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Equitable Instruction for Secondary Latino English Learners:

Examining Critical Principles of Differentiation in Lesson Design

Anne René Elsbree, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Teaching, Learning and Leadership
School of Education
California State University San Marcos
333 S. Twin Oaks Valley Road, San Marcos, CA 92096-0001
aelsbree@csusm.edu; Tel: (760) 750-4384; Fax: (760) 750-3352

Ana M. Hernández, Ed.D.

Assistant Professor of Multilingual and Multicultural Education
School of Education
California State University San Marcos
333 S. Twin Oaks Valley Road, San Marcos, CA 92096-0001
ahernand@csusm.edu; Tel: (760) 750-8570; Fax: (760) 750-3352

Annette Daoud, Ph.D.

Professor of Multilingual and Multicultural Education
School of Education
California State University San Marcos
333 S. Twin Oaks Valley Road, San Marcos, CA 92096-0001
adaoud@csusm.edu; Tel: (760) 750-8519; Fax: (760) 750-3352

Abstract

The research emphasizes the need for educators to take more ownership for Latino English Learner's (ELs) mastery of English and to identify the parts of effective lesson differentiation through subject area content, process (student activities), and products (assessments). The study examined lesson plans from 35 teacher candidates [86% white (n=30); 14% Latino (n=5)] in a Single Subject credential program in southern California. Teacher candidates conducted their clinical practice in districts that served up to 70% ELs, with the majority of students identified as Long-term ELs. Process differentiation was the most common with 89% of the lessons, content differentiation with 80%, and product was the least common differentiation with 57%. Of the 35 lessons, only 46% contained all three types of differentiation. The lessons were analyzed for five parts of a differentiation plan: 1) Student information; 2) Differentiation alignment to information; 3) Rationale; 4) Assessment criteria; and 5) Monitor and adapt. Candidates (94%) provided descriptive data about their students' proficiency levels, learning profiles and interests. All lessons included at least one differentiation strategy. Only 26% provided a rationale for the differentiation. Only 9% described the criteria for assessing student progress. And 26% included monitoring and adaption. Results indicated that teacher educators needed to be more strategic in how to teach the elements of differentiation to candidates, particularly in addressing the needs of Latino ELs' proficiency levels.

Equitable Instruction for Secondary Latino English Learners:

Examining Critical Principles of Differentiation in Lesson Design

At the secondary level, the majority of English learners (ELs) can be characterized as "long term English learners." While there are variations in the definitions provided by researchers, common characteristics of long term English learners or LTELs are: they have been enrolled in U.S. schools for approximately 6 years or more; they generally have grade point averages of below a 2.0; and they have not attained a proficiency level in reading and writing skills needed for academic success in content area classes (Olsen, 2010). Long term English learners perform at much lower academic levels than immigrant students who come to U.S. schools with a range of prior schooling experiences from their home countries (Callahan, 2005). One challenge facing secondary ELs is placement – the classes in which they are placed are often not those which are required for future attendance in four-year colleges. Secondary English learners often take multiple English as Second Language (ESL) or ELD classes thus limiting their access to "mainstream" content classes (Barron & Sanchez, 2007; Callahan, 2005; Rumberger & Gandara, 2004). Unfortunately, it is often the case that the curriculum in ESL or ELD classes is not challenging enough or aligned to college-track classes for long term ELs to transfer the information learned and be successful in their content area classes.

Additionally, the academic demands for secondary ELs in content area classes are much more complex than those needed for success in elementary schools. At the secondary level, content in textbooks and that presented in content area classes are done so through an increasingly complex level of academic language or the specialized

level of vocabulary, grammar and skills of secondary content area classes. For secondary English learners, particularly long term ELs, attaining and practicing a level of academic English is required for any level of success in content area classes. Secondary ELs come to content area classes with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences in school that require a varied level of scaffolding to access the content. To help ELs be academically successful, content area teachers should understand their students' literacy and content knowledge, previous academic experience in U.S. schools and their knowledge of the English language (Dutro & Kinsella, 2010).

