Teachers’ Beliefs About Students With English as an Additional Language and Co-Existing Disability Participation in State Academic Achievement Tests

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Linda Goldstone

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Dedication

"Being an English language learner is NOT a deficit, it's a difference. It's not something we need to intervene with, it's something we need to scaffold and really honor their first language as we develop their second (or third…). What a gift to be bilingual!" (Betsy, English language teacher participant, Spanish bilingual)

I dedicate this dissertation to my students learning English as an additional language with a co-existing disability, who continue to teach me about the intricate ways of language learning and use.

Abstract

This study examines teachers' beliefs in relation to their roles with respect to K-12 students with English as an additional language and co-existing disability (SEAL+D) participation in state-mandated accountability assessments. U.S. federal laws of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), last reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), and the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 (IDEA) require states to report on students' test outcomes for English learners and students with disabilities in meeting academic content standards in state assessments. For these tests, SEAL+D, who have both designations, must also participate. Title I and III of ESEA specifically mandate that English learners with disabilities, i.e., SEAL+D, participate in their state's English language proficiency assessments. However, more understanding is needed about the participation of SEAL+D in these tests. This study addressed this gap with asynchronous online focus groups conducted with teachers from a Midwestern state. Thematic analysis of these data through the lens of language policy and intersectionality indicates that teachers broadly shared similar beliefs about the mismatch between the linguistic complexity of the tests and their expectations of students' abilities. Moreover, input from English language teachers concerning students' academic English language proficiency was often not included in a student's special education individualized education program (IEP) team. The exclusion of the consideration of academic English language proficiency in the IEP has implications for students to meet academic standards.

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List of Abbreviations

CLD	Culturally and Linguistically diverse
EL	English Learner
ELD	English Language Development
ELP	English Language Proficiency
ELT	English Language Teacher
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
GET	General Education Teacher
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
SD	Student with a Disability
SEAL+D	Students with English as an Additional Language and Co-Existing Disability
SET	Special Education Teacher
SLD	Specific Learning Disability

Chapter One

Background and Rationale

The school population in the U.S. continues to grow more linguistically diverse with an increase in the number of general education students identified as English learners (ELs) each year (National Education Center for Education Statistics, 2022; Soto et al., 2015) who are learning English as an additional language. In the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), the term "English learner" replaces the term "limited English proficient" used in section 9101 of the ESEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Therefore, the term English learner refers to this group of students in this study. English learners are present in every U.S. state and differ in population size, representing approximately 10.4 % of kindergarten through grade 12 of the student population enrolled in U.S. schools (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021a). A smaller population of students is ELs with disabilities, approximately 9.3% of K-12 students across the U.S. in 2012 (Watkins & Liu, 2013). In parallel with the increase in ELs, ELs with disabilities were increased to 11.6% in 2019-2020 (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

English learners and ELs with disabilities, like all general education students, must participate in state academic achievement tests to measure their progress in meeting state academic standards as mandated in the last reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2015 as Every Student Success Act (ESSA). In addition, Title I and III of ESEA also mandate that all ELs, including ELs with disabilities, participate in their state's

annual English language proficiency (ELP) test and that states must monitor their students' progress in acquiring English language proficiency.

With the reauthorization of ESEA in ESSA in 2015, President Obama proposed *A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act,* which retained a test-based accountability system with standards and complementary assessments that challenge all students to be college or career ready. Test-based accountability continues to have a significant role in emphasizing outcomes to gauge the academic attainment of all students, including ELs with disabilities, i.e., those students dually identified as ELs and students with a disability (SDs), with the most significant challenges to authentic testing of their knowledge and skills.

This study examines teachers' beliefs concerning their roles in the participation of K-12 ELs with disabilities in mandated statewide summative tests. This study focuses on state summative tests that are referred to interchangeably as content or academic achievement tests or assessments of reading/English language arts, mathematics, and science. Though ELs and SDs have been widely studied, little is known about students dually identified with both qualities, particularly their participation in state mandated tests. To address this gap, I employed a qualitative method of asynchronous online focus groups with English language teachers (ELTs) and special education teachers (SETs) who represent the dual qualities of these students.

Terminology

The use of terminology varies considerably in the research literature in defining students who are learning English for academic purposes. In the Elementary and Secondary Education

Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), the term "English learner" replaces the term "limited English proficient" used in section 9101 of the ESEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). I use the amended term English learner (EL) to refer to this group of students in this study. For students with a disability (SD) in this study, they refer to students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to receive special education services. For students who are dually identified as ELs with disabilities, I refer to them as students with English as an additional language and co-existing disability (SEAL+D). My intent is to recognize them wholly as general education students with assets of having more than one language other than English, regardless of their level of proficiency in any language domain. Furthermore, the addition of a disability is viewed as an asset of difference.

I use the term "teachers" broadly to refer to teachers (e.g., English language, special education, general education) who provide direct instruction and administer tests to students. Most of these teachers in the U.S. are White middle class, English monolingual speakers (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020) as they are in this study. In contrast, the school population in the U.S. continues to grow more linguistically diverse with an increase in the number of general education students identified as ELs (National Education Center for Education Statistics, 2022; Soto et al., 2015) who are learning English as an additional language each year.

The aim of this study is to examine teachers' beliefs in relation to their roles with respect to the participation of K-12 who are SEAL+D in mandated statewide summative tests. For this study, the focus is on the state summative tests that are referred to interchangeably as content or academic achievement tests of reading/English language arts, mathematics, and science. Though ELs (e.g., August & Shanahan, 2006; Hakuta et al., 2000; Moll et al., 1992) and SDs (e.g.,

National Research Council, 1997; Yell, 2012; Ysseldyke et al., 2023) have been widely studied, little is known about students dually identified with both qualities, particularly about their participation in their state mandated tests. To address this gap, I employed a qualitative method of asynchronous online focus groups with English language teachers and special education teachers who represent the dual qualities of these students. In this study, I use the abbreviation for general education teacher (GET), who teaches any K-12 class, special education teacher (SET), who is a teacher for students with an IEP, and English language teacher (ELT), who is a teacher of ELs, who participate in the annual state English language proficiency test. Other terms used interchangeably in the literature that are used broadly in this study include: (1) assessment and test; (2) general education and content classroom teacher (i.e., may teach any core/content/subject areas such as English language arts, reading, mathematics, and science); and (3) content, core, subject, and state academic achievement tests.

Significance of the Problem

Despite over two decades of mandated accountability tests, most ELs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023a) and SDs (National Center on Education Statistics, 2023b) continue to not meet state academic achievement standards. It can therefore be assumed that like their ELs and SDs, SEAL+D likely perform below other general education students who are not ELs or not SDs. But research studies are sparse regarding SEAL+D performance in state accountability assessments.

ESEA's Title I requires states to disaggregate data and publicly report the academic performance on state tests for special student populations, including ELs and SDs. However,

states are not required to do the same for SEAL+D, therefore the available public information on SEAL+D participation and achievement performance in state academic achievement tests is greatly limited (Albus et al., 2021). Furthermore, most states have not developed policies to address SEAL+D participation in state assessments (Thurlow et al., 2004).

State achievement tests are typically in a standardized format with multiple choice items and content most familiar to students who are monolingual English native users of academic English vocabulary and are predominantly from a White, Anglo-European heritage, middle class culture. Scholars have raised questions of the representativeness of state standardized tests of language and literacy in special student populations, such as ELs and SDs (e.g., Bedore & Peña, 2008; Genesee et al., 2004; Kohnert et al., 2006; Paradis et al., 2010). For instance, ELs are a heterogeneous population in multiple ways such as in their educational experiences and language backgrounds. Moreover, states have variable understandings of how they define and identify any EL and each state has a variable EL population in size, all of which can influence educator decisions on which assessments students participate and how they participate (Abedi, 2004). Similarly, there is a wide variability of characteristics within SDs. Federal legislation identifies 13 categories of disability and states differ in how they define and identify students with a disability. To add further complexity, variations may exist within a disability category. For example, the learning disability category includes distinct types such as reading and math disabilities. The overlap of both student qualities of ELs and SDs adds a complexity to SEAL+D that challenges educators how to best serve them (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Artiles et al., 2016).

The data used in this study are derived from a larger multistate study in which I was the moderator of semi-structured asynchronous online focus group interviews with educators,

including ELTs and SETs. ELTs and SETs were selected for this study because they represent the intersecting student qualities of SEAL+D. This study addresses the following two research questions:

1. What are ELTs and special education teachers SETs beliefs about SEAL+D participation in state summative tests?
2. How do ELTs and SETs explain and justify their beliefs in relation to their roles and professional contexts in making state summative test decisions for SEAL+D?

To answer these questions, I centered on what ELTs and SETs stated through their written responses in the data collected and provide excerpts that respond to the research questions.

Purpose of the Study

In addition to the federal accountability mandate for students' participation in state academic achievement tests, language policy articulated in ESEA's Title I and III that mandate states to account for SEAL+D performance on an annual English language proficiency assessment (Dear Colleague Letter, 2015), adds an emphasis on the criticality of language considerations in the tests for students.

Despite the intent to implement inclusive test practices for ELs and SDs to have the same opportunity to participate in state accountability tests, reports of both groups of students' performance are commonly noted for challenges in meeting standards-based expectations in comparison to their other general education peers who are non-ELs and non-SDs. SEAL+D, who are dually identified in both groups, as ELs must participate in both academic content and ELP state tests of which little is known about their outcomes.

In light of the growing and increasingly linguistically diverse EL population in schools, with a corresponding increase in the number of these students who will be identified for special education services, there are minimal explicit language education policies (Menken, 2008) in the field of special education to provide guidance for teachers, particularly for SEAL+D. As the primary implementers of assessments for SEAL+D, teachers must rely on their own understanding and interpretations of policies. Menken (2008) and Menken and García (2010) assert that at the local level, teachers are language policymakers in developing permutations of test-based accountability policy as they implement and negotiate accountability tests. They add that because teachers explicitly implement these assessments to students, their beliefs about testing, language, and the needs of the students influence their interpretations of testing as language policy; therefore, within their classrooms, they directly contribute to language policy.

One way to learn more about SEAL+D is to glean perspectives from their ELTs and SETs, who represent SEAL+D intersecting qualities and work directly with SEAL+D. By addressing this topic for this specific group of students, this study aims to provide critical insights from ELTs and SETs. To address this research gap, I draw from a language policy lens to ascertain teachers' perspectives about the role of language in relation to state tests for students. I also draw on the intersectionality lens to account for the multidimensional qualities of SEAL+D.

Overview of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The following second chapter is a review of the literature identified for the purpose of this study. It further grounds the study in language

policy for ELTs and SETs who represent the students at the intersection of English language proficiency development and special education. Specifically, I critically examine current language policy research of teachers' beliefs in relation to test decision practices that impact SEAL+D. In chapter three, I describe the qualitative methodology I employed in this study including the research design that I relied on to collect and analyze the data. In chapter four, I present the core findings from this study that include excerpts from teachers' responses to the two research questions in my study. Finally, in chapter five, I discuss the analysis of the findings, implications, limitations, and conclusions of this study.

Overall, this study, as outlined in the chapters to follow, expands on the research with the emerging theoretical application of language education policy in concert with intersectionality to address ELTs' and SETs', who represent the dual qualities of SEAL+D, beliefs on the role of language in relation to disability. Through these lenses, the study contributes much needed empirical evidence about teachers' beliefs of SEAL+D participation in state mandated academic assessments. The findings will serve to make visible this understudied group of students, who unlike their other general education peers, not only must participate annually in states' grade-level academic achievement tests but also the state English language proficiency test, with the intention of identifying potential challenges they have.

Chapter Two

Language Considerations for SEAL+D in State Summative Tests

Reports indicate that many ELs (U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, 2021) and SDs (U.S. Department of Education, 2017) continue to have low academic achievement compared to their other general education peers. Still, little information is available on the academic achievement of ELs with disabilities (Albus et al., 2021). In addition, teachers' beliefs can influence the educational decisions they make for students (Fives & Buehl, 2012), including test practices for SEAL+D participation in state academic achievement tests. In this chapter, I provide context for this study with an overview of the test participation policy and teachers' beliefs. Next, I describe the literature search method I used to review the research literature critically. I then provide an analysis of the existing literature I identified relevant to my area of study on educators' beliefs about all students, including ELs, SDs, and SEAL+D participation in state academic tests. Lastly, I describe the proposed combined theoretical approaches of language policy and intersectionality that I incorporated to frame this study.

Test Participation Policy

The federal law of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), in a previous reauthorization as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001), mandated accountability of states and schools for all students to participate in academic achievement tests to measure their progress in meeting academic grade-level standards. The mandate of accountability state tests for students continues through the latest reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

of 2015. States receiving federal funding must annually report reading, mathematics, and other content test data to the federal government for all students and student subgroups, including SDs, ELs, students who receive free and reduced lunch, and students' ethnicity or race identified as non-White. Specific to SDs, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 requires all states receiving funding to report assessment data for students with disabilities. Specific for ELs, Title I and III require states to report on the progress of ELs on their annual state English language proficiency test, specifically with the newly added emphasis on the ELP progress for SEAL+D. This requirement for SEAL+D may bring greater attention to this group of students considering the exceptionally low levels of state reporting in relative terms (Albus et al., 2021).

The most current indicator on the number of states that reported participation and performance data for ELs with disabilities on all general tests shows an increase from one to three states from 2017–18 to 2018–19, with two additional states reporting participation and performance for some of their general tests (Albus et al., 2021). For ELs with disabilities, 11 states reported participation, and 13 states reported performance. Overall, the number of states reporting participation, performance, or both on general ELP tests was 28 for ELs and 14 for ELs with disabilities (Albus et al., 2021).

Despite the mandate for the progress monitoring of SEAL+D performance on state accountability tests, not all states report on their participation, which leaves an incomplete picture of how SEAL+D is faring nationwide. As teachers are the primary assessors of student learning by directly administering tests to their students, it is critical to include their perspectives

about testing SEAL+D, which is the aim of this study. To do so, I will first provide an overview of teacher beliefs about school testing policy in the next section.

Teachers' beliefs

The research on teachers' beliefs is expansive across disciplines and topics, in which there is no singular definition for beliefs in the literature. Nevertheless, broadly, teachers may be consciously aware of their beliefs or subconsciously hold them without question (Fives & Buehl, 2012; Kagan, 1992). The research literature indicates that teachers' beliefs about their role (e.g., Evans, 2009; Luttenberg et al., 2013; TESOL, 2013), subject matter (e.g., Reeves, 2006; van den Berg, 2002), and students (e.g., Jordan et al., 2010; Karabenick & Noda, 2004) can differentially influence how policy is interpreted, enacted, mutated, and resisted from the original intent of a policy (Duemer & Mendez-Morse, 2002) by which teachers' beliefs may guide or be reflected in their actions (Richardson, 1996). Alternatively, practices may influence teachers' beliefs, often concerning their teaching self-efficacy beliefs (Buehl & Beck, 2015). For example, Lauermann and Berger (2021) surveyed teachers and students to examine the relationship between teachers' motivational beliefs of self-efficacy and responsibility for student educational outcomes. One prominent finding was that when teachers were confident in their teaching capability and took responsibility for their instruction and student outcomes, they seemed to be attuned to and supported student needs, which suggested a positive association with student engagement. However, the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices may not be linked or consistent with teacher practices (Buehl & Beck, 2015). In this study, I define teachers' beliefs to be conscious or subconsciously held assumptions about SEAL+D participation in state tests, in which I investigate teachers' beliefs through analysis of their talk (Gill & Hoffman, 2009) in

relation to their testing practices. I examine teachers' talk to provide insight from their rationales that may explain their underlying beliefs about SEAL+D participation in state tests.

To provide context for the aim of my study, I next conducted a literature review to gain an understanding of existing research relevant to my area of study that will illustrate the existing gaps in the literature. I first describe the literature search method I used to identify representative empirical studies focusing on the studies' methodology and findings. Clarification of key terms is included as well.

Literature Search Method

Since more needs to be reported by state departments of education about the state participation and test performance for SEAL+D (Albus et al., 2021), I started with the assumption that there may not be a wealth of existing research on SEAL+D. So, I set more comprehensive parameters for my literature search on teachers' beliefs that included any group of students, including ELs, SDs, and SEAL+D, and all groups of educators, including GETs, ELTs, and SETs associated with state academic achievement tests between the years 2001 to the present. The year 2001 was chosen as the starting point because that was the year the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), which marked the inception of mandating all students to participate in accountability tests. Therefore, the criteria for papers in this review had to address all three areas of educators, beliefs, and accountability assessments. Articles could include in-service teachers and educators across K-12 from every subject area, school setting, and any location in the United States. Articles on pre-service, pre-K, and post-secondary educators, international contexts, instructional practices, and curriculum standards were excluded.

My primary search utilized the University of Minnesota library's databases including, Academic Search Premier, Google Scholar, Education Source, EBSCO, PsychINFO, Linguistics and Language, and Digital Dissertations. I only considered empirical peer-reviewed journal articles. Non-peer reviewed journal articles, position papers, and other publications were excluded from the selection process. I used multiple combination keyword searches from these primary word groups: (1) teacher, special education/disability, EL/bilingual; (2) beliefs, perceptions; (3) high-stakes tests, assessments, large-scale assessments; and (4) accountability policy, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). I used a broad a search for the SEAL+D by including interdisciplinary field searches in general education, English as a second language/bilingual, and special education. Additionally, I used internet search engines to identify sources at organizational websites such as the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO), National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA), and the Migration Policy Institute (MPI). An example would be "teacher beliefs high-stakes tests." I also searched the references listed in the qualifying publications.

