Abstract

The research emphasizes the need for equitable pedagogies for English Learners (ELs) through common core subject area content (materials and instruction), process (activities), and products (assessments). Based on the literature review, school achievement improves when practices address students’ culture, experiences and learning styles in ways that are universally designed or individually differentiated. The study examined lesson plans from 35 single subject credential teacher candidates (86% white, 14% Latino) in southern California. Candidates conducted clinical practice in districts that served up to 70% ELs, with the majority identified as Long-term English Learners (LTEL). Results indicated 97% (34/35) of the lessons included equitable pedagogies. Lesson analysis led to a five part equitable pedagogical plan: 1) information about student, 2) strategy, 3) explanation of strategy alignment to the student’s need, 4) assessment criteria, and 5) monitoring and adaptations. Educating LTELs is more than just providing access to the curriculum or sheltering instruction.

*Keywords:* common core, differentiation, English learners, equitable pedagogy, long-term English learners, secondary education, single subject credential, universal design for learning

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Equitable Pedagogy: Preparing Secondary Teachers to Use Common Core Instruction with Long-Term English Learners

At the secondary level, the majority of English learners (ELs) can be characterized as “long term English learners” (LTELs). While there are variations in the definitions provided by researchers, common characteristics of 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). LTELs 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 ELs 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 ELs, particularly LTELs, 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).

The educational experiences of LTELs underscore the importance for teacher education programs to prepare teachers to equitably teach students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. 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 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 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 (Daoud, 2015).

**Common Core Standards – New Standards, New Opportunities**

As teachers begin to incorporate rigorous Common Core 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 (Walki, et al., 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’s 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 using equitable pedagogical strategies? 2) How do teacher candidates articulate their equitable pedagogical strategies?

**Literature Review**

**Common Core and English Learners**

Educators need to understand that educating ELs is more than just providing access to the curriculum or sheltering instruction for comprehension of content. New Common Core State Standards (CCSS) 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. New shifts in CCSS related to textual evidence from non-fiction selections and the complexity of academic language in content registers present new instructional paradigms for ELs (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2012; Daoud, 2015; TESOL, 2013). Therefore, a reconstruction and transformation of the manner in which teachers/teacher candidates design lessons will be the new guiding principles for equitable pedagogies for ELs (Daoud, 2015).

California’s English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework (CA Department of Education, 2014) is the first framework to incorporate and address the needs of ELs in the instruction of the core content instruction from transitional kindergarten through grade twelve. The framework breaks new ground by providing a blueprint for the implementation of two sets of interrelated standards: California’s Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, August, 2012), and the California English Language Development Standards (CA Department of Education, ELD Standards, 2012).

The CA ELD Standards correspond to and were designed to be used in tandem with the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy. The new framework delineates language practices that all ELs must acquire to meet the CCSS in the four domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing across a range of personal and academic contexts that expands students’ opportunities for career and college success and for full participation in a democratic society and global economy (CA Department of Education, 2014). It includes guidance for the design of instructional materials, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development by ensuring that the diversity of California’s learners benefit optimally and achieve their highest potentials.

California has the largest number of ELs in the country. More than 20 percent of the students in K-12 grade are designated as ELs with over 60 language groups represented (CDE Dataquest, 2014). More than 45 percent of California’s students, not all of them ELs, come from homes where a language other than, or in addition to, English is spoken. The state has the opportunity to build on the linguistic assets that ELs bring to public education while also supporting the acquisition of biliteracy and multiliteracy in students whose home language is English.

Socialization into new academic discourse communities involves not only the acquisition of new language and literacy skills, but also potential “internal and interpersonal struggles” and “emotional investment and power dynamics (Bunch, Kibler & Pimentel, 2012). 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. Creating equitable educational opportunities for ELs is explicitly rooted in tenets of social justice and equity frame teaching that is directly connected to: 1) how well teachers know their EL students, 2) selecting appropriate language and content standards, 3) designing differentiated assessments and student-centered activities, and selecting culturally relevant/multicultural materials and resources (Daoud, 2015).

