<u>DROPOUT DETERMINANTS IN NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS IN
NORTHERN VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOLS BETWEEN 2010-2020, IS LANGUAGE
IMPORTANT?</u>

by

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Dropout Determinants in Non-Native English Speakers in Northern Virginia High School between 2010-2020, is Language Important?

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Bachelor of Arts
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Dedication

I dedicate my work to everyone who been there and helped me during my journey as my family, and friends. As well, this work is dedicated to all English Language Learners.

Acknowledgments

First, I want to thank my parents and family, for always been there for me and telling me that I can do it. As well, to my members of my committee for the guidance Dr. Joseph Scimecca, Dr. Brian Levy and Dr. Benjamin Manski. Third, to professor Dr. Joseph Scimecca for been there during my graduate school journey, I appreciate the support and encouragement during my thesis work. Finally, I want to thank Dr. Dennis and Dr. Masters for the recommendations and advices.

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Abstract

DROPOUT DETERMINANTS IN NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOLS BETWEEN 2010-2020 IS LANGUAGE IMPORTANT?

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This study seeks to examine the determinants of the increasing rates of school dropout among non-native English speakers in Northern Virginia high schools between 2010 and 2020. It examines the differences in student dropout among non-native English speakers' boys and girls in Northern Virginia high schools. The research adopts a qualitative design involving the use of secondary sources. The content analysis method was used in analyzing the qualitative data in examining the research problem. Additionally, the Interactionist approach by Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner was considered the primary theoretical approach. The findings highlighted that graduation rates of English Learners (Els) have remained low over the ten years. The main concern was the limited supported offered by Virginia state to non-native English learners. Schools do not have sufficient staff or programs to ensure that ELs get the support they need to gain English proficiency and remain in school. Poor early engagement of learners, family socio-economic status, and cultural differences accounted for the disparities in the dropout rates. The research

recommended an increase in state funding to ELs, better training of teachers and counselors for ELs in schools, systemizing tracking, implementation of dual language programs to assist ELs, and establishment of community-based organizations to assist the community in understanding the school system. Few publications on how language itself affects the dropout rate of non-Native English students in Virginia were identified as the main limitations of the study.

Introduction

Background of Issue

With high rates of immigration and population growth rates within minority groups, the enrollment of these groups into America's public school system is increasing. Access to education brings considerable challenges for these students. Based on a U.S. Census Bureau Report, approximately 12 million students speak a language other than English at home, and 6 million face difficulties communicating in English (US Census Bureau, 2021). Moreover, Miller, Mackiewicz & Correa (2017, p.5) observe that *"one of the most pressing issues in education today is how to address the academic needs of English Language Leaners (ELL)"* as an opening comment for the publication *A multi-modal intervention for English language learners: Preliminary results.* The United States school system has implemented measures and policies to deal with these students' difficulties and gaps and accommodate them; however, after measures have been implemented, the dropout rate in these groups is still high, with the rate ranging from 2010-2020 for dropouts from 563,867 (2010) to 592,895 (2020) students, according to the Virginia department of education statistic database (US Census Bureau, 2021). For the purpose of this study, data utilized is collected from the Virginia school system exclusively. ELLs are students who are new living in the US, and they are learning English as a second language.

Most of my research has been focused on causes of dropping out of school, such as the need to get a job, unexpected pregnancy in the case of female students, bullying, and depression (Rumberger & Ah Lim, 2008). However, language for a particular target group of (native) English-speaking students in high school has not been reported as a key barrier or cause of dropping out for this group. First, language barriers may not be as pronounced among native English-speaking students, particularly those who are higher-achieving, as they are among English-language learners or students whose first language is not English (Haaland, 2017). Native English-speaking students may feel more comfortable with the language of instruction and have more access to resources and support than students still learning English (Altavilla, 2020). Moreover, English learners are relatively more susceptible to dropping out of school than native English-speaking students, who are versatile and better equipped to adjust and adapt to the education system's demands. For example, they may take classes online, pursue a GED or certification, or transfer to another school where the instruction language is more comfortable. *"Just because a program is well-designed for use by English speakers, that doesn't necessarily mean it will work well for Els"* (Altavilla, 2020, p.20).

The importance of language for students' academic achievements is critical for mastering skills and continuing their education and access to the labor force, jobs, and competitive salaries. A variety of issues cause the learning crisis and dropout factors (Williams, Kaui & Ernst, 2015). Nonetheless, it is now widely understood that language remains a significant obstacle preventing students everywhere from acquiring the skills they need to thrive in life. Language is a tool for transmitting messages, communicating,

learning, and understanding complex processes and concepts critical to accessing a qualified job (Pinnock, 2009).

Although students need more capacity to manage and control their language characteristics, non-native (for example, Hispanic) students will likely face systematic difficulties in continuing and completing school. Due to a lack of motivation, they will receive low grades (Sugarman, 2019). Along with these and other advantages, language also boosts cognitive growth, academic performance, and attitudes toward other languages and cultures. For students to successfully compete in global businesses, language acquisition is necessary. Success in schooling, therefore, depends, among other factors, on understanding the widespread usage patterns and standards of language in a given social setting (Callahan, 2013). Success in education and academics is also feasible if one can use and grasp educational language properly. Difficulties and challenges are crucial for non-native English students to thrive academically and master academic material in English. This makes them particularly susceptible to content-area difficulties as they learn the language (Callahan, 2013).

English language learners in Virginia between 2010 and 2020 are the focus of this study, which aims to determine the impact of language on English learner attrition. Inconsistencies in the evaluation of teacher competency across the different states make it difficult to compare and utilize data from different states. *"As such, these states have required mainstream teachers to receive specific training to teach Els"*. (Montecillo, et al. 2021, p.23). In addition, I look at whether or if there are gender-specific differences in the dropout rates of male and female students (US Census Bureau, 2021). I seek to demonstrate

that the language barrier is a major contributor to English language learners' school failure in Virginia, with difficulties encountered in the classroom being the primary reason for this failure rather than external influences.

The state consistently fails to provide enough funding for English learners, which has a negative impact on the academic success of this rapidly expanding cohort of learners. Virginia is towards the bottom of the country regarding English language learner (EL) success, even though EL students encounter far more formidable obstacles to education elsewhere (Peguero et al., 2016). The research shows that EL learners have been hurt the worst by the interruptions caused by the epidemic since the pandemic has worsened the difficulties already faced by ELs. EL learners are particularly vulnerable to these interruptions because the pandemic has significantly impacted language learning resources, such as access to certified teachers, language support programs, and other specialized services.Furthermore, the disruption of traditional in-person instruction has caused EL learners to fall behind in their language development, which may lead to difficulties in all academic areas (Peguero et al., 2016). Additionally, the closure of school buildings and libraries has limited EL learners' access to resources essential for language learning, such as computers, textbooks, and other materials. Furthermore, the pandemic has exacerbated the socioeconomic challenges many EL learners face, such as food insecurity and limited healthcare access, further complicating the language learning process (Sorensen et al., 2018). Ultimately, the effects of the pandemic on EL learners are far-reaching and long-lasting, making it essential that educators and policymakers address the unique needs of EL learners to ensure their academic and social-emotional well-being.

Statement of Problem

School dropout has an impact on communities nationwide. As a result, dropouts who find work frequently find it challenging to hold on to positions that might otherwise enable them to rise out of poverty (Magana, 2018). Consequently, the high unemployment rates lead to poverty and poor living standards due to decreased productivity. "*An important way that schools can help ELL students is to help them acquire the linguistic and cognitive skills necessary to succeed academically* "(Sheng, Sheng, & Anderson, 2011, p.101).

Long-term English Language Learners have a recurring challenge. It could be too late for children in this category to achieve good grades after years of struggle owing to unresolved academic issues that began in the earlier days of elementary education. Unfortunately, elementary and middle schools frequently fail to address the needs of students in this age range (Rodriguez, 2020). Moreover, some Els are recent immigrants to the US from non-English speaking countries. Thus, they often struggle with simultaneously learning a new language (English) and integrating into the new high school environments in their new schools. The disconnect in early engagement with the English language for such groups of individuals significantly undermines their capacity to cope with learning expectations (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014). Therefore, schools must devise strategies to deal with protracted EL dissatisfaction by creating academic language programs tailored to the

needs of students whose deteriorated language abilities lead to academic setbacks and eventual dropouts (Rodriguez, 2020).

ELS should have more access to the challenging curriculum qualified educators to teach in high-performing schools. Many English learners (ELs) fail to graduate because they do not have the necessary academic preparedness (Peguero et al., 2016). Each school's administration, faculty, and guidance counselors are responsible for evaluating the programs and services available to English Language Learners in high school. To guarantee that ELs get high-quality teaching tailored to their specific educational, instructional, and background requirements, every teacher must assess and review the services offered to these learners regularly (Rodriguez, 2020). Without considering how schools assist and offer resources to satisfy EL students' educational, language, core content, and academic background requirements, the onus of academic success falls mostly on the English Learner. Therefore, it is essential that all ELs, particularly those at threat of dropping out, have access to high-quality education and school support from the school's administration (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014).

To help ELs acquire information and improve their English, schools should use adaptable programming that uses the main language (Rodriguez, 202). A program's success heavily depends on the time allotted for various activities and how classroom time is used (Lopes-Murphy, 2020). The principal's responsibility is to make sure that instructors provide students with challenging and interesting lessons tailored to their specific skill sets and interests.

In light of the above, I will attempt to answer the following questions:

1) Is language a major determinant causing the dropout of non-native English-speaking students in high schools in the Northern Virginia area between 2010 and 2020?

2) Is there a dropout difference between boys' and girls' students attending school?

Hypothesis

The language barrier affects the attendance and dropout levels of non-native English-speaking students. In addition, based on gender, boys' students may have a higher dropout level than girls' students.

The primary reasons that contribute to students dropping out of school include affiliation with detrimental peer groups, engagement in activities that generate revenue, poor levels of self-motivation, and a general lack of enthusiasm for learning (Wood et al., 2017). As well, as opposed to females, a male student's ability to stay in school is badly impacted when his family is disorganized. Their home is impoverished, their parents are unable to provide enough supervision, their parents have limited education, and their household places a low importance on education. When ELs show signs of difficulty with English language competence or core curriculum, schools should have a strategy to assist them (Department of Education).

Secondary Data to Content Analysis

Student's academic progress is influenced by their linguistic, philosophical, and school features, as well as their background and socioeconomic status (Rodriguez, 2020). An increasing body of evidence shows that minority kids, predominantly black and Hispanic, whose first language is not English, are more likely to drop out of high school (Rodriguez, 2020). Nationwide survey dropout rates are the subject of continuous study, showing shifting patterns and underlying reasons (Wilang & Singhasiri, 2017). Dropout rates among ELs are higher not just because of not earning the language but also because they are more inclined than the general public to come from low-income families and be the children of immigrants, both of which place them in a vulnerable position (Shi, Harrison, & Henry, 2017).