I only excluded an article if it did not specify the characteristics of the educators or students. Much of the published work on my topic was in non-empirical research (neither quantitative nor qualitative), non-peer-reviewed journals (written forms such as reports or presentations), or a study's data generated before 2001. However, the search results identified 11 articles for this review. These articles have varied conceptual frameworks and methodologies. A review of these articles is organized on educators' beliefs of accountability assessments in four different student groups: (1) all students (those who were not in the following specific three

groups); (2) students with a disability; (3) students who are English learners; and (4) students with English as an additional language and co-existing disability (SEAL+D). Articles in each of the following sections are addressed chronologically, beginning with the earliest and ending with the most recent.

Teachers' Beliefs About Language Considerations for Student Participation in State Academic Achievement Tests

This section is a literature review of empirical studies that pertain to educators' beliefs about state summative tests for SEAL+D. Because SEAL+D is an understudied student population, the parameters for the literature search were for all general education students, including special student groups of SDs and ELs. Also, educators from separate roles, such as teachers and principals, and teachers from different disciplines, such as general education, special education, and English language teaching, were included in the parameters of the literature search. A critical review of the studies is organized sequentially into four sections: all students, SDs, ELs, and SEAL+D.

Teacher Beliefs and Testing Practices with Respect to All Students

The studies reviewed in this section pertain to all students and do not specify any student group. I identified these four studies: Grant (2001); Abrams et al. (2003); Jones and Egley (2006); and Vasquez Heilig et al. (2012).

The earliest study in this section is Grant's (2001) case study of two high school social studies teachers. He examined the influence of the state's eleventh grade U.S. History and Government test on their instruction and assessment practices. He framed his study by observing the teachers' classrooms on a U.S. civil rights movement content unit. He also interviewed the

teachers before and after the observations (though his data pertained to only the observations). Both teachers were from the same suburban school in New York. He identified one teacher who was a female African American, and the other was a European American male. Both held master's degrees in American history but had different years of teaching experience. Field notes from the observations were analyzed with an inductive approach.

Grant (2001) found each teacher had quite different ways of teaching and attending to the state test. Aside from the testing requirement, he identified two factors influencing their practice – their views of the subject and their students. For example, the male teacher had a more teacher-centric, implicit instructional style that reflected aspects of the test. He did not reference the test during the class content, nor did he have class activities that mimicked the test content or format. Yet, his class assessments were always in a multiple-choice format, which did not always include an essay portion. This teacher believed the test served to provide a content standard and hold teachers accountable. He held low expectations of his students, whose intellects he viewed as undeveloped.

In contrast, the female teacher's instructional style was less representative of the test, and she included various activities and experiences in the content unit. She used a more straightforward approach in setting aside some class periods to prepare for the state test, using questions from past state tests and having the students practice test-taking strategies. Also, unlike her colleague, she believed students could learn in various styles rather than from a one-size-fits-all perspective. Grant (2001) concluded from his findings that how teachers instructed (rather than what they taught), and the beliefs they held of their students were inconsistent with other

findings in the literature. Notably, other factors besides the testing requirement guided these teachers' practices.

The small scale of Grant's (2001) study--two teachers, one subject, one grade level, and one suburban school--limits the transferability of his findings. However, his use of observations (rather than only teachers' verbal reports) provided evidence of actual occurrences to support his conclusions. Triangulating his interview data with observations could have revealed consistencies or inconsistencies between their beliefs and actions. Also, additional demographic information about the school and students and their test outcomes may have further explained differences between the teachers' beliefs about the different instructional approaches they used. Unlike Grant's study, I did not conduct observations. Still, I conducted focus groups with a greater representation in the number of teachers specific to ELTs and SETs, not GETs, across grade levels and geographic locale in one state. Given that New York is notable for a high EL population but was unstated in Grant's study. A few details of demographic information about the gender and race of the teachers were provided. Still, no explanation was made if these had a possible bearing on the beliefs teachers held in using different instructional practices in relation to the context of the demographics of the students and school.

The second article by Abrams et al. (2003) investigated teachers' attitudes about accountability testing in high-stakes testing states compared to low-stakes testing states. They conducted a national survey in 2001 on how the state test impacted classroom instruction and assessment. A total of 100 teachers were randomly selected from both urban and non-urban areas across all grade levels. Most of the teachers were white females with a wide range of experiences. A few were special education teachers (SETs), and it is assumed the remaining

majority were general education teachers (GETs). Similarly, the participants in my study include SETs and with the addition of ELTs, who too mainly were white females, but not GETs.

Abrams et al. (2003) reported that high stakes testing negatively impacted teachers' classroom instruction. For example, teachers in high stakes testing states spent more time preparing for the test by teaching tested content and less on non-tested content, such as arts, field trips, and class enrichment activities. Across all states, most teachers' responses indicated that their state testing program led them to teach in ways that contradicted their conceptions of appropriate educational practices. Teachers' assessment practices were also influenced. More teachers from high-stakes test states reported tremendous pressure to raise test scores, use classroom assessments more frequently, and format them similarly to the state test.

The teachers also expressed their stated beliefs on how test scores should be used. Most teachers did not believe that test outcomes should be used to hold schools and teachers accountable. More than half did not agree that they should be used as a mechanism to decide students' grade promotion or retention. Yet they were not against using test scores to hold students accountable or to determine who should be awarded high school diplomas. Teachers reported that the high-stakes tests may have contributed to their students dropping out of high school, but the evidence was not provided to validate this position. Most teachers across states were positive about one aspect—their state's content standards. Over half of them expressed that they taught to the state standards and believed that teachers should follow the curriculum on which the test was based.

The study's researchers contended that policymakers need to consider the unintended negative consequences of state testing programs and emphasize supporting and improving

teaching and learning with less reliance on a system of rewards and sanctions to enhance student improvement. Including additional data--such as observations, interviews, and student outcomes (such as dropout rates in the state) would have made a more comprehensive and compelling case for policy reconsiderations. Also, information was not provided on teachers' content areas or demographic information of students and schools. Though the authors in an endnote stated that their survey included teachers across all school levels from elementary, middle, and high school subject areas, and a few SETs, the findings did not differentiate teachers' responses across the different grade levels nor differentiate between GET and SET responses, which may have identified other differences. Though my study does not include GETs but has SETs with the addition of ELTs, I will compare between SETs and ELTs.

The third study by Jones and Elegy's (2006) compares teachers' and administrators' (i.e., principals') views of the effects of accountability testing. They argued that comparing the two groups would provide a deeper understanding of the effects of testing programs. They summarized their findings from several previous papers that looked at each group separately to make this comparison.

The authors conducted a survey in 2002, the fourth year that testing was implemented in Florida. Florida is commonly one of the states associated with a high EL population though this aspect was not mentioned in the study. There were 708 participants divided into two groups, with approximately equal numbers of elementary teachers and principals from 235 schools across 30 districts in the state. Teachers and principals each had a questionnaire about their perceptions and practices on the state's test-based accountability program. Each questionnaire had multiple-choice items with two open-ended items.

The authors determined mixed findings between their participants of teachers and administrators. Both groups shared negative views of the effects of testing on schools, but the principals had more positive thoughts. For example, principals believed testing had more positive effects on student learning. The researchers compared the principals' perspective to that of policymakers and politicians. Test data were helpful for principals in their role as instructional leaders to make decisions about teachers and programs and to provide an overall picture of the effects of the implementation of their testing program.

Contrary to the principals, teachers thought there were more negative effects on student and teacher motivation. Most teachers needed help finding the test data helpful in improving their teaching practices or student achievement. They were more interested in their teaching and individual student learning. More teachers than principals suggested eliminating the test.

Jones and Egley (2006) attributed the differences between the groups to how the testing program affected their roles and responsibilities. The differences were further elucidated in their post-survey group interviews of both principals and teachers. For instance, principals looked at aggregate data to have an overall understanding. In contrast, teachers emphasized individual student performance focusing on student learning and motivation. However, the findings were not all one-sided by either group. Despite the differences, the groups shared a few of the same sentiments. For example, some teachers believed their administrators understood teachers' challenges and used data in ways to improve student learning.

The study's authors concluded that tensions stemming from different beliefs and expectations between the groups could negatively impact school culture and degrade trust. However, more details about the participants, schools, or survey and interview methodologies

could have added further understanding of the differences between the groups. Further, they asserted that trust provides a more positive environment with open communication. Included among their suggestions for improvement were: (1) teachers need to have their voices heard, and leaders need to model an ethic of care for building trust, which is vital to cooperation, and (2) principals as instructional leaders can shield teachers from the pressures of accountability testing and increase communication through classroom observations to better understand teachers' perspectives. If the authors had cited background literature on the critical importance of trust and provided examples of trust or lack thereof, their conclusions would have substantiated trust's significance between educators and trust implications on accountability testing. In addition, more information on teachers' and students' demographics compared to the principals could have provided a factor to explain the differences between their beliefs. Finally, given that the study's survey was conducted over a relatively substantial number of 235 schools in Florida, a state noted for a large EL population that went unmentioned, it may have added further explanation for the need for trust and teachers' voices to be heard.

In the last study in this section, Vasquez Heilig et al. (2012) employed risk management theory, which they claimed they were the first to use to conceptualize school practices concerning their treatment of at-risk students in low-performing high schools. In addition, they examined the beliefs of teachers and leaders in meeting educational accountability with the intention to improve educational outcomes for at-risk students.

The authors combined and summarized the data from two studies conducted from 1995 to 2008. They interviewed 89 educators, who were selected using a key informant method. The schools were randomly chosen identified from available test scores, representing seven

geographically diverse, low-performing Texas high schools. The schools were also described as Latina/o and African American majority high schools. It was mentioned that focus groups were conducted, but no other information about this method was given. An inductive process was used to analyze the data. They also collected field notes, school archival materials, and local press reports. Their data analysis identified a significant theme: schools were developing an aversion to at-risk students.

Contrary to the intended purpose of test-based accountability to improve student achievement, Vasquez Heilig et al. (2012) reported that schools mirrored corporate risk-management processes, with unintended and negative consequences from pressures to increase test scores. Educators viewed students as liabilities and were at-risk student averse, as there were no incentives to keep low-performing students. Fear was instilled in the school culture with concerns of job security, tainted school reputations, and loopholes that forced kids out of school to exclude them from high school exit exams. They concluded that the costs of high-stakes accountability were more significant for at-risk students and did not fulfill the purpose of education as a public good. Instead, students were viewed as assets or liabilities based on their test scores. They described educators as 'victims of a broken system" (Vasquez Heilig et al., p. 580), inferring that they lacked agency and capacity for self-efficacy.

The authors asserted that their conceptual perspective supported evidence contrary to reports that high-stakes accountability had produced successful schools. Their findings lead the reader to infer that all the educators in the study held the same negative perceptions, all educators used loophole practices unwittingly, and that all students in the schools were low achievers. No additional information was given about the educators, whether the same educators were

interviewed in the intervening years, the number of interviews, or if interview protocols were used. Accounting for the context of their study, low-performing schools would have qualified their conclusions. There was no clue of any positive aspects in the findings, and they presented their conclusions with a unilateral grim view of accountability testing across the 13 years of their data collection. The authors identified students as non-White in Texas. Though the state is notable for its high EL population, this was unstated in the study, and no demographic information was given about the teachers. Such information could have added further insight into educators' deficit perspective about the students.

In sum, these articles, which focused on teacher testing beliefs and practices with respect to all students, used different methodologies with or without stating a framework using other data methods (i.e., observations, a survey, interviews) and different number and types of participants. The authors used general terms to describe the context of their studies, with little to no information about the teachers, students, and schools. All studies used or included data at the time of the inception of NCLB (2001) that framed the context of their studies and the accountability assessments. One of the studies identified teachers' views of their subject and students, other than solely the test, which influenced their practices. Each study's conclusions could have been strengthened with additional data, such as students and educators demographics for comparative analysis, more clarity on methodological processes, or other literature to support their conclusions.

Overall, the studies above reported adverse outcomes from the influence of state accountability tests on teachers' instructional practices, which included deficit-oriented beliefs about students and tension between teachers' and principals' beliefs about the tests. Only one

study included SETs besides GETs, but the authors did not make comparisons between the two groups. Though NCLB required disaggregated reporting of test outcomes for groups of students, including SDs and ELs, all studies occurred in states (i.e., New York, Florida, Texas) noted for their high EL population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023); this remained unmentioned in the studies, nor were ELTs included as participants in the studies. Unlike these studies, I have ELTs and SETs in my research and make comparisons of their beliefs about SEAL+D in a Midwestern state, which is not a region commonly studied.

Teacher Beliefs and Testing Practices with Respect to Students with a Disability (SDs)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) enacted in 1975 mandates a free appropriate public education for eligible students identified by a team of professionals as having a disability that adversely affects a student's academic performance to need special education and related services. The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 required SDs to access the general curriculum and participate in state tests. Also, disaggregated public reporting of test results for all students was needed to increase the accountability of schools that received federal special education funding.

The number of students ages 3-21 who received special education services increased from 13 percent of the total public school enrollment in 2009 to 15 percent in 2021 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). SDs are a heterogenous group in which 13 disability categories are federally recognized. In 2020-21 the category of specific learning disabilities (SLD) had the largest percentage of students, in which 33 percent of all students who received special education services had SLD (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023b). Variations may occur within each category. For example, several different sub-disorders, including oral

language, written language, reading, and mathematics, vary in severity (Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2018).

Students who receive special education services have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) guided by an IEP team to make decisions about the IEP for students. The IEP team includes a SET, administrator, parents or guardians, GETs, and other related services providers. ELs with disabilities may be eligible to receive special education services through an IEP. An educator with expertise in English as a second language is required to be included in the IEP team (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

For this section, I identified the following three articles that examined educators' beliefs about accountability testing specific to SDs: Crawford et al. (2002); Vannest et al. (2009); and Russell and Bray (2013)

The first article in this section is Crawford et al. (2002) study of educators' perspectives including SD in high-stakes tests. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit a representative sample of educators across six geographically diverse districts and school levels in Oregon. Most of the participants were female with varied teaching experience. Face-to-face focus groups were conducted with 57 GETs, SETs, and a few assessment coordinators. One focus group was led in each of the six districts (the total number of districts in the state was not given).

An inductive method was used to analyze the focus group data to identify themes. One of the main themes was teachers' attitudes, and the researchers found a few mixed findings. Most of the teachers were apprehensive about the impact of testing on the well-being of the SD. Teachers had concerns about the amount of attention given to tests and the pressures associated with sanctions, such as teacher reassignment and teachers switching out of the testing grades. On the

other hand, only a few teachers were enthusiastic about using standards to improve students' educational outcomes and the increased opportunities for collaboration between GETs and SETs. Although many teachers had based inclusion decisions on individual student characteristics, a few teachers perceived the state's policy as rigid with little room for professional judgment. But a few others made inclusion decisions based on student group characteristics rather than individualized considerations.

The researchers, Crawford et al. (2002) acknowledged that the non-random selection of the participants in their study did not represent a broad range of experiences. No other information was provided on participant demographics, the number of focus groups compared, and the educator composition of each focus group. More information on the number of districts in the state and a comparison across focus groups and educators' roles in the different disciplines would have provided a richer understanding of teachers' beliefs regarding state testing.

In the second article, Vannest et al. (2009) used the framework of perception of change related to accountability. They examined educators' beliefs about changes from the impact of NCLB on special education. They conducted a survey in 2005 with teachers and directors of special education in Texas. The recruitment process entailed different sampling methods, with 15 districts and 248 respondents in their survey. Participants were primarily female educators from various racial/ethnic backgrounds who taught across all grade levels.

Descriptive statistics analysis indicated findings were mixed regarding changes from the impact of NCLB. Respondents perceived accountability as positive, especially with having higher academic standards for students in special education. On the other hand, at least half of the participants negatively perceived the consequences of students not passing the state-

mandated tests. But the authors concluded that educators' stated beliefs were a more salient measure of the impact of accountability assessment policy than assessment scores. The analysis method limited results to either positive or negative perceptions without more detailed explanations for teachers' reasoning of their perceptions about changes from the impact of accountability assessments.

In the last article in this section, Russell and Bray (2013) used a sense-making framework to understand educators' beliefs about the relationship between the special education policy of IDEA and NCLB's accountability assessment policy. The work in their paper (described as exploratory) was from 106 out of 347 interviews of a larger two-year, 2004-2006, longitudinal study in three states (California, Georgia, and Pennsylvania) and in six districts (the districts' states were not specified).

The researchers did a comparative analysis of the alignment between NCLB and IDEA written policies. They also interviewed selected educators on their understanding and implementation of both policies. The participants included GETs and SETs, principals, and superintendents representing elementary and middle school districts. There were no other details about the districts or students other than that they were in special education and represented a more prominent than the national percentage of the Hispanic-Latino population. However, this aspect of the students was not reported as a significant finding in the study.

Russell and Bray (2013) used an inductive approach to analyze the interview data, and a comparison was made across the different educator roles. They found that more district leaders than teachers interpreted NCLB as promoting the inclusion of more SDs in general education classrooms to expose them to the general curriculum to meet accountability assessment goals.

More than the teachers, the leaders also attributed the failure to achieve adequate academic levels to the SD population. The leaders expressed concerns that SDs would be stigmatized, and schools would be penalized for having a disproportionate number of SDs. For example, two superintendents reported having moved SDs to different schools to avoid having them identified as a subgroup in their accountability reporting.

