of ELs, the data does depict an overwhelming majority of ELs at each of the schools examined are underperforming. Meanwhile, the findings from this study indicate that there are some fundamental flaws in the education of ELs at the high school level because their educational outcomes are far beneath those of their peers regardless of the school's ethnic diversity index. Although the findings of this study do not support the hypothesis about the impact of the ethnic diversity index on the academic achievement of ELs, they do correlate with the literature that states that the quality of education being provided to ELs at the high school level is not adequately preparing them for advanced educational outcomes. The overemphasizing of English proficiency through standardized tests is taking away from ELs' opportunities for post-school success.

Using LPP theory and situated learning theory as a theoretical framework, this study provides an overview that supports student-learning through practical application of knowledge and interaction with a community of learners. As a student subgroup, ELs are a vulnerable population due to the increased efforts to help them attain English proficiency at the expense of subjecting them to leveled and exclusionary tracking. As can be seen by the findings of this study and the broader literature on this topic, exclusionary teaching and learning practices are not beneficial towards the post-school success opportunities of students. On the contrary, students who are denied the opportunities to meaningfully apply knowledge and work within a community of learners doing the same, are receiving a lessened quality of education when compared to their English-speaking peers. Lave and Wenger's (1999) discussion of LPP and situated learning applies to the learning of ELs who are removed from meaningful learning opportunities due to their language limitations. Rather than being portrayed as an asset to a classroom learning community given their diverse linguistic abilities, the academic emphasis of ELs lies primarily in their ability to acquire the English language and demonstrate proficiency on mandated standardized tests. Although English proficiency is an important factor for the educational and social advancements of ELs, it should not become the primary focus that takes away from students' ability to practically apply their knowledge and interact with a community of learners. In turn, an in-depth understanding of LPP and situated learning proposes that ELs receive greater benefits from meaningful opportunities to collaborate with others and participate in learning experiences that are not permeated by the demands of English proficiency.

Limitations of Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze quantitative data in order to explore the factors that contribute to the low educational outcomes of ELs at the secondary level when compared to schools' ethnic diversity. The disaggregated data used throughout this study provided schools' ethnic diversity indices, the comparison of graduation and dropout rates between ELs and all students, and the percentage of ELs meeting college admissions standards at each school. A limitation of this study was the inability to look at the pedagogical instruction offered at each school. The conclusions drawn about the quality of education being provided to ELs resulted from data on graduation and dropout rates, as well as the rates of meeting college entrance requirements. The opportunity to look at the

pedagogical instruction at each school would have given insight towards practices of leveled or exclusionary tracking implemented in regard to ELs. Another limitation of this study was the lack of specific breakdown by student demographics for each of the variables explored throughout this study. The data provided for this study compared the academic achievement of ELs to all students. However, further conclusions could have been drawn if given additional data on the ways in which ELs performed as compared to other student subgroups based on ethnicity. Such data could have clarified whether the quality of education provided at these schools differed based on cultural and linguistic diversity of the students enrolled. The last limitation of this study was the fact that no time was allotted to talk to teachers and students regarding the school culture, the courses being offered, and the process of EL classification. This additional qualitative data would have contributed to the research question and the purpose of this study in that it would have provided more information on the potential reasons for the low graduation rates and high dropout rates of ELs at the high school level.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional qualitative data would have improved this study. The qualitative data would include interviews and surveys from the students and teachers at these schools to gather their perspective on whether or not ELs are receiving the same quality of education as their English-speaking peers. Another improvement that would be made to this study would be the breakdown of the graduation and dropout rates by student demographics. This additional data would allow for further comparison of the differences between the educational outcomes of ELs and their peers. Lastly, this study could be improved by implementing other methodologies that further analyze the data and explore the research question posed.

Future research is needed to uncover the pedagogical practices that contribute to the low academic achievement of ELs. Incorporating a qualitative component where teachers and students are able to share their perspective on the quality of education provided to ELs will allow for a more in-depth analysis of the pedagogical instruction ELs receive at the secondary level. Furthermore, a quantitative study with more data on the specific ethnic makeup of each school can help determine if there are any underlying correlations between ethnic diversity and the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level. This additional data can serve as a reference when determining whether certain groups of students have access to certain courses or instructional practices that are being denied to ELs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to examine the impact of schools' ethnic diversity index on the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level. The research question posed was *RQ1: Does a school's ethnic diversity index impact the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level?* The corresponding hypothesis was *H1: The ethnic diversity index of schools impacts the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level.* It was predicted that schools with higher ethnic diversity index would negatively impact the academic achievement of ELs and schools with lower ethnic diversity index would positively the academic achievement of ELs. This study used disaggregated quantitative data from the Ed-Data Education Data Partnership which included graduation rates, dropout rates, and rates meeting college admissions standards of ELs at the high school level as compared to all students. The results from this study determined that ethnic diversity index does not have a significant impact on the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level. The findings from this study highlight the need for providing quality instruction to ELs despite the ethnic makeup of the school. Given the widespread underperformance of ELs as

compared to all students at the schools analyzed in this study, adjustments need to be made in order to increase the opportunities for post-school success of ELs at the secondary level.

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