Preparing Teachers to Teach Secondary English Learners

The educational experiences of long-term English learners underscore the importance for teacher education programs to prepare teachers to equitably teach students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds. In a survey of California teachers, Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly and Driscoll (2005) report on challenges that secondary teachers identify in teaching ELs. The most commonly cited challenge for secondary teachers is the language and cultural barriers between themselves and their EL students. The secondary teachers who participated in the survey stated that the most beneficial professional development trainings are those that focus on understanding the cultural characteristics and learning profiles of ELs they need to effectively teach them.

The more knowledge teachers have about their EL students, the better able they are to provide equitable educational opportunities to them. It is therefore imperative that secondary teacher credential programs and professional development trainings prepare secondary teachers to provide ELs in their content areas classrooms access to the core

curriculum in ways that are both comprehensible and academically rigorous. It is also essential that teacher credential and professional development programs explicitly draw from the tenets of multicultural education, social justice and equity to prepare teachers to provide equitable educational experiences for all their future students.

Common Core Standards – New Standards, New Opportunities

The monumental change for teacher's implementing the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and shifts in instruction becomes more complex when lessons demand differentiation and scaffolding strategies to meet the needs of the varying degrees of English proficiency amongst second language learners. ELs need to develop language skills that will support their learning in content instruction beyond the fundamental functions of English. As teachers begin to incorporate rigorous standards and complex demands of using texts from various content registers, there is fear that ELs will continue to trail behind or further decline in academic achievement, since ELs lack understanding of knowledge and skills in disciplines that require high functioning levels of English proficiency (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012). In addition, according to WestEd (2010), "in order to succeed academically, all ELs must overcome a 'double gap,' first to equal the achievement of their native-speaking counterparts, and then to reach a level of achievement that is considered grade-level proficient (p. 3). However, CCSS and the new ELD Standards can offer a window of optimism to reconstruct the manner in which teachers instruct ELs with deeper understandings of content and language. It offers a fresh start to equip linguistically and culturally diverse students who have been denied the right to interact with rigorous content, opportunities to engage in effective communication skills, and ways to apply new knowledge of their

English language skills in meaningful ways. For secondary ELs, this could signify a new dawn for their right to an equitable education and journey into college and career readiness.

The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the need for educators to take more ownership for EL students' mastery of English and to identify the parts of an effective content, process and product differentiation in a lesson. The research questions for the study include: 1) In what ways are teacher candidates addressing differentiation? 2) How do teacher candidates articulate their differentiation plan?

Literature Review

This inquiry draws from the theoretical foundations of critical theory/pedagogy to develop consciousness of instructional practices in traditional education. To address the educational issues facing secondary ELs, faculty in the teacher education program highlighted in this inquiry frame our practice in critical multicultural education, use a social justice / critical pedagogy approach to design and deliver our program, and teach our candidates how to use effective practices for ELs in their instruction.

Multicultural Education

Based on the notion that all students learn when the curriculum is meaningful, comprehensible, and relevant to students' lives, the lesson planning process outlined in this paper draws from the theoretical foundations of multicultural education and critical pedagogy to provide teacher candidates with the tools needed to motivate English learners along with all students to learn. Improving educational experiences through understanding and respect of all students is one of the foundation of the theories and practices of multicultural education (Banks, 2003; Gallavan, 2011; Nieto & Bode, 2008;

Sleeter, 2005). School achievement improves when instructional practices address students' culture, experiences and learning styles in ways that are differentiated to meet each student's individual academic needs (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Peer interactions and collaborative activities that are rooted in critical pedagogy are paramount in educating second language learners, particularly in states like California, where approximately 25% of students in public schools (K-12) are classified as ELs, either immigrants or the sons and daughters of immigrants living in poverty or below poverty level (California Department of Education, 2013). Educators need to understand that educating ELs is more than just providing access to the curriculum or sheltering instruction for comprehension of content. New standards call for students who are actively engaged in content learning through peer interactions, understand how to conduct research, provide evidence while reading and writing, analyze complex texts, and can apply advanced levels of academic language skills to any subject area. Therefore, a reconstruction and transformation of the manner in which teachers/teacher candidates design lessons will be the new guiding principles for equitable instructional practices for English learners.

