



# English Learners at Community Colleges: The Good News, The Bad News, and Improving ESL Services

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# The Good News: Research in a Neglected Field

## Non-native English Speakers in US

- 1990 31.8 million
- today 60.5 million+ (Ryan, 2013)

## US Schooling and English Learners (ELs)

- 20.7% of US (age 5 and up) speak a language besides English at home (Ryan, 2013)
- 9.3% of students are enrolled in ESL coursework in K-12 settings (Kena et al., 2016)



# The Good News: Research in a Neglected Field

As US ELs go from high school to college, they are more likely to choose to go to community colleges than universities (Kanno & Cromley, 2015; Nunez & Sparks, 2010)

Only recently has this group started getting the research attention it deserves



# The Bad News: Poor CC EL Student Retention, Persistence, and Transfer to 4-Year University Rates

## **Razfar and Simon (2011)**

- 8% of 1,479 EL students planned to transfer
- 62% of them dropped out of CC after only two semesters
- over 50% of them were unable to advance to regular college courses

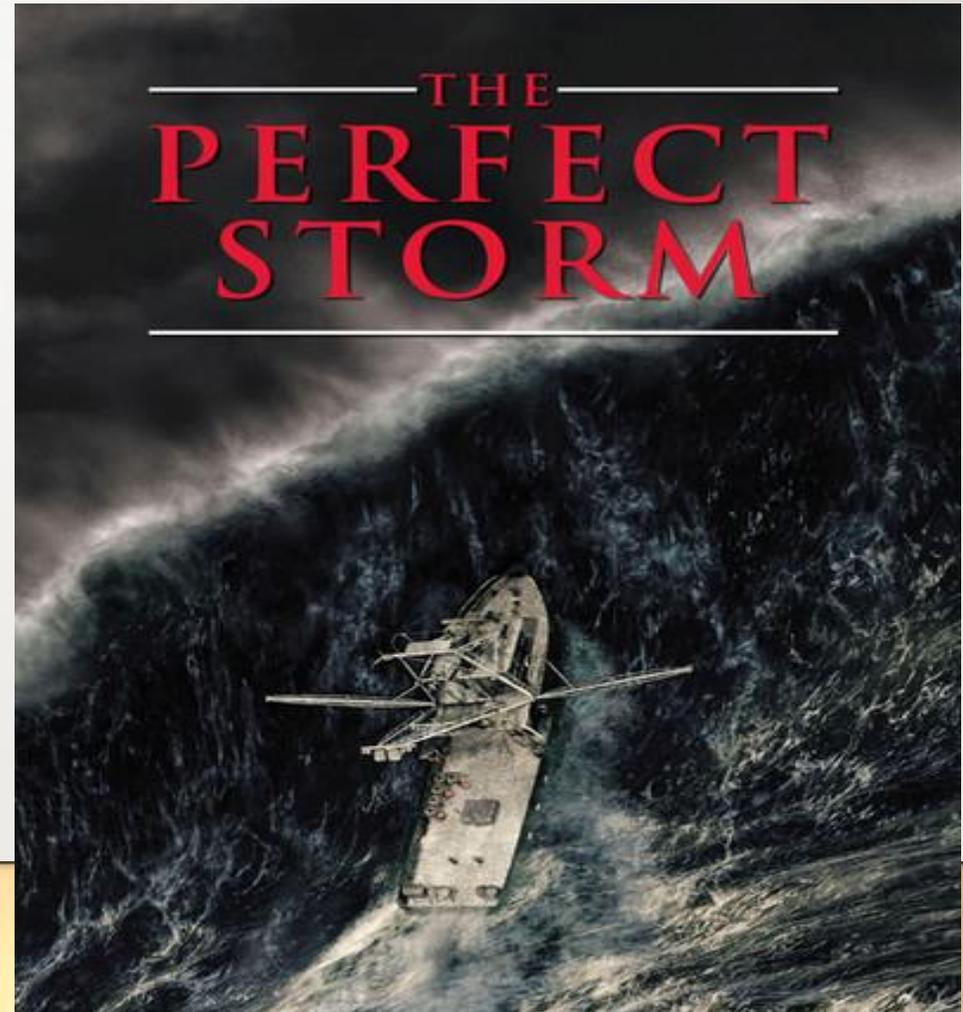
## **Almon (2012)**

- CC graduation rate: EL (13%) versus non-EL (23%)
- less than 50% of EL students passed their ESL programs

