http://doi.org/10.35847/MHoff.JReynolds.4.3.4

Research Article

"It's a Different World": Language Ideologies, Literacies, and College Readiness

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Abstract

For linguistically diverse students, the path to college is often defined by language. Depending on assessments and institutional policies, students may be placed into course sequences in developmental English, adult basic education, and/or English as a Second Language courses. The purpose of this study was to better understand developmental education, adult basic education, and English as a Second Language instructors' perceptions of how to best prepare linguistically diverse students for the literacy expectations of college courses. Ten instructors from Texas institutions were interviewed. Finding showed an overall lack of shared understandings of academic literacy across the three fields. Furthermore, there were tendencies towards deficit framings among developmental English instructors. Finally, findings showed a high level of animosity, particularly between English as a Second Language and developmental English instructors. Implications of these findings are discussed.

Keywords: academic literacies, linguistically diverse learners, college readiness, developmental education

Over the past decade, public schools have seen a 9.2% growth in students requiring language assistance, with roughly 4.4 million students working their way to college (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2015). Despite composing a large part of the community college student population, linguistically diverse students in the American education system risk being silenced on their way to a college degree (Harklau, 2000).

In policy and practice, language can be conceived as a resource or an obstacle (Young, 2020), and this framing has tangible consequences for students. Language and literacy are at the heart of learning; however, linguistically diverse students may experience college courses differently from their monolingual peers. Yet, there is a lack of research on linguistically diverse students in community colleges (Almon, 2012), particularly in developmental education courses (de Kleine & Lawton, 2018).

Given the growing population of linguistically diverse students entering postsecondary institutions, the lack of research on what impedes or supports success is concerning. American schools are becoming increasingly diverse, particularly around the languages

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that students bring with them to school, and de Kleine and Lawton (2018) predicted that developmental courses will become increasingly diverse. Meanwhile, the teaching force remains predominantly monolingual. This disparity in linguistic experiences shapes ideologies, which in turn inform how educators perceive and address the needs of their students (Assaf & Dooley, 2006; Young, 2020).

Instructors serve as a liaison between school policy, practice, and students. Yet, depending on the field, instructors might have different perceptions about the needs of their linguistically diverse students, despite a shared goal of preparing students for college (Harklau, 2000). Furthermore, instructor-student relationships can impact academic engagement and outcomes (McKenna et al., 2020).

Working towards a common understanding of college readiness across fields could ensure that linguistically diverse students are receiving the support they need to be ready for postsecondary academic literacy expectations regardless of their path to college. We define academic literacies by merging theoretical elements of literacy (Gee, 2011; Street, 2001), language (Gee, 2011; Lippi-Green, 1997), and college readiness (Bartholomae, 1985; Gee, 2011). For this study, academic literacy is viewed as a social process that is shaped by learners' educational and sociocultural contexts. Additionally, academic literacies are important for academic success, but are not always explicitly taught (Bartholomae, 1985; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008) and vary across different pathways to college. The purpose of this study was to better understand developmental English (DE), adult basic education (ABE), and English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors' perceptions of how to best prepare linguistically diverse students for the literacy expectations of college courses.

Literature Review

For linguistically diverse students, the path to college is often defined by language (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). Depending on assessments and institutional policies, students may be placed into course sequences in DE, ABE, or ESL. In the absence of a shared definition of academic text readiness (Armstrong et al., 2016), it is unclear how such programs align in preparing students for postsecondary academic literacies. This is more concerning given that linguistically diverse students may enter college-level coursework through a diverse set of entry points. For example, some students are placed into developmental courses after taking a series of ESL courses, while others may be placed directly into college-level courses directly from the ESL sequence.

Texas Higher Education

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) unveiled a plan to increase the number of Texans with college certificates or degrees to 60% of Texans. Currently, only 23% of eighth-grade students in Texas will go on to graduate from college (THECB, 2019). Reaching this goal requires extending college access to groups traditionally considered unprepared for college. Therefore, the THECB's plan is multipronged, bringing together community colleges, adult education programs, and local schools to broaden access to a wider portion of the population. The plan includes adult education and developmental education as entryways into college.