Social Justice Approach

Teacher education programs which are explicitly rooted in tenets of social justice and equity see teaching as the act of enhancing students' learning and their expanding opportunities both in and beyond school (for example, Cochran-Smith, et. al, 2009; Darling-Hammond, French & Garcia-Lopez, 2002). Social justice teacher education programs highlight inequities that exist in schools and guide teacher candidates in understanding theories and practices that will help them provide equitable educational

opportunities for all their future students. In this inquiry, the steps needed to create a differentiation plan used in this inquiry approaches social justice from a framework similar to one described by Chubbuck (2010) on conceptualizing and implementing socially just teaching. Teacher candidates reflect upon and design their individual socially just and equitable pedagogy to address student learning difficulties using both individual and structural orientations (Chubbuck, 2010). To create a differentiation plan, teacher candidates first identify their EL students' proficiency levels, learning profiles and interests, then reflect upon how to choose differentiation strategies that lead to more equitable educational outcomes.

In a study of a teacher education program explicitly centered on social justice and equity, Cochran-Smith, et.al, (2009) found that teacher candidates' definitions of social justice and equity are placed into four categories; pupil learning, relationships and respect, teacher as activist, and recognizing inequities. Across the categories, the teacher candidates define and enact social justice through their own individual actions rather than through policy change or political actions (Cochran-Smith, et.al, 2009). In a study of two teacher education programs in California to examine how each program implements social justice and equity across their programs, McDonald (2005) found that translating these definitions into actions can be challenging for teacher candidates. Freeman, Bullock and Duque (2005) also describe challenges when trying to use consciousness raising activities to guide teacher candidates to transformative actions. Drawing from these studies, one can establish that teacher education programs should; present social justice in ways that the candidates are open to learning; teach candidates to define social justice on an individual level; and help candidates translate their

definitions into concrete actions in their future classrooms. The steps that comprise the differentiation plan provide very specific "doable" actions that teachers and teacher candidates can integrate into their teaching practices which directly impact the equitable educational opportunities for secondary English learners.

Students of impoverish communities, who are linguistically and culturally diverse, need to connect knowledge to power and freedom of oppression in order to achieve social reconstruction (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988). It is important for teachers to view educational opportunities for students who have been historically disenfranchised by inequitable systems. Teachers can transform students into thinkers for social change and active learners in their communities. Structures that allow a one size fits all instructional program creates a "culture of silence and oppression" for groups of students who are perceived as subordinates in educational stratifications, particularly English learners. This theory permits teachers to re-examine and reconstruct lesson development as a critical process for transformation, rather than to continue a status quo approach in the classroom.

Effective Strategies for Teaching Secondary English Learners

Effective instructional planning is a necessity for meeting the needs in today's diverse classrooms, especially with English learners. Three instructional design practices that lend themselves to English language development include Universal Design for Learning (Rose & Meyer, 2002; Rose & Gravel, 2010), Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) and Differentiated Instruction (Tomlinson, 2001). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a pedagogical approach based on the universal design movement in architecture, where buildings provide accessible options for entry

and use from the initial design, not as an after thought that requires retrofitting. Examples of retrofitting include curb cuts, ramps and bathroom modifications. Some universal design buildings not only have ramps and elevators instead of stairs only, but also provide electronic doors to support entry for those using wheel chairs, crutches or even strollers and carts. Universal Design for Learning is similar because the multiple accessibility points are considered from the initial instructional plan. The students and their needs are considered before the lesson is designed. So it minimizes the need for retrofitted or differentiated plans.

