EXAMINING BILINGUAL TEACHERS' PREPARATION FOR THE INTERVENTION ASSISTANCE TEAM ENGAGEMENT AT AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A Record of Study

by

SEUNG YOO

Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Chair of Committee,	Trina J. Davis
Co-Chair of Committee,	Monica V. Neshyba
Committee Members,	Radhika Viruru
	Gwendolyn Webb-Hasan
Head of Department,	Michael De Miranda

December 2019

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

ABSTRACT

The Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) meetings allow educators to engage in a collaborative, problem-solving process to resolve student problems indirectly, through teacher consultation with a team (Myers & Kline, 2002). However, according to Ghandi (2018), general confusion exists in implementation of the IAT in urban schools in Texas. Ghandi found inconsistent knowledge hampering IAT implementation across schools, noting that "limited evidence of data-driven decision making" was taking place (p. 47). The purpose of this study is to investigate current practices and perceptions of bilingual teachers when considering a bilingual student for special education assessment. This phenomenological qualitative study was designed to understand how classroom teachers' experiences influenced bilingual students' referrals for special education, as well as teacher readiness for the IAT meeting. I interviewed five elementary bilingual teachers using face-to-face, audio-recorded, semi structured interviews. The results revealed the following (a) four out of the five teachers expressed that they felt inadequately prepared and trained to teach English language learners (ELLs) (b) all teachers lacked formal documentation to collect classroom data for IAT meetings and (c) all teachers were unable to effectively distinguish between language acquisition and learning disability in ELLs. Consequently, an IAT checklist was developed to assist classroom teachers with data collection and as a formal document to assist in the decision-making process in the IAT meetings. This IAT checklist can be used by school districts to minimize unwarranted special education referrals of bilingual students or ELLs.

DEDICATION

To my wife, Mia, who encouraged me along the way, who has so much love for our marriage, and whose love is what communicated to me to keep going, I am indebted to you. I am so glad we are running this race together, let's finish well. To my children, Sarah and Joey, for helping me in getting my mind off so I could take some breaks. For my loving parents, Jae Jung (유재중) and Rang Sook (유랑숙), for all the prayers and support; I am who I am because of your prayers. To my sisters and brothers-in-love, Mary, Gladys, Kevin, and Danny—you always cheered me up. To all my incredible house church and village people for reassuring me all the way. Last, but not least, thank you Pastor Eric and Lynette for all your prayers. "So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:13 New Interventional Version).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Davis, and my committee members, Dr. Neshyba, Dr. Viruru and Dr. Webb-Hasan, for their guidance and support throughout the course of the program and research.

Thanks also go to my colleagues and Houston group. Ambyr Rios, our amazing associate director in our department for making my time at Texas A&M University a great experience.

Dr. Ted Serrant, research manager from our own school district, thank you for all your guidance with abstract and thematic analysis.

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

Contributors

This work was supervised by a record of study committee consisting of Professor Davis (chair) and Professor Neshyba (co-chair), along with Professor Radhika Viruru of the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture and Professor Webb-Hassan of the Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development.

The student completed all other work conducted for this record of study under the advisement of Professor Davis and Professor Neshyba.

Funding Sources

Completion of all work for this record of study occurred without outside financial support.

NOMENCLATURE

AIR	American Institutes for Research
ARD	Admission, Review, and Dismissal
ELL	English Language Learner
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
IAT	Intervention Assistance Team
RTI	Response to Intervention
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education for Students with Disabilities
NAEP	National Assessment of Education Progress

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:

CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE ACTION

In 1975, the U.S. government passed what was to become the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Previously referred to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the legislation facilitated the provision of free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to children, giving parents a voice in their children's education (Lee, 2019). The intent with IDEA was to provide government oversight regarding how public agencies and states deliver special education to millions of students. A group of professionals (educational diagnosticians, speech language pathologists, licensed school psychology specialists, and others) evaluate student eligibility for these services thorough individual assessment. Although the IDEA standardized the assessment, there is a discrepancy in the national percentage of students between the ages of 3 and 21 years eligible for special education services nationally (13%) and in Texas (8.7%). Such discrepancy reveals the shortage or denial of services for Texas students with disabilities (Isensee, 2017). Further incongruity emerges when comparing English language learners (ELLs) in Texas (7.6% identified as in need of special education in 2016) to English-speaking students (9.0% identified as in need of special education in 2016; Isensee, 2017).