Though overlooked in the strategic plan, there is a third important entryway into college—ESL. Increasing college enrollment for a broader portion of the population necessitates addressing the needs of linguistically diverse students. Currently, 18% of students are registered as English language learners in Texas public schools (NCES,

2019). Linguistically diverse students will often be tracked into some form of ESL. However, that is not universally where linguistically diverse students begin, or should begin college. The diversity of students subsumed with the label "English learner" complicates assessment and placement policies that can be overly reductive, particularly when focused on only one aspect of student learning—English proficiency. The entryway into college may largely depend on the type of assessment used to measure college readiness (Bunch & Kibler, 2015).

College Readiness

There has been an emphasis on the construct of college readiness, especially in the transition from high school to college (e.g., ACT, 2019; Common Core State Standards, 2020; Conley, 2008; Vandal, 2010). There has also been growing interest in literacy with college readiness (e.g., Boden, 2011; Henry & Stahl, 2017; Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jimenez, 2012; Springer et al., 2014) and language (Contreras & Fujimoto, 2019; Lee et al., 2018). And yet, the concept of college-ready literacies remains nebulous.

College readiness is multifaceted, incorporating skills, traits, habits, and knowledge (Arnold et al., 2012). Conley (2008) described college readiness as four "keys": cognitive strategies, content knowledge, academic behaviors, and contextual skills and knowledge (p. 3). However, scholars argue that readiness is not simply a collection of cognitive skills and knowledge, readiness also includes aspirations, motivation, and self-efficacy (Arendale, 2005; Holschuh & Paulson, 2013). Despite the insistence of scholars that readiness is multifaceted, assessments focus on mastery of content knowledge. In Texas, for example, students may take the Texas Success Initiative Assessment, which measures reading and writing using a collection of multiple-choice questions and an essay (College for All Texans, n.d.). College-readiness assessments can shape trajectories by determining if students will go into credit-bearing or developmental courses.

Developmental English

In Texas, students are placed into developmental courses based on their Texas Success Initiative Assessment scores (THECB, 2012). When students do not meet the minimum passing score for reading or writing, they are placed in a developmental education course to prepare for postsecondary academic literacies. Developmental education is often equated with remedial education; however, theoretically, these two course structures differ in important ways. Whereas remedial coursework attempts to address student deficiencies with an emphasis on reteaching skills and content, developmental education scholars take a more expansive view of college readiness with an integration of social, cognitive, metacognitive, and affective aspects of learning (Arendale, 2005; Holschuh & Paulson, 2013). It is unclear how these divisions translate into practice within developmental courses and may depend on how the instructor understands college readiness.

Developmental reading and writing were initially offered as separate courses; however, Texas recently mandated an integrated reading and writing model of instruction (THECB, 2012) in an effort to accelerate developmental education course sequences. Given the collapse of developmental reading and writing, we refer to these courses as Developmental English to encompass experts in the areas of both reading and writing who are now teaching both.

English as a Second Language

ESL placement is often determined by a single test

result rather than the use of multiple measures (Shapiro, 2012). The most common exam, Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), does not necessarily relate to college success (Cho & Bridgeman, 2012). Some institutional policies use citizenship status to determine ESL placement (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). Students can be tracked into ESL or DE by the entrance exam they are asked to take (Bunch & Kibler, 2015).

ESL used to denote a focus on life skills such as banking and shopping but in community colleges, ESL is placed among courses that help students transition into college and careers (Parrish, 2015). Traditionally, ESL courses focused on written language conventions over speaking and talking (Ferris, 2009). Coursework may have a heavier emphasis on building grammar and vocabulary over more holistic writing conventions in freshman composition. This focus on written language conventions may do little to help prepare students for American expectations of classroom participation (de Kleine & Lawton, 2018). In contrast, Niranji and colleagues (2014) found that international students felt better prepared for the cultural expectations of their other courses after taking an ESL course. Parrish (2015) proposed a more rigorous approach to ESL courses for adults that combined academic language, language strategies, and critical thinking to better prepare adult language learners for college and careers.

Adult Basic Education

ABE encompasses workforce preparation, integrated English literacy, and civics education, among other areas (Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education [OCTAE], 2020). ABE courses focus on basic skills (reading, writing, math, English language proficiency, and problem-solving) needed to find employment (CareerOneStop, n.d.). Programs include basic skill instruction, high school equivalency exam preparation, and ESL. However, OCTAE also works closely with community colleges to expand access to college degrees.

Although there has recently been increased interest in linguistically diverse students in postsecondary settings, there is a need for more research, particularly in community colleges (Almon, 2012; de Kleine & Lawton, 2018). It is particularly important to examine the courses that purport to prepare students for success in college courses. Therefore, the path that a student is sent on, can vary in important ways. Given the numerous paths into college, it is important to understand how each field perceives the needs of linguistically diverse students and the extent to which these perceptions align.