Universal Design for Learning addresses three networks: recognition, strategic, and affective (Rose & Gravel, 2010). Universal Design for Learning requires each lesson provide multiple means of representation, action/expression and engagement (Rose & Meyer, 2002). While it is critical that educators provide instruction in universally accessible ways, English Learners often need further differentiation to guarantee that the access fits their proficiency levels. It is not enough to provide a ramp, for student entry, but to monitor and see if the student is able to maneuver the ramp independently. Some students need further scaffolds, but if the educators do not monitor and identify if the instruction is meeting the student's need then no further adaption or modification can be developed.

Understanding by Design (Wiggins & Grant, 2005) is a backward planning process, where educators identify the learning outcomes of a unit first and then choose learning activities and materials that would support the identified learning objectives. The benefit of this instructional design is that it focuses on planning the learning tasks and evidence of the students understanding. Educators can design the tasks with

English learners in mind with set criteria to demonstrate language development as well as content understanding.

Carol Ann Tomlinson's (2001) differentiated instruction adds to both of these instructional plans by focusing attention on the three main areas of instruction: content (subject objectives, concepts and materials), process (student activities), and product (assessments). Each of the three areas can be adapted or modified based on the learner's readiness level – English proficiency level, learning profile and interests. Tomlinson provides a framework for differentiating based on the specific information of a student. So this instructional design allows for more refined instruction dependent on the needs of the learners.

Research findings on effective strategies for teaching secondary English learners provide the foundation for following the steps of designing differentiation plans. Teaching methods such as sheltered instruction or Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) provide secondary teachers with the pedagogy, methodology and strategies to effectively teach English learners. In sheltered or SDAIE classrooms, language and content objectives are threaded throughout the curriculum so that English learners are able to learn content while improving English literacy skills (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2014). Sheltered or SDAIE lessons include multiple strategies and methods that help make academically rigorous content accessible to English learners at various language proficiency levels, and in multiple contexts including "mainstream" content classrooms (for example, Diaz-Rico, 2013; Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2014).

Research shows that incorporating language and content objectives based on state standards is an effective competency that teachers of secondary English learners use in their lesson planning (Faltis, Arias & Ramirez-Marin, 2010). Using the standards and objectives as a guide, sheltered or SDAIE lessons include multiple strategies, methods and assessments that help make academically rigorous content accessible to English learners at various language proficiency levels, and in multiple contexts including "mainstream" content classrooms (i.e., Diaz-Rico, 2013; Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2014; Faltis, Arias & Ramirez-Marin, 2010).

Supporting academic language development is particularly paramount for secondary English learners who need academic language to be successful across all their content area classes. Effective strategies for supporting English learners' academic language development include explicit teaching of language forms and metacognitive strategies, building background knowledge and providing opportunities to practice academic language across multiple contexts (Bowers, et. al, 2010). Additionally, English learners need content presented through explicit scaffolding so they can perform the academic task required (De Jong & Harper, 2005). The amount of scaffolding needed is based on the English learners' language proficiency levels as well as their background knowledge (language, content and culture). Building upon students' background knowledge is an effective strategy to develop language and content mastery as well as to make curriculum culturally and socially relevant to students' lives (De Jong & Harper, 2005; Faltis, Arias & Ramirez-Marin, 2010).