Thus, there is a confluence of circumstances that may lead to English Learners being in danger of not completing their education. One of these elements is the difficulty of the classroom and instructional tasks, along with the services offered by each of their respective institutions (Kim, 2015). These three primary facets significantly impact the overall experience of ELs throughout their time in high school. Children's backgrounds, families, and socioeconomic circumstances all significantly affect their academic achievements, overall performance, and ability to graduate from high school (DePaoli et al., 2015).

These students face various academic problems relating to their English vocabulary knowledge and comprehension, the context and content of different subject fields, and schools' haste to pressure them to complete state and local assessments (Liu, Hu, & Pascarella ,2021). To graduate from an EL high school, learners must meet such specific academic requirements proficiency in scholarly English dialect and literacy, the capacity to learn subject knowledge and dialect simultaneously, and the capacity to keep pace with linguistic features and complex academic constructs (Williams, Kaui & Ernst, 2015). When students eventually acquire English, they often fall so far behind in schoolwork that it becomes impossible to make up. As a result, many of them grow disheartened and quit school altogether.

Nevertheless, students who had previously been categorized as having Limited English Proficiency (LEP) but were subsequently reclassified as having Fluent English Proficiency (FEP) had better Pass rates (Rodriguez, 2020). In addition, it was less prone to drop out of school before they had completed their required coursework (Cheng & Lee, 2018). Other likely explanations for school dropout entail the conviction that higher education is a different and more challenging experience than middle school and the background of shifting schools or varying school systems. Several elements have been demonstrated to raise the possibility of a student's school failure. In addition, a sense of not "relating" to the school, a propensity to avoid engaging with important persons at the institution, "*student attrition is and continues to be a problem in self-directed language learning programmes, including self-access programmes in tertiary education*" (Cheng & Lee, 2018, p. 171).

Long-term English Language learners are consistently confronted with this issue. Due to unaddressed classroom issues facing learners in this subgroup that arise early in their academic journey, typically in the subsequent elementary school years, it could be too late for them to excel academically once they enter high school, following years of failure because they will have already spent those years falling behind (Kronholz, 2011). Most of the time, elementary and middle educational facilities have neglected to recognize the requirements of these students.

Consequently, secondary schools need to devise strategies to combat the problems connected to long-term EL indifference (Miller, Mackiewicz, & Correa, 2017). These strategies should involve the development of comprehensive academic language programs tailored specifically to the needs of learners whose language skills have become so ingrained that they cause them to perform poorly in school and, consequently, lack the motivation to continue their education. Most of these learners' scores drop into the lowest tiers on English language examinations, even though the promotional procedures in place for such learners as they progress from level to level are more liberal than other students, and these students might gain from programs that are more substantial, entertaining, and tailored to their specific needs, focusing on their capabilities and areas of interest (Rodriguez, 2020). Students are more prone to disengage in their studies when they face repeated instances of failure (Behnke, Gonzalez, & Cox, 2010).

The causes or variables that led learners to stop attending school and compared the findings of seven studies that followed students who had quit school. The authors analyzed the data by first classifying the potential causes of dropping out of school into three

categories: push influences, pull influences, and falling-out influences. Push factors are the after-effects of occurrences that result in undesirable academic outcomes, such as attendance, poor academic performance, and discipline (Doll, Eslami, & Walters, 2013). Enticements outside school, such as employment and families, pregnancies, and marriages, might be considered pull forces (Rodriguez, 2020). Finally, "*falling out factors highlight a process in school dropout whereby the student gradually increases in behaviors or desires of academic disengagement, yet without being forced out by the school*" (Doll, Eslami, & Walters, 2013, p. 2).

The most common reasons for school dropouts were related to pull influences, such as job and childbearing, which rated highest among Hispanic learners (Rodriguez,2020). Furthermore, Hispanic students expressed the greatest effect of pull influences, with females indicating elevated incidence, mostly from childbirth and extramarital affairs, and boys indicating higher percentages from work and household responsibilities (Rodriguez,2020). This implies that ELs, the majority of whom are Hispanic, frequently "*drop out of school due to pull influences*" (Doll, Eslami, & Walters, 2013 p. 4). Furthermore, Hispanic students indicated the greatest sway of pull factors.

Wood and other authors (2017) highlighted several factors relevant to English learners from various ethnic backgrounds. In addition, the variables point to the significant impact that employment, families, and maybe language barriers have on the inability of certain Hispanic students to complete their education, which is consistent with previous research findings (Borden, 2014)

Although efforts are being made to improve high schools, there has been and will remain to be a lack of proper research on this subject owing to the continuous underreporting of the attrition issue (Reider & Wooleyhand, 2017). There is a pressing need for more refined ways of collecting data. One of these steps pertains to absenteeism and sustaining a dependable list of learners who cease to attend school, as well as developing the necessary framework for getting daily communications with guardians in the learner's native language to guarantee that these students receive the support, they require to continue their education (Rodriguez, 2020). The higher attrition rate and the unpleasant concerns mentioned have ramifications for everyone, including dropouts, schools, local society, employment markets, and the financial system. The public must be aware of these issues since knowledge is crucial. The public needs to be aware of these issues because they can majorly impact society regarding economic and social consequences. For example, high dropout rates can lead to many people not contributing to the economy through labor, leading to decreased public services (Hung, 2020). Additionally, high dropout rates can lead to a decrease in civic engagement since those who are not educated are less likely to vote or participate in other civic activities (Robinson, 2021). All these issues can have a major impact on society, and the public needs to be aware of them to take appropriate action to help reduce them, thereby improving their communities' economic and social well-being (Obinna & Ohanian, 2020).

Researchers gathered information from high school instructors, educational authorities, and ELs about their beliefs, preparation, and routines to determine the factors that have recently led to students dropping out of secondary school (Vaughn et al., 2019).

According to Trainor, Murray and Kim (2016) to the researchers, educational administrators and faculty believed that absenteeism and punctuality were significant concerns. Still, students assessed them as smaller than other, more significant issues that arose inside the institution (Trainor et al., 2016). This supports the notion that the perspective of students versus that of school officials (including both administrators and instructors), who are exposed to the same issues, might explain variances in how those issues are perceived. When the replies of the administrators were compared, one significant finding was that the school officials thought that learners dropped out for causes that were completely different from the ones that students had stated (Vaughn et al., 2019).

Pull factors ranked at the top for premature dropouts, while fall-out variables scored the highest for late attrition. The following are the perspectives teachers presented: The instructors' expressions of powerlessness about the abusive language that students direct against teachers and their responses concerning the physical abuse that students direct toward teachers are consistent with the instructors' first-hand encounters (Vaughn et al., 2020). The following are some of the perspectives expressed by former learners: These students cited violations of school policies as the primary reason for their high rates of dropping out, a reason for attrition (drug and alcohol abuse, missing classes, and fighting). Students were less concerned about matters with less dire repercussions or less appeal to the general public (absenteeism and verbal and physical mistreatment of instructors) (Sugarman, 2019). Every respondent group offered perspectives on educational issues informed by their unique experiences. To implement actual changes that will favorably

improve the results for children considered at risk, there has to be a more in-depth dialogue throughout the system involving administrators, instructors, and students (Duran, 2020).

Goldenberg and Wagner (2015, p. 29) *"for the next 30 years, through different presidential administrations, the status of bilingual approaches to educating language minority students rose and fell".* This research investigated how students' perceptions of their interactions with professors influenced their decision to drop out (Hickman, 2020). They polled the students to find out how their instructors felt about them, how interested their teachers were in them, and how positively they responded to the learners. Institutions where students had favorable evaluations of their connections with instructors, had a lower proportion of students dropping out of school than schools with negative evaluations of their educators (Sugarman, 2019). However, even after considering other aspects of the learner and the institution, such as the syllabus and the number of students in the classroom, the favorable link between student-teacher interaction and the percentage of high school graduate students did not alter.

Similarly, Bloomfield and Fisher (2019) urged researchers to investigate student-teacher interactions in addition to familial and socioeconomic issues in their studies of students who dropped out of school. The authors placed a special emphasis on the need for research on dropouts to take into account the social components of dropouts and the hazards associated with dropouts that materialized in school environments.

When taken as a whole, the results of this research suggest that the interaction between students and teachers significantly influences whether students continue their education (Bohon et al., 2017). For example, it is quite probable that students will choose

not to continue their education if they have the impression that their professors do not encourage them or that they have unhealthy connections with their peers. On the other hand, having healthy connections with one's instructors and having the impression that one is supported and cared for are expected to have a good impact and lower one's risk of dropping out of high school (Williams & Kaui & Ernst, 2015).

A shortage of qualified instructors, particularly EL-certified instructors, often distinguishes EL programs. This deficit may be one reason that contributes specifically to the English Language Learner dropout problem (Miller, Mackiewicz, & Correa, 2017). Not just in EL programs do unqualified teachers of English to speakers of other languages exist.; rather, it affects the upsurge of schools and regions that deliberately register EL learners. Accreditation programs were intended to educate bilingual educators. His conclusions were supported by research into instructor preparation programs conducted nationwide in institutions of teacher education.

Given the relative scarcity of multilingual academic activities among EL assistance services throughout the country, this finding is not altogether surprising. The poll's findings, on the other hand, suggested that even fewer teacher accreditation programs trained mainstream instructors to address the demands of English Language Learners, which were particularly remarkable. Instead, English as a Second Language education would be left up to EL professionals. As the number and percentage of English Language Learners enrolled in schools throughout the United States continue to rise, the widespread absence of EL preparation among mainstream instructors is becoming an increasingly concerning trend (Sorensen et al., 2018).

The results of studies investigating teacher accreditation and preparation in typically English Learner (EL) regions reveal that the issue is not limited to locations that are popular destinations for new immigrants. However, the consequences may be more evident in these districts. This gap in professional certification may be representative of the standard of educational programs encountered by English Language Learners, particularly those regarding the overall education they get and the multilingual support services that are necessary to meet the student's specific academic and linguistic demands (Quin, Heerde, & Toumbourou, 2018).

A survey conducted on resources and assistance for English Language Learners found that sixteen percent of EL learners did not receive any EL assistance or support. In comparison, an additional thirty-four percent gained some, but not comprehensive, EL assistance in an environment where only English was spoken (Kronholz, 2011). "*Youngsters miss school and get "backed up" in class, so they miss more school because they're bewildered or embarrassed, and fall further behind. Seeing few ways to recover, "they just silently drop out, seeing few ways to recover, they silently drop out*" (Kronholz, 2011, p. 25). This is despite the fact that federal law mandates that EL learners obtain linguistic assistance. Research has linked teacher performance and qualifications for a long time to student performance; the imbalance in teacher performance faced by EL students compared to their peers who are not learning English implies that teacher quality solely may be a threat element in the determination of EL students dropping out of school (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). Furthermore, although it is not assessed here, the presence of non-EL qualified teachers in EL teaching may pertain to the low academic prowess of

many EL learners and the negative effect estimated to be caused by ESL placing in some instances (Callahan, 2013).