Theoretical Framework

This study was framed by sociocultural and sociolinguistic perspectives of literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 1989; Street, 2001). Literacy is complex, contextual, and dynamic. Literacy is a social process and practices are shaped by values, norms, and power dynamics. This study also draws on disciplinary literacies (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008) to frame literacy practices within academic contexts. This research assumes that academic literacies are context-specific, important for academic success, but that academic literacies are rarely explicitly taught (Bartholomae, 1985; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

Our research assumes that the fields we examine (ABE, ESL, and DE) aim to increase access to college and therefore should align with academic literacy expectations of college and careers more broadly. Literacy instruction often focuses on mechanics, grammar, correctness and other

"superficial features of language" and these features are essential to access status-giving language communities (Gee, 1989, p. 11). However, the components of literacy are more far-reaching, including behaviors, values, and ways of making meaning within communities of practice.

Language is a necessary component in our framing of literacy. In looking at the instructors of linguistically diverse students, it was important that we look at how they are framing literacy and language. Lippi-Green (1997) described language as "a flexible and constantly flexing social tool" (p.63) further arguing that perceptions of language variations are filtered by language ideologies. Put simply, language ideologies are beliefs and attitudes towards languages and dialects. Standard language ideologies are marked by "bias toward abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language" (Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 64). Language ideologies are pervasive in education, upheld by "standard" language ideologies (Lawton & de Kleine, 2020; Lippi-Green, 1997), such that even when instructors develop increased awareness of language variations, they maintain standard/nonstandard dichotomies (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Often when monolingual is the norm, other languages necessarily become an obstacle. Furthermore, language issues are rarely about language, but power dynamics upheld by language ideologies often couch a host of other biases (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Lawton & de Kleine, 2020; Lippi-Green, 1997). Such biases often manifest as distinctions between language framed as right/wrong within academic contexts. As previous research shows (e.g., Hoff & Armstrong, 2021; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Miller, 2003), instructor beliefs can restrict student access to the knowledge they need to navigate college.

Although there have been calls to define college literacy readiness (e.g., Armstrong et al., 2016) and to de-center "standard" English (e.g., Canagarajah, 2011; Conference on College Composition and Communication, 1974; Mazak & Carroll, 2017), language remains an obstacle for students in college classrooms (de Kleine & Lawton, 2018; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Miller, 2003). Thus, we wanted to examine how instructors working with college-bound linguistically diverse students framed postsecondary academic literacy expectations.

Methods

The purpose of this study was to understand how instructors in ESL, ABE, and DE in Texas community colleges perceive the needs of linguistically diverse students on the path to college. We used a qualitative case study (Merriam, 1998) to address two research questions:

1. How are learners transitioning out of adult ESL being prepared for postsecondary academic literacies?
2. Where do these understandings align and diverge between practitioners in ESL, ABE, and DE?

Research Setting and Participants

Focusing on a single state helped to ensure that programs across colleges were informed by similar policies. Texas served as an ideal case because of the linguistic diversity of students. The Texas Workforce Commission (2021) subsumes adult ESL within adult education and literacy programs. Generally, these programs combine components of both ESL and ABE. For this study, adult ESL was broadly defined as pre-college language classes for adult language learners.

To recruit participants, Texas was divided into regions (north, south, east, west, and central). Graduate students were assigned regions and

asked to contact college practitioners who were working with linguistically diverse students in developmental, ESL, and ABE courses. Practitioners self-identified their primary teaching field. Developmental courses (DE) included reading, writing, and integrated courses. ESL included English language courses within community colleges. ABE included workforce-oriented classes and GED-preparation.

A total of 25 people were contacted, of which ten scheduled interviews. This process resulted in a convenience sample of ten practitioners from across three fields (see Table 1); however, we did not achieve parity. The majority of participants (*n*=4) worked at colleges in central Texas. All of the participants were teaching in their respective fields and three (Tamara, Ben, and Melanie) also worked in leadership roles.

TABLE 1: Participants and Regions

Pseudonym	Field	Region	Level of Education	Years of Experience
Phil	DE	Central	M.A.	21
Tamara	DE	North	-	-
Nina	DE	North	M.Ed.	35
Cameron	DE	South	B.A.	13
Ben	DE	West	M.A.	10
Jordan	ESL	Central	-	10
Katie	ESL	Central	M.A.	29
Terry	ESL	East	Ph.D.	20
Mary	ABE	Central	B.A.	20
Melanie	ABE	South	M.A.	-

Note. (-) indicates that the information was unavailable.