Russell and Bray (2013) found that teachers were conflicted in their views of teaching and learning from the two policies they interpreted as contradictory. The teachers were frustrated and forced to implement IDEA's individualization approach for each student while implementing NCLB's standardization approach in their practices. The strongest tension for teachers was administering accountability tests to SD based on their grade levels because they tended to perform significantly below grade level compared to their peers without disabilities.

The authors concluded that the misalignment of the two policies might be a factor in the educators' incoherent sense-making between the two policies. It was also suggested that the differences in interpretations might be attributed to the educators' distinct roles. However, the authors did not compare these differences across roles and states. A total of 20 participants across roles and states were interviewed each year in the study. But the number of participants interviewed across roles from each state varied yearly and the superintendents were not included in all years. In addition, the authors did not indicate if the same participants were interviewed each year or if there were educators in the minority who did not have a conflicted understanding of the policies. It is assumed, therefore, that the authors' conclusions about educators' sensemaking of the policies were consistent across all three states regardless of their roles and school and student demographics.

In conclusion, the three studies in this section about SDs differed in their application with or without a framework, and data collection methods included focus groups, a survey, and interviews. As a result, the findings were mixed, which could be attributed to the roles of the participants and their contexts. However, the researchers acknowledged they did not make comparisons of roles across different contexts. In addition, the authors acknowledged limitations in their investigation in not collecting information about the participants. Finally, as with the previous section, data in these studies were from around the earliest years of the inception of NCLB (2001).

Even though teachers from the studies in this section may have been of different racial and ethnic backgrounds or from disciplines in special education or general education, the researchers did not make demographic comparisons across the teachers to possibly account as a contributing factor for the results. Moreover, comparisons were limited to labelling the results as either positive or negative without providing reasons for a deeper understanding of the results. Like these studies, I include SETs, but unlike these studies, I have ELTs to compare with the reported beliefs of SETs. Again, like the studies in the previous group for all students, studies occurred in Western and Eastern states more commonly recognized with ELs. In contrast, my study occurs in a Midwestern state.

Teacher Beliefs and Testing Practices with Respect to Students who are English Learners (ELs)

ESSA's Title I (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a) require ELs to take two types of tests. Title I, the federal program for educating underserved students, requires ELs to take the same academic achievement tests that all students must take. Additionally, Title III (U.S.

Department of Education, 2014b), the federal program supporting language instruction programs, requires ELs to participate in a state's annual English proficiency assessment to meet English language proficiency standards and requires public reporting of their test scores. ELs can participate in an English language program to support their attainment towards English proficiency to help them meet the state's academic achievement standards-based tests in which all students are expected to participate.

The population of ELs continues to increase in schools in the U.S. The percentage of ELs rose from 9.2 percent in 2010 to 10.4 percent in 2019, and states differ in the size of the EL population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). For example, 19.6 percent of students in Texas schools are ELs compared to 0.8 percent in West Virginia. Like SDs, ELs are a heterogenous group that is diverse in multiple ways. A few ways ELs are diverse are in their home languages, schooling experiences, English language proficiency level, and if they have a disability. Furthermore, each state varies in how they define an EL, what procedure they use to identify a student as an EL, and cut-off scores that indicate a student is English proficient. Once a student has been identified as an EL, the student must participate in the state's annual English language proficiency test until they meet the state's English language proficiency standards of the test.

Despite the increasing EL population, there appear to be very few studies that address educators' stated beliefs about ELs' participation in state academic achievement tests. I identified only two studies, one by Harper et al. (2007) and the second by Palmer and Rangel (2011).

In the first paper, Harper et al. (2007) investigated teachers' beliefs on implementing the NCLB policy in their schools. Purposive sampling was used to recruit the participants in the study. They conducted 52 face-to-face or telephone interviews with English as a second language (ESL) teachers across all grade levels in 40 schools from diverse regions in Florida.

Harper et al. (2007) used an inductive method to analyze the data. They focused on one theme in the article: teachers' beliefs on NCLB implementation with emphasis on the shift from their role as ESL teachers to reading teachers. They found mixed responses but agreed that the implementation of NCLB had significant effects. A positive aspect for several teachers was that more attention was given to ELs, especially their reading achievement. But for most teachers, a focus on reading, decoding, and associated tests dominated their instruction at the expense of teaching other skill areas such as language, speaking, listening, writing, comprehension, and vocabulary development. Teachers indicated the standardized structure of a homogenous and scripted curriculum limited their ability to provide individualized attention to ELs. Moreover, teaching outside their expertise with an emphasis on reading instruction had several teachers question their role in teaching ESL.

A comparison of teachers' beliefs across the grade levels and geographical locale may have provided additional insight into the findings. Also, the findings did not extend to answering their second research question: "What are the implications of NCLB for K-12 ESL teaching and teachers in the United States?" (Harper et al., 2007, p. 643). It is inferred from this question that the study's findings for Florida are generalizable for the entire U.S. Also, profiles of teachers were not provided, nor information about the students and schools.

In the second article, Palmer and Rangel (2011) used sense-making theory to understand implementing accountability assessment policy shaped teachers' decision making in bilingual classrooms. Specifically, they argued that the context of the students in classrooms must be considered in understanding teachers' decision making. Further, they argued that teachers are not automatons who implement policies without considering individual student needs.

Palmer and Rangel (2011) conducted ethnographic interviews in 2006 with third through fifth-grade bilingual teachers of bilingual classrooms in a large six-school urban district in Texas. A purposeful method was used to select bilingual teachers as participants for the study, resulting in 16 teachers. They used a traditional ethnographic inductive approach to analyze the data. Unfortunately, principals from the school districts did not permit classroom observation data for this study, so the researchers could not triangulate observational data with interview data. Because of this constraint, the researchers acknowledged that the study was limited to participants' stated beliefs without confirmatory observation of the implementing accountability assessment practices in the classroom.

The researchers found that teachers attempted to make sense of the competing demands from external policy mandates. Two types of pressures were associated in response to the needs. One was explicit pressure from explicit messages. For instance, grade-level teams organized school schedule activities around test preparation, which limited instruction time. The second type of pressure was from implicit messages in response to explicit pressures. For example, teachers spent time formatting classroom content like state tests and taught test-taking skills. Because bilingual teachers had the additional responsibility of instructing general curriculum content and ESL instruction, they experienced time pressures from high-stakes testing restricted

the amount of ESL instruction. In addition, they found that teachers believed they should make learning fun and motivate their students to engage in experiences in a way that expressed caring. As a result, they buffered the students from less authentic learning experiences. Teachers were aware of the challenges to make sense of the tension between their beliefs and the external pressures to focus on testing.

The authors cited their findings as inconsistent with the literature that refers to teachers as automatons who implement policies top-down without considering students' needs (Menken & García, 2010; Shohamy, 2001). Palmer and Rangel concluded that it is essential to consider the local context of students in the classroom where teachers implement accountability tests. However, inconsistent with their conclusion, no demographic information was given in the article about the teachers, students, schools, and bilingual programs.

To summarize, teachers in both studies in this section on ELs shared similar findings in ways that NCLB impacted teachers' beliefs and practices. The test requirements constrained their ability to make decisions. Nevertheless, in one study, the teachers attempted to balance their instruction by providing authentic learning experiences for their students. The findings could have been supported further by aligning their research questions and more detailed demographic information on the students and teachers. The impact of positive, authentic learning experiences on student participation in the assessments and their resultant performance outcomes are unknown. Though one study reported on the role change of the ELTs that restricted their ability to teach the English language, neither study provided demographic information about teachers, students, and schools or language programs. I, too, address the role of ELTs, but more specifically about their role in providing input to other stakeholders, such as the IEP team, about

the tests and status of students' English language proficiency. These two studies occurred in states noted for the EL population, but my study is in the less studied region of a Midwestern state.

Teacher Beliefs and Testing Practices with Respect to Students with English as an Additional Language and Co-Existing Disability (SEAL+D)

SEAL+D are students who receive both special education service and English as a second language (ESL)/bilingual education service. There is a wide variability of the characteristics of students within SEAL+D, including their educational history, the range of different languages, and the range of disabilities (Artiles et al., 2005). The ELs with disabilities population is approximately 11.6% of K-12 students, increasing as ELs increase (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

Much of the existing literature on the SEAL+D group address a primary concern of making an accurate differential diagnosis between linguistic differences and disabilities to determine a student's eligibility for services (e.g., Chhuon & Sullivan, 2013; Klingner & Artiles, 2006; Sullivan et al., 2020; Zehler et al., 2003). This determination can influence whether a student must participate not only in the content tests but as an EL the state's English language proficiency test. Therefore, ELs with or without disabilities may or may not receive appropriate instruction, assessments, resources, and support.

The SEAL+D population, like all students, must take the state academic achievement tests. Nevertheless, unlike their other general education peers, these students must participate in content and English language proficiency tests. As noted earlier, SDs and ELs continue to have

low performance outcomes on states' academic achievement tests. It can therefore be assumed that this is also the case for SEAL+D, who represent both student populations.

Unlike the other SDs and ELs populations, public and federal reporting of disaggregate test scores is not required for SEAL+D. Therefore, the available public information on SEAL+D participation and achievement performance in state accountability tests is minimal (Albus et al., 2021). Furthermore, most states still need to develop policies to address SEAL+D participation in state tests (Thurlow et al., 2004).

With limited information about SEAL+D, there are fewer resources for best practices in identifying and providing educational support, and challenges are magnified in teaching and assessing SEAL+D in required tests. There are few studies on students who cross between having linguistic differences other than English and disability, as indicated in this review. There are even fewer studies that investigate teachers' stated beliefs about accountability testing of this unique student population. For this review, I identified only two articles on SEAL+D from Mueller et al. (2004) and Minnema et al. (2006).

In the first paper in this section, Mueller et al. (2004) explored the effects of the special education policy of IDEA and California's Proposition 227 (1998) in restricting non-English instruction in teachers' classrooms and assessment practices for SEAL+D, specifically students with moderate to severe disabilities. Mueller and Singer (2004) used the snowball method to recruit special education teachers. Fifteen teachers were recruited from an urban region in California with a wide-ranging socioeconomic status and a high EL population. The teachers served grades K-12 and varied in their experience and their knowledge of Spanish. Each teacher was interviewed for one hour, which occurred over one year from 2000-2001. An inductive

method was used to analyze the data. The authors also performed member-checking of the themes with one of the participants.

The authors found that teachers needed clarification about both laws due to the lack of information. For example, parents were not included in the special education Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to discuss the option for the language of instruction other than English. Many teachers explained that there needed to be more administrative input or guidance on decisions about the language of instruction and assessment for these students. Teachers also expressed frustration in needing bilingual resources and assessments for their students. The authors acknowledged the small number of participants and the limited geographical range of the study. There was no mention of any attempts to recruit ESL teachers to participate in this study.

The second study I reviewed in this section from Minnema et al. (2006) summarized the qualitative findings of one exemplary school case selected from a larger study. They used a systems approach in examining administrators' and teachers' beliefs to understand the complexity and contextual issues associated with including SEAL+D participation in state academic achievement tests.

The school was in an urban area of a large Western state's third largest, linguistically diverse school district. A purposeful sample included 25 SETs and GETs and five administrators (all were interviewed face-to-face). The only teacher demographic provided was that 86% of the teachers in this district were Caucasian (not of Hispanic or Latino descent). The students were identified as Spanish-English students with disabilities.

An inductive approach was used to analyze the data. Implementation of an inclusive accountability assessment approach was a priority for the district. All research participants

understood this policy to mean that all students were included in statewide testing. District and school administrators' comments reflected a systemic approach to information flow that emphasized the inclusion of SEAL+D in statewide testing. There were two primary ways that this policy information was communicated. One way was through professional development that focused on ways to support SEAL+D on large-scale assessments. Professional development was the bridge to ensure the implementation of this policy at the teacher praxis level. The authors did not report how frequently this training was done or how much SEAL+D participated in the tests.

A second way policy information was communicated was via the district principals and administrators, who believed their role included instructional leadership. Communication meant daily contact with staff and students, including entering classrooms to teach model instruction. The authors noted that they had informally observed these practices while collecting data for their research. For example, they observed principals interacting with staff, students, and parents throughout the school. The district leaders worked directly with the lead teachers and department heads of the schools to prevent communication gaps. Also, teachers were kept apprised through district newsletters.

The authors acknowledged that having responses from only 25 SETs and GETs across all school levels was negligible. The themes were predominantly around communication with parents about testing. Teachers believed that the parents of SEAL+D needed to understand the culture and procedures of American schools. Yet, particularly regarding large-scale tests, teachers assumed parents knew about statewide testing, even though the state information needed to be more readily understandable. In this small sample case study, the participants shared a general understanding of the implementation of testing across all levels of stakeholders.

Both studies in this section on SEAL+D represent different examples of educators' beliefs and experiences about accountability assessments for SEAL+D. In the first study with a restricted language policy, teachers' unclear understandings of allowable policy options, incomplete information communicated to teachers and parents, lack of solid administrator support, and lack of instructional resources frustrated teachers and limited their capacity to add value to the critical SEAL+D group. In contrast, the second study was illustrative of a successful district that implemented concerted efforts to maintain open communication, especially with parents, and the flow of information from the administrators to teachers. Professional development and administrative support were instrumental in conveying district's priorities to teachers as the primary implementers of testing. Even though both studies pertain to SEAL+D, only one included SETs but not ELTs, whereas, in my research, I have ELTs and SETs as representative of the intersecting qualities of SEAL+D and address the role of the ELT in the IEP.

Summary

The research literature review indicates a slim body of existing empirical work on educators' beliefs about academic achievement tests for the smaller group of general education students—SDs, ELs, and SEAL+D, despite the prominent role state tests have in education for all stakeholders. Though the studies across the different student groups varied in their frameworks and methodologies, negative findings were evident in most studies. For example, most of the studies focused on the impact of tests on teachers' instructional practices, such as relinquishing some of their instruction time to teach to the tests or prepare students for the tests.

The participants in the study included GETs, SETs, and principals but no ELTs. Only one study by Harper et al. (2007) included bilingual teachers that illustrated how the tests influenced a shift in their role from language teachers to becoming reading teachers. An exception to most of the studies, there was only one study with primarily positive findings by Minnema et al. (2006). Their study about SEAL+D illustrated beneficial outcomes from open communication across educational system levels from administrators to inform teachers and parents about testing policies.

These findings reveal varied and multiple influences that impact educators' beliefs, which can influence their practices (Fives & Buehl., 2012; Pajares, 1992). For example, numerous effects indicated in the studies that impacted teachers' instruction in an educational testing system included different school settings, student populations, educator roles, relationships among stakeholders, and testing policies.

For instance, the transmission of external policy messages from administrators to teachers is uneven and transformed by contextual differences across and within and by levels from states to districts, schools, teachers, and students. But most studies needed details on participants' demographics and settings. For example, all studies took place in states recognized as popular international border entries, e.g., California, Texas, Florida, and New York, with their high EL population. However, the authors omitted mentioned of this information. The lack of mention of ELs is a glaring gap, especially given the federal mandates for states to ensure special student populations, such as ELs, participate in their states' academic achievement tests. Furthermore, ELTs of ELs and SEAL+D, except for bilingual teachers in the study by Palmer and Rangel (2011), were not included in the studies. Overall, the studies were silent on the

relevance of language for teacher instruction of content and student participation in the classroom and state academic achievement tests. Unlike the studies I reviewed, my study will not focus on teachers' instructional practices but on testing concerning language considerations. In the next section, I describe the theoretical approaches I used to conduct my study.

Theoretical Frameworks in Tandem

The implementation of all educational policies occurs at the classroom level. Still, the ways and extent of this implementation depend on teachers' interpretations of policies (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977) and their beliefs that may be revealed through their enactment (Fives & Buehl, 2012; Pajares, 1992). Therefore, unlike the studies I reviewed in the previous section in which ELTs were absent, my study includes ELTs. With their inclusion, through the lens of language policy, I focus on the association of language with academic achievement tests and ELTs' role in making test-related decisions for SEAL+D.

Unlike a few of the studies I reviewed that only included the beliefs of GETs and SETs about students' participation in state tests, I address ELTs and SETs by adding the theoretical framework of intersectionality in combination with language policy. Incorporating both approaches provide a more inclusive framework to study the intersecting beliefs between ELTs and SETs, who represent both qualities of language and disability of SEAL+D. Therefore, I first provide an overview of the theoretical foundations of language education policy in the next section and then follow with an overview of intersectionality.

Language Education Policy

An assumption of the theory of action of a test-based accountability policy is that implementation of its provisions will directly improve academic achievement for all students. However, tensions can develop between a policy's intention and teachers' beliefs, understanding, and implementation of the policies. Therefore, I draw from language policy within the broader context of test-based accountability policy as one of the theoretical perspectives for my proposed study to examine teachers as language policymakers in implementing state accountability assessments for SEAL+D (Menken & García, 2010).

My study builds on the studies above to address the research gap that foregrounds language policy concerning high-stakes tests for SEAL+D. In this study, I draw on the expansive general definition of language policy from Spolsky's (2004) approach. His framework is an interconnection of the three components of language practices, language beliefs or ideology about language and its use, and the planning or management of language. More specifically, King (2000) distinguishes language ideology from beliefs as a "broader system of beliefs, standards, or values" (p. 168) about language. Language ideology inherently underpins language policy (Shohamy, 2006; Spolsky, 2004), and the role of language policy may be used as a covert or overt mechanism that influences practices (Shohamy, 2006). Therefore, language policy is viewed broadly in political, historical, and sociocultural contexts (Paulston & Heidemann, 2009; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Shohamy, 2006; Spolsky, 2004).