Methodology

The study is an analysis of lesson plans from 35 teacher candidates. The candidates were enrolled in a two-semester fifth-year Single Subject Secondary Credential Program in Southern California. All of the candidates had a bachelor degree and had passed the California Subject Examination for Teachers. In the fall semester, each candidate was enrolled in three-core methodology courses (Teaching and Learning, Literacy, and Multilingual Education), one subject specific methodology course and full-time clinical practice at a public middle or high school that serves English learners. Some of the districts served up to 70% English learners, with the majority of them identified as long-term English learners (Olsen, 2010). The demographics for teacher candidates: 49% women (17) and 51% (18) men; 86% white (30) and 14% Latino (5); The candidates' subject areas: 14% English (5), 20% Math (7), 5.71% Physical Education (2), 8.57% Science (3), 28.57% Social Studies (10), and 22.87% Spanish (8) earning a Spanish/English Bilingual Authorization. It is important to note that of the eight Spanish teacher candidates, three were white, four were Latinos (three from Mexico and one from Honduras) and one was Latino/Hawaiian with roots from Mexico. In terms of language, almost 23% of the candidates were bilingual (Spanish/English) and 77% predominantly spoke English only. In addition 14% (5) of the candidates self-identified as English learners, with two of them experiencing high school education in California during Proposition 227: Anti-Bilingual Education Initiative passed in 1998. They have shared their experiences with their colleagues in terms of how their education changed under the reform.

      The candidates were enrolled in Multilingual Education, which focuses on the goals of multilingual and multicultural education, specifically why and how to support English learners. The assignment for this research study was to design a lesson plan that included differentiation for English learners. The program provided a lesson template that was used across courses and in clinical practice. Each lesson included: standard, objective, assessment, enduring understanding, essential questions, instructional steps, student information, differentiation and materials. Prior to this assignment candidates were instructed on how to create a universally designed lesson (Rose & Grant, 2010) using backward planning (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) with specific differentiation for content, process or product (Tomlinson, 2001) based on their class profile. First, the candidates created a personal learning profile for themselves, where they identified their strengths, their readiness levels for different content, their learning preferences, their collaboration and leadership styles, and their interests. Based on their learning profile the candidates identified learning activities where they would thrive. The purpose of this activity was to help the candidates understand how this information could inform instruction. Second, the candidates were instructed on how to locate student information at their clinical practice sites, such as English proficiency levels and individual education plans. The students learned about the evaluation processes for both English learners and Students with Special Needs. Currently the data available for English learners is the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). The CELDT scores identify the English learners' ability to listen, speak, read and write in English. The candidates learned how to match a student's CELDT score to an appropriate level English Language Development Standard: emerging, expanding and

bridging. Third, the candidates created and conducted a survey with their middle and high school students to identify their interests and learning profiles. Fourth, the candidates were asked to analyze the class profile to identify similarities in their students' learning profiles, identify students that needed differentiation and to learn how to choose effective differentiation strategies based on the profiles.

The analysis of the lesson plans focused specifically on the differentiation strategies for English learners. We categorized the differentiation strategies into three areas: content differentiation for subject objectives, concepts or materials; process differentiation for the student activities; and product differentiation for the assessments (Tomlinson, 2001). For each strategy we identified if the candidate articulated the five parts of the differentiation plan:

1) Identification of English learner's proficiency level, learning profile and/or interests (Tomlinson, 2001);

2) Alignment of the differentiation to the English learner's proficiency level, learning profile and/or interests;

3) Explanation of why the differentiation is appropriate for the English learner's proficiency level, learning profile and/or interests (Tomlinson, 2001);

4) Description of the criteria for assessing the English learner's progress based on proficiency level;

5) Plan for monitoring and adapting strategy to support English learner's progress.

The research focused only on the lesson plan design and not the implementation, so there was no reflection analyzed to identify the effectiveness of the differentiation plan.

Results

The research findings covered two areas, the types of differentiation and the plan for the differentiation. The intention of the original analysis was to identify what types of strategies the candidates designed, but we also were curious how the candidates articulated their differentiation plan - what parts were included in their differentiation plan and what parts the candidates needed more guidance and practice for designing socially just and equitable instruction.