Data Collection and Analysis

Each participant was interviewed one time by phone for 30 to 90 minutes. Using a semi-structured interview protocol, each participant was asked eight core questions. The present study focused on four questions that pertained to academic expectations and practices with linguistically diverse students with follow-up questions as needed.

1. Please explain the adult ESL sequence at your institution and how students transition from adult ESL into credit classes.
2. What are the academic expectations for a student who is considered ready to leave adult ESL? (for example, in the areas of reading, writing, listening to lectures, speaking in discussions or presenting).
3. What do you do in (your position) to prepare students to meet these expectations?
4. What challenges do you face in preparing students to transition out of adult ESL?

The research team transcribed interviews using exact reproduction but omitting pauses, emphases, and non-verbal sounds.

For data collection and analysis, we used a sociocultural framing of literacy as a guide for what we included as references to literacy. Sociocultural theories conceptualize literacy as a social practice, including behaviors, values, and ways of making meaning within communities of practice (Gee, 1989). It was also important to include context, perceived social goals, and an understanding of participants as relevant to our framing of academic literacy.

Coding was completed in three rounds using open-coding and magnitude coding (Saldaña, 2016). First, after familiarizing ourselves with the data, we determined a provisional list of codes based on our initial interest and informed by our sociocultural framework (literacy, language, college readiness, and descriptions of students). Literacy included references to reading and writing, but also beliefs, actions, and values (Gee, 2011; Street, 2001). Language included references to language variation, features, deviations, comparisons as well as beliefs about language (Gee, 2011; Lippi-Green, 1997). College readiness included references to disciplinary literacies (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), implicit and explicit expectations, and strategies (Bartholomae, 1985; Gee, 2011). Finally, our theoretical framework highlights the contextual nature of literacies and languages; therefore, we coded for references to students and references to their positionings, lives, and identities (Gee, 2011; Lippi-Green, 1997).

Both authors separately coded interviews. Second, authors compared codes, combining similar codes and setting aside codes that were less relevant to the research questions. Throughout the coding process we kept analytic memos, noting any surprises and questions that arose. From these notes, we decided to include an additional category—perceptions of other fields—in our coding scheme. We then used frequency counts (LeCompte & Schensul, 2013) to describe the prevalence of codes within each interview.

Participants were grouped by field for individual case analyses. Within each field, the authors looked for the occurrences and frequencies of each code, as well as co-occurring codes. We used a code frequency table to examine the distribution of themes and subthemes across participants and then fields (see Table 2). By clustering then comparing the frequency of subthemes, we could better formulate an overall image of the ways in which academic literacies were being described across fields.

Findings

We present findings first by individual fields, describing how they talked about college readiness, academic literacies, language, and their students overall. This study asked (1) How are learners transitioning out of adult ESL are being prepared for postsecondary academic literacies? and (2) Where do these understandings align and diverge between practitioners in ESL, ABE, and DE? To answer the first question, we summarize the perceptions expressed by participants as they related to literacy and college readiness and provide examples of how these perceptions translate into practice. For the second question, we use a cross-case comparison of the codes and frequencies to highlight where these fields converge and diverge in their understandings of academic literacies, languages, and college readiness.

Developmental English

For DE instructors, college readiness centered around language, literacy, confidence, and comfort. They talked about preparing students for future college courses which included needing "skills necessary to succeed" but also exposure

to the 4-year campus: "Allow them to experience campus and sort of have a future or a vision of what the future holds before they get there." Notably, no code occurred across all five participants (see Table 2). The majority of discussions around college readiness focused on language and literacy. The four most common topics (from greatest to lowest prevalence) were building discrete language skills (11), college knowledge (7), motivation (5), and academic literacies (5). In addition, participants mentioned the importance of persistence (3), preparing for tests (3), reading comprehension (2) and study skills (1).

These perceptions did not exist in a void. Instead, these various perceptions of college readiness, and more specifically, postsecondary academic literacies, were important because they informed classroom practices. For example, Tamara described academic literacies as the ability to "communicate in writing and in reading at least a college-level" and preferred "activities in the classroom where they're actually communicating through presentations." The belief that being able to communicate at a college-level translated into classroom activities that used communication on multiple levels including speaking, reading, and writing.