The value of the broadness of language policy as a theoretical framework is that it is not limited to one overarching theory confined to a single discipline methodology or definition

(Cooper, 1989; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Language policy is an interdisciplinary field that is flexible in its multi-method approach with a wide range of qualitative tools such as questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, ethnography, and others (Baker, 2009; Cooper, 1989; Ricento, 2009; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Furthermore, education is a primary domain of language policy study (Cooper, 1989; Corson, 1999; Menken & García, 2010; Shohamy, 2001, 2006). This analytic lens in empirical educational studies at the local and individual levels is in wide and productive use (Menken & García, 2010).

Despite the absence of an official U.S. language policy, Menken and Solorza (2014) argue that ESEA's reauthorization as NCLB poses a restrictive language education policy that impacts students' language skills and academic performance. They report in their work that test-based accountability is a disincentive for schools to serve ELs because doing so negatively affects schools' ability to ensure that students make adequate progress. Menken asserts (2008) that testing creates a de facto implicit language policy because the accountability tests were not developed with a plan to affect language change. Furthermore, she contends that language policy exists at every level of the educational system, from the top-down federal NCLB policy level to the bottom-up local practice level in classrooms that influence what, how, and who teaches and what languages are taught.

For example, Menken's (2008) study of ELs illustrated high-stakes mandated tests as de facto language policies. As a result, English language proficiency mediated their performance on state tests and impacted the replacement of bilingual education programs with ESL programs. In another example, Palmer and Lynch's (2008) study illustrated how language policy of tests influenced teachers' decision to teach the language of the test in bilingual classes. As a result,

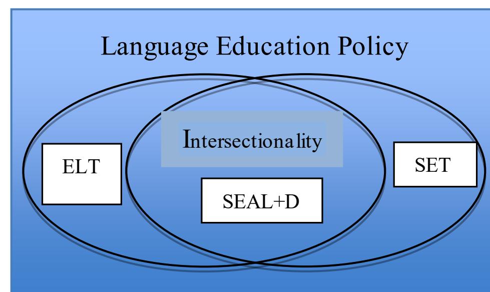
state tests serve as perpetual de facto language policies that influence language practices (Menken, 2008; Shohamy, 2006). These studies also exemplify the roles teachers, particularly as language teachers who give language input to students, have as grassroots language policymakers as they are solely responsible for decision making and implementation of these tests to students (Menken, 2008; Menken & García, 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Furthermore, teachers' reported beliefs are a factor that influences their decision making regarding language policies, such as in tests, which can greatly impact students' educational trajectories in grade promotion, retention, graduation, and post-secondary options (Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Menken & García, 2010). Ricento and Hornberger (1996) provide a metaphor to describe the process between the levels of policy and the local level as an onion that must be unpeeled because individual stakeholder roles at each level influence changes to language policies in response to testing policy, often in contradictory ways.

A need exists for empirical studies that addresse language policies concerning SEAL+D related to language and assessment. Only one instance is identified in which Mueller et al. (2004) explored the effects of the special education policy of IDEA at the time California's Proposition 227 (1998) restricted non-English instruction in teachers' classrooms and assessment practices for ELs with moderate to severe disabilities. In their findings, they concluded that teachers were confused about both laws due to the lack of information; parents were excluded from language of instruction decisions for their children and teachers; administrators lacked guidance on making decisions about the language of instruction and assessments; and teachers expressed frustration in not having bilingual resources and assessments for these students.

Though my study focuses on teachers' beliefs, their practices and management are influenced by their beliefs (Fives & Buehl, 2012. For example, regarding language-performance testing, Shohamy (2001) demonstrated that educational policymakers mandated high-stakes tests in schools to determine what and how it was taught. Her work indicated that contrary to the official policy, English as a foreign language was the de facto educational model. In my study, a language policy approach is fitting to illustrate state accountability tests as mediating structural processes about the educational needs of SEAL+D. In addition, I used an intersectionality approach combined with language policy to explicate the shared commonalities and differences of SEAL+D teachers' beliefs, which I will provide an overview of in the next section (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Language Education Policy and Intersectionality Frameworks in Tandem



Intersectionality

Intersectionality is rooted in feminist and critical race theories as an analytic theoretical framework (Crenshaw, 1991) used primarily in qualitative studies in the social sciences (Alemán, 2018). Like language policy, it is without set tenets nor one overarching theory (Grant

& Zwier, 2012). This openness enables applicability across various disciplines (Davis, 2008; McCall, 2005) and practical use with other theoretical frameworks (Olive, 2015).

Intersectionality makes visible the exclusionary and marginalized experiences of individuals stigmatized, with overlapping social identities of difference, such as race, gender, sexuality, economic status, language, and disability. Intersectionality, with its origins in Black feminist studies (Crenshaw, 1991), enables a multilayered, dimensional approach to explicate the complexity of intra-group identities instead of viewing these identities in a unidimensional, monolithic, or linear fashion. In addition, analysis can extend beyond the individual level to consider more broadly the context of complex systems with their institutional structures, processes, and patterns that perpetuate the disadvantages of ignored groups that overlap or occupy intergroup spaces (Collins, 2012; McCall, 2005).

Given the multiple social structures of marginalized groups, it is an emerging methodology in an educational context (Davis et al., 2015; Grant & Zwier, 2012). García and Ortiz (2013) advocate for intersectionality methodology in education, particularly in special education, with its increase in racial/ethnic and linguistically diverse students. The increase in the racial and ethnic diversity of students in U.S. schools is mainly reflected in students who are ELs. For example, in 2015, approximately thirty percent of English learners were Hispanic compared to one percent White (NCES, 2019). With the increasing culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) student population in U.S. schools and their persistent disproportionate overrepresentation in special education programs (Artiles et al., 2016; Artiles et al., 2010; National Research Council, 1982), researchers of disabilities studies in education (DSE) (e.g., Blanchett et al., 2009; García & Ortiz, 2013) have advocated for intersectionality as an analytic

tool to examine the complexity inherent in understanding the needs of CLD student with a disability within the broader sociocultural political and historical contexts to succeed in school. Even though my attention in this study is on the social markers of language and disability, this does not diminish the significance of SEAL+D with other social identities (Collins, 2015).

Though intersectionality of race, class, and disability (e.g., Losen & Orfield, 2002; Connor, 2006; Erevelles, 1996); race and class (e.g., Omi & Winant, 1994); race and language (e.g., Chhuon & Sullivan, 2013; Flores & Rosa, 2015) have been studied, there does not appear in the extant literature the use of an intersectional language policy framework that foregrounds language linked with disability in education (Artiles, 2013; Ferri, 2010; García & Ortiz, 2013). Intersectional language policy is aptly appropriate as a methodological and analytic tool to address this gap. I draw from García and Ortiz's (2013) conceptualization of intersectionality to examine the relationship between the social categories of language and disability of SEAL+D through the beliefs of ELTs and SETs at the intersecting disciplines of service to make visible how state accountability assessments serve as the mechanism to position and shape the outcomes for these students.

Summary of Supporting Theoretical Frameworks

Language policy and intersectional theoretical frameworks help to foreground the neglected nexus of language and disability to address the positional standing of SEAL+D by examining their ELTs' and SETs' beliefs. When used in tandem, the combining of both frameworks offers an enhanced analytic and methodological approach to make visible the overlooked SEAL+D who are at the intersecting spaces between language and disability. Intersectional language policy in this study contributes to advancing educational research to

explicate complexity from a more nuanced and multidimensional perspective to address the overlooked educational needs of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations.

The combination of language policy and intersectionality provides an analytic means to illuminate and focus attention on the presence of SEAL+D and broaden our understanding of SEAL+D within the context of educational testing. Thus, using a language policy lens is well suited to understand how relevant language is for SEAL+D in their learning academic English and for schooling. Intersectionality provides a means to view the multi-dimensional and complex interdependence of language and disability. The aim of this combination of approaches is to enhance our understanding of systemic factors beyond the attribution of a student's singular identity dimension. In the next section, I describe the methodology for probing teachers' talk in this study to answer the two research questions.

Chapter Three

Connecting Language and Disability

Given the increase in the EL population and the challenges teachers face in how best to serve the educational needs of SEAL+D, there is a need for teacher collaboration across the disciplines. A few studies have looked at collaborative relationships between SETs and GETs (e.g., Huberman et al., 2012; Walker et al., 2021) and ELTs with GETs (e.g., Arkoudis, 2006; Creese, 2005; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2019). However, there is less attention to the relationship between SET and ELTs, who represent the intersecting social markers of SEAL+D. My study utilizes focus groups, as appropriate exploratory method or for understudied areas such as teacher's talk between ELTs and SETs. In this study, I focus specifically on ELTs and SETs experience with K-12 students who have English as an additional language co-existing with a disability (SEAL+D). In this chapter, I describe the study's focus group methodology and how the data were analyzed.

This study explores teachers' beliefs about their roles in making decisions for students with English as an additional language with a co-existing disability (SEAL+D) participation in state accountability tests). I analyze the dual intersecting qualities of language and disability of SEAL+D as represented by the roles of ELTs and SETs who service them. I employed two complementary theoretical frameworks, language policy and intersectionality, to address the following two research questions:

1. What are ELTs' and SETs' beliefs about SEAL+D's participation in state academic achievement assessments?

2. How do ELTs and SETs explain and justify their beliefs to their roles and professional contexts in making state academic achievement assessment decisions for SEAL+D?

My description of the methodological processes of this study is organized into two sections. First, I describe the research design, including recruitment of participants, data collection, and analysis. Then secondly, I conclude the chapter with an explanation of my positionality in my role as a researcher and prompted my research interest in the topic of this study.

Data were collected from eight asynchronous online teacher focus groups conducted in a Midwestern state from a larger multi-state study. Data were analyzed through a combined qualitative approach with two theoretical frameworks. The first is language policy to examine language considerations by teachers for SEAL+D participation in state tests. The second is intersectionality theory to account for heterogeneous inter-group multidimensionality (Crenshaw, 1991; García & Ortiz, 2013) of students who overlap in both ELs and SDs groups, whom I refer to as students with English as an additional language and a co-existing disability (SEAL+D).

Research Design

The data in this study are from one of several research activities of a larger-scale multi-state project[1] on how educators make decisions about state summative tests for SEAL+D. The states sought to understand ways to make state accountability assessments more valid and reliable for ELs with disabilities. The use of asynchronous online focus groups was one of the project's activities to understand better the current assessment and accommodation decision-

[1] The project grant was supported by a contract (State of Minnesota Award #B54419) from the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education (Award #S368A100011), along with the National Center on Educational Outcomes, Dr. Martha Thurlow, Principal investigator.

making process, test score use practices, and issues and challenges educators face in making appropriate decisions for ELs with disabilities. Several focus groups were conducted for each state with 232 school and district practitioners from the five states; I was the moderator of all the focus groups.

Since I was the moderator for the asynchronous online focus groups activity, the data piqued my interest to take a more granular look at teachers' perceptions of the participation of SEAL+D in state summative tests, specifically about language, given my background as a speech-language pathologist serving SEAL+D in various urban public schools. Therefore, I used a qualitative inductive analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Patton, 2002) of the data generated from asynchronous online focus groups to explore an under-researched area related to SEAL+D participation in state mandated summative tests.

Participants

Teachers in this study were recruited through a purposeful sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). The state department of education sent a recruitment flyer on their listservs or through teacher group emails. Teachers interested in volunteering to participate in the study contacted me by email. The teachers were geographically dispersed in public schools across a Midwestern state in this study. For their participation, each teacher received a nominal stipend to compensate for their time.

This study's participants included various stakeholders such as ELTs, SETs, assessment coordinators, and administrators. The majority were ELTs and SETs. For this study, I included only the ELTs and SETs representing SEAL+D. I chose a Midwestern state from the larger study of five states because more extant studies occurred in commonly high populations of ELs in

coastal states such as California, New York, and Florida. There were eight focus groups for this Midwestern state, each with an average of six participants.

The optimal size for focus groups ranges from five to twelve participants (Krueger & Casey, 2009). In my study, the composition of each group had between five to eight individuals with a mix of job titles and demographic backgrounds. For this state, the majority were SETs and ELTs, with approximately 80 each. The remaining participants included GETs, administrators, and related service providers. Most participants were ELTs and SETs. Other educators and a few teachers had additional roles as specialists, e.g., psychologist, administrator, and assessment coordinator.

The demographics of the ELTs are listed in Table 1, and the SETs in Table 2. Participants were assigned pseudonyms; they are indicated in this study as an English language teacher (ELT#) or special education teacher (SET#). There was a total of 48 teachers with 30 ELTs and 18 SETs. However, only some numbers from the demographic questions add to match the total number of teachers since there were non-responses to some demographic data questions. Most of the teachers were White except one ELT who self-identified as Hispanic or Latino. All teachers were female. Half of the 30 ELTs were fluent in languages other than English: Spanish (22), French (1), German (2), Gaelic (1). Two SETs were fluent in Spanish and two in American Sign Language (ASL) of 18 SETs. ELTs' teaching experience ranged from one to 15 years: six with less than five years and 13 with five to ten years. SETs' teaching experience ranged from one to 31 years: seven with less than five years, six with five to ten years, and six with more than ten years. The school locale of ETs was urban (4), suburban (15), rural (9), all (1), and reservation (1). SETs were urban (8), suburban (3), and rural (7). Most ELTs taught elementary grades (14);

and others were secondary (7), and all grades (9). Most SETs taught elementary (8), and the remaining were equal between secondary (5) and all grades (5). The school size for ELTs was less than 500 (11), 500 to 999 (16), and 1,000 to 3,000 (5). SETs mainly were less than 500 (11), 500 to 999 (11), and 3,000 (1). Data from educator participants, who did not self-identify as ELTs or SETs, were not included in the analysis of this study.

Table 1

English Language Teachers (ELT) Demographics

ELT #	Race/ Ethnicity	Language Fluency (other than English)	Years Experience	Grade Levels	School Size	School Locale
1	White	Spanish	11	K-12	500-699	Rural
5	White	French	3	All	500-699	Rural
8	White	German	12	All	Under 100	All
9	White	Spanish	13	K-4	500-699	Suburban
11	White	Spanish	4	7-12	700-999	Urban
12	White	Gaelic	5	K-5	700-999	Suburban
13	Hispanic or Latino	None	3	All	700-999	Suburban
15	White	None	8	K-6	500-699	Closed Reservation
18	White	Spanish	11	1-4	300-499	Suburban
19	White	None	7	K-5	1000-1999	Suburban
21	White	None	9	Secondary	3000+	Suburban
22	White	None	8	6-8	Under 100	Urban
24	White	None	15	3	1000-1999	Rural
26	White	German, Spanish	6	K, 3-5	500-699	Rural
27	White	None	2	K-3; 5	500-699	Suburban
33	White	Spanish	9	All	300-499	Suburban
34	White	Spanish	10	K-5	500-699	Suburban
36	White	None	1	12	300-499	Rural
37	White	None	2	All	300-499	Urban
39	White	None	8	All	700-999	Suburb
40	White	Spanish	15	K-2	300-499	Rural
42	White	Spanish	2	7-12	700-999	Suburban
43	White	Spanish	13	All	300-499	Rural
44	White	None	5	All	300-499	Suburban
45	White	None	12	7-12	1000-1999	Suburban
46	White	Spanish	11	All	700-999	Suburban

47	White	None	6	K-4	300-499	Rural
49	White	None	10	K-6	700-999	Rural
50	White	None	12	3-6	300-499	Urban
51	White	Spanish	7	3-6	300-499	Suburban

Table 2

Special Education Teachers (SET) Demographics

ELT #	Race/ Ethnicity	Language Fluency (other than English)	Years Experience	Grade Levels	School Size	School Locale
3	White	None	9	7-12	Under 100	Rural
2	White	None	2	7-12	500-699	Rural
7	White	None	2	K, 1	300-499	Urban
6	White	None	6	All	300-499	Suburban
10	White	None	10	8-12	500-699	Rural
14	White	Spanish	28	All	Under 100	Urban
16	White	ASL	3	7-12	700-999	Urban
17	White	Spanish	3	5-8	100-299	Rural
23	White	None	10	All	500-699	Suburban
25	White	None	3	1-4	300-499	Urban
28	White	None	9	K-6	100-299	Rural
29	White	ASL	14	K-8	500-699	Urban
31	White	None	12	K-6	500-699	Rural
32	White	None	6	All	100-299	Suburban
35	White	None	1	7-12	100-299	Rural
38	White	None	31	All	3000+	Urban
41	White	None	4	Pre-8	300-499	Urban
48	White	None	2	5-8	700-999	Urban

Data Collection

Focus Groups as a Qualitative Research Method

Focus groups are a specific qualitative research approach (Krueger & Casey, 2009). They are used to explore people's views with the intent for participants to self-disclose their experiences to identify trends on a particular topic in a purposeful, sequential process (Kruger & Casey, 2009). Focus groups typically include about five to ten people who convene to discuss a

shared topic determined by the researcher and who moderates the group using predetermined questions to guide the discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2009). A focus group rule of thumb is to conduct a minimum of three focus groups to discern comparability across groups, validate the data, and achieve saturation of new information (Flores & Alonso, 1995; Kidd & Parshall, 2000; Krueger & Casey, 2009).