# Challenges CC ESL Programs Face

A huge variety of EL student backgrounds

- Some students not literate in L1
- Some had interrupted educations
- Many are non-traditional students
- Many have significant family and work responsibilities
- Many are attending part-time
- Many are first generation college attenders
- etc.



# Challenges ESL Programs Face

College administrative decisions to cut back on ESL programs and resources

Program administrative efforts to both staff and coordinate ESL programs while having to justify them



# EL Student Success and Transfer

The definition of EL student success really depends.

- Whether students increase their educational expectations after entering community college
- Whether students progress into next level ESL courses
- Whether students transfer to a four-year institution



# EL Student Transfer

Research gap: no research has specifically documented the transfer process of EL students.

Existing research:

- Focuses on general students
- Focuses on after-transfer adjustment
- Asks students to *recall* their transfer processes

## EL Student Transfer

### CC Student Bachelor's Degree Attainment Rates (Kanno & Cromley, 2016)

	NS	EP	EL
bachelor's degree attainment (%)	23	20	16.2
bachelor's degree attainment for students with transfer aspiration (%)	31.7	27.1	22.6

# EL Student Transfer

- Community colleges' abilities to overcome students' initial inadequate academic preparation are limited (Kanno & Cromley, 2016; Roksa & Calcagno, 2008).
- Educational attainment of ELs in community colleges cannot be viewed simply as a community college issue (Roksa & Calcagno, 2008).

# EL Student Transfer

Is the transfer process *automatic*?

Transfer milestones:

- Aspiration to transfer
- Transfer qualifications
- Four-year college application
- Four-year college enrollment

# EL Student Transfer

## Barriers to Transfer (Ornelas & Solorzano, 2004)

Students	Institutional barriers (CC commitment and a lack of transfer information)
	Non-traditional student (work and family responsibilities)
	Financial aid process
Faculty	Institutional barrier (lack of a transfer culture)
	Insufficient knowledge and information on transfer process
	Insufficient innovative teaching strategies
	Inadequate academic preparation

# EL Student Transfer

## Barriers to Transfer (Ornelas & Solorzano, 2004)

Counselors	Non-academic responsibilities
	Inadequate academic preparation
	Student self-doubt
	Financial aid process
	Institutional barriers (CC commitment and inconsistent approach to transfer)
	Counselor-student ratio
Administrators	Multiple missions
	Limited resources
	Student educational disadvantages
	Cultural deficit thinking

# EL Student Transfer

Frequently asked questions:

- How long will it take me to transfer?
- How about if I want to transfer to a private four-year institution?
- How far in advance do I need to apply for a transfer program?
- Which is more important for transfer, my GPA or my course completion pattern?
- How many credits can I transfer?
- What is my cc's transfer rate?

# Recommendations for Teachers and Administrators

International ELs are different from domestic ELs, so don't feel like you have to teach them similarly

- 4 skills instruction versus content-based instruction (Bunch & Kibler, 2015)

ELs often need the content instruction they would have gotten in high school if that hadn't been enrolled in ESL coursework (Bunch & Kibler, 2015)



# Bridging the Gap to College Work

Work on bridging the gap between ESL programs and college coursework

- The longer the course sequence in ESL, the less likely students are to move on to college work (Patthey-Chavez et al., 2009)
- Figure out what these students' goals are: just English proficiency, or college graduation



# Making Their Time in ESL Count

Offering ESL courses for college credit (CCCC, 2001; TESOL, 2012)

Having ESL courses serve as adjunct coursework for GE courses

Offer for credit content courses in the students' first language if there is a predominant L1 group (Artiaga, 2013)



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Thank you!

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