Therefore, it is crucial that equitable pedagogies match the ELs’ abilities through instructional strategies to deeper engage students in the curriculum (Daoud, 2015; ELA/ELD Framework, 2014). All educators must know and share the responsibility for teaching ELs by including a variety of flexible grouping strategies, creative and critical-thinking opportunities, appropriate assessments, and other approaches designed for the complexity of the curriculum (TESOL, 2013). Coleman and Goldenberg (2012) stated that what happens in the classroom and how teachers teach has tremendous consequences on the academic achievement of ELs, because “ELLs have the challenge of learning academic content and oral and written language skills and conventions simultaneously (p. 47).” Language can best be understood as action, rather than “form” or “function” alone; students learn to do things with language when they are engaged in meaningful activities that engage and challenge them (Bunch et al., 2012).

**Equitable Pedagogies for Secondary ELs**

Equitable pedagogical strategies are a necessity for meeting the needs in today’s diverse classrooms, especially with ELs. 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. Universal Design for Learning addresses three networks: recognition, strategic, and affective (Rose & Gravel, 2010) and provide multiple means of representation, action/expression and engagement (Rose & Meyer, 2002). 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. Educators can design the tasks with ELs in mind with set criteria to demonstrate language development as well as content understanding. While it is critical that educators provide instruction in universally accessible ways, ELs often need further differentiation to guarantee that the access fits their proficiency level needs. 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.

Research findings on effective strategies for teaching secondary ELs 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 ELs. In sheltered or SDAIE classrooms, language and content objectives are threaded throughout the curriculum so that ELS are able to learn content while improving English literacy skills (Daoud, 2015; Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2014). Research shows that incorporating language and content objectives based on state standards is an effective competency that teachers of secondary ELs 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 ELs 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 ELs who need academic language to be successful across all their content area classes. Effective strategies for supporting ELs’ 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, ELs need content presented through explicit scaffolding so they can perform the academic task required (Daoud, 2015; De Jong & Harper, 2005). The amount of scaffolding needed is based on the ELs’ language proficiency levels as well as their background knowledge including language, content and culture (CA Department of Education, ELD Standards, 2012).

**Methodology**

This study uses qualitative methods to facilitate the collection and analysis of data using a “naturalistic” approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994). 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. The program has been in existence for over fifteen years and offers single subject credentials in the following subjects; English Language Arts, Mathematics, Physical Education, Science, Social Sciences and Spanish. The program philosophy centers on clinical practice, digital age learning and social justice. To prepare teacher candidates to be effective teachers in our service area of southern California, it is essential that we focus on issues of social justice, specifically meeting the needs of diverse students from low socioeconomic statuses, ELs, and other students traditionally underserved.

**Participants**

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 ELs. Some of the districts served up to 70% ELs, with the majority of them identified as LTELs (Olsen, 2010). The demographics for teacher candidates (see Table 1): 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 ELs, 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.

Table 1

*Candidate Demographic Information By Content Area (N=35)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Content Area | Gender  Male Female | | Ethnicity  White Latino | | Bilingual  English/Spanish |
| English | 2 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Mathematics | 0 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Physical Education | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Science | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Social Sciences | 9 | 1 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Spanish | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 8 (5 ELs) |
| Total | 18 | 17 | 30 | 5 | 8 |
| Percentage | 51% | 49% | 86% | 14% | 23% |

*Note.* Candidates in this study only represented the two ethic groups listed above

**Data Collection**

The candidates were enrolled in Multilingual Education, which focuses on the goals of multilingual and multicultural education, specifically why and how to support ELs. The assignment for this research study was to design a lesson plan that included differentiation for ELs. 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 & Meyer, 2002; Rose & Gravel, 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. Currently the data available for ELs is the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). The CELDT scores identify the ELs’ 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.

**Data Analysis**

The analysis of the lesson plans focused specifically on the equitable pedagogies for ELs. During the analysis, common themes (equitable pedagogies) were identified through an open coding process and revisited until patterns emerged (areas of universal design for learning and differentiation strategies) allowing us to move from a broad analysis to the specific question of “how” teacher candidates were addressing equitable pedagogy (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). We categorized the strategies into three areas: content for subject objectives, concepts or materials; process for the student activities; and product for the assessments (Tomlinson, 2001).

**Limitations**

There are at least two methodology limitations in this study: 1) only one lesson to represent all that the candidates learned, and 2) the fact that the data only covers lesson designs. The lessons were merely a snap shot in the candidates’ understanding of equitable pedagogies in the first half of the credential program. More lessons over the entire program would make this study richer and more reliable. In addition, the data collected were only lesson designs, and not the implementation, so there was no reflection analyzed to identify the effectiveness of the equitable pedagogical plan.