A distinguishing feature of focus groups is the group interaction (Kitzinger, 1995; Morgan, 1996; Watson, 2006), which gives the method a high level of face validity because what participants say can be confirmed, reinforced, or contradicted within the group (Krueger & Casey, 2009). In addition, focus group participants' perspectives are partly influenced by the interaction with other participants in the group (Kidd & Parshall, 2000; Kruger, 1998).

The ubiquitous presence of feature-rich personal computing and global-wide internet-mediated communications has facilitated the migration of focus group methodology to the Internet as another option in qualitative research (Kenny, 2005; Schneider et al., 2002; Stewart & Williams, 2005; Watson, 2006). More recent definitions of a focus group have been adapted to reflect this online format. For example, online focus groups (OFGs) are also referred to as virtual, internet, web-based, electronic, chat-based, or computer-mediated focus groups where the participants are not face-to-face but communicate through web-based text discussion sites, audio-conferencing, or video-conferencing (Barbour, 2007; Tates, 2009). Adler and Zarchin (2003) offer another example that "a virtual focus group is an Internet-based research method that utilizes electronic mail to unite spatially and temporally separate participants in a text-based discussion" (p. 418). Peacock et al. (2009) provide this example with "…a selected group of individuals who have volunteered to participate in a moderated, structured, online discussion in

order to explore a particular topic for the purpose of research" (p. 119). Moreover, Vicsek's (2010) version is: "…as a method in which data are generated by the research participants who collectively communicate on a given theme" (p.122) because collective communication rather than oral discussion captures the computer-mediated component of the focus groups.

Practical aspects make OFGs particularly useful when researching hard-to-reach populations in remote areas on under-researched topics (Tates et al., 2009; Turney & Pocknee, 2005). Moreover, the quantity and quality of data from OFGs are comparable to those collected during traditional face-to-face focus groups (FTF) (Burton & Bruening, 2003; Fox et al., 2007; Stewart & Williams, 2005). However, the context of OFG differs from FTF. Turney and Pocknee (2005) found in their study, which examined the potential of online discussion boards in virtual focus groups, that many of the critical features of a traditional FTF were evident in the OFGs. Likewise, Campbell et al.'s (2001) study on cancer had similar findings between their online and FTF groups.

The lack of standardization in focus group methodology allows researchers flexibility in using focus groups for their studies (Morgan & Bottorff, 2010; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). For example, focus groups may be a stand-alone qualitative method (Agar & Macdonald, 1995; Kruger & Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1996; Turney, 2005). The nature of focus groups makes them applicable across different research fields, including education research (Flores & Alonso, 1995; Lederman, 1990; Vaughn et al., 1996; Wilson, 1997).

I used one form of OFG for my study, asynchronous focus groups (AFGs). Using text-based AFGs offers advantages not found in other forms of focus groups. The format allows participants and researchers to read and reflect on the discussion content before replying to one

another’s postings (Turney & Pocknee, 2005; Watson et al., 2006). This flexibility also allows participants to produce different threads of conversation (Hanley, 2011). AFGs are helpful in terms of cost and time savings in accessing hard-to-reach groups of geographically dispersed people residing in different time zones (Turney & Pocknee, 2005). Since participants type their responses, transcription is already completed. The online text-based approach eliminates the need for audio recording and time consuming transcribing of participants’ responses, therefore retaining the data content with high accuracy (Turney & Pocknee, 2005). However, though it may be more convenient for participants to respond at their convenience in an online forum, the communication in the discussions may not be as fluid nor easy to follow the discussion compared to a face-to-face focus group (Zwaanswijk & van Dulmen, 2014).

A common assumption is that text-based online social interaction precludes emotive expressions such as emphasis or stress on words without hearing intonation or volume in a speaker’s voice. However, looking at the context, such as what groups of words surround a word and how the words are displayed in social interaction can provide meaningful interpretation by the reader (Jaspers, 2012). Although oral and visual cues are less prominent or absent, the AFG method does not prevent a sense of community because the participants share a mutual interest in the discussion topic through social interaction (Turney & Pocknee, 2005). Watson et al. (2006) used AFGs to investigate the experiences of sufferers of repetitive strain injury. They found that though the data may differ from FTF, interaction occurred among participants in the focus group despite the absence of verbal and visual cues. For example, the keyboard can communicate emotions that supplement the written language with textual cues and symbols. The repertoire may include punctuation marks, line spacing, large fonts, and acronyms (e.g., LOL for ‘laugh out

loud'), emoticons [e.g., smileys 😊 or sad faces ☹] (Kenny, 2005; Madge & O'Connor, 2003; Stewart & Williams, 2005; Watson, 2006). These options provide language cues to consider and potentially integrate when conducting data analysis that may capture a greater depth of understanding of participants' perspectives in the absence of directly observed interaction.

Focus groups are commonly used to explore a topic that is little known (Stewart et al., 2014) with the intent for participants to self-disclose their experiences to identify the patterns of their perspectives (Kruger & Casey, 2009). Focus groups allow researchers flexibility for the particular purpose of their study (Morgan & Bottorff, 2010; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009), such as using a stand-alone qualitative method (Agar & Macdonald, 1995; Kruger & Casey, 2009; Morgan,1996; Turney, 2005) like for this study.

The root of focus groups is in the social sciences (Agar & MacDonald, 1995; Wilson, 1997) that span disciplines such as education (Lederman, 1990; Vaughn et al., 1996; Wilson, 1997). Examples in education specific to students with disabilities and English learners include middle school general education teachers' perspectives on including students with disabilities (Ornelles, 2007), teachers' perspectives on educational reform (Flores & Alonso, 1995), preschoolers with special education services (Grisham-Brown & Pretti-Fontczak, 2003), assessment of students with significant cognitive disabilities on academic content (Goldstein & Behuniak, 2012), teachers' view on instructional grouping for reading (Moody et al., 1997), teacher advocates for English language learners (de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007), and ESL teachers' views on advocating for ELLs (Ho, 2006).

All data in this study were generated from asynchronous online focus groups through text-based discussions (Barbour, 2007; Tates et al., 2009). This format allowed teachers across

multiple diverse geographical urban, suburban, or rural locales to interact with each other, especially those who were in remote areas in the state (Tates et al., 2009; Turney & Pocknee, 2005). Asynchronous online focus groups also permitted flextime for teachers to participate at their convenience (Turney & Pocknee, 2005; Watson et al., 2006).

There was a total of eight asynchronous online focus groups from one Midwestern state. Each group was organized with five to eight participants (Kruger & Casey, 2009) with a mixed balance of demographic characteristics of English language and special education teachers to capture various perspectives. I moderated each focus group in a semi-structured format over one week (Ryan & Valverde, 2006; Kruger & Casey, 2009; Farnsworth & Boon, 2010). Each participant was assigned a unique pseudonym. All focus groups were conducted online in a password- protected Moodle-based platform.

As the moderator, at the start of each day I posted two main questions for four consecutive days (a total of eight questions). The questions began broadly to encourage focus group participation and then focused narrowly on specific aspects of the study's topic (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Participants had a 24-hour period to post their responses to each day's questions. Since the format did not permit me, the moderator, to see or observe participants, I monitored the discussion with prompts from the start of the day and several times throughout the day into the late evening hours to signal to participants that I was present to maximize the opportunity for teachers to respond. To encourage participants' responses to the questions and discussion interaction with one another, I prompted further discussion by asking follow-up or clarifying questions about their responses or their thoughts on other participants' responses. Participants from all eight focus groups responded and engaged daily. My role and positionality

as the moderator may have influenced the data generated with the prompts I asked in follow-up questions to guide the discussions (Zwaanswijk & Dulmen, 2014). For this study, the total number of one-sided, single-spaced transcript pages for the focus groups was approximately 40 to 80, with an average of 70 pages for a focus group with a total over 500 pages.

Data Analysis

This section describes the methods I used to analyze the focus group data. Data analysis details remain relatively sparse in focus group research (Carey, 1995; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Moreover, no standard method exists in the analysis for any form of focus group (Bertrand et al., 1992; Vicsek, 2010). However, there are frequently used analytic approaches to focus group data. For this study, I analyzed the transcripts of the focus groups using a qualitative approach (Krueger, 1998) within a language policy and intersectional frameworks. In addition, I applied the following broad questions to guide my analysis of the data:

1) How do teachers describe their experiences?
2) What are teachers' stated beliefs about language?
3) What are teachers saying about state accountability assessments used to test SEAL+D?
4) What are teachers saying about students' participation in the tests?
5) What are teachers saying about their roles in testing SEAL+D?
6) What challenges do teachers encounter in understanding and implementing accountability assessments?
7) What strategies do teachers use to overcome the barriers?

8) What challenges do teachers encounter in their understanding and implementing accountability assessments?
9) What factors influence teachers' beliefs in making assessment decisions?
10) What support do teachers say they need or want?

Coding Scheme

A coding scheme for thematic analysis is the predominant research approach used for focus group data (Massey, 2011; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). I used the constant comparative method, which compares participants' responses for similarities and differences between groups (Barbour, 2007). I coded chunks of text to label and categorize related data segments to identify patterns or themes (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Miles et al., 2014).

Multiple focus groups serve to achieve data saturation when similar information reoccurs, and no new information emerges (Kruger & Casey, 2009; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Often, a set of focus groups will number between six to a dozen. However, a minimum of three focus groups is recommended for a study to acquire information saturation or until the data becomes redundant from one focus group to another (Krueger & Casey, 2009). In my study, there are eight focus groups for the state, and I analyzed at least three focus groups of the state or more until saturation was reached.

Counting Scheme

In addition to using a coding scheme in thematic analysis, some researchers also apply a counting scheme. Various lengths of text units or responses may be counted for quantitative purposes or to organize data in thematic analysis to identify the patterns and spread of themes. In concert with the coding scheme, I used thematic analysis matrices to organize and view the

frequency distribution of text segments from participants' postings (Barbour, 2007; Miles et al., 2014). The use of matrices allowed me to make comparisons across the focus groups.

Interaction

A defining feature of a focus group is the interaction among participants within a group. However, the research literature indicates that consideration of this is frequently missing in a study's analysis (Farnsworth & Boon, 2010; Kenny, 2005; Vicsek, 2009). Instead, individual participants' verbatim quotations from focus group discussions are a dominant approach used in focus group studies to represent findings (Flores & Alonso, 1995; Kitzinger, 1995; Vicsek, 2010).

The trend of focus group proponents advocates for including dynamic group interaction in focus group analyses (Carey & Smith, 1994; Farnsworth & Boon, 2010; Hollander, 2004; Kidd & Parshall, 2000; Kitzinger, 1994). Furthermore, group composition and group dynamics may influence individual responses (Barbour, 2007; Farnsworth & Boon, 2010; Hollander, 2004; Kitzinger, 1995; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Vicsek, 2010). Such multiple aspects are necessary to interpret the data as representative of the focus group findings (Agar & MacDonald, 1995; Farnsworth & Boon, 2010; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Even though such contextual factors have not yet been regularly noted in focus group research (Hollander, 2004), focus group researchers (Barbour, 2007; Farnsworth & Boon, 2010; Hollander, 2004; Kitzinger, 1995) recommend that these and other contextual factors be considered in focus group data analysis. Therefore, I included a combination (Vicsek, 2010) of isolated excerpts of participants' postings from the group discourse and relevant exchanges between participants to capture the interaction. Furthermore, unlike other methods, the complexity of focus group interaction involves data at

three levels: individual, group, and multiple focus groups (Duggleby, 2005; Massey, 2011), which also can be considered for data analysis.

Intra-group and Inter-group Differences

Comparing intra-group (individuals within a group) differences in the analysis process can influence the findings of the data (Barbour, 2007; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Comparing intra-group differences and comparing inter-group (between groups) differences can also influence the interpretation of data findings (Barbour, 2007; Farnsworth & Boon, 2010; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Vicsek, 2010).

I reviewed both intra-group and inter-group analyses to determine the breadth of whether a perspective was shared (Barbour, 2007; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Interrogating these differences may enhance the responses to my research questions more thoroughly. In addition, my data collection included demographic information from participants that allowed me to make more nuanced contextual comparisons in this aspect of the analysis, particularly about participants' role titles.

Unit of Analysis

I used the more common analytic approach with focus groups with selected quoted excerpts of individual teachers as the unit of analysis (Barbour, 2007; Massey, 2011; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009) to illustrate the findings relevant to the research questions (Flores & Alonso, 1995; Kitzinger, 1995; Vicsek, 2010). I interpreted the data by constantly comparing participants' responses for similarities and differences between groups (Duggleby, 2005; Massey, 2011; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Therefore, the interpretation of the data was an

iterative process of reading, analyzing, and rereading text to find meaning in teachers' written responses in the discussion.

The analysis of focus group data can take a wide variety of forms in which there is no one best approach. Fitting for this study, I used an intersectional language policy framework to analyze teachers' beliefs (García & Ortiz, 2008; Spolsky, 2004). I used thematic content units to code chunks of text to mark different topics to identify common patterns and emerging themes (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Miles et al., 2014). The coding entailed a cross-comparison of individual teachers within groups and across groups. The comparability of the data across a minimum of three focus groups continued until saturation of new information was reached to validate my interpretation of the data themes (Flores & Alonso, 1995; Kidd & Parshall, 2000; Kruger & Casey, 2009; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). The preformatted written transcripts from the online platform limited my use of qualitative analytic software; therefore, I used Microsoft Word to shift and organize data into categories throughout the analytic process.

Researcher's Role and Positionality

My research interest for this proposal culminates from over ten years as a speech-language pathologist (SLP) serving diverse populations in varied settings. My more recent practice was predominantly in pre-K-12 public schools with students who received special education services. One aspect of my role involved conducting evaluation assessments with various testing instruments and methods, including interviewing and observing students. Evaluating also involved interviewing and collaborating in team decision-making with parents, teachers, and other educational staff.

The students I served had a wide range of disabilities and included some students with a home language other than English. Particularly with these students, I grappled with the difficult, complex challenge of evaluating the students to determine whether a student had a disability rather than a language difference in learning English as an additional language. When I began serving SEAL+D in urban schools approximately ten years ago, there were virtually no diagnostic tests for SEAL+D. Often I found it unsettling that it was common practice by educators and service providers, e.g., SLPs, to use standardized diagnostic assessments that were not developed with SEAL+D in mind. Often considerations of a student's home language and language proficiency were not fully considered. Furthermore, input from ELTs was rarely part of the IEP team. The absence of ELTs was often due to teachers' schedule conflicts or incompatible departmental organizational structure that limited collaboration in schools. This approach was commonly carried over to decision making for a student's participation and needs for support on state assessments.

The field of special education is based on a medical model, as evident in IDEA's 13 disability categories. Unless a physician has medically diagnosed a disability, the disability labels are socially constructed, and student disability determinations are based on evaluators' subjectivities. For example, even the title, speech-language pathology is a medical term that connotes disease or disability. Special education and ESL fields intermingled into the educational context carry over an institutionally constructed deficit perspective in identifying, categorizing, and labeling students as disabled that perhaps contributes to the reproduction of perpetuating students identified with a disability and influencing educators' beliefs that SEAL+D are unable to learn like all general education students and blame students for failing (Valencia,

2012). In recognizing the possibility of attributing deficit thinking from my experience in the fields of SLP and special education, I am sensitized and attuned to deficit notions that may arise from the findings in this study. To counter deficit references to students, I attempt to refer to students from an asset perspective resulting from my experience serving these students who have demonstrated that they can learn and communicate meaningfully with language.

In my university coursework, particularly methods courses in the Second Language Education Program and Department of Curriculum and Instruction, I have had the opportunity to employ all phases of a research study, from the conceptualization and research design of a study, processing and fulfilling Institutional Review Board requirements, recruiting participants, collecting data, transcribing data, analyzing data, reporting the findings, and presenting the findings. I have also had a similar opportunity to gain experience with all phases of the research process as a Research Fellow under the supervision of Martha Thurlow, PhD., Director at the National Center on Educational Outcomes, University of Minnesota, at the time of the project from which the data are derived. Overall, my practice experience in school systems and research experience within the University has prepared me to proceed confidently in completing my research study.

Individual identities are multidimensional based on intersectional identity categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and language (Grabham et al., 2009). As researchers, we may identify as an insider in belonging and perceiving ourselves in certain categories, while others may want to label us differently as an outsider. The social context of our research marks our social position as an insider or outsider (Merton, 1972; Patton, 2002). Rarely are these dual positions delineated but instead exist in a tenuous interrelationship that, as researchers, we have

an ethical responsibility to articulate our positionality, i.e., intersectional identities, concerning our research participants that influence how we interpret and present their voices (Canagarjah & Stanley, 2015).

Within the context of this study, unbeknownst to the teacher participants, I was privileged to be an insider in relation to their roles. My interest in adding value to the SEAL+D community began while working as a SLP for the past ten years, particularly in several urban public schools. Most of the students in these schools were non-White, speakers of languages other than English, and acquiring English as an additional language. As a SLP, I worked directly with students, their families, teachers, and school administrators. My knowledge and experience in that sphere of work enabled me to engage with the teachers more fully in this study due to a deeper understanding of their perspectives and this context. As a monolingual English speaker, it was evident to my cohort of teachers that we shared the same dominant language in written communication in the study. Nevertheless, despite shared commonalities, we all bear inherent biases that shape our perspectives.

Visible identity markers can shape individuals' perspectives and position individuals as insiders or outsiders as determined by the social context (Banks, 1998). Since the focus groups were conducted online with no visible interaction, there were no face-to-face interactions where teacher participants could have viewed me as an outsider or insider due to my physical characteristic as non-White. Therefore, race/ethnicity as a social identity category was invisible during interactions and data collection in the focus groups.