Although the number of ELLs is increasing in the United States, academic progress remains a concern. According to NCES (2018), in 2015, 9.5% of public-school students participated in ELL programs compared to 8.1% in 2000. Hispanic students account for 77% of the ELL population. ELLs underperform on standardized tests when compared to their native English-speaking peers. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card, is a congressionally mandated project administered by the NCES

within the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences, designed for the purpose of measuring U.S. students' knowledge and skills in various subjects. In 2017, ELLs scored 189 points (below the basic range) on the NAEP compared to 226 (basic range) non-ELLs in the same fourth-grade reading assessment in which a score of 210 is basic, 240 proficient, and 270 advanced. The nationwide public-school average in 2017 was 222 points for fourth grade.

NAEP test results are problematic for teachers, with 75% to 80% of referrals generated from teachers' concerns over reading problems (Learning Disability Association of America, 2018). In fall 2015, school administrators identified 713,000 ELLs as students with disabilities, representing 14.7% of the total ELL population enrolled in U.S. public elementary and secondary schools (NCES, 2018). This percentage is an increase from 9.2% in 2007, when there may have been national under identification of ELLs in need of special education services (National Education Association, 2007). Despite the growth of ELLs with disabilities in the US between 2007 and 2015, this group of students continues to struggle in making progress, consistently receiving test scores below the national average.

In December 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). One of the main modifications under the new law was that many of the standards, assessments, and accountability requirements that previously fell under Title III were now under Title I. For instance, the assessment and accountability of ELLs moved to Title I and now merits inclusion in the state's overall accountability system. As a result, ELLs are now part of the schools' accountability rating, albeit with concern for the way evaluation teams assess students. The IQ-achievement discrepancy model enables explanation of why this change to accountability rating can be problematic.

The IQ-Achievement Discrepancy Model

The IQ-achievement discrepancy model is the traditional method used to determine whether a student has a learning disability and needs special education services (IRIS Center, 2018). Under the discrepancy model, school leaders can test whether a substantial difference exists between a student's IQ score and academic achievement (IRIS Center, 2018). For example, if a fourth grader's IQ falls in the average range, then the expectation is for the child to be reading at the fourth-grade level. However, if scores show the student is reading at a first-grade level, there is a discrepancy between the ability indicated on the IQ test and the actual reading level. As assessment results of young children (e.g., first graders) typically do not indicate severe discrepancy between IQ and achievement results, the discrepancy model illustrates how early identification and intervention of children with suspected learning disabilities can be difficult (Restori, Katz, & Lee, 2009). In other words, first-grade students experiencing academic problems have not had enough educational opportunity to demonstrate achievement progress to show severe discrepancy (Speece & Ritchey, 2002). Therefore, determining eligibility on the discrepancy model can be problematic, because it relies on a "wait to fail" approach to diagnosis (Fletcher, Coulter, Reschly, & Vaughn, 2004). Consequently, students with a suspected learning disability tend to fail for a couple of years before having their achievement deemed sufficiently low compared to their IQ, something required to meet eligibility for special education services (Restori et al., 2009).

Response to Intervention

Because of the confines and limitation of the discrepancy model, the 2004 IDEA reauthorization provided the option of using scientific, research-based early intervention for students experiencing significant learning difficulties in general education classroom (Ortiz,

Robertson, & Wilkinson, 2011). Signed by President Bush, the revised IDEA preserved the basic structure and civil rights that guarantee IDEA, but also included significant changes in the law (Council on Exceptional Children, 2019). The federal regulation neither mandates nor mentions the use of response to intervention (RTI) specifically but does promote the implementation of a process based on the child's response to scientific and research-based intervention (Posny, 2019). The new revision of the law eliminated the requirement of a discrepancy model for identifying students with learning disabilities. As a result, RTI emerged as an alternate route to identification of learning disabilities (Bradley & Danielson, 2004). RTI is a research-based model created to support early intervention in the general education setting, functioning as a multitiered system to help all students be successful (Abou-Rjaily & Stoddard, 2017). A team of professional educators with diverse training and experience, the intervention assistance team (IAT) convenes to discuss and initiate research-based early intervention for students in need of assistance and individualized services.

The RTI model has three levels of support. In Tier 1, students receive quality classroom instruction in the general classroom, which consists of scientifically based curriculum, differentiated instruction, universal behavior management systems, and screenings. If a student does not make progress in Tier 1 for 5 to 6 weeks, the child moves to Tier 2. In Tier 2 intervention, the student participates in targeted small-group (two to five students) instruction several times a week for 6 to 8 weeks while also receiving Tier 1 support. Should students not make sufficient progress with Tier 2 interventions, they move to Tier 3 to receive more intensive intervention most days of the week. If a student is still not making progress after 8 to 9 weeks at Tier 3, a special education referral takes place, requiring the heavy involvement of special education personnel (Abou-Rjaily & Stoddard, 2017). Despite this time frame, parents can

request a formal evaluation under IDEA (2004) at any point during RTI. Use of the RTI is not to deny or delay a formal assessment for special education.