Perceptions of what a student needed to be college-ready differed between individuals and institutions. Nina was the only participant who mentioned reading comprehension as a challenge for linguistically diverse students, in particular, finding the main idea:

> I find, and this is probably a language, absolutely, a language issue, I find that determining when they come in and we are working on the reading, for them to determine the main idea and the supporting details, through, to pull that out of the text, is difficult.

Reading was framed as a language issue that could be remedied by direct instruction about main ideas. These beliefs translated into practice. Nina explained how excerpts from textbooks used across campus were incorporated: "We start out teaching

TABLE 2: Code Frequencies

Code	Frequency			Example
Academic Literacies	DE (*n*=5) 5 (4)	ESL (*n*=3) 15 (3)	ABE (*n*=2) 2	"Be able to communicate in writing and in reading at least a college level."
College Knowledge	7 (4)	8 (3)	5	"They need to know to ask for help and where to find help."
Motivation	5 (3)	3 (2)	2	"They're wanting so much to succeed."
Discrete Language Skills	11 (2)	7 (2)	0	"We work on Latin-Greek roots and prefixes and affixes."
Study Skills	1 (1)	2 (2)	0	"They have study skills, how to, you know, reading...how to take notes."
Test Preparation	3 (1)	0	0	"We basically teach to the test."
Persistence	3 (2)	0	0	"A lot of times we get people who come in for one class and then drop out."
Reading Comprehension	2 (1)	0	0	"Being able to determine what's important in a piece of a text."
Listening Comprehension	0	6 (3)	0	"Do they really understand what they are hearing."
Vocabulary	0	5 (3)	0	"They have to be able to display proficiency in vocabulary."
Non-Academic Barriers	0	0	1 (1)	"Barriers like transportation and things like that."

Note. The number of participants who referred to each code is in parentheses.

them that all authors, particularly textbook authors because their goal is to teach you, will give levels of importance in the textbooks that they write." Academic literacy, then, is tied to college-specific texts.

English as a Second Language

For ESL instructors, college readiness was a combination of language and literacy skills. Across the three ESL participant interviews, there seemed to be a clear consensus on what students needed from their courses. When participants talked about readiness, the four most common topics were building academic literacies (15), college knowledge (8), listening (6), and vocabulary (5). Alongside building English vocabulary and learning to write grammatically correct sentences, the instructors talked about analyzing information, making connections across course readings, and understanding cultural expectations. To a lesser extent, participants also discussed motivation (3) and study skills (2).

The participants affirmed the porous boundaries of academic literacies, noting that students were learning skills they may have developed in their first language:

> They've got to learn again all the conventions of writing, and it takes a lot of practice, but we get a lot of the different types of essays: cause, effect, narrative, argumentative, compare/contrast and all those and it takes many drafts and corrections.

Participants also framed academic literacies as connecting to the broader lives of their students. In one course, a participant explained that "ESL college students put their struggles on stage." By literally writing and acting out their lived experiences, the instructor was preparing students for college and beyond.

Perceptions of college readiness were often focused on becoming strategic college readers that included both vocabulary and academic literacies, namely, critical thinking. According to Terry, students needed to learn vocabulary but also to learn past vocabulary: "In English, because they are so intent on definitional meanings. And you have to break out of that mind-frame—And start thinking." All three participants shared a similar list of language skills that students needed to acquire, particularly around listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

The belief that students needed specific and interconnected study skills—such as taking notes, listening to lectures, reading course materials, and finding connections between sources—was reflected in teaching practices. Terry shared a lesson that integrated many of these skills:

> So they literally teach the class English grammar for like about ten-fifteen minutes. So they've got a class presentation due, they've got the PowerPoint up there, they're speaking, they're directing to the class, and they have to come up with a little quiz, to then test their class.

In this lesson, students became teachers and needed to gather information, summarize it, create a presentation, and identify what they wanted the other students to learn. They practiced several skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening within a college setting.

When talking about class activities, there was an emphasis on activities that "really make it real. And it makes it, you know, stick." ESL instructors focused on language-specific features like building vocabulary and writing grammatically correct sentences, but they actually focused on broader academic literacy tasks more so than discrete language skills.

