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# Language Policies:

*A study of Language Ideologies in Connecticut  
State Policies for English Language Learners*

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Senior Research Project  
Educational Studies

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Connecticut has a growing population of English Language Learners. In the era of high stakes testing, the state has found a large achievement gap between ELL students and non ELL students. My research investigated language ideologies in policies regarding the education of English Language Learners in order to understand why ELL students are underperforming. I argue that Connecticut's policies regarding the education of English Language Learners reflect a power structure that has worked to rid students of their native languages and cultures in order to maintain both the supremacy of the English language and the existing power structure. Connecticut's policies have attempted to rid students of their native languages by replacing their language with English. However, there is hope for the education of English Language Learners and there are opportunities for transformation of a system that has done more harm, than help to ELL students.

## Introduction

Connecticut has a growing population of English Language Learners (ELLs) which has increased from 3.7% in 2001 to 5.3% of the total student enrollment in 2010 (Connecticut State Department of Education, Connecticut Education Data and Resource, 2010). This number only represents students receiving ELL services. Students who reported a home language other than English represent 12.8% of the total student population in Connecticut (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2010). It is expected that the population of students identified as English Language Learners will continue to grow since they are mostly concentrated in early grades with 9% identified ELL students out of all kindergarten through second grade students (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2010). In an era of high stakes testing, the state of Connecticut has been faced with a large achievement gap between ELL students and their English speaking peers. The 2011 Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) results showed that the following percentages of 8<sup>th</sup> grade ELL students scored at or above proficiency on the corresponding sections: 37.5% on mathematics, 22.4% on reading, and 29.2% on writing, and the following percentages of 8<sup>th</sup> grade non ELL students scored at or above proficiency on the corresponding section: 87.8% on mathematics, 85.6% on reading and 83.6% on writing (Connecticut Mastery Test, Student Assessment Office, 2011). In this one grade alone, there is a large disparity with more non ELL students scoring at or above proficiency than ELL students. The achievement gap is not unique to any particular school or district. ELL students across the state, and nation, are not performing as well on high stakes tests like their English speaking counterparts.

With such large achievement gaps, it is necessary to study Connecticut's language policies and understand how the state serves their ELL students. As a result of high stakes

testing, the state of Connecticut has pushed for faster English Language acquisition as an attempt to close the achievement gap between ELLs and non ELLs. However, the achievement gap between ELL and non ELLs continues to persist. If any progress is to be made, the state must evaluate its policies given that districts and schools turn to state policies for guidance when serving their ELL students. The inequalities confronted by English Language Learners are a result of state policies that have failed them. Connecticut's language policies have supported the swift transition from the native language of ELL students to the English language, which has been unofficially, and in some states officially, accepted as the language of the United States. Norma Gonzalez (2005) investigated language ideologies in a dual language school in Arizona, and she defines ideology as "a set of beliefs that are tied to our social category" which "implicates power, the exercise of power, and the reproduction of dominant-subordinate relations" (p.163-4). For Gonzalez, language ideologies demonstrate beliefs about languages in connection with particular social groups, and those views about groups who speak particular languages has maintained some in a subordinate position to the superior group and language. My research will investigate language policies serving English Language Learners in the state of Connecticut. My research will explore how the state of Connecticut views its English Language Learners and their native languages in relation to power and their positions in society. My research question is: What language ideologies are reflected in Connecticut's policies for English Language Learners? I argue that Connecticut's policies regarding the education of English Language Learners reflect a power structure that has worked to rid students of their native languages and cultures in order to maintain both the supremacy of the English language and the existing power structure.

## Literature Review

Previous literature has looked at language ideologies and how they have shaped the execution of policies at the school level. Gonzalez (2005) investigated the influence of language ideologies in the implementation of a dual language program, which maintains a balance between English instruction and native language instruction and builds upon both languages, in Arizona. She conducted an ethnographic study over a period of three years and observed a bilingual magnet school prior to the passing of Proposition 203 which ended native language instruction. She found that the dual language program served to combat the negative stereotypes of bilingual students and promoted Spanish as an appropriate, academic language. Gonzalez writes, “When the teacher says “Bilingüe” (bilingual), there’s a moment’s hesitation and thought before the student blurts out “Tonto” (stupid, foolish), clearly in refusing interpellations that construct bilinguals as in need of remedial or compensatory programs” (2005, p.169). Gonzalez’s observations revealed how the teacher’s use of the native language in instruction validated the students’ native language as a rich language that is appropriate for instruction and also resisted notions of bilingual students ignorant and in need of remediation. The teachers in Gonzalez’s study resisted the perceptions of their ELL students as ignorant and validated the student’s language and identity through native language instruction.