Another important aspect in determining whether or not ELs complete their education is the difficulty of instruction they receive in high school (Liu, Hu, & Pascarella, 2021). The difficulty of instruction is an important aspect to consider when determining if ELs complete their education because it affects their ability to access the curriculum and gain the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful. If the instruction is too difficult, ELs will become frustrated and unable to understand the material. This can lead ELs to lose interest in their education and eventually drop out (Liu, Hu, & Pascarella, 2021). It is possible that the contemporary environment, characterized by such high aspirations, has contributed to a higher percentage of students who have reached the breaking point and decided to discontinue their education (Shi, Harrison, & Henry, 2017). Because of the major disparities between males and females, there is a need to tailor the interventions for preventing dropouts to the specific needs of each gender to see the best possible benefit. Furthermore, with the extra challenges of language, social disconnectedness, and economic reasons, ELs have more pull factors that might serve as antecedents to dropping out of school, such as family issues, work, or pregnancy (Wilang & Singhasiri, 2017).

These criteria, which affect the dropout rate, serve as beginning points for contemplating how the training sessions of ELs might be modified to provide more appropriate teaching activities and experiences (Obinna & Ohanian, 2020). Also, not only the ESL instructor but all of the instructors are required to share responsibility for the success of ELs. Such, in effect, necessitates proper teacher training on the part of all

instructors who provide instruction to satisfy ELs' language and subject-area requirements. Moreover, schools need to make the most of the utilization of the main language and adaptive programming to make it easier for ELs to access information and study and improve their English simultaneously (Trainor et al., 2016). The amount of time devoted to education and how that time is spent are essential components of students' successful academic outcomes and studies have shown that even attending kindergarten for the whole day could influence a student's likelihood of school dropout in later years (Rodriguez, 2020).

According to the findings of Callahan's (2013) investigation, most schools do not provide adequate time for ELs to gain topic mastery in the core disciplines and put them in below-grade courses; rather, the EL class takes an unjustifiably significant percentage of the program. *"Educators' anecdotal reports of placing recent immigrants below grade level upon entry or even holding them back a grade to allow additional time to acquire English while mastering the content are not uncommon"* (Callahan, 2013, p. 24)

When making decisions concerning academic scheduling, it is necessary to consider that many ELs arrive at school with varying degrees of academic proficiency in their mother tongue and fluency in the topics that make up the core curriculum. Some ELs arrive with a strong command of their original language and previous knowledge in formal schooling. In contrast, others either lack expertise in formal education or come from cultures that do not have a written language (Virginia Department of Education, 2019). Some recent immigrants who arrive in the United States well-informed from their home countries and do well in American courses may struggle to pass state tests. In certain school

districts, an inclusive school-wide reform that systematically improves English Language Learners' access to difficult academic material and promotes instruction by employing competent, qualified instructors is necessary.

According to Peguero (2016), performance monitoring is the most harmful activity institutions engage in because it forces socioeconomically disadvantaged learners into poor academic tracks, putting them on the path to receiving a substandard education. Consequently, affected students, who are currently at a disadvantage socially and psychologically, continue falling even further behind their classmates, suffer a decline in their sense of self-worth and motivation, and finally give up on their education entirely (Sheng et al., 2011). In the face of the persistent failures of students from low-income and minority backgrounds, there is an absence of responsibility for promoting students who underperform. Some schools get around bilingual education plans by incorrectly putting English Language Learners in classrooms taught only in one language. Even in situations where bilingual programs are offered, there is still a disparity in the availability of resources. This is because the institutions that host bilingual programs obtain less financing than those that provide mainstream education, which hinders EL education (Lee-St. John et al., 2018).

In the face of the attempts that are being made to improve public high schools, there has been and will remain a lack of study on this subject due to the persistent underreporting of the attrition problem (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014). Many experts are calling for the data-gathering process to be enhanced. One of these steps pertains to absenteeism and sustaining a dependable list of learners who decline to attend school, as well as developing the

necessary framework for sustaining regular interactions with guardians in the learner's native language to ensure that these students receive the support, they require to continue their education (Bohon et al., 2017). Mentoring programs, which encourage learners to have high goals for themselves and help them form interpersonal connections with their peers, have proven to be quite helpful in keeping children enrolled in school (Rodriguez,2020). Students have a lower risk of school dropout if they are involved in supplementary school events and clubs, where they can form relationships with their classmates, instructors, and mentors (Menken, 2010). The development of main language ability, exposure to ethnic affinities, increased coherence connecting a home to school, and improved ability to accommodate individual variations may be attainable via extracurricular activities such as after-school and summer programs. Formal mentorship programs that explicitly target ELs offer the experience of individuals (teachers, advisors, counselors, and coaches) with specific abilities to improve ELs' social and cultural resources as they go from high school to college and then on to professions (Rodriguez,2020). My research gathers new information to shed light on whether language is a major determinant of high school dropout among non-Native students in Virginia between 2010 and 2020 and whether the rates are higher among male or female students. With the help from previous research describing the challenges that ELs in high school encounter in terms of learning and instruction.

Theoretical Framework

My research uses the interactionist approach, which considers dropping out of school to be a result of the experiences that participants have while they are enrolled in educational programs defining language as an indicator of the importance of the academic achievement of these students. This approach questioned established conventions and structures of domination by demonstrating what they did to human beings and their experiences of their lives (Adler-Nissen, 2016*).* These experiences include interacting with significant aspects of the educational system, most notably with the other learners and the teachers. The psychological and social features of the person have a significant bearing on the standard of the encounter (Adler-Nissen, 2016). *"Educational institutions, the media, and communities produce attitudes and behaviors that impact a student's identity development and mental health"* (Cuba et al., 2021, p. 67). If a suitable degree of integration is not achieved, dropout will occur as a consequence. Data from the state of Virginia will be used exclusively considering Montecillo, Colombo & Nerlino (2021, p.23) postulate that *"the inconsistencies in teacher preparation and accountability reporting make it impossible to compare ELs progress from state to state, and thus shroud program and teacher effectiveness for ELs, which is highly inconsistent with the second and third prongs of Casteñeda".*

The interactionist perspective has its roots in the sociocultural philosophy of language acquisition advanced by Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky proposed that children learn the norms and standards of their communities by seeing and working with adults. Further, he argued that social learning generally precedes linguistic development, highlighting the significance of culture and social environment in language acquisition (Vygotsky, 1978).

Although children certainly have a natural aptitude for acquiring language, Jerome Bruner thought they also need a great deal of immediate interaction and exposure with others to develop complete linguistic fluency (Bruner, 1983). That is why they can't pick up language skills by passively observing people and sitting in on discussions rather than actively participating in such exchanges. In most cases, a learner's caregiver will be the one to offer the linguistic encouragement necessary for the youngster to develop their speech skills (Bruner, 1983). Their capacity to identify and fix mistakes, as well as their ability to streamline their speech, provides a youngster with a solid foundation upon which to create a mature vocabulary. When explaining how infants acquire a dialect, the interactionist approach considers physiological and social factors. Children acquire language because they need to engage with their environment, and the interactionist view posits that children's language development is influenced by their relationships with others (Adler-Nissen, 2016). This encompasses the individuals a youngster could meet and their entire experience with those people. The quality and rate of a child's language development are strongly influenced by the context in which they grow up socially.

The interactionist approach to language learning recognizes that language is a dynamic and ever-changing system acquired and developed through interaction with the

environment (Gonzalez, 2021). *Menken* (2010, p.124) *states that "linguistic complexity is not limited to English tests, but rather also includes subjects such as math, which is often misperceived as using universal language".* Therefore, it encourages learners to be actively involved in learning by engaging in meaningful conversations and interactions with their environment. To effectively acquire and use a language, learners should be exposed to a variety of language input and be able to interact with the language to make sense of it (Quin, Heerde, & Toumbourou, 2018). This requires learners to engage in conversations actively, read, listen, and write in the language. By doing so, learners can develop their language skills, understand the language, and learn it meaningfully and naturally. This approach also emphasizes the importance of understanding the context in which language is used, which encourages learners to view language as more than just a set of rules to be memorized (Sugarman,2016). Through this approach, learners better understand the language and its usage, which helps them become more English proficient.

The interactionist approach emphasizes the importance of feedback and the exchange of ideas between the learner and their environment. This feedback allows learners to reflect on their language usage and adjust their language accordingly (Russ, 2021). Furthermore, interaction with the environment helps learners develop their confidence in language use and encourages them to take risks to learn. The interactionist approach encourages learners to reflect on their language learning process and adjust their learning strategies. By doing so, learners can better understand the language and become more confident in their use of it (Kim, 2015). Finally, this approach encourages learners to become more aware of their language proficiency and to develop the skills to improve their language skills

continuously. Inferences about a person's level of engagement need to be drawn from indirect measures such as the degree to which they participate in academic work, their level of interest, and their enthusiasm. This occurs because engagement is an internal quality that requires one to concentrate and make an effort; therefore, it cannot be easily observed (Quin, Heerde, & Toumbourou, 2018). Students underlying desire for competence, the amount to which they feel included in the institution, and the legitimacy of the task they are expected to accomplish all significantly impact their level of participation in the academic tasks they are required to finish.

Doing homework and participating in extracurricular events outside of the classroom, like student organizations or athletics, exemplify students' connection and participation in high school's educational and social facets (Sancho et al., 2018). Behavioral engagement refers to these kinds of conduct. Students' affective responses to their educational encounters and in their courses, such as whether or not they are pleased or bored. The extent to which students believe that the school environment is meeting their needs is a key determinant of whether or not they will be motivated to complete their studies.

In addition, the external systems approach asserts that the cause of a participant's decision to stop attending school should be interpreted as the essence of their connection and devotion to systems unrelated to the educational environment (Carter & Fuller, 2016). The dropout population is relatively disintegrated, and factors from the outside world, like employment and family, negatively affect a person's ability to persist.

Methodology

The project adopted a themed analysis of data collection, collecting information from secondary sources database with additional support from the study concepts, content analysis, and review process. I searched for relevant literature by using the library at the university as well as relevant database websites. Second, I looked for relevant publications such as books, journals, research, and policies. I searched for research material online by reviewing the abstracts of the articles first to decide whether or not the content was relevant.

The subsequent standards were used to assess: The relationship between dropping out of school with the language being the indicator of these students leaving school, including having at least one unfavourable event during one's time in school, had to be investigated. When doing a comprehensive search, it is necessary to use several permutations and synonyms of the predetermined search keywords.

Dropout, English language learners, Virginia, language, educational hurdles, and racial minority education are some examples of major search keywords. The search for the database began in September 2022 and was limited to articles released in English between 2010 and 2022. It only examined publications written in English.

The study used the theme analysis technique to analyse information gleaned from the qualitative data that is readily accessible. Thematic analysis is a technique for analysing

qualitative data that comprises combing through a large dataset to detect, analyse, and report repeating patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The data were analysed in great detail to find recurring topics, concepts, and meaning patterns referred to as recurring themes.

Performing a thematic assessment on a qualitative information collection is an effective method for researching anything about the perspectives, opinions, expertise, experiences, or ideologies. In addition, the thematic analysis provides much leeway in interpreting the information. It makes it possible to tackle big information sets in a manageable manner by categorizing the data into overarching themes (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019).