Notably, none of the ESL instructors talked about replacing a student's first language in any way. Other languages were not posed as obstacles for students to develop academic English. There was consistency in the descriptions of college readiness across the three ESL instructors. Instructors' beliefs

and teaching practices shared many common features, including a focus on integrated skills and making connections to life outside of school.

Adult Basic Education

For ABE instructors, college readiness was less about language and literacy and more about helping students adapt to academic culture and overcoming obstacles such as transportation and money. They emphasized the necessity of providing their students with soft skills and an introduction to college as a culture. The most frequent codes included college knowledge (5), academic literacies (2), motivation (2), and non-academic barriers (1).

ABE instructors prioritized informing students on what to expect upon starting college and mentored students through the college application process (college knowledge). Mary prioritized college knowledge and learning the vocabulary of college, like what is a "grade point average": "It's a different world, college, a different terminology, a different language." All participants mentioned helping students feel comfortable in college through either learning about the environment or the college-specific vocabulary.

Only one participant discussed how academic literacies were incorporated into the class. Mary taught reading within disciplinary contexts: "It's different when you have to read for understanding in the science kind of world versus the more linguistic kind of world."

For college readiness, they focused on building college knowledge, motivation, and academic literacies, alongside addressing barriers. Both ABE participants addressed college readiness specifically but had different interpretations. Melanie talked about teaching computer skills, math, reading, language skills, and helping students feel comfortable in a college setting: "The academic perspective, like study skills, but the cultural aspect, like the culture of higher ed. is huge. Helping them know who their resources are." Mary, in contrast, focused more school-specific skills: "a student who's ready for college courses should be able to listen to a lecture, get the main idea and important topics, important details."

Although there were no descriptions of class practices, ABE instructors emphasized the importance of learning about the students in their classes. According to the ABE instructors, the lives and identities of students outside of college were essential. Melanie explained: "It's not only the student who goes on this journey but the whole family might get involved, husbands and children, and we want to embrace that." The world seeped into discussions about students and their needs.

College readiness was not the only concern for ABE instructors. Within the current political climate, there was a need to "try to make that fear go away so that they can learn." This indicates a belief that learning was not happening in a void but that students' lives outside of the classroom were real and came with them to class.

From these discussions, it is hard to discern how the instructors' beliefs informed their teaching practices. However, these interviews revealed that beliefs about college readiness, language, and literacy informed the instructors' relationships with students.

Comparisons Across Fields

The values and assumptions of literacy and college readiness varied between and within each field. ESL was the most consistent in their perceptions about college readiness. DE was the least consistent. DE instructors talked about specific college-based activities and preparing students for

them. In DE and ESL, we saw clear connections between what instructors believed and what they taught. Likewise, in ABE we saw a connection between what instructors believed and how they supported students.

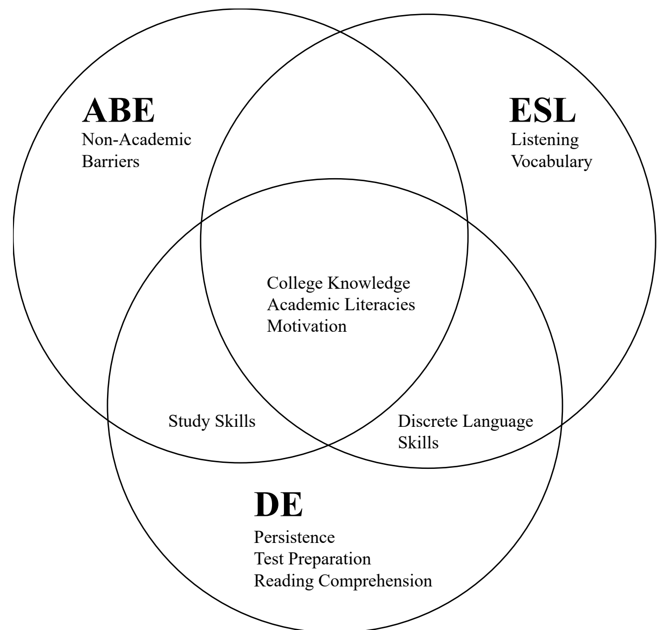
College knowledge was a feature that one participant used to distinguish DE and ESL: "I don't think the ESL part has that piece of college support and readiness." The findings did not reveal a lack of college support in ESL and ABE, but rather different perspectives on what was entailed. For example, ESL participants focused on learning cultural norms as readiness indicators: "That's the culture...they need to know how to be independent learners."