Other research has focused on the discourse revolving policies and its implementation into schools. David Cassals Johnson (2008) investigated discourses of language policies in the School District of Philadelphia. He attempted to look at the micro-level interactions in schools and its relation to macro-level organizations. The author conducted an ethnographic study involving observation, field note collection and interviews with teachers, administrators and Pennsylvania policy makers. Johnson analyzed policy documents using a critical discourse

approach. Johnson writes that a critical discourse analysis places “its attention to the various layers of context in which a text is produced and interpreted lines up well with the multiple layers of context through which language policies must pass” and “its focus on discourse and power helps explore how language policies, and societal discourses, can hegemonically sculpt language education toward monolingual practices” (2008, p.151). The author’s analysis of policies revealed that schools were in fact free to provide which ever program to their students, but it was the change in the definition of bilingual education that prevented them from going towards a program that would build upon the student’s native language. Administrators discussed feeling constrained to an English focused curriculum because the law’s definition of bilingual education as transitional. Johnson found that policies implicitly promoted monolingual practices in the classroom.

Kris Gutiérrez, Patricia Baquedano-López and Jolynn Asato (2000) investigated how school administrators made sense of the transformation of ELL programs with the passing of Proposition 227 in California, which banned native language instruction. The authors conducted qualitative research that included observations in school classrooms and school meetings and interviews with administrators at three different schools in order to understand how schools interpreted and implemented Proposition 227. The authors came to the conclusion that Proposition 227 privileged the English language and framed the language as the solution to education problems. Administrators were left to adopt reading initiatives which were designed for English speaking students and these reading initiatives were inappropriate for ELL students. ELL students were left to fail when their language and culture were left out of instruction and devalued by the school and policies. The authors write, “In this way, the new literacy contributes to the social construction of failure by constructing school identities that categorize

and sort children in ways that undermine their competence and confidence. In particular, the combination of reductive literacy practices and English-only policies help sustain the achievement gap between rich and poor, especially the poor, linguistically different children” (2000, p. 99). The authors believed that the transformation of ELL programs contributed to the achievement gap, instead of closing the achievement, by undermining the ability of the students’ native language to contribute to the learning process.

The research of Eric Johnson (2005) involves an analysis of the campaign for Proposition 203 in Arizona. He discusses the campaign’s metaphor of Proposition 203 as “War” as a way of understanding the policy and the ideologies embedded in the proposition. Johnson analyzed several periodical materials for the Proposition 203 campaign and searched for war metaphors. Johnson critiques the Proposition 203 campaign because it depicts English Language Learners as victims and that English is the only force that can save them. The Proposition 203 war is a battle against bilingual programs that allow for instruction in the student’s native language. The author discusses the ideological forces that encourage certain types of language use, and in this case, the use of English for classroom instruction. Johnson found that Proposition 203 was an attempt at reproducing the existing power structure by maintaining the superiority of the English language and English speakers.

By taking into consideration prior research, I plan to incorporate aspects of prior literature into my own research. Gonzalez , D.C. Johnson, and Gutierrez, et. al. focused on the implementation of restrictive language policies within the school and how power structures shape monolingual practices. E. Johnson discussed discourse in the campaign to pass ban native language instruction through Proposition 203 and how campaign initiatives depicted English as superior to other languages . Prior literature has investigated issues of power in the execution of

policies at the school or classroom level and also discourse within the school or in the media. I plan to move beyond prior research by looking at language ideologies in state policies and obtaining the views of those involved in the policy making process at the state level in order to understand how power structures have worked to control the use of students' native languages in Connecticut schools.