In contrast, as an "Other" from teacher participants, I am privileged as a social science researcher in my member affiliation with an institution of "higher" learning. The teachers knew

this of my role since I was the moderator of the focus groups in this study. However, my identity as a female minority in academia marks me as an "outsider-within" (Collins, 1990). Furthermore, my primary external socialization development occurred in the dominant U.S. Anglo-American culture and its educational institutions. Whereas my inner cultural socialization occurred from my family's multiple heritages across race, ethnicity, culture, and linguistic diversity. I have benefited from having experienced privileges across these varied social contexts, which has given me a broader perspective and greater openness to different perspectives from others, even with the fundamental tension of the unobtainable goal in striving for objectivity in social science research (Banks, 1998).

My familiarity with the different stakeholder roles in this field has given me an appreciation of the varied perspectives and their interactions. As a result, I need to be equally vigilant about the biases I bring to this type of research in relation to others. For instance, I need to guard against assumptions from my familiarity with the field, its stakeholders, and its roles. In addition, my subconscious biases due to my position and development in this field may keep me from appreciating the more subtle and hidden biases that shape this type of work. Therefore, it behooves me to continue to be alert to what my biases may be.

In summary, a takeaway going forward is that a life-long learning objective will be to continue to enhance my awareness of the biases I bring to qualitative research and other stakeholders' biases. Moreover, insider and outsider positions foster my reflexivity as a researcher to recognize how my biases and others influence objectivity. Finally, the factors of my work, academic, and family background shape the questions I ask of participants, code, and

interpret the text data. In the next chapter, I present the findings with representative excerpts from teachers relevant to the research questions in this study.

Chapter Four

"In the Dark:" Invisibility of Language

Following the analytic procedures described in chapter three, I determined a broad set of findings for each research question based on the qualitative data collected from the focus groups. The qualitative findings highlight the complexity of SEAL+D participation in state academic achievement tests that unfolded around the central question of the intersectionality of language policy and disability. In this chapter, I present findings of teachers' discourse from English language teachers (ELTs) and special education teachers (SETs) from the asynchronous online focus groups. The findings are organized into two main sections. The first section is teachers' responses to the first research question of their beliefs about SEAL+D participation in state academic achievement tests. The second section of this chapter is about teachers' responses to the second research question of how they explain and justify their beliefs concerning their roles and professional contexts in making state academic achievement tests decisions for SEAL+D.

From the qualitative findings, two broad themes emerged based on responses to the two research questions. For the first research question, the theme in the teachers' talk was issues around the characteristics of the tests, particularly the state academic achievement tests. Teachers spoke mainly about the mismatch between the characteristics of tests and the skills and capacities of the students. The mismatch was a barrier for teachers to determine student learning growth and a language barrier for students to access the tests to show what they learned. A second theme emerged in the second research questions in that teachers were rarely informed about students' English language proficiency or the test as a relevant component for the special education

individualized education program (IEP). Moreover, ELTs were generally not considered relevant members of the IEP team, nor it seemed that their input was formally documented in the IEP.

For both sections, I draw on data to illustrate the findings with excerpts from teachers' responses to demonstrate the perspectives of ELTs and SETs and to provide examples of teachers' reported beliefs about student participation in state tests and the ways they justified their beliefs concerning their roles in making assessment decisions for SEAL+D. The aim is to shed light on the participation of SEAL+D in state tests from the perspective of teachers who represent these two qualities of the students.

Mismatch Between Tests and Students

Like all general education students, SEAL+D participate in state academic achievement tests that are administered annually, typically near the end of the school year. As ELs, SEAL+D must also participate in an annual state English language proficiency test. For this section, teachers' responses to the first research question revolved around the mismatch between the tests and students. When I asked teachers to describe what they thought test issues were for SEAL+D to participate in the state tests, teachers widely reported that the characteristics of the tests were not valid and meaningless to use with this group of students. First, I will describe the student complexity of SEAL+D in relation to the test. Secondly, I will then describe the language complexity of the tests for SEAL+D.

Student Complexity

During the discussion about issues with the state tests, I prompted the group whether there could be a type of test that would be sound for SEAL+D. One way this was exemplified

was in an exchange I had with Katy, an ELT, about the differences between academic achievement and English language proficiency assessments. She compared the two tests in Excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1: (Katy, ELT, Spanish bilingual)

1 Katy: Any testing instrument used with a population should be tested on and
2 normed for that specific population. ELLs with disabilities are an area where
3 we lack such tests.
4 Linda: What type of assessment could be used to test a diverse EL population?
5 Katy: Like the [state English language proficient test], a test with a variety of
6 questions that targets the background knowledge of a diverse group of students
7 would be ideal. I know it is difficult to cover all the different backgrounds fairly,
8 but currently state tests are written to favor a white, middle-class student.

In line 1, Katy's use of the word 'should' emphasizes her stance that appropriate tests need to be administered for SEAL+D, which suggests they are not. She explicitly explains in line 8 that the academic achievement tests were designed more favorably for homogeneous White, middle-class students. Her perspective of the student group for the test contrasts with SEAL+D, who represent varied backgrounds of languages, including non-White and of lower socio-economic status. Katy pointedly remarked that using such tests for SEAL+D tipped the scale unfavorably to SEAL+D, whose background did not represent the standard norms of the tests. She suggested that if academic achievement tests were designed for a wider range of student characteristics, like the English proficiency test, they would be fairer for SEAL+D. In other words, a test would be fair if "the same constructs for all test takers and scores from it have the same meaning for all…a fair test does not advantage or disadvantage some individuals because of characteristics" (AERA et al. 2014, p. 50).

Other teachers, too, questioned the appropriateness of the academic achievement tests for SEAL+D. An issue for both ELTs and SETs was that the tests needed to provide meaningful

information to teachers on students learning academic content. For example, Excerpt 2 is an interaction between two ELTs, Betty and Jenna, both Spanish bilingual and one SET, Frances, American Sign Language (ASL) bilingual.

Excerpt 2: (Betty, ELT, Gaelic bilingual; Jenna, ELT, Spanish bilingual; Frances, ASL bilingual)

1 Betty: My continual concern in terms of testing is…the validity of the tests
2 themselves…many of the tests just don't make sense for ELs with or without
3 disabilities, and that our current system does not provide adequate feedback or
4 data about how students are really progressing. If this change doesn't happen
5 at the state level, I think we'll continue to feel like we're in the dark when it
6 comes to our ELs with disabilities.
7 Frances: I agree that we really don't have a clear view of what assessments
8 show and don't have good feedback on the progression…I feel that we in our
9 district may not do a great job in terms of content understanding for ELLs.
10 Jenna: I agree- I have concerns with regard to the validity of the tests as well
11 as the appropriateness of the tests for certain students…I feel like as a state
12 and nation we are still struggling to meet the educational needs of special
13 education students, but then when the EL label is added, it only deepens the
14 problem.

For example, Betty in line 4 and Frances in line 7 exclaim with "really" to emphasize without a doubt that the current tests suggest unfairness to students in not showing students' growth in their learning. The teachers questioned the validity of evidence of the academic achievement tests for English learners regardless of their disability. If tests are not valid to the "degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test score for proposed uses of test" (AERA et al., 2014, p.11), then test scores are not a helpful indicator for teachers' because students are not showing growth in their learning. Teachers reported that they did not believe the tests accurately measured students' knowledge who were not proficient in English.

Even though teachers questioned the use of the academic achievement tests as they are, none of the teachers in the study spoke against students participating in the tests per se. When I probed further, Nancy, a SET, explained. (See Excerpt 3.)

Excerpt 3: (Nancy, SET)

1 Linda: Do you think state content and English proficiency assessments serve a
2 useful purpose?
3 Nancy: I do believe in most cases that state assessments are useful tools to
4 understand a student's measure of progress and provide a piece of the
5 puzzle. When it comes to EL learners, however, I think we need to view group
6 administered assessments such as the [district tests] and [state content tests] with
7 extreme caution until we understand the student's language proficiency.

Nancy believed that the English proficiency of students who are ELs needed to be considered when interpreting the results of the academic achievement tests. In Excerpt 3 and the previous excerpts in this section, teachers suggested inconsistencies existed between using the state academic achievement tests that were not intended for testing the diverse student groups, such as SEAL+D, and these did not meet the criteria for the test's standards for all students (AERA et al. 2014). In addition, the tests did not provide meaningful data on student outcomes to inform teachers of students' learning progression. In the next section, teachers elaborated on the conflict between the English language development of students and the language characteristics of the tests, particularly language complexity.

Language Complexity of Test Questions

Another concern teachers had was the language level of the test questions and test items. Below, I discuss this for ELTs, and then I turn to SETs' beliefs. Both groups of ELTs and SETs expressed concerns about the English language complexity in the tests. According to many, the English level of the tests was too challenging for students who are in the process of developing English.

For instance, Olivia, a Spanish bilingual ELT, stated, "The language load is too heavy on the state content tests…the state content test is normed without addressing the ELs" as one

aspect of the language complexity. When I asked about the challenge for students to participate in the tests, Diane, a SET, compared the challenge of academic language between the reading and math achievement tests.

Excerpt 4: (Diane, SET, ASL bilingual)

1 Linda: What aspects of the state content tests are most challenging for students?
2 Diane: EL students tend to find the reading tests most challenging, as the content
3 does not rely on rote skills such as some math content that is tested. That being
4 said, as the [state content tests] test grade-level standards, students who are
5 functioning significantly behind grade level struggle with all three (reading, math,
6 science), as they all depend on academic English knowledge as well as
7 background knowledge to apply.

She held the reported belief that the numeracy of math relied less on academic English proficiency; therefore, the math test may be more accessible to SEAL+D. Nevertheless, she asserted that students still needed grade-level academic English knowledge to perform on all the content tests, which English learners still needed to acquire.

In contrast to Diane, other teachers pointed less to numeracy than to the technical language in math tests. Both SETs and ELTs shared similar beliefs on the language complexity of the math test. For example, Robin, a SET (three years, rural, upper elementary setting), stated that "Math language still confuses [and] prevents showing that they do have the skill. Even though they are hearing the words aloud, the language does confuse them, when I know that the skill is one that they would be able to do." Robin's comment was a rare finding that students have the knowledge and ability clouded by the level of language difficulty. Another example in response to my prompt about the meaning of language heavy, an interchange occurred between Sandy, ELT, and Liz, SET.

Excerpt 5: (Sandy, ELT; Liz, SET)

1 Sandy: state assessments…are...language-heavy…. Math and science tests
2 should have as low of a language load as possible.
3 Linda: what does language-heavy mean to you?
4 Sandy: By language-heavy, I mean grammatical structure – complex
5 sentences, embedded clauses, passive tense — as well as vocabulary. I expect
6 a mathematics test will include complex math vocabulary appropriate for the level
7 (symmetry, equilateral triangle, etc.), but it should avoid other complex academic
8 vocabulary (consequently, therefore, etc.). I think this just wasn't taken into
9 consideration during the development of some math assessments.
10 Liz: Sandy, I completely agree. This is what I meant as well in regard to
11 the language heavy.

Both ELTs and SETs agreed that even though math had its specific complex vocabulary, they reportedly believed that non-content language could be avoided by simplifying the language if tests were developed with SEAL+D in mind. As with the reading test, a heavy language load in the math test posed a language barrier to SEAL+D's access to the content. The language complexity of the tests could mask their students' knowledge and skills on the tests. Teachers not only talked about the language complexity of the test questions, but that language complexity also applied to the test directions, which I discuss in the following section.

Language Complexity of the Test Directions

In addition to the language complexity in the test questions, the language complexity in the test directions was another barrier for students to access the tests**.** Teachers were compelled to instruct students on academic language in the content of the test items but also the directions and question prompts. An exchange between four ELTs explained the issues they strongly shared about the language complexity of the test questions. Rebecca (throughout her lines) and Andrea (line 13) used capitalization to emphasize specific word examples in test directions that teachers needed to instruct test-taking skills to students. Compounded emphasis was also expressed by

Stephanie in line 15 with the adverb 'totally' and exclamation mark and Katy in line 17 with a definitive one-word 'yes" and an exclamation mark of complete agreement.

Excerpt 6: (Four ELTs: Rebecca, Spanish bilingual; Andrea; Stephanie; Katy, Spanish bilingual)

1 Rebecca (Spanish bilingual): I add "all of the above" and "none of the above" to
2 all of my homemade tests, to give my 2nd and 3rd grade EL student's familiarity
3 with that type of question. In addition, test questions such as, "Which of the
4 following is NOT a summer Olympic event?" (an actual question from a test I
5 gave today) can really trip up ELs. I give an elaborate explanation before they
6 answer such questions, such as "OK, kids, that means 3 of the answers ARE
7 summer Olympic events. You do NOT want to circle those. Find the ONE that is
8 NOT a summer Olympic event and circle THAT one." Even this is sometimes
9 not enough for Els who have language processing disorders. One idea is to create
10 practice tests of those types of questions to give the kids extra practice (i.e.,
11 Which of these is NOT an animal: cat, dog, desk, bunny).
12 Andrea: I agree those questions are very tricky. As are the questions that read
13 something like "which of the following answers in NOT true?" Same type of
14 issue with confusion about what the question is asking.
15 Stephanie: I totally agree! The test itself is often a test and not so much a test on
16 the concepts!
17 Katy (Spanish bilingual): Yes! Students need to be taught test-taking skills and
18 language.

Teachers' beliefs about the language complexity on the tests shaped their practices (Spolsky, 2004) to prepare students for the tests. To address the language complexity, ELTs reportedly believed students needed instruction on learning content and understanding specific phrasing in the test questions and directions to access the tests. The focus on preparing students to participate in the tests became as much on teaching the language of the test as the content (Menken, 2008).

Like ELTs' reported beliefs in the previous section, in an interaction with Cathy, an SET (urban, elementary setting) in an interaction with Andrea, an ELT (suburb, all grades) believed it was necessary to teach not only the content but also the language of the questions and directions so that students could focus on the content and not on understanding the English language.

Excerpt 7: (Cathy, SET; Andrea, ELT)

1 Cathy (SET): Another consideration when testing ELL students is the actual test
2 language that is involved. Students with limited exposure to English need to be
3 explicitly taught the language of the test so they can have an opportunity to show
4 what they know, instead of getting caught up in the directions…They need to
5 learn what it means to "circle" the answer, or "bubble in" the correct response,
6 etc. We cannot assume that they will be able to navigate the layout of the test if
7 we've not exposed them to that previously.
8 Andrea (ELT): I would agree that the terminology on tests needs to be explicitly
9 taught, as well as the meaning of the directions as you mentioned. I would also
10 add that the students need to be taught that questions may have an answer choice
11 such as "all of the above" or "none of the above". These types of questions seem
12 to trip students up on a regular basis both native and non-native speakers.

Both teachers commented on the need to pointedly teach students specific examples of test directions, questions, and phrasing. Andrea's remark in line 12 that such questions are confusing even for non-English learners suggests that the challenges are even more significant for ELs to understand what to do on the tests.

SETs like ELTs reportedly believed that besides the language of the test content items, the language of the directions to navigate the tests was an issue for students' participation in the tests. In an uncommon finding among either ELTs or SETs, Nicole, a SET ASL bilingual who teaches in an urban setting, mentioned, and advocated using students' native language. She stated, "I believe that directions should be given to students in their native language…it's really hard to assess their ability to complete a task if they do not even understand what it is they are supposed to be doing." Nicole believed that students could not be expected to complete the test items if they were not English proficient without first understanding the test questions. She believed that at least the test directions should be provided in a student's native language.

Teachers believed it was necessary to provide test practice opportunities to prepare students to participate in the tests so that they could understand what they were expected to know

and what the tests were asking them to do. Instruction time was absorbed in part for test preparation activities for students. The content tests were language tests that overrode measuring students' academic content knowledge (Menken, 2008) in that teachers needed to help students access tests and to overcome language barriers to understand the content.

English Language Proficiency Test

Though most of the teacher talk was about the academic achievement tests, there were a few instances of the usefulness of the state's English language proficiency (ELP) test. For instance, Amy, an ELT, indicated, "The [ELP] test this year was a useful tool for measuring their academic knowledge. I didn't find the questions to be confusing, the book was in color, and it was truly measuring what they say they are trying to measure." She contrasted the ELP with the academic achievement tests stating "I become very frustrated with [state content tests] however. Watching EL students try and read through stories with names and concepts that are far above their language reasoning ability." She added that in addition to the complexity of the content tests for students, the complexity of student characteristics adds a further challenge, "Plus, once you add a disability of some type to that it really takes a lot of motivation by these students to complete the assessment."

For ELTs, the ELP test was practical and consistently measured what it purported to do, whereas the state content, with its language complexity, was overly challenging for students. Amy placed the challenge that students faced in participating in academic achievement tests in part to the language complexity of the test and in part to their disability, putting the onus on students to be persistent to participate in the tests fully.

SETs, in turn, diverged from ELTs. For example, unlike Amy, the ELT described above, Diane, an ASL bilingual SET, was atypically involved in administering the ELP test to students (See Excerpt 8.) She provided insight into the language challenges some of the students experienced in the different domains of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in the ELP test, specifically between the writing and reading portions. Like the academic achievement tests, directions could be challenging for the students.