Types of Differentiation

Process differentiation was the most common with 89% of the lessons (31/35), content was the second most common with 80% (28/35) and product was the least common differentiation with 57% of the lesson containing assessment differentiation (20/35). Of the 35 lessons, 20% (7) of the lessons contained only one type of differentiation with two that included content differentiation and the other five included process differentiation, 34% (12) of the lessons contained two types of differentiation (with seven that included content and process differentiation, two with content and product and one that included process and product differentiation) and 46% (16) of the lessons contained all three types of differentiation.

Content. The content differentiation consisted of content accommodations and with no substantial content modifications. Content accommodations were minor differentiations that did not substantially change the instructional level, subject content or assessment criteria for the English learner, but addressed the delivery method, such as multisensory presentation (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and vocabulary development supports.

An example of a lesson that included content differentiation focused on vocabulary. The differentiation plan began with information about the EL. The candidate described an English learner with a CELDT score of 3, an intermediate level with strong English reading skills, but poor English speaking articulation. In addition he noted that the student enjoys playing soccer and consistently makes an effort to complete his class work. The differentiation plan described how the teacher candidate will directly taught the vocabulary word, "imperialism." The candidate described projecting the word and it's definition on a smart board in bold black font and having the English learner copy the word and definition on a graphic organizer and to describe the word verbally. Although the candidate did not explain why the differentiation was appropriate based on the student's information, the candidate did describe how he would check for the EL's understanding by checking what he wrote on the graphic organizer and listening to the student's verbal definition and to make any needed clarifications immediately to make sure that the English learner comprehended the correct definition.

The other content differentiations 78.5% (22/28) merely described the student and named a differentiation with no specifications of why the differentiation was chose or a plan to assess the effectiveness of the strategy or adapt the strategy if needed.

Process. The process differentiations included flexible grouping, graphic organizers, multisensory activities and tiered lessons. The flexible grouping describes the different ways students can be grouped to maximize learning. The lessons that included graphic organizers were designed to help the student visually process the content. The multisensory activities included visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. The tiered

lessons provided different participation roles for the ELs based on their proficiency

levels.

In one of the lessons that included process differentiation, the candidate not only

described the English learner's proficiency level at a CELDT 3 score, with visual and

interpersonal learning style preferences, that enjoys one-on-one instruction. The

candidate described the Latino EL's interests in computers and video games,

specifically guitar hero. He was earning a B in the math class and was interested in

going to the local community college to pursue engineering. In the lesson the students

are to use their understanding of volume and surface area formulas to design a drink

container for another country. In the differentiation plan the candidate describes how the

student would be assigned a group with a reclassified[1] Spanish-speaking English

learner to assist with any translations as well as high performing English-Only students

to model proper language and math usage. The candidate provided a strong

explanation of why the strategy was appropriate for the EL's proficiency level. Although

the candidate neglected to address the criteria that would be used for assessing the

EL's progress or a plan for monitoring the strategy and adapting it if necessary, the

other three parts were very strong: information about student, differentiation aligned to

student information and explanation of why the differentiation is appropriate based on

the student proficiency level, learning profile and/or interest.

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[1] Reclassified – Is a term used by the California Department of Education to identify students who have met reclassification criteria. A district determines whether or not an English learner student has sufficient English proficiency to be reclassified as a fluent English speaker through the following: *EC* Section 313 (d) specifies multiple measures be used to reclassify ELs, including all four of the following criteria: Assessment of English proficiency Evaluation of performance in basic skills, such as the CST for English-language arts (CST- ELA) or the California Modified Assessment for ELA (CMA-ELA), teacher evaluation, and parental opinion and consultation. Retrieved on March 27, 2014 from http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/rd/.