### Methodology

My research used qualitative methods in answering the research question regarding language ideologies in state policies. A total of three in-depth interviews were conducted which lasted anywhere from 40 to 50 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The identities of participants were protected by providing pseudonyms. One interviewee, Marisol Sánchez, is the ELL/ Bilingual Consultant for the Connecticut State Department of Education and her job involves writing and proposing policies to the Connecticut State Board of Education. The other two interviewees were Adam Johnson and Elicia Rodríguez and both are members of the Connecticut Board of Education. The members of the Board of Education review policies proposed by the Department of Education. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain the perspectives of those involved in the policy making process and to understand how Connecticut's policies regarding English Language learners came into place. The participants responded to questions about the state's policies, factors that have influenced the policies, the state's stance on bilingual education and the state's goals for English Language Learners (Appendix A).

I also analyzed state documents regarding bilingual education, the role of native language instruction and the goals of programs for English Language Learners. A thorough analysis was

conducted on the following documents: *The Bilingual Education Statute of the General Statutes of Connecticut* and the “Position Statement on the Education of Students who are English Language Learners.” *The Bilingual Education Statute of Connecticut’s General Statutes* contains the state’s language policies regarding English and native language instruction in Connecticut schools. The position statement was analyzed as well since it states the Board of Education’s stance on native language instruction and their justification for the current policies regarding English language learning. I used a critical discourse approach when analyzing the documents in order to gain insight into the relationships and power structures that are shaping these policies. Johnson (2008) said that a critical discourse analysis “analyzes both how discourse constrains our behavior and/or thought and how discourse, or at least the illumination of discursive patterns, can be emancipatory” (p.151). Although a critical discourse analysis reveals a power structure that constrains language and its use, it still provides hope by bringing to light these unequal dynamics. Approval from Trinity College’s Institutional Review Board was granted prior to beginning research in order to ensure that my research followed ethical guidelines.

## Context

### *English Only Movements*

Connecticut’s policies regarding the education of English Language Learners have been shaped and influenced by English Only Movements and a recent backlash against immigrants. The English Only Movement appeared in the twentieth century simultaneously with movements against immigration in the United States. English has widely been accepted as the common language of the United States, but now many states have pushed to make English the official

language. A nation built by immigrants has now turned against the new generation of immigrants. James Crawford (2000) writes,

In the American experience, English-only campaigns can be classed in two categories: as proxies for intergroup competition and as mechanisms of social control. Discrimination against minority language speakers can serve both as a means of privileging certain groups over others and as a tool for maintaining the hegemony of ruling elite (p. 10).

Crawford discusses how the English Only Movement has been used as a way to maintain control and exercise power over those who are not native English speakers. The movement arrived during a time when many English speakers began to feel threatened by speakers of other languages and desired to control the situation. Earlier this year, Republican Representative John Piscopo of Connecticut proposed a bill to make English the official language of Connecticut (State of Connecticut, General Assembly, 2011). This is not the first attempt to make English the official language in Connecticut. Many before have attempted to make Connecticut an English Only state. There are many forces pushing towards making English the official language, and the English Only Movement has helped shape Connecticut's policies regarding the education of English Language Learners.

### *History of Language Policies and Bilingual Education*

Following World War II, the state of Connecticut established that classroom instruction would solely be conducted in English in 1949, unless a child were born in a foreign country and could not understand English. The statutes also limited foreign language instruction to one hour per day. It wasn't until 1971 when bilingual education was introduced into the statutes. When English Only Movements began to gain attention in the 1990s, the state of Connecticut made several changes to the Bilingual Education Statute in Connecticut's General Statutes. The state

clarified that bilingual education is a program that makes use of the student's native language and English with the purpose of gaining proficiency in English. One more thing that was added to the policies during that time was English as a Second Language programming. The statute added English as a Second Language which is a program that uses only English instruction. With the growing tension between English speakers and non English speakers as a result of English Only movements and backlashes against immigrants, the state of Connecticut decided to place the emphasis on English as a Second Language programs for their ELL students.