A theme gives significance and identity to recurring experiences and their expressions. A concept may be formed experimentally from raw information or abstractly from theory and earlier study. With an inductive method, themes are closely tied to the information and may not relate to participant inquiries. The last step occurs after the researcher has defined the topics and is ready to compose the presentation (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

As a result, I screened and conceptually analyzed all the collected papers in a worksheet to determine how each component of the framework related to the high school attrition rate of English Language Learners. This worked at generating metadata that categorized the causes of ELs' dropout into three primary categories: educational, familial, and personal. Using thematic analysis, the researcher could note thoughts related to the themes while I became acquainted with the material and reviewed the articles (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). An essential theme may be gleaned from integrating disparate elements with little significance. The thematic analysis draws on deductive and inductive methods

of inquiry. Deductive research adheres to a predetermined methodology, unlike the more

subjective inductive research that draws on participants' experiences. Therefore, thematic

analysis was a great technique for obtaining an overall understanding of my work. (Braun

& Clarke, 2019).

Data Analysis and Discussion

1)   Is language a major determinant causing the dropout of non-native English-speaking students in high schools in the Northern Virginia area between 2010 and 2020?

All learners benefit from more culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Many other languages are spoken in Virginia, as many K-12 learners in the state identify as English learners. An estimated 10% of learners in the state are classified as English Language Learners, matching the national average (US Census Bureau, 2021). In contrast, student population density varies widely throughout Virginia. The five Northern Virginia jurisdictions with the highest concentrations of EL learners are Alexandria City, Loudoun County, Fairfax County, Arlington County, and Prince William County (Steward & Mendes, 2021). There were about 37,000 English Learners in Fairfax County Public Schools in the 2019-2020 academic year, from a total of 116 000 ELs in all school regions in the state (Virginia Department of Education, 2022).

The number of English language learners enrolled in Virginia's public schools increased to almost 86,000 between 2005–06 and 2010–11. 7.1% of the K-12 public school students were ELs in 2010-11 (US Census Bureau, 2021). In 2010-2011, Virginia achieved an estimated on-time completion rate of 86.6% with all new graduates and 55% for ELs. In 2011–12, the percentage was 65% for native English speakers and 88% for ELLs. At the end of the 2012–2013 school year, the overall completion rate was 89.1%, while the

percentage for ELs was 51.8% (Virginia Department of Education, 2022). English language learners' completion rate was lower than the overall rate (48.2%) for only the 2013-2014 school year (89.9%).

In 2015, 90.5% of learners in Virginia completed their degrees on time. The greatest completion rate in the area was in Loudoun County, where 95.6% of students graduated on time (Altavilla, 2020). Among counties in the area, this one had the greatest percentage of Hispanic learners completing on schedule (86.4 %). In 2015, the attrition rate in Virginia dropped from 5.4 percent of learners to 5.2 percent of students, although the Hispanic attrition rate remained steady at above 10 percent (Mun et al., 2020). The percentage of ELs who graduated in 2017 totaled 74%, whereas the completion rate among all learners was 91.1%. The On-Schedule Completion Rate in the Commonwealth of Virginia reached 91.6% in 2018, 91.5% in 2019, and 92.3% in 2020 (Virginia Department of Education, 2022). Statistics show that for Cohort 2022, English language learners had a completion rate of 72.69 percent and an attrition rate of 24.77 percent.

Race & Ethnicity

Virginia's learner population has broadened over the last 15 years, and learners of color make up about 52% of all learners statewide. EL learners are varied. Although they are all learning one language, they are diverse in their ideas and their backgrounds, demands, and socioeconomic and cultural assets to contribute when interacting with others (Goss & Andren, 2014). While the percentage of EL minority students has stayed the same, their race and ethnicity have varied. 70% of EL learners are Latinx, compared to 61% in 2009 (Steward & Mendes, 2021). 14% of ELs are Asian Americans, and nine percent are

white. ELs speak diverse languages since racial and ethnic backgrounds do not usually correspond to the local language. Some learners may not speak English.

Additionally, 60% of Virginia government school learners who speak English below "really well" communicate in Spanish (The Commonwealth Institute,2022). A quarter of Virginia ELs converse Asian languages, including Korean, Chinese, Arabic, Urdu, and Vietnamese (Kuhfeld, 2020). Vietnamese, Chinese, and Hindi are the most prevalent Asian languages spoken by students (Steward & Mendes, 2021). Diverse languages may make it difficult to fulfill every student's requirement but making education and family outreach as inclusive as feasible increases involvement and engagement, and EL learners in Virginia are still more confident in communicating another language than their counterparts in the rest of the country, where 71% are Spanish speakers (Steward & Mendes, 2021).

An English Learner's success or failure in school is due to a variety of causes, some of which include but are not restricted to, the following: local and federal financial backing; a variety of languages; capacity of English Learners in high schools; social welfare support offered for immigrant households; school systems and offered courses; and the power of community-based associations (Holen, Waaktaar, & Sagatun, 2018). Therefore, before examining potential remedies based on state policy, it is vital to have a greater knowledge of the challenges students learning English encounter.

Factors That Contribute to ELL Dropout

Researchers have examined several aspects that may contribute to a student's decision to stop attending school. An intensified interest has lately been oriented toward

English Language Learners since the group is at a high risk of dropping out, which may have a detrimental impact on districts and educational institutions meeting objectives for each subset of learners as stipulated by the NCLB provisions, which stipulate that *"there is also evidence of a relationship between emotional wellbeing and education attainment"* (National Research Council, 2011, p. 14). In addition, EL students account for a community with a high chance of failing academically. Research on ELs has found a variety of risk factors; however, the emphasis of this subsection is limited to the most important elements that distinguish the ELL group as a whole.

Family Socioeconomic Status

One of the strongest indicators of academic difficulty and abandonment of education has been identified as the family's socioeconomic status (SES). Specialists believe that economic disadvantage is the single most important factor in determining the percentage of youngsters who will have difficulties in their academic and health endeavors (Kim, 2015). Therefore, the student's family socioeconomic status is among the greatest determinants of academic success. A family's socioeconomic status depends on factors such as the housing situation, the neighborhood, the educational level of the parents, and the degree of supervision and assistance provided by the parents (Kanno & Cromley, 2013).

Learners who are learning English as a second language and come from households of recent immigrants are often at a financial disadvantage compared to students who are skilled in the English language. Comparatively speaking, students learning English are more inclined to originate from low-income homes and have guardians with lower levels of education than their classmates who are already fluent in English (Wood et al., 2017).

Comparatively, only thirty percent of English-conversant learners are qualified for the program, yet only about ten percent have guardians who did not graduate high school. However, more than sixty percent of English Language Learners are eligible for the federal and discounted rate meal plan. More than forty percent of those students have guardians who did not graduate high school (Jimerson et al., 2016).

Students who come from immigrant households with a low socioeconomic status have the greatest chance of school dropout. In contrast, students from immigrant households with a high socioeconomic status do not demonstrate a major disparity in the likelihood of attrition compared to learners from other categories.

Cultural Differences

The cultural gap between family and school, which makes it challenging for English learners to adapt to the culture of mainstream schools in Virginia, is another important factor that raises the likelihood that ELL students may drop out of school (Bustamante & Eom, 2017). These cultural variations manifest themselves in various ways, including the methods of instruction, the standards of conduct expected of students, the patterns of daily life, and the interactions between instructors and students. It would seem that the majority of Asian students are not at a greater risk of failing as a result of their cultural diversity (Lemon & Watson, 2011). Even when contrasted to the group that comprised the majority, white students, Asians held the least attrition rate and the greatest graduation rate. Several studies have investigated the Asian cultural principles of appreciation for education and laborious effort, to name just two examples (Johnson, Strange, & Madden, 2010).

While there could be some explaining power associated with traditional cultural values concerning academic success and a minimal dropout rate, the focus on cultural values is particularly related to characteristics such as the household's financial standing and the educational qualifications of the guardians. Variation between different Asian ethnic groupings regarding academic success and the percentage of students who graduate from high school (Sugarman, 2016). Low income had a detrimental effect on the priority that Asian families placed on their children's education. It is possible that the disparity in dropout rates between the two groups, even though Asian cultural values are also a factor.

Engagement In Social and Educational Activities

Research indicates that a student's level of participation in their school's societal and educational life is the primary factor in determining whether or not they will graduate from high school (Navarro, 2018). When teenagers are on the cusp of becoming adults and gaining independence, they start giving their friends more influence and value than their close relatives. Friendships in adolescence support learners and impact the student's ability to make decisions. Learners of the middle class who admitted to experiencing strong ties with other young people who had previously withdrawn from school or had been employed were discovered to be among the learners who were in the greatest danger of school dropout (Steggall, 2014). The connection between students' ability to move about and their likelihood of dropping out is mediated by both the students' standing amongst their social circles and the academic achievement of their peers. A strong correlation exists between a young adult's level of social activity, as assessed by friendships and placement in peer interactions, and the likelihood that they would drop out of school (Galvao, 2020).

There is a significant racial and ethnic diversity factor in the intensity of the link between social activity and abandonment of school. There are ethnic inequalities in engagement resulting from the lower proportions of social and recreational activities among adolescents of Mexican ancestry (Mireles-Rios, Rios, & Reyes, 2020). Even while school-oriented connections lessen the chance of learners leaving school, there remain ethnic variations in engagement. According to these results, a certain subset of today's adolescents does not reap the full benefits of the informal relationships available at their high schools to decrease the likelihood of abandoning school (Goss & Andren, 2014). The extent to which a student is integrated into a school's unofficial social support network is a gauge of the student's resilience and sense of identity at the institution.

Educational Stratification

There is a clear correlation between a student's educational and social involvement and where they fall on the institution's academic hierarchy (tracking), which affects not just their education but also the number and standard of the friendships they develop (Kavish, Mullins, & Soto, 2016). If minimal levels of English mastery led to enrollment in low-level subject areas, which in turn causes a low degree of educational performance, poses a typical dilemma for EL education, and the argument around the core origins of the EL attainment gap continues in full effect. Course selection made in the first semester of high school is highly indicative of final grades and graduation success. Research indicated that ninth-grade achievement, rather than English ability, was a more critical determinant of graduating high school for learners of all linguistic backgrounds (Montecillo, Colombo & Nerlino, 2021).

Reclassifying a student as non-EL before sixth grade was the strongest predictor of success for students from linguistic minority backgrounds. This correlation might be attributable to the fact that reclassified children are now exposed to the material at their educational level. It could also indicate that the most linguistically and scholastically adopt EL learners are among the most scholastically competent learners at the school (West, 2016). The newest ELs, however, had a far lower likelihood of graduating even when they achieved similarly to or superior to their co-ethnic counterparts in ninth-grade academics. Combined, these data indicate a disparity between EL learners' academic achievement and their likelihood of graduating high school (Gonzalez, 2021).