In DE, academic literacies were defined as being "able to speak, read, and write in English. Reasonably well. We don't expect perfection." ESL participants offered similar such as being able to "read at a...high enough academic level that they could function in a university course," as well as writing and listening. However, ABE participants talked more about belonging and mentorship: "that's our goal, is to mentor our students through this process, so, that's what we do."

When discussing barriers, DE participants compared English to native language use: "I mentioned the syntax and then thinking in their native language is a very difficult habit for them to break." Whereas ESL and ABE participants talked more about adapting to cultural differences: "I'm not sure what their home education was like, but the culture difference was so serious" (ABE).

Compared to DE practitioners, those in ESL and ABE made more connections to the world outside of college. ESL emphasized preparing students for life beyond courses and encouraged students to bring their life into the class. ABE instructors incorporated the experiences of students into their beliefs about what students needed. They emphasized preparing students for life beyond college courses.

FIGURE 1: Similarities and Differences



Tensions Across Fields

An unexpected finding was the level of tension that we discovered between fields. Some ESL participants questioned the role DE plays in the transition from adult ESL to college, describing it as "a very unfortunate pathway." A general perception was that students in DE courses were very different from linguistically diverse students, and therefore, had different needs: "Dev. Ed students have a lack of basic study skills and study ethic. And some of them have learning disabilities. And so, I think it's a very, unfortunate thing that ESL students would go into Dev. Ed classes." The greatest difference mentioned was that linguistically diverse students need help with language, whereas students in DE need help with study skills and acquiring postsecondary academic literacies.

The ABE participants presented conflicting perceptions of educators in other fields. One participant specifically mentioned the ESL faculty within their organization as essential contributors to their students' transition from Adult ESL to college: "Our ESL faculty are really good, they're really good at helping students transition." Another questioned the quality of the DE field: "The work that ESL teachers do is solid, fairly consistent across the board, hopefully. I couldn't say that for Dev. Ed." The participant noted "the lack of infrastructure" within leadership, explaining "faculty are still doing what they've always done," and that this leads to students "falling through the cracks." This issue was due to a lack of support and resources for instructors, "it's an assistance problem, not a people problem."

Conflicts seemed to arise from a lack of resources. As one ABE participant explained: "There's been moments at the early stages about 'you're taking my students' but...we're not trying to keep them." Another participant elaborated,

> The diminished number of financial hours that are going to be paid...a lot of our colleagues in the reading and ESL are clamoring to hold on to these students who should be put into the co-req models but instead are allowing them to chew up their financial aid by cannibalizing possible student enrollment.

Such financial tensions create rifts between faculty who otherwise share a goal of supporting students. Findings indicate how limited financial resources may confound student needs with funding needs. Beneath the infighting, there is a clear goal as Melanie articulated, "I just want people to get their needs met, their education met. It's only going to help them down the road, you want to give every student a chance at having a future, that's how I see it."

Discussion

This study explored the perceptions of instructors about the needs of linguistically diverse students in preparation for college-level courses. Similar to past research (Armstrong et al., 2016), our findings revealed a lack of shared understanding of college readiness. Moreover, the findings show discrepancies both within and across fields. In examining our findings across cases, we saw that DE, ABE, and ESL instructors all had different understandings of the academic literacy needs of linguistically diverse students.

Contrary to past work defining the foundational goals of developmental education, the findings from conversations with practitioners revealed minimal focus on the social, cognitive, metacognitive, of affective components of learning (Arendale, 2005; Holschuh & Paulson, 2013). Instead, practitioners focused on preparing students for tests and textbooks. In our interviews with DE instructors, we found a higher prevalence of deficit perspectives about students compared to interviews with both ABE and ESL instructors. These findings indicate a lingering perception of DE as remedial rather than holistic. Furthermore, there was no point of alignment across participants, suggesting a need for a shared understanding of college readiness in the field of developmental education.

Practitioners in ESL described college preparation as a combination of academic language, language strategies, and critical thinking which was closely aligned with Parrish's (2015) perspective on ESL courses. Moreover, there was a greater consensus on the needs of linguistically diverse students compared to the findings from DE. Participants all discussed the importance of understanding literacy expectations as well as how to navigate the college environment more broadly.