### *The Bilingual Education Statute*

Before delving into my analysis of Connecticut's policies regarding the education of ELL students, I will first discuss current language policies. When a student enrolls into a Connecticut school, the state requires that districts distribute to each family a home language survey to determine the dominant language in the home and find out if another language other than English is spoken by the student and his or her family. If the student lists a language other than English as the home language, then districts must further assess the student to determine whether the student is proficient in English. Upon identification, students are placed in the school's program whether it is English as a Second Language or bilingual education programming. For the state of Connecticut, bilingual education involves the use of English and the student's native language, but with the goal of achieving English proficiency. From year to year, English language instruction increases while native language instruction decreases until the student is in an English Only classroom. Schools are mandated by the state to have a bilingual education program if they have 20 or more students from a language group. English Language Learners may exit ELL

services if they score proficient on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2), Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) or Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) and the Language Assessment System (LAS) Links test. ELL students are limited to 30 months or 3 academic years of bilingual education. If the student does not become proficient at the end of 30 months or by 10<sup>th</sup> grade, the school provides the student with Language Transition Support Services which provides English only language instruction. These are the policies that the state of Connecticut has created in order to serve their ELL population.

### Analysis and Interpretation

#### *A Better Language*

Connecticut's policies are very clear that the purpose of bilingual and English as a Second Language programs is to achieve English language proficiency. The *Bilingual Education Statute* of the *General Statutes of Connecticut* states:

Any local or regional board of education may establish at any level of instruction a bilingual and bicultural program of study involving a culture in which a language other than English is predominately spoken, provided the purpose of such program shall be to enable children to become proficient in English (Connecticut General Assembly, 2011, p. 57).

The statute emphasizes that the goal of programs for ELL students is to obtain English language proficiency, not native language proficiency. The Department of Education only views the native language of students as a means that is sometimes necessary in order for the student to learn English. A position statement by the Connecticut State Board of Education states, "The Connecticut State Board of Education believes that high-quality, comprehensive and effective English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual education programs are essential to acquire English language proficiency and academic proficiency for students who are English

language learners” (Connecticut State Board of Education, 2010, p.1). The position statement connects English language proficiency with academic proficiency. The English language is a language that can be used in the classroom and allows students to comprehend the material. However, this should not be the case. ELL students fall behind in content area subjects because their grasp of the English language is necessary in order to understand the content. Students are failing tests because priority has been given to the student’s grasp of the English language, and the programs that serve ELL students do not provide the students with the content area information in order to succeed on high stakes testing.

The state policies attempt to rid students of their native language by pushing English language acquisition on ELL students and restraining the use of native language instruction in the classroom. The *Bilingual Education Statute* states that bilingual education:

Provides for the continuous increase in the use of English and corresponding decrease in the use of the native language for the purpose of instruction within each year and from year to year and provides for the use of English for more than half of the instructional time by the end of the first year (Connecticut General Assembly, 2011, p. 58).

Bilingual education in Connecticut attempts to subtract the student’s native language from the classroom each year and push for more English instruction. In the Board’s position statement, it is written that “The Board believes that bilingual instruction can provide a foundation to enhance students’ native languages and academic achievement while developing proficiency in English” (Connecticut Board of Education, 2010, p.1). The Board of Education believes that bilingual education can build on the students’ native language. Yet, how can bilingual instruction enhance students’ native languages when native language instruction is decreased each year? The program subtracts students’ native languages from them in the learning process and devalues their languages. Angela Valenzuela (1999) discusses the concept of subtractive schooling that

subtracts students' most valuable resources, their languages and cultures, in the learning process.

Valenzuela writes,

The very rationale of English as a Second Language (ESL)- the predominate language program at the high school level –is subtractive. As ESL programs are designed to transition youth into an English-only curriculum, they neither reinforce their native language skills nor their cultural identities. Although there are many other aspects of schooling that are subtractive, it is important to emphasize how the organization of schooling has been historically implicated in the devaluation of the Spanish language (26).

In this example, Valenzuela discusses how the schooling process devalues the student's native language by reinforcing the importance of the English language. Many ELL programs with the goal of having students achieve English proficiency attempt to take away the student's language in order to give them a "better" language. The programs and policies attempt to take the student's native language and cultural identity away in an effort to maintain the superiority and dominance of the English language.