The question is not if ELs do poorly relative to their classmates, but what factor(s) underlie this difference (Haaland, 2017). ELs may be exposed to inferior academic material as they are learning English, which has been linked to poor performance (Callahan, 2013). Course placement and educational achievement were two outcomes that Callahan (2013) sought to disentangle from the influence of allocation in EL classes. The authors discovered that placement in ESL throughout high school, even after controlling for criteria such as English mastery, race/ethnicity, guardian education, past accomplishment, and many more, still limits access to college prepared math and science subjects for certain language minority adolescents (Callahan, 2013). There is a serious danger to ELs' educational and social potential by routinely placing them in lower-level topic area courses based on their EL status rather than their academic abilities (Callahan, 2013).

Students' English proficiency must not be used to determine where they start in a given subject area. Instruction in mathematics and science must be adapted to

accommodate ELs' language growth, so there is no need to keep a youngster already showing signs of academic proficiency out of grade-level classes (Felix, 2021). Guidelines for EL courses need to reflect the variety of English and academic competency among the ELs population since schools and teachers have equated low proficiency in English with inadequate intellect for decades.

Students with poor English mastery, who were more likely to be placed in a subgroup of EL students studied by Callahan and collaborators, did not conform to the classic ELs stereotype (Callahan, 2013). Rather, they were more similar to the long-term ELs for whom poor performance has been reported elsewhere. Because they spend so much time in EL courses without being exposed to challenging material, long-term ELs could be at a higher risk of dropping out than their peers. This problem is not exclusive to EL learners; rather, it affects the vast majority of students assigned to relatively easy classes. There is a downward spiral in school achievement for a learner after they have been identified as needing remediation, whether in language or subject.

Given that even in the native English-speaking cohort, grade retention is challenging at best, the unusually high prevalence of this issue among EL students warrants serious examination (Callahan,2013). Anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers often enroll new immigrants at a lower grade or delay them by a grade to give them more time to learn English and understand the curriculum (Lee, Cornell,Gregory,& Fan, 2011). Handbooks and rules for governments, districts, and schools all explicitly and openly discourage the concept of EL retention.

The deliberate expulsion of comparably low-performing learners is another kind of academic stratification. This expulsion is typically justified under the premise of upholding school discipline and high standards for learning. Academic experience of high school ELs, advisors, and administrators often steered these students, particularly new immigrants, to a GED instead of graduating from high school (Menken, 2010). Counselors, instructors, and administrators gave various linguistic and intellectual justifications for their suggestions, with the goal of best meeting the student's needs being the most common.

Dropout rates are higher if accountability measures are in place, and this is felt not just by schools but also among learners required to take these examinations (Behnke, Gonzalez, & Cox, 2010). Since they are in the unique situation of studying English, ELs' exam results often reflect not just their skill in math, science, and history but also their fluency in English. Mis-measuring English Learners (ELs) regularly under the supervision of an educational process that does not doubt the accuracy of tests for language learners or the application of student performance scores to quantify school and teacher performance leads to a negative stereotype of ELs as a burden on the institution. Although the present accountability system was intended to help the most vulnerable children, its implementation has created more obstacles to EL success. Students' choices to abandon their education are often influenced by their performance on minimal competence and other examinations, particularly among young people from ethnic and linguistic minorities (Hung, 2020).

Studies have shown that high school leaving examinations negatively influence graduation rates, particularly in areas with a significant minority population. Student

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interviews revealed that not passing a graduation requirement test might cast doubt on the graduation prospects of otherwise capable students, increasing the likelihood that they would abandon their studies (Sorensen et al., 2018). English proficiency evaluations are administered to EL learners in addition to the topic area and basic competence testing (Umansky, 2016). The upshot is that a larger part of EL students' classroom time is devoted to evaluation and preparedness for assessment than it is for non-ELs, which not only discourages ELs but also reduces the amount of time they have to devote to real learning (DuHaart, 2019).

Teacher Expectations

Learners who are placed in low-level courses are not only exposed to less academic information than they would be exposed to in other settings, but they are also exposed to faculty who often demand less from their learners. Despite actual student achievement, poor teacher expectations could significantly impact students who belong to marginalized groups, such as English Language Learners (Massaro & Palencia, 2022). Similarly, Fontana (2017) chronicles the risk posed to learners whose professors could "like" them but retain negative perceptions of them. This gives young people counterfeit social capital (Fontana, 2017). Scholars and practitioners have compiled evidence demonstrating the detrimental effects on students of instructors who may sympathize with their learners yet have low academic expectations of them. Even though the instructors may have a genuine concern for their learners, the fact that they have such loose standards is working against the learners' greatest advantage (Reider & Wooleyhand, 2017).

Lowered standards from the educators, while harmful to all young people, may have a particularly powerful effect on Els. The juxtaposition of low expectations with "caring," often known as the "pobrecito" condition, has shown to be especially troublesome in the teaching of ELs and students from language minority groups. These afflictions' "kind" character is deceiving, as it hides the capacity for long-term harm in the guise of decreased educational success and attainment. This is a danger that must be ignored. The instructor is supposed to be concerned for the learner, but the teacher has extremely low learning standards for the learner; the learner, realizing that the teacher is concerned, absorbs the teacher's academic standards into their academic self-concept (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018).

Furthermore, students' post-secondary opportunities are restricted, which may even increase the likelihood that they will abandon high school. The combination of limited educational exposure and low instructor standards disguised as care poses a significant risk to the graduation rates from high schools of ELs. Yet, these two factors may also present a potential solution to one facet of the problem of EL student dropouts (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019).

Fluency in English

The degree of English mastery ELs have is one of the key elements determining whether they will drop out of school (Rodriguez, 2020). This is attributable to the reality that English mastery is strongly linked to academic achievement and grade retention (Mireles-Rios, Rios, & Reyes, 2020). *"English proficiency directly relates to academic performance and grade retention"* (Sheng et al., 2011, p. 99). According to the findings of several studies, English Language Learners (ELL) often have a worse academic

performance overall when compared to learners who are proficient in the English language (Horsford, 2013). The results from the NAEP showed that learners learning English as a second language had consistently lower scores for mathematics and reading compared to students not learning English as a second language (Liu et al., 2020). The empirical evidence suggests a correlation between low academic performance and a high attrition rate. This correlation has been thoroughly established. Poor academic success, commonly measured by standardized tests of accomplishment or grade point average (GPA), has continuously been one of the most important antecedents of high school dropout rates (Terry et al., 2017). Consequently, the degrees of English proficiency that EL learners have are directly tied to the educational results that they have. A variety of circumstances may influence English language abilities of learners.

These elements relate to encounters specific to the learner and include the following: the duration of residency, the age when arriving in the country, the degree of English mastery of the guardians, and whether or not English is spoken at home (Russ, 2021). It takes immigrant children an average of two years to grasp practical English and a significantly longer to master academic English. This is necessary for them to catch up in their academic achievement effectively. The age at which a student starts residing in the United States is another factor that impacts how quickly they acquire English (Holen, Waaktaar, & Sagatun, 2018). According to findings from studies on how people learn languages, there is a crucial age range beyond which it gets more difficult to communicate effectively in English. ELs benefit from having preexisting exposure to the English language or having guardians who comprehend and speak the language (Altavilla, 2020).

Virginia Assistance & Response

Virginia Does Very Little to Assist EL Students in Other States to Overcome Obstacles to Their Education.

EL learners in Virginia schools arrive from a wide variety of ethnicities and backgrounds, levels of English proficiency, financial means, family obligations, and varying personal goals and objectives (Steward & Mendes, 2021). The state figures show, however, that most ELs are not getting the assistance they need to succeed in school despite the challenges they face (Steward & Mendes, 2021). While this pattern is observable across the country, Virginia ranks poorly contrasted to other states, having the sixth lowest EL graduation rates (Stevenson, Swain-Bradway, & LeBeau, 2021).

Virginia's ELs' poor performance results are likely due to several issues. A major contributor is probably the general budget of states like Virginia, which provides far less specialized assistance for ELs than the national median (Peguero et al., 2016). Beyond the state's contribution to the wages of a small number of EL expert instructors, Virginia pays very little of the extra expenditures necessary to offer high-quality instruction for EL learners (Steward & Mendes, 2021). This means that districts must provide funding for career growth for general education instructors who have the greatest contact with EL learners, as well as for the purchase of instructional materials that are available in more than one language or tailored to ELs' needs (Miller, Mackiewicz, & Correa, 2017). Although this is not the only factor contributing to Virginia's ELs' dismal performance on national examinations, improving funding is a good place to start.

While it is true that a lack of resources is to blame for the dismal performance of EL learners throughout the country, it's also fair to wonder whether the households of Virginia's ELs face any additional challenges not shared by their peers in other jurisdictions (Lopes-Murphy, 2020). In the past five years, research has shown that Virginia families led by a non-Native with children under eighteen have the lowest poverty levels. In addition, the majority of non-Native residents are more likely to have graduated high school than their peers in many other states. Although these numbers may not precisely capture the conditions of households with EL learners, they show that the poor EL student accomplishment in Virginia is not attributable to the poverty level or educational level of the probable households with EL learners. Instead, the comparatively low national ranking is probably due more to the absence of necessary resources and assistance inside Virginia schools than to any other single factor (Sugarman, 2019).

Instructional Practices

The instructional practices encompass the aspects of school life that are most closely associated with the activities in lessons, such as instruction, debate, quizzes, and presentations. In this domain, aspects such as teacher efficacy and sufficient numbers of instructors and teaching assistants should be evaluated as potential areas for improvement (Galvao, 2020). For example, there may be positive outcomes for students' acquisition of second languages as a result of instructors encouraging the use of students' first languages in the lesson. In a similar vein, if school administrators are aware of the language that is most commonly used at home, they will be able to improve their communication with families, as well as encourage the use of both the first and second languages in the

classroom, which will ultimately lead to a reduction in student dropout rates (Mireles-Rios, Rios, & Reyes, 2020). In addition, there is a problem with students dropping out of English classes due to factors such as low rates of effort and involvement, inadequate supply and performance of bilingual teachers, an absence of motivation in the school environment, a lack of adjustments to English applied in classroom practice, among others. "*Engaging in instructional practices that have been demonstrated to be effective for English learners*" (Jimerson, et al., 2016, p.413)

As the quantity and percentage of ELs enrolled in institutions in Virginia continue to rise, the absence of EL preparation among mainstream instructors is becoming a growing concern. "*Schools in new arrival states lack sufficient support structure to accommodate the needs of Latino students, especially those with limited proficiency in English*" (Behnke, Gonzalez, & Cox, 2010, p.390). Research has linked teacher performance and credentials to student learning for a long time; the setup of non-EL competent teachers in EL lessons might directly relate to the low academic achievement of many EL educational environments. It could even add value to the harmful impact of EL placing in certain cases.

Low Rates of Graduation and Related Factors Endorse the Immediacy of Enhanced EL Student Services

When compared to other student groupings, such as those who have impairments, English learners regularly have the poorest test scores on state examinations for science and literacy (Sorensen et al., 2018). The arithmetic passing percentages for these students are consistently the lowest or second lowest of all students. Students taking English Language Arts (ELA) classes saw the biggest percentage reduction in reading,

mathematics, and science scores over the final two years of enforced federal Standards of Learning (SOL) tests administered in years 2019 and 2021 (standardized tests were not needed in 2020 owing to the pandemic) (Virginia Department of Education, 2022).