**Results**

The research findings covered two areas, the types of equitable pedagogies and the plan for the equitable pedagogies. 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 plan - what parts were included in their plan and what parts the candidates needed more guidance and practice for designing socially just and equitable pedagogies.

**Types of Differentiation**

There were 73 equitable pedagogies (universal designs for learning or differentiation strategies) in the 35 lessons. Ninety-seven percent (34) of the candidates’ lessons included at least one universally designed for learning strategy. Seventy-one percent (25) lessons included 78% (57) strategies that were differentiated for ELs, with the majority, 93% (53) based on the EL’s readiness and 7% (4) on the EL’s interests or learning profile. Only 28% (16) of the differentiation strategies included assessment criteria and only 30% (17) described how the differentiation strategy would be monitored and adapted.

Content strategies were the most common with 86% of the lessons (30/35), process was the second most common with 78% (27/35) and product was the least common with 17% (6) of the lesson containing assessment strategies. Of the 35 lessons, 37% (13) of the lessons contained only one type of differentiation with eight that included content differentiation and the other five included process differentiation, 49% (17) of the lessons contained two types of differentiation (with 16 that included content and process differentiation, one with content and 14% (5) of the lessons contained all three types of differentiation. See Table 2.

Table 2

*Strategies Used By Candidates in Lesson Plans (N=35)*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Content Area | Content | Process | Product |
| English | 2 of 5 (40%) | 5 of 5 (100%) | 0 of 5 (0%) |
| Mathematics | 7 of 7 (100%) | 5 of 7 (71%) | 2 of 7 (29%) |
| Physical Education | 2 of 2 (100%) | 1 of 2 (50%) | 0 of 2 (0%) |
| Science | 3 of 3 (100%) | 3 of 3 (100%) | 0 of 3 (0%) |
| Social Sciences | 8 of 10 (80%) | 7 of 10 (70%) | 3 of 10 (30%) |
| Spanish | 8 of 8 (100%) | 6 of 8 (75%) | 1 of 8 (13%) |
| Total | 30 of 35 (86%) | 27 of 35 (77%) | 6 of 35 (17%) |

**Content.** The candidates’ lessons included 23 universal designs for learning content, with eight of the strategies including an explanation of how the content was specifically designed for ELs, such as Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) and vocabulary development. In addition four of the lessons included content differentiation that were based on ELs’ readiness – language proficiency. The universally designed content included SDAIE (15), vocabulary development (14), slam poetry video (1), Spanish text (1), shorter math word problem (1), larger font (1) and math art (1). The content differentiation consisted of content accommodations with no content modifications - no substantial change to the instructional level, subject content or assessment criteria for the EL, but addressed the delivery method.

**Process.** The lessons designed by the candidates included 27 process strategies, with 74% (26) universal design for learning strategies including 21 of these with descriptions of how the strategy is designed for ELs. The process strategies for universal design for learning included flexible grouping (21), graphic organizers (7), and multisensory activities (6). The grouping strategies described the different ways students can be grouped to maximize learning, with 76% (16) specified for ELs, such as grouping the ELs with students more proficient with English to model correct language or to partner and with other ELs that share the same first language for translation. The lessons that included graphic organizers were designed to provide scaffolding and to help ELs’ visually process the content. The graphic organizers used in the lessons were provided for all students and there were no differences so all of the graphic organizers represented universal design for learning, but four of the lessons described the criteria for assessing the ELs graphic organizer and five of the lessons described how the ELs would be monitored when working on the graphic organizer. The multisensory activities included presentations (3), drawing (2) and acting (1).

**Product.** Seventeen percent (6) of the candidates’ lessons included product strategies; five candidates included a rubric and one candidate designed a math lesson where the EL was to verbally answer using a complete sentence in English. Two of the lessons used the rubrics as a universally designed product, but the other three were differentiated and specified how the ELs would be required to perform at different levels on the rubric based on their readiness. The product differentiations were minor accommodations where the ELs were expected to learn the same subject area content as the rest of the class. The rubric were designed to communicate the different language development tasks based on the emerging, expanding and bridging development levels that refer to the California English Language Development standard’s proficiency level descriptors.