An analysis of the policies regarding the education of English Language Learners revealed the state's hidden agenda of replacing the student's native language with English. The state of Connecticut is open to the use of students' native languages in the classroom, but native language instruction is solely for the purpose of obtaining English language proficiency. Students are allotted 30 months of native language instruction in order to gain English language proficiency, and if they do not gain an academic proficiency in English, then they are provided with Language Transition Support Services. The framing of the name of the services, Language Transition Support Services, is interesting because of the use of the word "Transition" which emphasizes the transition from the native language to the English language. The policies stress the importance of transitioning and replacing the student's native language to the dominant language English. In an interview with Elicia Rodríguez, a former English Language Learner

and a member of the Board of Education, she said, “You know, in ESL classes they are not made to feel that they are smarter. They are made to feel, well you take off whatever language you have and give it up because we’re going to give you *a better language*” (Personal Interview, November 15, 2011). Rodríguez indicates that there is a language hierarchy that places English above all other languages. English is “better” and is the appropriate language for students to learn in.

### *In Need of Remediation*

The state’s policies imply a deficit view of English Language Learners who are in need of remediation. Rodríguez said,

What I’ve heard is that that towns that have bilingual programs they say “Oh my god what a challenge” instead of saying “What an opportunity! We’re going to get more students that know two languages. Isn’t that wonderful? Isn’t that incredible? Isn’t that what we want? You know for students to speak two languages.” They see it as a *deficit* model instead of an asset model. They see it as *remediation*. They need to remediate instead of helping students (Personal Interview, November 15, 2011).

Rodríguez discussed how schools with mandated bilingual programs see ELL students’ native languages as a challenge because the schools must direct their attention and efforts to the cause of teaching the students English. ELL students are viewed and identified in schools by what they lack which is English language proficiency. Schools would rather look at ELL students as challenges rather than noting the valuable cultural resources and diversity that they can bring to the classroom. ELL students lack English proficiency and the schools would rather continue to look at them as deficient students.

The policies require that districts provide extra services to their ELL students as a form of remediation for their deficiencies. The Bilingual Statutes states:

If a student is not making sufficient progress toward meeting the state standard based on the assessment, the local or regional board of education shall provide language support services to the student in consultation with the parent or guardian of the student to allow the student to meet the state standard. Such services may include, but need not be limited to, summer school, after-school assistance and tutoring (Connecticut General Statutes, 2011, p.59).

The state requires that local boards of education provide extra services to ELL students if they are not meeting proficiency on assessments in order to ensure that ELLs obtain a sufficient amount of academic English to exit out of ELL services. Instruction within the classroom is not enough. The state must create more services and require that students spend more time in these programs in order to learn English. Valencia and Solórzano (2004) explain the concept of deficit thinking that points to the student's personal deficits as the root of their educational failures. The authors write, "Deficit thinking strategically blames the culture and environment of the home and family for these students' so called educability deficit. . . deficit thinking divert[s] attention away from the institutional factors contributing to marginalized student's predicament" (Valencia and Solórzano, 2004, p.125). Deficit thinking blames the students for their own failures and results in remediation for those students who are seen as deficient. The state's policies regarding English Language Learners provide ELL students with extra services because they have failed to meet English proficiency. Summer school and after-school programs attempt to maintain ELLs within school settings because the school believes the students are not getting support towards meeting English proficiency at home. These programs look to the students and their families as the root of their failure to gain English proficiency rather than actually evaluating the existing programs serving ELL students in schools. In a conversation with Rodríguez, she told me that a reporter had called her to ask if the achievement gap was a result of immigration. Here is yet

another example of how many attempt to divert attention away from the programs that serve ELL students and place the blame on the students since many ELL students are immigrants.

Policies that reflect deficit views of English Language Learners can be detrimental to the student since schools look to the policies for guidance when implementing programs. Rodríguez spoke of her experience as an English Language Learners and said,

The reason why I have an accent is because they put me in speech for foreign borns. They treated me, and this was many, many years ago, they treated me as if I were *ignorant*. You know I'm talking from my own experience. Somehow I decided that keeping my accent was part of my identity and that no one could take that away from me. It took me many years to understand that having an accent meant *knowing more, not knowing less* (Personal Interview, November 15, 2011).