When compared to other statewide exams, the 2021 SOL decreases were consistent. By 2021, the bulk of English Learners in all of the first three grade levels analyzed was at risk for developing long-term reading problems (Liu et al., 2020). Young English learners in Virginia were already at a heightened risk of reading problems before the epidemic. Scholars in education who have been designated with the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) advocate for a baseline proportion of literacy specialists for children in the state's public schools (Virginia Department of Education, 2022).

Despite the persistent challenges that ELs and other learner groups confront in achieving greater literacy levels, legislators have yet to explore ideas to respond on this notion seriously. As of the next school year (2021–2022), the VBOE was thinking of suggesting steps to boost reading experts in schools, with the provision that they provide extra help to learners who score poorly on the third level reading assessment (Virginia Department of Education, 2022). Because the PALS evaluation results for ELs show a need for supplementary reading instruction, this VBOE prescription would greatly help. Since early literacy levels are a powerful determinant of long-term school performance, the declining PALS reading outcomes for ELs without intervention are concerning (Hung, 2020).

High school English language learners in Virginia confront their own set. Virginia's poor completion rate for ELs is likely attributable to several factors, including a shortage

of bilingual school advisors, absence of educational resources, parents with limited English proficiency, and insufficient academic assistance overall. Some people think that the necessity to find work to support one's family is the root cause of Virginia's persistently high dropout rates, especially among EL male students (about 29% in 2020) (Wood et al., 2017). There may be an increased burden on adult children to contribute financially to their families if their immigrant parents cannot get public assistance despite their household's poverty level. Numerous studies have demonstrated a substantial correlation between a parent's level of education and the risk that their high school-aged learner would not complete that level of schooling. Parents with low English fluency will not be able to educate themselves on how institutional education functions in America, and this may inhibit their ability to assist their children with navigating the educational institution and to form meaningful relationships with their teachers (Fontana,2017). "*Relationship between encouragement from parents and student achievement may be mediated by students' attitudes that are the result of parental support.*" (Fontana, 2017, p. 19)

Scholars who study ELs are worried that the epidemic may increase the number of ELs who abandon their education to take care of their family (Vaughn et al., 2019). The narrow coverage of state assistance for ELs focusing almost exclusively on EL instructor-to-student ratios, restricts this financing from flowing to other employees, like culturally diverse guidance counselors and caseworkers, who could assist individuals navigate alternatives to ration school and work obligations and, more generally, support learners continue with their education and on a completion schedule.

Virginia's non-EL completion percentage has increased each year from 2008 to 2020, from almost 83% to above 94%. However, the EL students' completion rate has stayed relatively stable between around 68% and 74% (Virginia Department of Education, 2022). Completion rates for EL students might be much lower than those of their non-EL peers, and this disparity can widen at the school district level (Department of Education,2022). Potentially more EL students will not graduate on time next year because of the disruptions created by the pandemic (Obinna & Ohanian, 2020). Students new to English as a Second Language in high school confront significant obstacles to completing their diploma obligations and are at danger of dropping out even before the epidemic. Due to age-out limits, it may be especially difficult for ELs in high school to resume their studies after an interruption.

Students who receive their Advanced Diploma are almost twice as prone to complete or remain in higher learning beyond four years as individuals who obtain a Standard Diploma, as per a study. The availability of courses necessary to get an Advanced diploma varies by an institution (Sundari, 2018). It is widely established that educators have difficulty recognizing the talents and abilities of English learners (ELs), especially when they possess less training to engage with these learners. Thus, they are less inclined to recommend ELs for intermediate track and talented programs. Despite making up almost ten percent of the school population, ELs are underrepresented in Virginia's talented student population, making up just two percent of the special student population (Sugarman, 2019).

It is not surprising that EL learners are less inclined to continue their education through high school than their non-EL counterparts, given the limited availability of Advanced Diploma programs. In addition to putting children in a group with their classmates who are more inclined to continue their education after high school, taking more advanced courses helps them prepare for the rigors of college (Rumberger & Ah Lim, 2008). As a result, graduation rates for ELs have been falling, and with that, the number of ELs enrolling in college during the previous several years. Unfortunately, this is not true for most Virginia graduates. This alarming trend suggests that schools ought to hire more specialists to help English learners succeed and implement rules that will increase the likelihood of being put in advanced study tracks (Shi, Harrison, & Henry, 2017).

Pandemic Highlights EL Challenges

Non-English-speaking parents have trouble steering online learning

Before the outbreak, immigrant parents of English learners had trouble accessing public education. All school-aged youngsters are entitled to universal education, irrespective of their citizenship status. Guardians with low English proficiency must get translated messages to partake in their youngsters' learning (Stevenson, Swain-Bradway, & LeBeau, 2021). Yet perceptions of these guidelines may differ from institution to institution, and guardians with poor English may not get clear information to help their youngsters. Moreover, guardians were expected to play a greater role in their children's schooling during the epidemic when they had to move to virtual learning.

School divisions transitioning to virtual education could not have had equivalent virtual resources in many languages or the capacity to cross the digital gap swiftly (Steward

& Mendes, 2021). General education instructors have less digital competence to help ELs (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014). EL instructors indicate fewer hours of virtual learning material instruction than their general studies colleagues. ELs were less prone than their classmates to get virtual learning help during the epidemic, which might become an issue with increasing virtual education in schools.

Student engagement may have hampered English learning

Reduced in-person schooling time with English-speaking classmates and adults increases worries about language regression (Virginia Department of Education, 2022). Fluency improves through productive discourse or speaking with peers during school hours. At home, ELs may speak their original language more than English may. EL learners lose English competence during the summer, and virtual learning may have comparable effects (Cuba et al., 2021).

Economic and health pressure

It is reasonable to draw the following conclusion given what is known about the consequences of immigrant households during the global epidemic, that ELs remained more prone to reside in households that observed increased economic turmoil and heightened anxiety about anti-immigrant policies and discourse. This is in addition to the educational and linguistic difficulties that they faced. Depending on their legal recognition, immigrant households have a lower likelihood of having health insurance, may feel less comfortable seeking medical attention (Steward & Mendes,2021). Children from immigrant households are also more prone to have obligations such as working or caring for other children, making them spend considerably more time studying at home.

Notwithstanding a guardian's citizenship status, there has been a significant uptick in the number of youngsters in immigrant households exhibiting trauma-related symptoms (Sandilos et al., 2020). This is a direct result of the rise in anti-immigrant discourse because children who come from immigrant households cannot often differentiate between the discourse they are exposed to and the extent to which the fears of deportation relate to their household. It is widely known that traumatic events in children, such as greater exposure to stress during the pandemic, may have long-term repercussions on academic success if addressed (Gonzalez, 2021). If this is the case, academic achievement should be a primary concern. When it comes to organizing support services for ELs and mitigating possible effects on their education over the foreseeable future, education institutions and community-based organizations have the ability to play a pivotal role (Hung, 2020).

2) Is there a dropout difference between boys' and girls' students attending school?

According to the latest data, 90.2% of male and 94.0% of female learners in the 2022 cohort graduated on schedule. It has been determined that over 5,100 learners (5.19%) from the 2022 cohort, 98,648, have dropped out of school (Virginia Department of Education, 2022). Male learners in the 2022 cohort had an attrition rate of 6.51%, while female learners had a rate of 3.78%.

There is a higher risk of academic failure or dropout among male students than female learners (DuHart, 2019). Female students face greater obstacles than male students while trying to get an education. A wide range of obstacles in the classroom prevents male learners of color from achieving academic success and completing high school. What

follows will shed light on the difficulties faced by disadvantaged students by discussing the causes of the achievement interval that is disproportionately large among minority male learners. Poverty, disciplinary policies, and the preservation of competent instructors are the most significant issues preventing minority guys from excelling in high school (Horsford, 2013).

Poverty

Many male students from underprivileged groups struggle financially. Students from underrepresented groups lack access to resources that more affluent learners take for granted, which might hinder their academic progress. Upwards of 5 million learners, most of whom are people of color, live in severe poverty. Student success correlates with financial stability in the family. (Quin, Heerde, & Toumbourou, 2018). Students' academic performance is affected when they lack access to necessary materials or do not study in safe, stimulating classrooms. Dropping out of education and looking for work to support one's family is a common strategy for low-income households and, more likely male students than girl students. Male high school dropouts are at increased risk for ill health, unemployment, criminal behavior, substance abuse, and incarceration, all contributing to the persistent problem of high school dropouts. Students' school failure has significantly more detrimental effects on society than those who graduate and proceed to make constructive contributions in life.

Methods of punishment

The overrepresentation of minority learners, especially Hispanics and African Americans, in special education programs may be traced back to the implicit and explicit

prejudices and biases held by certain instructors (Lopez, McEneaney, & Nieswandt, 2015). Educators' misunderstanding of culturally based behavioral differences may contribute to the disproportionate participation of boys from underrepresented groups in special education. Certain educators have a punitive bent or a deficit mindset, manifesting in low expectations for and bigotry toward male learners from underrepresented groups (Sugarman, 2016). Discipline gaps between learners of different races and ethnicities in the United States are widening. Discipline also has a detrimental effect on student involvement and has been related to worse academic achievement (Massaro & Palencia, 2022). Three times as many minority learners as white students are ejected or suspended each year. There is a significant disparity between the percentage of black learners suspended (16%) and the percentage of white learners (5%) in the United States (Menken, 2010). Minority learners have fewer prospects for success in schools with hostile settings and discriminatory punishment systems. Higher education has been shown to boost prospective earnings and lessen the likelihood of criminal participation (Lopez, McEneaney, & Nieswandt, 2015). Individuals who have received a solid education learn patience and put their knowledge and abilities to apply in the workforce. High school dropout minority men are more likely to be arrested, have a lower income, and use state programs more frequently than their higher education educated peers (Sugarman, 2016). Putting money into a person's education is more beneficial than funding the upkeep of a jail.

Teaching staff retention

The annual teacher turnover rate in extremely poor schools is around 20%, far greater than in schools from more wealthy communities (Massaro & Palencia, 2022). Unfortunately, most educators will quite under-resourced, extremely poor schools for better pay and conditions in less-disadvantaged institutions. Therefore, it is difficult for extremely poor schools to hire qualified educators with appropriate credentials. Therefore, many untrained first-year teachers are placed in schools serving high-poverty populations, resulting in high staff turnover and declining student performance (Lee, Cornell,Gregory, & Fan, 2011). Also, it is crucial that all learners, particularly minority male learners, have access to a minority male teacher who can serve as a positive role model. Instructors, particularly male teachers from the same minority, are well-positioned to fill this role and assist in closing the gap for young men from underrepresented groups (Williams & Kaui & Ernst, 2015). Relationships between students and teachers that are produced may profoundly impact student engagement and teacher efficacy.