Excerpt 8: (Diane, SET, ASL bilingual)

1 In terms of the [ELP], the writing section I observed was particularly challenging
2 for some students, as it required one to both read and understand the writing
3 prompt and then provide a response, with some prompts first giving an example
4 that was not directly related to the question students were asked to write on this
5 threw off several EL special ed students I was testing they kept referring to the
6 pictures/diagrams and example as a means for framing their writing
7 response. The reading portion of the [ELP test] I felt was more straight-forward
8 and provided again visual supports to the text, which some students were able to
9 then extract additional meaning from in supporting their understanding of the text
10 and in accessing their background knowledge of the topic. Finally, as the listening
11 portion of the [ELP test] only allows the proctor to read the passage/item once, it
12 would be difficult for students who have language processing challenges to be
13 able to perform well.

Diane provides a glimpse into how students may perform better on one domain than another, depending more on visual prompts provided in the different domains. But accessing the domains also relies on the extent of a student's language processing abilities.

Teachers stated alternative adaptations to alleviate the word complexity that existed not only in the test items but in the test directions and questions. They believed explicit instruction on words and phrasing used, students' native language, and visuals could help overcome the barriers for students to access the tests. Furthermore, depending on the student's disability, a student may have difficulty with one domain more than another.

In sum, teachers reported that primarily the academic achievement tests were not an appropriate fit for SEAL+D to show what they know. However, the ELP test could also be a barrier for students depending on their disability. Teachers suggested that the tests were not inclusive for a student population that was diverse in language and disability, including race, ethnicity and economic level, compared to a homogenous monolingual academic English proficient, White, middle-class student group. As students are in the process of acquiring academic English, the complexity of the academic English used in the test questions and directions posed a barrier for SEAL+D to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and for teachers to determine whether students were learning the content. Next, section two that follows also concerns English language development but regards the consideration of the ELP test in the IEP and the role of the ELTs on the special education IEP team.

“Entire Team Needs to Be at the Table”

This section describes the findings of the second research question on how ELTs and SETs explain and justify their beliefs in relation to their roles and professional contexts in making state accountability assessment decisions for SEAL+D. Responses from the teachers to this question were prominently around the Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is the cornerstone of special education that is a legally binding document for students with a documented disability receiving special education services or related services of specially designed instruction of the general education curriculum to meet student’s unique needs (IDEA, 2004). The IEP involves a team that must include an administrator, special education teacher, general education teacher, parents, other related service providers, and as appropriate, the

student. In addition, the IEP team should include other individuals who provide services to a student, such as an English language teacher who provides services to students who are also ELs (IDEA, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The team's responsibility includes making assessment participation decisions and reviewing a student's performance results in statewide and districtwide tests in meeting general education academic standards. Developing, reviewing, and implementing the IEP involves a collaborative decision-making process among the IEP team members (Clark, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, 2000). In this section, excerpts from both teacher groups were primarily on the role of the ELT as a participant in the IEP team.

Often, the ELT was not invited to the IEP, nor was their input provided for the IEP. However, teacher interactions on this point revealed a repeated lack of collaboration between ELTs and SETs in relation to the IEP team, particularly on the role of the ELT. Findings suggest this lack of collaboration could be traced to the inconsistent inclusion of ELTs on the IEP team without mention of the relevance of students' English language proficiency status in relation to their disability. In the next section, I illustrate findings with excerpts by ELTs and SETs.

Missing Seat at the IEP Table

A central thread in the findings was the exclusion of ELTs from the IEP team. Both ELTs and SETs mainly viewed their roles as mutually exclusive. They conducted their role as independent entities that operated separately in making state assessment decisions for students. Teachers reportedly believed the IEP team was under the purview of special education, whose decisions overrode that of ELTs (Kangas, 2014). Without ELTs' input it is unclear to what extent students' English language proficiency status was included in their IEPs (Kangas, 2018). When I

asked teachers about the participation of ELTs on the IEP team, both ELTs and SETs provided various explanations why ELTs, for the most part, were not directly involved with the IEP team.

For ELTs a primary way that ELTs explained their role in making assessment decisions for students was a default understanding of the IEP as entrusted to only special education. For instance, Sara, a Spanish bilingual ELT in an urban school, stated matter-of-factly, "When it comes to [state content] testing, the SPED [special education] dept makes *all* [italics added] the decisions in regard to *their IEP's* [italics added]. *We* [italics added] as an EL dept make the decisions when we do EL [English learner] testing." Sara made an explicit distinction in the use of pronouns that emphasized clear divisions of "their IEPs" as belonging to the special education department with inherent rights to make 'all' state content tests decisions. Whereas decisions for the state ELP test were under the domain of "We," the ELT department, apart from the special education department. It was assumed without question from either the ELTs or SETs that ELTs were not involved with the IEP. The boundary lines of ownership between ELTs and SETs were drawn. SETs possessed the IEP; ELTs possessed the ELP assessment.

Like Sara above, Alice, an ELT at a suburban school, did not participate in the IEP meeting. Unlike Sara, Alice believed the "EL teacher should be invited but often I am not…I do not know why I am not invited." She problematized this exclusionary practice that occurred within the special education department in her school and extended more broadly as "a problem across our district." She attributed her exclusion from the IEP in that "SpEd [special education] teachers do not consider it a need…We do not use an IEP team process for the [state English language proficiency test]." Alice added that her students, "ELs are a marginalized population in our district. ELs with SpEd, maybe even more so. Within our EL department, we talk about how

to best service our students...but that is amongst ourselves." Her elaboration exemplified a distinct separation between the EL and SE departments.

Alice justified her explanation that excluding ELTs from the IEP team mirrored the broader district practice with the marginalization of EL students and, therefore, SEAL+D. The district practice influenced the practice of the special education department at her school. The two groups of teachers did not communicate, but instead, "we talk…amongst ourselves" with one another. Decisions about the ELP assessment for SEAL+D were limited to the EL Department, apart from special education decisions at the school and district levels.

Another explanation of why ELTs were not involved with IEP team decisions is provided by Margaret, a Spanish-bilingual ELT of two years in a suburban school, also stated "The ELL teacher is not part of the IEP team." However, unlike Sara and Alice, Margaret was invited to an IEP meeting, but "Ultimately though, we are not part of the decision process about what goes into an official IEP." ELTs had the status more like guests without authority than other IEP team members, who were viewed as having an "official" role in the IEP with inherent authority to make decisions.

Although the IEP includes multiple individuals that involve collaborative decision making (Clark, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, 2000), in all the above cases, ELTs were not regular members of the IEP team for SEAL+D. Instead, ELTs and SETs operated as silos, each making their own decisions without collaborative decisions integrated through the IEP team. Only Alice asserted that ELTs should be part of the IEP team, and this stance was unique among ELTs in the findings. However, none of the ELTs mentioned the relevance of English language development

considerations with a student's disability. The invisibility of ELTs without involvement in the IEP is further illustrated by SETs in the following section.

Much like the ELTs described above, SETs also did not commonly consider ELTs as IEP team members. As part of a discussion on the IEP team, when I asked teachers who were part of the IEP team for SEAL+D, Cathy, with four years teaching elementary and middle school students in a small urban school, stated that "At the IEP meeting, the team including parent, gen ed teacher, administrator, case manager, service providers, discuss… the IEP." The ELT was not included in her description of the IEP team. This omission may be attributed more broadly from the school to the district level in her explanation "It's difficult for me to tease out what the district does specifically for ELLs with disabilities as opposed to what they do for all ELLs – because of the high ELL population." Cathy's omission of the ELT from the IEP team reflected the district practice of conflating SEAL+D with ELs without a disability by explaining, "I feel that most of the practices, assessment procedures, etc. are done with the ELL population in mind." This excerpt suggests that the individualized needs of SEAL+D identified in their IEPs may not be considered apart from English learners who do not have an IEP.

In another example, Cathy, Tina, with two years' experience in a small urban school, attested that separate test decisions were made "For special education students who are also EL students at the elementary level, the tests they take are primarily decided by the EL teachers based on their EL level." Her admission that "I cannot really speak to the actual decisions about which tests they take. I will check with my EL colleagues to get that information" indicates that although she was willing to communicate and inquire with her EL colleagues, this information was not the usual practice. Tina's lack of knowledge of ELP test decisions illustrates that

although each had different separate knowledge about the same student, ELTs' input and ELP information were possibly not regularly included in students' IEPs nor shared at IEP meetings.

Excerpts above from both ELTs and SETs illustrate that neither group of teachers advocated for including ELTs' input or English language proficiency concerning their achievement on the state academic tests. However, there was a small minority of excerpts from teachers that illustrate some consideration of ELTs' participation in the IEP meetings that I discuss in the next section.

IEP Invitation

In contrast to the SET excerpts above, a less common occurrence was examples of ELTs who were invited to IEP meetings. For instance, Liz, who taught for nearly five years, stated, "We always invite ESL teachers to our IEP and assessment meetings, but I have yet to have one attend…we do not work together in meeting the needs of our EL learners with disabilities…" Though it is unknown from Liz's comment the reasons ELTs do not attend the IEP meetings despite being invited, her comment suggests ELTs and SETs do not communicate even outside the IEP meeting to collaborate in the interest of SEAL+D. Instead, Liz reasoned the English language proficiency test, unlike other state assessments, does not entail special education consideration since "In this building ELL students' state assessments are decided by their IEP team…ELL teachers although their input…generally pertains more to ELL testing than the state assessments." When I probed further about the composition of the IEP team, which, unlike ELTs who appeared not to be required or expected to attend IEP meetings compared to other teachers, Liz stated that "The legal requirement is for a mainstream teacher to attend, so teachers most often will err on the side of having a mainstream teacher attend." She stated, without a doubt that

"I am certainly not saying this is beneficial to the student, but simply that it is how things are currently done at our school." Unlike the IEP, a legal document and other members of the IEP, ELTs are not official and therefore not essential. Liz's parsing between ELTs and SETs confined ELTs' role outside the IEP. Liz's understanding of the legal requirement of the IEP team members privileged other members, i.e., general education classroom teachers' attendance over that of ELTs (IDEA, 2004). Like Margaret, an ELT above, ELTs were invited to IEP meetings, but their role was viewed as non-binding.

To sum up, common in all the excerpts of SETs reported beliefs, ELTs were generally invisible or excluded from IEP teams and not formally considered as significant members of the IEP team. ELT test decisions were separate from the SET test decisions for students in the IEP team process. Teachers seemed to view the IEP team as confined to only disability related considerations without the English language component for students' IEPs. SETs knowledge about the students and IEP decisions at times mirrored practices at the district and school levels in which the ELP test provided a means to serve as a division wall between the roles of SETs and ELTs. Next, I turn to instances of exceptions where ELTs were included in the IEP.

Holding A Seat at the Table

In contrast to the typical marginalized role of ELTs in the IEP decision process, as exemplified above, there were exceptions to the rule of very few instances that included ELTs in IEP decisions. In these instances, collaboration happened between ELTs and SETs rather than as an exception. ELTs explained that one-way collaboration occurred because of the legal mandate of the IEP that required consideration of all the test programs for SEAL+D (IDEA, 2004; U.S.

Department of Education, 2016). In response to my question on whether ELTs were invited to IEP meetings, ELTs were reported to be present in these cases.

In one instance, Evelyn, an ELT teacher, viewed that any student with an IEP who is an English learner would, without question, be part of the IEP team. She said that "All teachers are invited to the IEP meetings, so of course, the ELL teacher is invited when the student is ELL." Her specialized role was on par with "all" the other teachers to be included in the IEP teams. She added, "Our IEP paperwork forces the case manager [special education teacher] to address all areas of testing before the IEP can be marked complete…the case manager must address ELL testing." Her reference to the IEP "Our" implies collective ownership and responsibility by all team members, including the ELT. This excerpt was a singular instance of an ELT in the study that stated the IEP is to include state English language testing, which is part of all state testing, as required by law (IDEA, 2004).

In another way, collaboration occurred from an ELT's initiation. For example, Teresa, an ELT who instructed elementary students for ten years in a rural school, brought up in a discussion about the SEAL+D population that "our district has about a 6% EL population with about 10-12% of them on IEPs." Like Evelyn above, Teresa has been included in IEP meetings. Teresa stated, "…our district has done a much better job collaborating between EL and Special Education. I have been included in the team meetings and have taken the lead concerning what I feel are English language issues." She explained that before being included in the IEP, "In the past the responsibility of educating ELs with disabilities landed solely with the Special Education teacher." When I asked Teresa what prompted this change, she provided this explanation:

Excerpt #9: (Teresa, ELT)

1 Linda: What was the impetus for collaboration to occur between EL and special
2 ed?
3 Teresa: I began to learn about collaboration while attending workshops, having
4 discussions with colleagues…This prompted conversations with our Spec. Ed.
5 teachers and Department of Ed. Reps to clarify policy and procedure. As things
6 fell into place so did the collaboration. It took about a year of me (gently)
7 reminding case managers and others that I should be included in team
8 meetings. Gradually it became routine.
9 Linda: What do you think is key for effective collaboration?
10 Teresa: I've learned that building relationships and patience is essential to any
11 change. It has been essential to building our district's EL program.

From professional learning and active engagement through communication at her school and state levels, Teresa reportedly believed developing collaborative relationships with stakeholders at all levels was essential. Moreover, her understanding and initiation to communicate with SETs to "building relationships" influenced others to include her as a valued member of the IEP team. The inclusion of Teresa in the IEP team, who was once invisible, was no longer an anomaly; instead, her voice became a "routine" in practice over time.

ELTs' understanding of the IEP in this section viewed the role of ELTs as inclusive to the IEP team. The English language proficiency test was part of the state assessments for the IEP of SEAL+D; therefore, ELTs have a shared the responsibility. Though Evelyn professed that the presence of ELTs on the IEP team was necessary as a "must" to address ELP testing to render an IEP as "complete," ELTs also have the expertise in second language learning and could have a prominent role in the IEP through self-initiation and establishing relationships and continuous learning.

Like ELTs, only a very few SETs reported that ELTs were not only invited but their input was needed in IEP teams' decisions for students. For example, Robin, a Spanish bilingual SET,

who taught students in grades five to eight for three years in a rural school, described that the IEP team was used as "The process my building uses to decide which state assessments [for] ELLs with disabilities …[and] is an IEP team decision for each student - each student has a unique assessment plan…. The [state English language proficiency test] for ELLs also... the team discusses." As it is the SETs who typically manage IEP teams, Robin reported that responsibility in her role was that "I feel it is my job to provide the whole team with the information about all possibilities so that the team can have a discussion about the options and then make a decision together." In her role as the IEP team manager Robin was compelled with an obligatory responsibility for the IEP team to due diligence in making decisions for students. This meant for Robin that the "whole" team included ELTs and included the ELP assessment as a relevant piece of the IEP. Only when everyone was included after "all" possibilities and options could be discussed then could decisions be mutually made.

When I asked teachers what ELTs could bring to the IEP table, one SET, Sophia, believed that "It would be very important to have the ELL teacher as a part of the decision-making process for ELL learners with disabilities." She expanded that "The IEP team needs to have a clear understanding of what the difficulties are for the individual child. How the language issues and the disability affect how the student shows their knowledge." She reasoned that for SEAL+D, an understanding of a student's English language development in relation to their disability needed to be considered.

Another SET, Hannah, referred to her district directive that "my school district's special education/ell department…some of our focus has been to insist that the ESL teacher is included in all IEP meetings of students who are EL/Special Education… State tests are always a topic

approached at the IEP meeting so it is essential that the ESL teacher attend the meetings to be able to make suggestions regarding the student's bicultural needs as well as his SE [special education] needs." The rationale for the district's insistence that ELTs were included in the IEP meetings indicated acknowledgment that ELTs' perspectives provided language and cultural factors relevant to students' participation in state tests. Including the ELT illuminates an understanding of the impact of language intersecting with a student's disability. Without including the ELT, issues would remain muddy, and considerations for the student would remain incomplete.

Both ELTs and SETs described in this section understood that ELTs were viewed as an IEP team member on par with other teachers, which was a minority case. ELTs played a vital role on the IEP team. In these cases, teachers acknowledged the importance of considering the English language proficiency of students in relation to their disability for their participation in state assessments. Excerpts in this section do not exemplify typical views of their practice and are contrary to findings in the previous sections.

Forging Collaboration

Besides the individual responsibility of ELTs and SETs concerning IEP teams, both groups of teachers had mentioned in a few of the excerpts in the earlier sections the influence that districts had in their schools. Administrators at the district level could be instrumental in ensuring collaboration was not restricted to the district level but extended to the school level. Input from district leadership was essential to guide collaboration between the English language development and special education departments.

In a rare example of an exchange between the two groups of teachers about the need for leadership at district and state levels for collaboration to occur, two ELTs and one SET shared the same perspective in which they were adamant in their stance on how practices need to change. The excerpt between Gertrude, an ELT in a large secondary suburban school for nine years, Elaine, a trilingual German Spanish ELT in a rural school, and Rebecca, a SET for ten years in a suburban school, describes such a case.

Excerpt #10: (Gertrude, ELT; Elaine, ELT, German-Spanish multilingual; Rebecca, SET)

1 Gertrude: I think that the collaboration among departments must happen at the
2 buildings, but I think that…the district can facilitate it better by working together
3 more often. As far as the state department of ed...I haven't seen strong leadership
4 in the area of dual identified SpEd [special education] and ESL [English as a
5 second language] students. We have felt on our own to sort out issues in this area
6 within our district.
7 Rebecca: I totally agree with you, that the entire team needs to be at the table
8 when making these decisions.
9 Elaine: I agree also. Any advice would be welcome. We have a SPED [special
10 education] group that has been isolated and are not used to collaborating. I have
11 nicely tried to encourage collaboration between ESL and SPED, but it hasn't
12 happened…One telling sign for us is that not one SPED teacher joined the group
13 until administration mandated that they be represented!