Product. The product differentiations included in 57% of the (20/35) lessons. Over half of the (11/20) lessons included product differentiations that were minor accommodations where what the English learners were expected to learn the same content as the rest of the class. Almost half of the (9/20) lessons that included a differentiated product (modification) used a rubric to communicate the different language development tasks based on the emerging; expanding and bridging that refer to the English Language Development standard's proficiency level descriptors. One lesson was a stellar example of product differentiation for a pickle formation in a physical education. The candidate provided information on a Spanish Speaking English Learner with a CELDT 3 score, who spoke well in class and understood verbal instructions, but struggled with vocabulary, reading and writing. In addition the candidate shared that the EL was athletic, interested in sports, and enjoyed soccer and shooting video games. In the lesson, the students were instructed to create a pro and con list for each formation of pickle ball. The teacher candidate described how he would strategically place the learner in a group with other strong readers and one student that was a Spanish-speaking English learner that was recently reclassified as proficient. He explained how this group would provide the necessary language supports for processing the different pickle formations and to comprehend what the pros and cons would be for each formation. The candidate described how he would monitor the group discussion and ask the EL questions to evaluate his comprehension and to ask him permission if he could be called on during the whole class discussion to share his answers. This not only offered the candidate an opportunity to assess the effectiveness

of the differentiation, but it would allow him to adapt the instruction to meet the EL's needs.

Differentiation Plan

The lesson plans were analyzed for evidence of the five parts of a differentiation plan: 1) Information about student, 2) Differentiation strategy aligned to student information, 3) Explanation of why differentiation was appropriate for student, 4) Criteria for assessing student progress, and 5) Monitor and adaptation plan. For the most part the candidates were consistent to gather information about their students' English proficiency levels, learning profiles and interests, and to choose a differentiation for specifically for their identified students. First, ninety-four percent (33/35) candidates provided descriptive data about their students' proficiency levels, learning profiles and interests. Second, one hundred percent (35) of the candidates provided at least one differentiation strategy that was aligned to the student, even the two candidates that neglected to provide information about their students included a differentiation for English learners and Students with Special Needs, in fact one of lessons provided differentiation for content, process and product and the other included content and process differentiation strategies. Third, the differentiation plans broke down from there, with only 26% (9) of the candidates providing a rationale for the differentiation. The candidates often did not explain how the differentiation strategy was appropriate for the specific learners proficiency level, learning profile or interests. Fourth, even less candidates described how they would know if the differentiation was effective. Only nine percent (3) of the candidates described the criteria for assessing the student's progress. Fifth, the last part of the differentiation plan, monitoring and adaption was more likely to

be described. Twenty-six percent (9) of the candidates described how they would monitor and adapt strategies to support student progress.

Conclusions

The analysis of the parts of differentiation, helped us as instructors recognize what our students understood and what they needed more guidance and practice for differentiation. The conversations during our collaborative analysis led us to recommit ourselves to ownership of our teacher candidates learning. As a result we are redesigning our lesson plan assignments and the learning activities and materials. We are making our rubrics more specific in regards to what evidence looks like for the five distinctive parts of the differentiation plan. We are condensing the lesson plan contents and making the differentiation a heavier weight for the graded assignment. By engaging in this research study we realized we needed to take our own advice and be more strategic in how we teach the differentiation. We needed to first, start with our students in mind. Second, identify a differentiation that matches their readiness – proficiency level, learning profile and/or interests. Third, explain the reason why the differentiation is appropriate for each teacher candidate. Fourth, describe what criteria we will use to assess the candidates' progress and fifth, have a plan to monitor and adapt to support candidate progress.

Teacher candidates in secondary education programs are likely to have long-term English learners enrolled in their content area classes. By teaching candidates how to differentiate by providing targeted strategies that match their English learners' needs, we are moving one step closer to providing them with more equitable educational opportunities.

Significance of Research

The importance of this study is that as educators of teacher candidates in secondary education must be clear on explanations and monitoring strategies for lessons designed for students who are linguistically, culturally and educationally diverse. This research advances instructional practices for a transformative education and agency in designing lessons that are in accordance to the proficiency and academic levels of Latino English Learners. More research is needed in the instruction of secondary Latino ELs and long term ELs, particularly on teacher credential programs in higher education.

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