Female students

Girls have a far lower dropout rate than boys do. While there is a wider variety of reasons why males quit school, pregnancy is the main reason for dropouts among girls (Cornell et al., 2013). Working - Women are less motivated to work so that they can support their families financially than they are to work so that they can support themselves or their children. This is especially relevant in households when both parents must work outside the home, leaving the children in the custody of the eldest daughter or daughters (Cuba et al., 2021)

Taking care of family members is a major reason why girls are more prone than males to forgo their education. Some examples include caring for younger children or elderly relatives and starting a young family (via pregnancy and/or caregiving) (Russ, 2021). Girls and boys might be impacted by family changes such as divorce, sickness, death, creating a stepfamily, assault, neglect, or relocation. Girls often go into caregiving roles inside the household. Additionally, in some cases, to avoid being tormented or harassed, girls may not go to school or take part in extracurricular activities after school.

Repercussions of Not Completing High School

Both for the person, who must traverse the adult labor force without a foundation collection of academic qualifications and for society as a whole, which must integrate an individual who is unsatisfactorily primed into its financial and civic realms, there are steep costs associated with high school dropout (Behnke, Gonzalez, & Cox, 2010). These costs are high for both the person, who must moreover the adult labor force lacking a fixed collection of educational credentials and for society as a whole. Those who do not complete their high school degrees not only experience a reduced ability to support themselves financially, socially, and educationally as compared to those who do complete their schooling, but they are also highly expensive to civilization in general (Haaland, 2017).

Dropouts frequently cannot engage in the job market comparable levels to those of their peers who finished high school; their incomes are fairly poor when working. Dropouts are also more likely to be incarcerated (Kanno & Cromley, 2013). Their unfortunate circumstance makes it more likely that their offspring would be unable to effectively

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maneuver the educational system to their advantage due to having a parent who is unable to do so. This perpetuates a poverty trap that may be passed down through generations.

Earnings and Educational Potential

At best, the prospects for people who do not complete their high school education and enter the workforce are dismal. According to most economic forecasting models that consider factors such as earnings, job duration, hours worked, and unemployment rates, high school dropouts are often projected to have grim economic prospects with little opportunities for social or fiscal mobility (Bustamante & Eom, 2017). The decision to not continue with one's education has repercussions not just for the person but also for civilization as a whole; a gender disparity in college enrollment has started to appear since the 1990s. It is important to note that dropping out of school is a factor in this widening educational divide; in fact, much higher dropout rates for male teenagers may be responsible for at least fifty percent of the gender difference in college attendance (Lemon & Watson, 2011). Not only can gender inequalities in graduating high school lead to variations in incomes, but they also result in disparities in academic capacity.

Civic and Political Partaking

An increased likelihood of political participation is among the less clear advantages associated with education; however, it is among the most crucially essential benefits, given that dropouts are substantially less likely to cast ballots and engage in the fundamental activities of democratic governance (Navarro, 2018). When schools provide unequal results for different groups of learners, the community as a whole is the one that loses the most, both financially and culturally. Communities need not just the political commitment

of casting votes but also the cultural, religious, and patriotic participation that reinforces communal links from within (Kim, 2015). This involvement might come in the form of volunteering or attending community events. The survival of a functioning democracy depends not only on voting but also upon knowledgeable, conscious, and educated citizens who can make decisions and behave in a manner that is for the betterment of the larger community (Galvao, 2020).

In addition to dropouts being more plausible to use more public assistance than graduates due to their greater likelihood to stay near home, they are also less prone to actively participate in the social, citizenship, and democratic fabric of their neighborhood, which is an expense to the neighborhood in and of itself. When a high proportion of high school dropouts in a community, there is also a low degree of social assistance and ties. Dropouts have a low likelihood of voting in local educational bond elections and even less likelihood of volunteering their efforts, which leaves the community devoid of a prominent civic presence.

It is not just their inability to cast a ballot that puts high school dropouts at a deficit in the public realm. The growing economic inequality afflicting the United States economy indicates even greater inequalities between the affluent and the impoverished regarding their political involvement (Goss & Andren, 2014). Delinquents would be less likely to participate in elections to resolve their self-interests. The connection between the restricted political activity of dropouts from high school and the detachment of political power within the moneyed classes results in an immediate threat to democratic institutions as a consequence of this connection (Callahan, 2013).

Student Dropout Among Els

It is possible that the correlation linking dropping out of school and engagement in political activities is even stronger among EL learners, a large percentage of that are youngsters of immigrants (Callahan, 2013). Human sciences classes in high school matter for immigrant youngsters in a manner that does not count for youngsters of U.S.-born guardians in his investigation to examine the impact of high school sociology coursework and achievement on youths' later civic engagement. In particular, the author discovered that the number of credits earned in social science classes was directly linked to the likelihood of casting a ballot and voter registration among the youth of immigrant guardians, but not one of the children in families who are native to the United States (Callahan, 2013). This study provided evidence that schools play a fundamental role in determining not just the civic destinies of people but those of the neighborhoods in which they are located. Callahan (2013) contends that schools and educational opportunities significantly affect the level of political engagement shown by the youngsters of immigrants. The expert emphasizes the crucial significance of graduating from high school to ensure a minimum degree of citizenship and political involvement among the expanding number of children of immigrants. The ability of English language learners to graduate from high school would have the chance to impact not just their destinies but also the futures of entire regions, given the possibility that studying social science courses would alter ELs' prospective political engagement (Felix, 2021).

Limitations

- Uncertainty in the validity of the sources used: the data was collected from published sources. This means I cannot know if they made any mistakes or limitations in their research process, which could have affected their work.

- Insufficiency sources from external research related to how Language impacts Dropout levels among English Language Learners in Virginia.

- Limited Ability to Verify Results: Because thematic analysis is a subjective process, verifying the findings of the analysis was a challenge for me to undertake.

Conclusion

The data suggest a robustly positive connection between student demographics and student attrition and between student attrition with school-affiliated factors, resources, and student encounters. These difficulties lead to unequal access to classroom information, although the law mandates exactly the contrary. ELs may achieve academic success if they have enough access to the topic curriculum, proficient knowledge of English, and familiarity with academic content vocabulary via taking several different courses throughout their secondary education (Surr,2019). English Learners cannot be prevented from fully engaging in any academic offering simply because of their limited levels of English mastery. As a result, content-based linguistic teaching programs are very promising when educating English Learners in regular classrooms. On the other hand, the absence of an agreement and knowledge on what constitutes successful language education for ELs, in addition to inadequate resources due to a lack of financing, would negatively influence the academic performance results of ELs.

This research provided evidence showing English language students in Northern Virginia are falling behind their classmates academically because of their language skills. According to the data, ELs are likelier to drop out of school because of school factors than because of issues at home or in the community. State financing is insufficient, school personnel (such as teachers and counselors) who engage with ELs lack adequate training,

and the recent COVID-19 epidemic has exacerbated the difficulties these students already experience in areas like socializing with their classmates, learning to qualify academically in English language and making ends meet at home.

This work bolsters the idea that, for English Learners to achieve academic success, all relevant parties must appreciate the consequences and difficulties of teaching a subject in a second language in a general classroom. If we want these learners to have the same chances as their peers, we need to amend the rules. For this population to have a fighting chance of succeeding academically and graduating from high school, policy shifts are required, such as the implementation of rigorous newcomers' programs, extended periods to learn English, alternatives to high-stakes tests, and new forms of support. The only solution to bridge the academic disparity separating ELs and non-ELs may be for innovative techniques to be established while addressing ELs. Good educational institutions foster Els learners' socio-cultural integration, provide supportive learning settings for language acquisition, and give ELs entrance to a rigorous curriculum.

More than one in ten of Virginia's learners are now enrolled in or have previously attended an EL program (US Census Bureau, 2021). The amount of help students will determine a significant portion of their performance in school, the workplace, and society. However, existing state and national statistics suggest that English Language Learners in Virginia are not receiving appropriate assistance. To ensure that these children, together with their households and the Commonwealth of Virginia, possess the chance to prosper, it will need bold legislation and investments on the part of Virginia (Steward & Mendes, 2021). There is a great deal at risk for all of these parties.

There are several recommendations to support English Language Learners in Virginia. These include providing sufficient and flexible funding, utilizing community resources to eliminate learning barriers, supporting dual-language education and after-school programs, and systematizing tracking. Personalizing the learning environment and instructional process, participation in extracurricular activities, enhancing teacher training and pipeline diversification, and, equally important, addressing cultural disparities in teacher training are also critical to improving the English learning process for ELLs. The VBOE should take action to increase funding for ELs, build partnerships with community organizations, provide support for dual-language programs, track student progress, and personalize learning to meet the unique needs of each student. The state can give EL students the resources they must perform well in class and beyond by working together.

Recommendations

Given that the Master's Sociology Program is a department dedicated to Public Sociology as a branch of sociological practice that aims to put academic understanding to promote positive social changes. I believe that the recommendations are in order.

Sufficient, flexible funding for Els

How the funds are allocated, prioritized for learners with the poorest English proficiency, and weighed against other state assistance for particular student groups matters. Years of studies show that financing matters, especially for learners with greater challenges, and affects long-term student success, graduation, and college enrolment (Kumar, Singh, & Handa, 2017). While several states have studied what constitutes appropriate financing for ELs, present governmental assistance is insufficient. Montecillo, Colombo & Nerlino (2021, p.24*) point out that *"parents also have a right to know what education services their children are legally entitled to receive"*.

Virginia's existing EL financing and the VBOE's planned increments in the Standards of Quality (SOQ) modification fall significantly below what most adequacy studies advise for required supplements. Virginia would have to boost SOQ expenditure for EL learners from the current seven hundred and twenty-five dollars to one thousand and eight hundred dollars or two thousand and two hundred dollars to match Maryland and Michigan, respectively (Steward & Mendes, 2021).

Boosting Virginia's EL instructor ratios and basing them on learners' English ability is a great first trend the VBOE proposed in its 2019 and 2020 comprehensive quality changes (Steward & Mendes,2021). With the number of learners in Virginia who do not communicate in English or do not speak it proficiently rising in current history, it is important to prioritize resources for learners with poorer English proficiency (Steward & Mendes, 2021). The state could surpass the VBOE guidelines and fund more EL expert instructors. Like most other states, Virginia should offer complete guidance for general education instructors who regularly interact with EL learners and additional instruction and virtual supplies that meet their special needs (Massaro & Palencia, 2022). Considering the statewide shortage of EL specialist teachers, this could be a real step to help ELs. The state might fund dual language programs to welcome EL learners in many languages. Growing data demonstrates these programs improve academic and linguistic results for ELs and their peers.

Proper monitoring and evaluation of EL programs and services can provide important insights into the effectiveness of the programs and the areas that need improvement. This can help ensure that the funding is being used effectively and that the programs positively impact EL students (Obinna & Ohanian, 2020). The monitoring and evaluation process can involve regular assessments of student progress, feedback from teachers, and analysis of program data. This information can be used to adjust programs and services to support EL students better.

EL students often have parents who also struggle with English, and parent involvement is crucial to their success. Provide funding for initiatives that encourage

parental involvement in their children's education, such as parent-teacher conferences and workshops for parents. Workshops on language acquisition (Stevenson, Swain-Bradway, & LeBeau, 2021). A supportive learning environment for EL students can be created by encouraging parent involvement with the school community.