Rodríguez believed that as an English Language Learner her teacher viewed her as ignorant because her first language was Spanish and she spoke English with a strong accent. Her teacher viewed himself as more intelligent and superior because he spoke English without an accent. Her class, speech for foreign borns, attempted to rid students of the accents that they brought with them to class in order to sound more American. Sánchez also had a negative experience as an English Language Learner who did not receive any native language support. She said,

So when I started school, I started with full immersion without [knowing] one word in English. It was overwhelming and for many, many years, I was quiet. I couldn't communicate, but I was also seen as a *slow* learner, no sense of humor, no social skills, and really it was that silent period that lasted for a very long time for me because I really didn't have an opportunity to develop my second language (Personal Interview, November 21, 2011).

Sánchez had great difficulty learning English because she did not receive any native language support. She was viewed as a slow learner and at fault for not being able to learn English. Her school and teacher placed the blame on her for not learning English fast enough, but in reality, it was the school that had failed her by not providing her with native language support that resulted in her inability to learn English quickly. Although both Rodríguez and Sánchez attended schools

in New York City, their testimonies reveal how their schools and ELL programs had failed them, and yet, the schools would only believe that the students were at fault for not meeting English proficiency.

### *The Politics of Language Learning*

Policies represent the beliefs and feelings of those in the political sphere and in the policy making process. Adam Johnson, a member of the Connecticut State Board of Education, said “It’s pretty clear from these [policies] that the legislature’s basic approach [to closing the achievement gap] was to be concerned about foreign language. They made some basic changes to the statutes. I think, in 1999 to require quicker exiting from the bilingual program” (Personal Interview, November 3, 2011). Johnson spoke of the concern about foreign language in the state of Connecticut. In a monolingual nation, many become concerned when they are confronted with a new language and culture. The threat of another language or culture is handled through education by attempting to make students assimilate and ridding them of their language. Sánchez spoke about the politics of language learning and the education of English Language Learners. She said,

The high school decision [to not provide bilingual education from 10<sup>th</sup> grade on] that was also a political decision. There were some people that were like “Are you kidding me? You have kids coming in their sophomore year and you’re going to *fiddle* around and teach them their own native language. They’ll never get a job.” Yet other people were saying “How are they going to learn unless you give them support in their own native language. All they’ve known for 15 or 14 years is their own language, and now you’re not going to give them that chance to at least use that avenue.” So you have people that were divided and that is how they decided that up until freshmen year they’ll be able to be in bilingual education. “Sophomore year cut off. That’s it. We don’t care. Struggle. Don’t struggle. Sink or swim. You have to do English only,” but it was *politics* and *hearts* and that’s usually the case for policies although it seems like a real brainiac activity. It’s also people that are writing those laws that really influences the final decision (Personal Interview, November 21, 2011).

Sánchez spoke of how the policies were shaped more by people's own feelings about language and its use in schools. Some policy makers viewed native language instruction as “fiddling around” rather than teaching the English language which was more important. Policy makers felt it was necessary to cut bilingual education and force students to learn English. If the ELL students failed, the legislature felt that it was the student's fault. Johnson said,

Connecticut is pretty much limited to helping kids speak and read academic English as opposed to, we have very little two way bilingual programming. I don't know why because I would think pretty much any parent would want, but I think that comes through in the statutes and it has not been viewed as a priority in the state. Even to the point that the State Board of Education has tried for years to get the legislature to agree that no one should graduate from high school without getting at least two years of some other language. We can't even get that done (Personal Interview, November 3, 2011)

The legislature has resisted the State Board of Education's recommendations to make all Connecticut students take two years of another language. Johnson also stated that two way bilingual programs or dual language programs have not been a priority in Connecticut. Effective programming for English Language Learners has not been a priority in Connecticut, and the issue of English Language Learning never comes up in any of the Board of Education meetings according to both members interviewed. With the United States being a predominately monolingual country with English as the common language, the legislature has resisted accepting other languages in order to maintain the value and superiority of the English language. Many feel threatened by students who speak another language and are bilingual. As a result, the United States has had many initiatives to try to control the immigrant population and allow for their fast assimilation into society rather than transforming the social order. The policy making process has really been shaped by “hearts,” as Sanchez stated, and feelings about language learning rather than research that shows which programs prove to be effective for ELL students. Neither

Johnson nor Sanchez could point to the research that supposedly had shaped the current policies which supports Sanchez's statement that policies were shaped by people's feelings and hearts rather than research.