This exchange between ELTs and SETs represented their need for administrative guidance and support to enable interprofessional collaboration decisions. Otherwise, for the most part, collaboration between teachers would not occur or occur sporadically and was left to the whims of the teachers. For instance, Elaine stated that administrative enforcement was necessary to override SETs' reluctance to collaborate with ELTs. The excerpts suggest that districts need to provide a model and institute collaborative practices in their respective departments to occur at the school level between ELTs and SETs on IEP teams.

In conclusion to this section, ELTs, for the most part, were not viewed as integral members of the IEP team even though students were also English learners. Either ELTs did not have a seat at the IEP table or may have been invited but not considered an official member of the IEP team, as Margaret, an ELT, and Liz, an SET, attested to above. The absence of ELTs suggested that their input, if any, was not documented in a student's IEP. Data on SEAL+D participation in accountability assessments, including the English language proficiency test, should be a documented part of a student's IEP but appeared to be rarely mentioned by any teacher except above by Robin, an SET. In most cases, the findings in this study indicate that ELTs for the English language proficiency test, and SETs for the academic achievement tests, made separate assessment participation decisions for SEAL+D without collaborative sharing of data and responsibility for students. The division was mirrored in some district practices, yet only a few teachers expressed the need for district and state guidance.

In the first section of this chapter, teachers pointed out the language complexity of tests that made the tests inaccessible for students, but in contrast in the second section teachers talk about language and student participation in tests were absent around the IEP. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings from this chapter to the extant literature and theory. The analysis is organized into two sections represented in the two research questions through the lenses of language policy and intersectionality that will illustrate the gap between the language policy of tests and local practice and the incomplete consideration of the multiple qualities of SEAL+D.

Chapter Five

Exclusion of Language

In this study, I examined English language teachers' (ELTs) and special education teachers' (SETs) beliefs about students with English as an additional language and co-existing disabilities (SEAL+D) participation in state summative academic achievement tests. The first research question I posed in this study is what are ELTs' and SETs' beliefs about SEAL+D participation in state summative academic achievement tests? The second question is how ELTs and SETs explain and justify their beliefs in relation to their roles and professional context in making state accountability test decisions for SEAL+D. Analysis of the findings from the previous chapter will be discussed in this chapter, organized by the two main research questions in their respective sections. The data for each section was analyzed through a combination of two methodological frameworks that guide the sections in this discussion. The first draws from the language education policy lens, particularly assessment language policy; the second draws from the intersectionality lens to account for the multidimensional qualities of SEAL+D, specifically as English learners and with a disability. Practical implications will then be provided, followed by limitations and future directions.

The exclusion of language was the main overarching finding indicated with considerable consistency between ELTs' and SETs' beliefs of SEAL+D participation in state academic achievement tests. Teachers' responses focused broadly on the exclusion of language in two aspects. One aspect was the lack of accessibility to the tests for students attributed to the complexity of the language of the tests. The second aspect was the absence of ELTs'

participation in the IEP and teachers' silence about students' English language proficiency status in the IEP. I theorize an ideology of null language in which teachers' contemplation about students' language and language was immaterial and void for SEAL+D, which I discuss in the following sections. I first discuss in the next section the lack of language accessibility on the tests for students in response to the first research question. Then in the second section, I discuss the lack of ELTs' input in the IEP pertaining to the second research question.

Lack of Language Accessibility

I discuss in this section the first research question on what ELTs and SETs beliefs are about SEAL+D participation in the state summative tests. A main finding was that teachers believed the language complexity of the tests was a barrier for students to access the tests, which had them question the validity and fairness of the tests for SEAL+D who are acquiring English language proficiency (Abedi, 2004). Excerpts from teachers are consistent with a few previous studies on teachers experiences in testing students who are ELs. For instance, a series of studies in the 2000s led by Abedi suggested that the linguistic complexity of achievement tests impacts the validity of these tests for ELs. Abedi's 2002 study of four different school sites in the U.S. found that the most prominent performance gap between ELs and non-ELs was most significant in the achievement test with greater language demand, i.e., reading, compared to science and computational math components of the tests that suggested that language factors may affect the validity of the tests. My study's findings are consistent with those studies that inaccessible language in the academic achievement tests indicates a mismatched relationship between the test's characteristics and student characteristics. As such, the tests pose a barrier for them to meaningfully participate in the academic achievement assessments to show what they know. In

another study, Menken's (2008) study of English learners' participation in New York assessments concluded that the state tests are a de facto language policy in which these content tests are English language tests that influenced the dismantling of bilingual programs for students.

Teachers' responses in the excerpts suggest that the state academic achievement tests do not consider the language complexity for ELs who have not yet acquired academic English proficiency because the tests are administered in English and not normed for ELs but instead developed for monolingual English students who do not have a disability. Even though ELs are in the process of acquiring English language proficiency, they are expected, like their non-EL peers, to be already proficient in academic English language to participate in the state tests. According to the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing of the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education (2014):

> Accessible testing situations are those that enable all test takers in the intended population, to the extent feasible, to show their status on the target construct(s) without being unduly advantaged or disadvantaged by individual characteristics (e.g., characteristics related to age, disability, race/ethnicity, gender, or language) that are irrelevant to the construct(s) the test is intended to measure. Accessibility is actually a test bias issue because obstacles to accessibility can result in different interpretations of test scores for individuals from different groups. (p. 52)

When students cannot access the language of the tests, their performance suggests they do not have the knowledge to meet academic standards. The outcomes may influence teachers' beliefs

towards a deficit orientation of low expectations for SEAL+D that they cannot meet academic standards (Valencia, 2012). The findings in this study suggest similar sentiments from an implicit bias of teachers' beliefs that students do not have the language ability nor the expected English language standard for the language complexity of the tests to participate in the tests successfully. This deficit view of students without the language is consistent with other studies reviewed earlier with deficit views of students. For example, in the teachers' interview study, Vasquez (2012) found that teachers viewed low performing high school Latina and African American students as liabilities based solely on test scores. The low performance imparted fear for educators' job security, school reputation, and loopholes forced students out of school to exclude them from high school exit exams. In another study by Russell and Bray (2013) of special education, represented primarily with students of Hispanic-Latino backgrounds, indicated conflicting ideologies between school leaders and teachers. Leaders viewed the inclusion of SDs in the general education accountability goals as a positive yet attributed school failure to SDs that stigmatized the school and relocated students to other schools. Teachers were frustrated by seemingly contradictory policies between the grade-level state tests (NCLB) for SDs with unique needs (IDEA, 2004) who performed below grade-level standards.

This study and previous studies indicate that student intersectional qualities such as language, disability, and race (García & Ortiz, 2008) influenced educators' beliefs and impacted test practices to the disadvantage of students to meet state test standards. More specifically, the impact of test practices to use standardized academic achievement tests with language complexity inaccessible to SEAL+D reifies their position of not being able to show their knowledge and skills on these state tests. The findings suggest that though academic language

may be necessary for student participation in the state achievement tests, this runs counter to the heterogeneity of SEAL+D with their highly varied language backgrounds and hides their ability to use language in other contexts, such as communicating with others. The tests serve as perpetual de facto language policies that influence teacher practices (Menken, 2008; Shohamy, 2006; Spolsky, 2004). I will discuss the teachers' beliefs that also impacted the IEP team practice in the next section.

Lack of English Language Teacher Input

A major secondary finding in this study is that ELTs and SETs reported beliefs of making state accountability assessment decisions for SEAL+D were reflected by their roles in IEP teams. Given that the IEP is the special education mechanism to identify and provide a program of individualized services specifically for students with a disability, SETs are team members of the IEP by default. However, the finding indicated that English language development and special education were mutually exclusive, in which ELTs and SETs needed a collaborative interprofessional relationship in making state assessment decisions for SEAL+D. The teachers tended to make independent decisions, if at all, restricted to their respective departments about student's English language proficiency standing. The need for input from ELTs and consideration of English language development services for students with English language proficiency status was not indicated in discourses between teachers in the study. The content of IEP for SEAL+D requires that state assessment data related to participation be documented (ESSA; IDEA 2004). However, the findings suggest that a students' English language proficiency not discussed or included in their IEP, as indicated by the absent pattern of ELTs from the IEP team (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). As reported in the previous chapter,

only one teacher, a SET, among all the participants in the study mentioned that the English language proficiency assessment, like other state assessments, must be discussed and included in the IEP. The findings suggest a tendency of unilateral decision making in which SETs overrode ELTs by missing a seat at the IEP table. Though studies are sparse on the role of the IEP team for SEAL+D, this finding is like the study by Kangas (2014). In her ethnographic study of English language learners with disabilities in a suburban elementary school, her findings indicated that disability-related services took priority over ESL services. The findings in my study are also consistent with an investigation by Hoover et al. (2018). They examined IEPs for English learners receiving special education for learning disabilities and found no references to linguistic and culturally responsive features to inform the IEP.

The IEP team serves as the mechanism for collaborative decision making in developing the IEP. The IEP team includes educators, parents, and caregivers who are involved in the educational needs of SEAL+D. Furthermore, language policy in the English Learner Toolkit (U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, 2016) in conjunction with the Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Dear Colleague Letter (2015) mandates legal obligations such that the IEP team include an educator with expertise in ESL to collaborate with general and special education teachers. An implication of the exclusion of the expertise of an ELT from the IEP team brings into question whether the IEP team has considered the English language development needs of SEAL+D with their disability when considering a student's performance on state assessments. As identified English learners, SEAL+D are entitled to supports and resources for English

language development provided by qualified ELTs as decided in the *Lau vs. Nichols* Supreme Court case.

A troubling implication in the general consistency from the excerpts of teachers in this study indicating the lack of ELTs' input for a student's IEP suggests that SEAL+D, identified as ELs, indicate that these students may not be receiving English language development services. This finding echoes Kangas (2018), in which SETs and ELTs operated in silos. A consequence of neglecting ELD services for SEAL+D is possibly a contributing factor, in the sustainment of students with below grade level outcomes in state tests, whether for the state academic content or the ELP assessments. This consequence may partly reflect teachers' stated beliefs of below grade level expectations for SEAL+D in which a student's disability precludes them from meeting grade level test standards despite being an English learner. However, these findings cannot be definitively attributed to conditions under the control of teachers. There may be systemic factors such as a shortage of ELTs available or a lack of organizational structure to allow collaboration time or teachers' schedules to attend IEP meetings. It is disconcerting that not one teacher, especially bilingual ELTs, in this study adopted the position of English language services as a relevant need for SEAL+D. With the interplay of the multidimensional qualities and heterogeneity of language and disability of SEAL+D, clear guidance for best assessment practices and professional development must be provided for teachers. IEPs for SEAL+D should document English language development for students to meet IEP goals and grade level standards-based state tests (Hoover et al., 2018). Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004 embed language policy with mandates that schools consider the language needs with their disability in a student's IEP (Dear Colleague

Letter, 2015). The findings in this study reflect a gap between policy and practice. Teachers' decisions or lack of decision making without input from all teachers for a student's IEP renders the IEP incomplete. It may impede a student's progress towards academic and English language proficiency achievement.

In sum, this study aimed to explore teachers' beliefs about SEAL+D participation in state academic content tests in relation to language education policies. Though laws were designed to improve equity for historically marginalized students by including their participation in state assessments, the findings suggest that the exclusion of language accessibility in tests and the exclusion of ELTs on IEP teams may pose barriers to equitable opportunities for students making progress towards their academic achievement.

SEAL+D are a heterogeneous group of students with varied English language proficiency and disability dimensions with complex considerations who face academic challenges and barriers to their participation in state assessments. The findings in this study suggest broader assessment systemic structures such as state testing programs and the special education IEP that underlie the achievement of SEAL+D. Tests designed for English proficient monolingual peers may frame and reify SEAL+D as not skilled at meeting standard expectations and may internalize educators' beliefs with deficit perspectives. As English learners, SEAL+D require interdisciplinary considerations from educators, including ELTs' input, to fully consider assessment decisions for these students. As English learners, SEAL+D are entitled to English language development services as mandated by law. This support, too, must be in concert with the development of their IEP. Th supposition SEAL+D are to progress in meeting ELP and academic achievement standards; in that case, they must have ELD support with ELTs input to

overcome unintended barriers on standardized assessments for equitable access to education as other general education peers.

Limitations and Contributions

Caution should be used when interpreting teachers' explanatory responses because, in this study, I examined a relatively unexplored phenomenon. Prior empirical studies were limited as guideposts in developing and analyzing themes. To mitigate potential bias as the sole researcher in this study, I used an inductive process to identify themes across a minimum of three focus groups as best practice to establish inter-reliability confirmation (Kruger & Casey, 2009). It is common for focus groups to be used as a stand-alone methodology (Agar & Macdonald, 1995; Kruger & Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1996; Turney, 2005), and findings in this study were compared to formal documents such as federal laws and policies, population data, and standards. However, triangulating with other methods can strengthen the consistency of findings (Patton, 2002). For example, post-interviews with participants would have allowed me the opportunity to clarify their responses in the focus group discussions or member checking to verify my understanding of their responses. Nevertheless, this research design format contributes to a qualitative research approach in education. This format across time and space enabled teachers in diverse contexts in hard-to-reach areas who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to hear their voices on this less commonly researched topic (Tates et al., 2009; Turney & Pocknee, 2005). In addition, participants' anonymity permitted them to be more candid, unlike in a face-to-face interview, particularly on sensitive topics.

This study contributes to the knowledge base by helping to fill the research gap concerning the multidimensional qualities of SEAL+D participation in accountability assessments. Unlike the predominant use of surveys in previous studies that are limited in scope to understanding teachers' beliefs associated with socio-cultural and linguistic factors for students' test participation, this may be the first qualitative study to report at a granular level from a language education policy lens within the broader social context of national educational assessment policy. Furthermore, more recent research has investigated bias factors toward students at the intersection of race and language (Flores & Rosa, 2015). However, there is less of a look at students with intersecting qualities of disability and language. For SEAL+D in this study, language and disability were the focal points that highlighted language, overall, was a neglected factor for SEAL+D whether for statewide summative academic achievement tests or at the local level of IEP decision making.

In this study, the value of the lens of language policy by way of teachers' beliefs made visible the exclusion of language for SEAL+D at different systemic levels, which have implications for practice (Spolsky, 2004). Teachers in this study questioned if the standardized tests were fair and valid because the language complexity in the tests was inaccessible to SEAL+D (AERA et al., 2014). Since these students are ELs, the tests functioned as language tests instead of accurately measuring their content knowledge (Menken, 2008). The tests privileged academic English proficient students but denied SEAL+D language access, thereby suppressing their ability to demonstrate their level of content knowledge and reifying and sustaining their status as persistent low performers and unable to meet academic achievement standards. The application of language policy needs to be further considered in the field of

educational disability in future research studies concerning SEAL+D. Language is particularly relevant given the increasing growth of ELs enrolled in schools and therefore, the increasing number of SEAL+D in special education.

The addition of looking through an intersectionality lens in this study highlighted that the multidimensional qualities of language and disability of SEAL+D were not usually considered in tandem. Furthermore, with Hispanics representing approximately thirty percent compared to one percent of White English learners, SEAL+D personifies the visible qualities of race/ethnicity that underpin the language and disability qualities of SEAL+D. Only Katy, an ELT in Excerpt 1 in Chapter Four, questioned the fairness of the state tests that favored a White, middle-class student. Instead, teachers' implicit beliefs pointed to the view that the disability of SEAL+D overrode language considerations for them. This view was particularly notable in the focus group discussion around the IEP that did not include input from ELTs, student performance on the English language proficiency test, or English language services for SEAL+D. Instead, decision making appeared to be unilateral or siloed through the special education mechanism of the IEP. Future studies of SEAL+D must move beyond a single dimensional to a multidimensional approach that can identify what aspects of students' qualities are not being represented and included to support their academic learning and meet academic standards and involve collaborative efforts and responsibilities.

However, given the nature of qualitative research, the findings of this exploratory study reflect a small group of teachers situated in a specific geographic, socio-linguistic, cultural, and educational context in one state. Moreover, states differ in many factors, including their EL population, and ELs vary in their academic and English language proficiency status. Therefore,

the findings in this study should not be generalized to other teachers, schools, and states. Nevertheless, the findings may be transferable to teachers in other contexts who share similar beliefs and professional experiences. Despite these limitations, the findings I have reported here shed light on a critical area of the multidisciplinary complexities of teachers' beliefs about the participation of SEAL+D in state summative assessments. This study offers implications for future research and practices to examine broader consideration of systemic factors such as the appropriateness of using tests that are standardized for, not all inclusive student populations and how such standardized tests outcomes are used to report the knowledge and capabilities of linguistically and disability diverse students, such as SEAL+D. The development of valid test outcomes (AERA et al., 2014) may impact teachers' test decision-making practices for all educators. Furthermore, valid tests may create equitable access to services, mainly English language services, for SEAL+D, as general education students, to demonstrate growth in their learning to meet state academic standards. Moreover, findings in the study suggest that test developers need to consider a more expansive inclusion of linguistic and cultural content to make tests more accessible for SEAL+D. As required, the progress of SEAL+D achievement needs to be reported (ESSA; IDEA, 2004) and shared at all system levels, particularly their academic English language proficiency that impacts their overall academic content achievement to move beyond the static deficit belief of what SEAL+D cannot do to one of an affirming asset belief that has yet to be determined.

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