Providing multicultural education to all students can encourage compassion and tolerance for individuals from all cultures and origins (AU School of Education, 2020). For example, the state could allocate funds for cultural celebrations, events, and programs that help promote diversity and inclusiveness in the school community. These events could include cultural festivals, student-led presentations, and workshops exploring different cultures' histories and traditions (Peguero et al., 2016). This type of education can help build empathy and understanding among all students, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for EL students. Multicultural education can also help EL students feel valued and seen, increasing their sense of belonging and improving their overall academic success.

Adopt and finance the Virginia Board of Education's Compliance revisions

The classified state direct assistance granted to divisions founded on Virginia's Quality Criteria affects the efficacy of Virginia institutions (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018). This state SOQ assistance pays a part of critical school personnel benefits and compensation. The Virginia Board of Education's academic experts propose SOQ modifications after two years to satisfy students' requirements and offer an acceptable education (Steward & Mendes,2021). In recent years, legislators have not supported proposed VBOE modifications and even decreased current SOQ funds over a decade ago.

In previous VBOE modifications, they suggest reestablishing financial assistance for all support personnel positions cut during the Global Recession, forming an Equity Stake to measure reserves for the very poor school regions, enhancing the proportion of social services and mental health personnel, and more EL instructors, school heads, assistant principals, advisors, and coaches for beginning staff (Fontana, 2017). These improvements would increase state spending on schools by millions annually and enhance their quality and operation.

In order to provide adequate support for English Language Learners in Virginia, the state must adopt and finance the proposed changes outlined by the Virginia Board of Education. These changes were developed by academic experts and aimed to meet the needs of students by offering a good education. The proposed modifications include restoring financial assistance for support personnel positions that were cut during the Global Recession, creating an Equity Stake to support schools in impoverished areas, increasing the number of social services and mental health personnel, and hiring more EL instructors, school leaders, and support staff.

Implementing these changes would require a significant investment from the state, but it would also lead to improved outcomes for EL students. The additional funding would provide resources for support personnel and specialized staff who can help EL students succeed in the classroom and beyond. Furthermore, the investment would help address disparities in funding and resources between schools in different areas, helping to ensure that all EL students have access to quality education and support.

Utilizing Community Resources to Eliminate Learning Barriers

Community-based organizations (CBOs) and regional support agencies provided crucial assistance for immigrant families during the COVID-19 outbreak. Unfortunately, Virginia may duplicate and coordinate similar programs in educational contexts for EL learners. Many school divisions failed to provide information systems, distance-learning resources for EL learners, and translators during the outbreak. CBOs that assisted immigrant households and have solid pre-existing links in communities managed to help such families traverse school systems (Doll, Eslami, & Walters, 2013). Such CBOs link immigrant families to state assistance.

The state currently funds nonprofits that help children in school contexts, and it might mimic this model by subsidizing CBOs that help immigrant families and learners (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015). Virginia could widen community school models by building statewide resources to assist school sites and regions as they adopt new concepts and providing schools in high poverty divisions and institutions with a significant proportion of EL learners with centralized funding sources to create and advance community schools (Steward & Mendes, 2021). First, the Virginia Department of Education might encourage community schools and evaluate divisions' interest in trying community school concepts (Stevenson, Swain-Bradway, & LeBeau,2021). Few community schools run in Virginia, such as a prototype program in Fairfax County (Steward & Mendes,2021).

Virginia could also work with CBOs to offer educators, administrators, and support staff professional development and training opportunities to support EL learners better. This can help schools and educators understand EL learners' unique needs and develop

strategies to eliminate learning barriers for them. Moreover, community resources such as libraries, museums, and cultural centers can be leveraged to provide extra support for EL learners (Kronholz, 2011). These resources can offer educational programs and resources that are both fun and educational, helping EL learners to improve their English language skills and develop a love for learning.

Additionally, partnerships between schools and CBOs can provide opportunities for EL learners to participate in cultural exchange programs, which can help broaden their perspectives and develop cultural competencies. This can help EL learners feel more connected to their communities and build their confidence and sense of belonging.

Enhance EL Instructor Training and Pipeline Diversification

The quality of instruction is closely correlated to the availability of content areas, and the availability of rich academic material is, in turn, dependent on the qualifications of the instructors and advisors (Kanno & Cromley, 2013). Even the most interesting and interactive hands-on scientific program will be underused if there are not enough trained teachers equipped to satisfy EL students' lingual and academic demands. Previous studies have shown that there is now a serious and rising scarcity of English Language instructors. It is not difficult to postulate that increasing the number of certified instructors, particularly EL-accredited teachers, in classes including English Language Learners will result in higher academic success rates and graduation among EL students (West, 2016). Previous studies have shown a correlation between professional certification and the number of EL students who graduate high school. Although certification of teachers does not immediately impact the percentage of students who graduate from high school, it helps mitigate the risk

of dropping out that is connected with having an EL designation. The small quantities of teacher certifications common in and throughout EL programs threaten the overall quality of education in EL settings.

Virginia teachers may get an English as a Second Language accreditation, though it is unclear whether it is necessary to be an EL expert (Johnson, Strange, & Madden, 2010). Certification might help teachers better serve ELs. Numerous instructors will engage with and educate EL students as their population grows. General education instructors in Virginia must obtain some preparation to deal with EL learners for original and renewal licensing, but school divisions are not required to offer it (DePaoli et al., 2015). Emphasizing career growth for general education educators working with EL learners might improve student results, particularly because they will interact more with such teachers than with experts (Steward & Mendes, 2021).

Support dual-language Education and After-School Programs

The state could fund dual language education models and provide divisions greater freedom to spend EL resources on alternative programs (Cheng & Lee, 2018). Dual language training equips the learner's other language while teaching English. Students may enhance their original language just as they can enhance their English. Bilingual language programs improve student results, according to a study.

The state might also provide funding for programs for English language learners after school. For students, these programs can offer additional practice and support in a less formal, less demanding setting. The courses might include entertaining activities like games, music, and the arts to interest students and promote language growth. They can be

taught by licensed teachers or language tutors. Also, after-school programs can give pupils a secure setting where they can interact with others who are studying English.

Participation in Extracurricular Activities

Participation in extracurricular activities is a sort of targeted reform that may be done beyond the classroom and is predicted to reduce the likelihood of students dropping out of school. Students strengthen friendships with their classmates while participating in such exercises and relationships with adult role models such as trainers, advisors, and role models (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). Even participation in sports could assist in avoiding dropping out of school for some minority youth, contingent on the school setting.

The expectations that are imposed on youngsters' behavior on the basis of their ethnicity, culture, and tradition must be addressed in order to remove barriers to ELs' wider engagement. It is possible that educational institutions and teachers would want to spend time and energy deliberately constructing infrastructure to facilitate students' engagement in extracurricular activities. Out-of-school time (OST) initiatives can potentially improve English learners' academic performance, reducing the likelihood that these learners will not graduate from high school (Wood et al., 2017). Given that OST programs can strengthen and cultivate primary language proficiency, provide ethnic role models, match students' dissimilarities, and nurture firmer collaboration between the household and the classroom, it seems likely that they are well-suited to tackle the specific lingual and scholarly requirements of EL learners.

Systematize Tracking

Experts urge governments, institutions, and school districts to create and operate local data mechanisms to detect potential attrition. While it is impossible to forecast whether a learner will abandon school, institutions and divisions may identify trends by tracking a variety of indications over time (Lee-St. John et al., 2018). Individual learners should be tracked longitudinally using unique student identities. Absenteeism, grade retention, poor academic success, and detachment from education as young as fourth grade are associated with dropout risk (Sancho et al.,2018). Tracking systems could monitor learners' social interaction and academic achievement. They may employ automatic warnings to identify those with behavioral or life concerns which need interventions to graduate (Reider & Wooleyhand, 2017). Effective tracking systems need current, freely available data for school staff to monitor and respond.

Tracking systems should get partnerships with local businesses and community organizations to provide additional resources and support for at-risk students.

Addressing Disparities in Teacher Training across Cultures

The rising population of ELL learners means that cultural sensitivity training should be included in all teacher education programs, not treated as a separate track. Numerous experts proposed a two-stage multicultural instructor training technique to provide instructors with sufficient intercultural competence to meet the needs of ELL students (Sun & Wang, 2020). In the first stage, educators build an appreciation for the language and cultural variety among their ELL students. The second stage involves developing this knowledge into instructional methods, such as general and subject-specific intercultural pedagogical competency instruction (Castello, 2017). Teaching English language learners

is merely one of the several advantages that could result from incorporating cultural understanding into the training of future educators. Individual differences could influence teachers' perceptions of students' active engagement or intellectual capacity in strategies for social connection (Peng, 2017). Students of Native American, Asian, and Hispanic descent may struggle to fully engage in traditional classes since the emphasis on individuality runs opposed to the ideals they were taught at home, in their communities, or elsewhere.

Teachers who can recognize and account for their students' cultural backgrounds are more inclined to adapt their lessons to the needs of their ELL students (Artieda, 2017). Various authorities have emphasized the development of multiple literacy practices. They recognized the necessity to rely on their prior experience while instructing ELLs. They emphasized the students' cultural knowledge and community involvement as instructional resources (Castello, 2017). They investigated opportunities for instruction that builds on students' racial and linguistic diversity and career development options for educators that may be adapted to meet student's needs in various settings. According to experts, teaching using a culturally relevant approach shows respect for ELL students' language and cultural backgrounds, which is crucial for their development as individuals.

Modify the Classroom and Teaching Methods to Fit each Student's Needs

Personalizing the learning environment and the instructional process is an important recommendation to improve the English learning process for English Language Learners (ELLs) (Horsford, 2013). Personalized learning refers to tailoring educational experiences to individual student's unique needs, interests, and learning styles. This

approach allows educators to provide individualized attention, instruction, and support to each student based on their specific needs and abilities. In addition, personalizing the learning environment for ELLs can help ensure that they receive an engaging and effective education.

One of the critical components of personalized learning is individualized instruction. This can be especially beneficial for ELLs, who may require more individualized attention to master the English language. Additionally, teachers can incorporate the student's primary language, cultural background, and experiences into their lessons to make the content more relevant and meaningful to the student (AU School of Education, 2020).

The use of technology can also play a role in personalizing the learning environment for ELLs. For example, technology tools such as adaptive learning software can help provide personalized instruction, track the student's progress, and provide real-time teacher and student feedback.

Finally, a supportive and inclusive learning environment is crucial for personalized learning. Teachers can create an inclusive classroom culture that values and celebrates the diversity of each student and where students feel comfortable and valued for who they are (AU School of Education). This supportive learning environment can provide a sense of belonging for ELLs and can help to increase their motivation and engagement in their learning.

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Biography

Jenny Flor received her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from George Mason University in 2020, then became an Alumni and continue her education on the Master Sociology Program. After gaining her Master of Arts in Sociology from George Mason University in 2023, she will follow her passion in working in schools focusing on educational issues and finding and supporting recommendations for these students.