### Future Research

After establishing the deficit views of English Language Learners and the state's attempt at getting rid of ELL students' native languages in order to maintain the power of native English speakers, future research can build upon my own research by taking a look at other aspects of policies. In the interviews that I conducted, the issue of school autonomy often appeared. My interviewees mentioned that it was really up to the schools and districts to decide how best to serve their ELL population. Future research could investigate how Connecticut schools decide on the programs they will use to serve their ELL students. Schools look to the policies for guidance and they must interpret state policies regarding the education of English Language Learners. Future research could investigate how language ideologies affect the implementation of policies at the school level in Connecticut.

Future research could also investigate how Connecticut language policies affect English Language Learners. My research has shown that policies regarding the education of ELL students have attempted to get rid of the student's native language and culture. An ethnographic study could investigate how students have been impacted by such harmful subtractive practices and see how students react to such practices. The views of English Language Learners could be investigated in order to understand how ELLs view practices that push for English only instruction and deem the use of their native languages as inappropriate when learning in the classroom.

## Conclusion

Connecticut's policies regarding the education of English Language Learners have attempted to rid students of their native languages and cultures. The United States is a monolingual nation that views the language and culture of people not considered to be mainstream as a threat. As a response to this supposed threat, policy makers have created strict language policies that aim to subtract students' native languages and replace their language with a better language, English. The policies reflect a language hierarchy with English being the desired and superior language. ELL students are also viewed as slow learners and inferior to monolingual English speakers. These deficit views of ELL students are used to justify practices that attempt to replace their language. The state of Connecticut is at war, fighting off the "threat" posed by other languages. Language policies have pushed to eliminate native language instruction as soon as possible. These subtractive policies can be more harmful than helpful by taking away the student's only resource, their language, in order to learn another language. These policies have all been shaped by people who feel that students should not learn their native language in Connecticut schools.

However, there is hope for the education of English Language Learners and there are opportunities for transformation of a system that has done more harm, than help to ELL students. Policies have been shaped more by individual feelings about language learning. Francesca Lopez (2010) writes, "Thus, if they [policy makers] are interested in raising student achievement, they must consider the unintended consequences of policies that can impact achievement" (p.23). If policy makers in Connecticut are indeed interested in closing the achievement gap then they must put their own feelings aside and follow what the research has shown to be effective

instruction for ELL students. Lopez's (2010) research showed that students in dual language classes, where instruction is equally conducted in English and another language, had a stronger sense of their bilingual identity and their scholastic competency. As a result, students in dual language classrooms were performing better than students in classrooms with English only instruction. The existing policies have shown deficit views of ELL students and depicted them as slow learners. Students in dual language programs see that their native identities are valued within the classroom and that they are not ignorant as ELL students have often been viewed. Students have been resistant to English only instruction because it devalues their own native identities and home language. If the state is indeed interested in closing the achievement gap between ELL and non ELL students, then policies must move away from subtracting the student's native language in the classroom, and instead, the state must promote policies and programs that build upon the student's native language.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Questions

1. Can you start by telling me a little about yourself. (Title, educational background, years working for Board of Education, etc.)
2. What is the process for creating policies? Who is involved in the process?
3. What are the state's policies for English Language Learners? How were these policies decided?
4. How has the state policy for ELLs changed over the years?
5. What factors influence the state's policy and position towards English Language Learners?
6. What are the state's goals for English Language Learners?
7. What research does the state draw upon in forming its policy for ELLs? What factors are most important to the state?
8. How often are ELL issues discussed in board meetings? What are the major debates or areas of concern?
9. Why has Connecticut made the decision to be an English Only testing state?
10. Has the state considered adopting a Spanish version of the CMT? Why or why not?
11. What is the role of students' native language in their learning, according to the state?
12. What is bilingual education according to the State of Connecticut?
13. According to the Bilingual Education Statute, a school must provide a bilingual program when there are 20 or more in a language group. How did the Board of Education decide on this number?
14. What happens to those students in schools with less than 20 in a language group? How does the State recommend schools serve these students?
15. Do you speak another language? If so, how did you learn your second language?
16. What sources have been most influential in the policy making process when serving English Language Learners?