Finally, ABE findings uncovered more emphasis and integration of academic literacies than the

literature suggested. In contrast to definitions of ABE, predominantly workforce preparation and civics education (OCTAE, 2020) or basic skills education (CareerOneStop, n.d.), ABE participants offered expansive perceptions of student needs. ABE participants were, indeed, more likely to focus on skills needed beyond college compared to the other fields. This aligns with ABE's emphasis on workforce readiness. However, participants were also more aware of the non-academic needs of students and the obstacles that students faced outside of academic contexts.

The tension between these fields suggests that there is limited knowledge sharing and collaboration. This is unfortunate given the common goal of supporting students, there would be potential for the sharing of expertise across silos. ABE instructors, for example, presented the most in-depth understanding of integrating life within and outside the classroom. ESL instructors are language experts, whereas DE instructors have expertise in disciplinary literacies. The diverse perspectives uncovered in the study also hint to a need to better align our understandings of academic literacy, both within and across departments. These tensions may be fueled by funding policies. Rather than a focus on student needs, programs must focus on enrollment numbers, placing these support courses at odds with one another.

The findings revealed a concerning lack of shared theoretical framing among DE instructors suggesting that, though the name of the field has changed, the practices within have not. That DE instructors seemed more likely to frame students in deficit terms was alarming considering the purported expansive view of college readiness (Arendale, 2005). Are some DE courses simply a repackaged remedial course?

DE instructors were more likely to talk about preparing students for entry-level courses, whereas ESL and ABE instructors talked more broadly about preparing students for long-term goals. Across the three fields, ABE instructors used the most student-centered language and talked about navigating more spaces that just college courses. There is a growing awareness that terms such as "linguistically diverse student" oversimplify the language and literacy experiences of this diverse group of students (de Kleine & Lawton, 2018); yet, the complex identities and experiences of students were limited in our interviews.

The process of explicating tacit ideologies is particularly important for monolingual educators. As Gee (2011) argued,

> One always has the ethical obligation to explicate (render overt and primary) any theory that is (largely) tacit and non-primary when there is reason to believe that the theory advantages oneself or one's group over other people or other groups.

It is difficult to understand the experience of learning within a new language unless one has already done so. Given that all educators do not experience living outside of their linguistic comfort zone, it is crucial that those working with linguistically diverse students examine their beliefs. This reflective process might highlight the limits of viewing other languages as the obstacle and rather seeing students are more than language learners.

In alignment with past research, we found that instructor perspectives translated into practice (Assaf & Dooley, 2006; Young, 2020). This means that the way the instructors talked about the students and their needs influenced what and how the students were taught in the class. Supporting linguistically diverse students is not merely access to pedagogical resources but requires a critical examination of the ideologies of college instructors.

Implications

Research is needed that looks more in-depth and perceptions of language and college readiness in each field as well. Future studies should expand this scope to other states and regions. While this study was largely descriptive, larger studies will provide a more complete picture of language ideologies in college preparation. Additionally, research is needed on the motivations behind instructional and curricular choices and how this impacts instructors' goals.

The findings of this study show that instructors across fields have good intentions for students. However, since instructors' perceptions of college readiness varies across fields, the curriculum is inconsistent. Future research should examine how these fields can integrate curriculum and instructional practices more consistently. More professional development opportunities for collaboration across fields is needed in Texas.

Throughout this study, participants offered diverse and sometimes divergent perceptions of college readiness needs. As we work collectively towards a more shared understanding of college readiness at the policy level, community colleges can begin to cultivate an institutional understanding of the needs of linguistically diverse students by encouraging interactions between instructors of various fields. ABE, DE, and ESL instructors need opportunities to learn from each other, but they could also benefit from exposure to literacy expectations in the college-level courses. For example, colleges could survey instructors across fields to uncover the literacy and language expectations of courses. Instructors of ABE, DE, and ESL may also benefit from opportunities to attend college courses (and vice versa).

Conclusion

Our findings highlighted several misalignments in the way academic literacy is framed. In the place of alignment, we uncovered tensions. With a common goal of preparing students to succeed in college, a shared understanding of college readiness is essential. As educators, when we too narrowly define our role, we risk limiting the academic potential of students by failing to see the ways in which we can support their growth. Though, we all perceive the role of language and literacy in different ways, we are all language teachers, content teachers, and mentors into academic literacies.

Supporting linguistically diverse students requires alignment across fields. As educators, we know there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to instruction. However, regardless of a student's path to college, the standards and expectations should be consistent across fields. As the findings revealed, there is expertise across departments. Our strength is in collaboration and not maintaining silos. The first step to breaking those silos is to understand our own assumptions about literacy and language.

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