**Equitable Pedagogical Plan**

After analyzing the lessons for the types of equitable pedagogies that were present in the lessons, we identified five different parts that the candidates described in the equitable pedagogical plans:

1) Identification of EL’s proficiency level, learning profile and/or interests (Tomlinson, 2001);

2) Strategy aligned to the EL’s proficiency level, learning profile and/or interests (Tomlinson, 2001);

3) Explanation of why the strategy is appropriate for the EL’s proficiency level, learning profile and/or interests (Tomlinson, 2001);

4) Assessment criteria for monitoring the EL’s progress based on proficiency level (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005);

5) Monitoring and adapting the strategy to support EL’s progress.

For the most part the candidates were consistent to gather information about their students’ English proficiency levels, learning profiles and interests, and to choose equitable pedagogies for specifically for their identified students (see Table 3). First, 97% (34/35) candidates provided descriptive data about their students’ proficiency levels, learning profiles and interests. Inclusion of this information was evidence that the candidates were mindful of who needed support in their lesson. Second, 100% (35) of the candidates provided at least one equitable strategy that was aligned to the student; even the one candidate that neglected to provide detailed information about all of their students included equitable pedagogies for ELs and students with special needs. Third, the equitable pedagogical plans broke down from there, with 60% (4) of the candidates providing an explanation for the equitable pedagogical plan, a rationale. Some candidates may have assumed that the strategy was aligned so well with the student’s need that an explanation was not necessary. Fourth, 60% (4) of the candidates that used product strategies described the criteria for assessing the student’s progress. Fifty percent (3) of the candidates described the criteria for assessing the student’s progress. Again, the candidates may have assumed the criteria were built into the implementation of the strategy. Fifth, the last part of the equitable instruction plan, monitoring and adaption was described in 50% of the strategies.

Table 3

*Equitable Pedagogical Steps By Strategy Type*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Steps | Content | Process | Product | Total |
| 1. Identify Student | 97% (29) | 100% (27) | 100% (6) | 97% (34) |
| 2. Strategy-Alignment | 100% (30) | 100% (27) | 100% (6) | 100% (35) |
| 3. Explanation | 40% (12) | 78% (21) | 60% (4) | 80% (28) |
| 4. Assessment Criteria | 7% (2) | 33% (9) | 60% (4) | 34% (12) |
| 5. Monitor-Adaptation | 7% (2) | 41% (11) | 50% (3) | 37% (13) |

**Conclusions and Educational Significance**

The teacher candidates’ use of equitable pedagogy was evident in both the types of strategies employed as well as in how the candidates articulated their plans. Across all content areas, teacher candidates’ lessons were aligned to both the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the California ELD Standards. The lessons contained objectives and assessments that allowed LTELs enrolled in the classes to access the content as well as targeted language development. Teacher candidates used 73 universal and differentiated strategies in the 35 lessons. Many of the 73 strategies used by the candidates allow ELs to equitably access skills and knowledge in content area classes that are outlined in the CCSS such as SDAIE, vocabulary development and flexible grouping strategies (TESOL, 2013).

Returning to the literature reviewed for this study, the equitable pedagogies used in the lessons created by the candidates allowed them to take definitions of social justice and enact them into individual actions (Cochran-Smith, et. al, 2009; McDonald, 2005). The lessons themselves focused on multicultural content that was universally designed for learning and when necessary differentiated to meet each student’s individual academic needs while also addressing their culture, experiences and learning styles (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2001). The lessons were designed to address the challenges LTELs face with the Common Core of learning academic content and language skills (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2012). Further, each aspect of the candidates’ equitable pedagogies represents effective instructional practices for ELs; they include language and content objectives, varied assessments, and academically rigorous content presented through accessible and comprehensible instructional strategies (Diaz-Rico, 2013; Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2014; Faltis, Arias & Ramirez-Marin, 2010). It is important to note that the majority of candidates in the program are white women, as is the case in most teacher education programs nationally. Regardless of their backgrounds, candidates can design socially just and equitable differentiated lessons that address the needs of the LTELs enrolled in their content area classes.

The importance of this study is that educators in secondary education must be clear on teaching candidates how to use equitable pedagogical strategies in content area 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 LTELs. More research is needed in the instruction of LTELs, particularly on teacher credential programs in higher education. Teacher candidates in secondary education programs are likely to have LTELs enrolled in their content area classes. By teaching candidates how to develop universally designed and differentiated lessons by providing targeted strategies that match their ELs’ needs, we are moving one step closer to providing them with more equitable educational opportunities.

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