Situational Context

Distinguishing between second-language acquisition and learning disabilities presents many challenges for bilingual teachers (Ortiz, 1997), as ELLs and students with learning disabilities display similar characteristics (Duquette & Land, 2014). These similarities may include weak oral language skills, poor motivation, and low self-esteem (Ortiz, Wilkinson, Robertson-Courtney, & Kushner, 2006). During my 11 years participating in school district IAT meetings, bilingual teachers did not have any means to systematically document and provide adequate information to the IAT. Some classroom teachers brought to the meeting a list of grades and State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness test scores, as well as student work samples; however, they did not have a formal document to guide them in systematically collecting information demonstrating learning difficulties for possible special education referral. A checklist would, therefore, provide teachers the necessary guidance to note the different characteristics to look for and create documentation for the IAT meeting.

In 2016, *Houston Chronicle* investigative reporters found 30% fewer special education students in Texas schools compared to the national average (Rosenthal, 2016). The national average was at 13% percent of enrollment; in Texas, this number was only 8.5%. According to National Public Radio, Texas had 8.5% in place from 2004 until 2016, after the *Houston Chronicle* article appeared (Kamenetz, 2018). The investigation showed thousands of children denied special education services, including those who were ELLs.

Based on investigation findings, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted a third-party, 10-month, independent special education program review. The researchers randomly

selected 300 students with disabilities from 27 schools, surveyed school staff and parents, and conducted focus group interviews with district leaders. Researchers asked classroom teachers of ELLs what they do when a student in their classroom was struggling academically or they suspected the student might have a learning disability. Findings showed that only 29% of teachers reported always consulting with one or more members of the IAT for advice or working with the IAT to coordinate or provide intervention; in turn, 42% of teachers said they never or sometimes consulted with IAT members (Gandhi et al., 2018). These results indicate much room for improvement regarding providing guidance for the teachers of students who are struggling or whom teachers suspect of having a learning disability.

According to the AIR report (Gandhi et al., 2018), the top area in need of improvement was confusion about, and inconsistent implementation of, processes related to intervention and special education identification. Furthermore, when ELLs are involved in the IAT, Ortiz and Artiles (2002) recommend, personnel with knowledge in language acquisition to participate and Witt, VanDerHyden & Gilberson (2004) suggests guidance for teachers in the data collection process for implementing any school-based intervention. These recommendations support the core concern with this study, which is to ensure school administrators address language acquisition issues and provide teachers with guidance in data collection. Due to this information gap, the goal with this record of study was to provide a research-based checklist for teachers to guide them in collecting accurate data to bring to the IAT meeting.

Statement of the Problem

According to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, scientifically based research "involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge" (NCLB, 2001). Unlike the discrepancy model described earlier,

the RTI process involves extensive evaluation, and although it is not the sole criterion, RTI may be useful to determine eligibility with early intervention in the absence of a discrepancy assessment (Abou-Rjiaily & Stoddard, 2017). From NCLB, a wealth of "scientifically based interventions have appeared, but response to intervention (RTI) is among the few interventions that are research-based and have shown results to support student achievement" (Abou-Rjiaily & Stoddard, 2017, p. 86).

The IAT uses the RTI model as the most promising approach to address the learning challenges of ELLs and prevent unwarranted representation of these students in special education. The model's selection was due to the model's creation to support early intervention in the general education setting (Abou-Rjaily & Stoddard, 2017). Because RTI is a "process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention" (IDEA, 2004), it provides educators early identification and information needed to address learning needs. Therefore, improving the RTI and IAT process through implementation of a best practice checklist can help prevent unnecessary referrals of students for special education services.

Klingner and Harry (2006) identified students were at risk for special education assessment for testing based on the assumption of teachers, administrators, and specialists that poor academic performance indicated a need for special education. The researchers observed multidisciplinary teams conducting special education referral meetings for 19 ELLs. Ultimately, Klingner and Harry "recommend[ed] that districts provide additional professional development for everyone involved in the referral and decision-making process" (p. 2277). Because the researchers gave only superficial and passing attention to the referral process, however, they failed to consider language issues and overall confusion about when to refer an ELL for evaluation.

Confusion is common among school classroom teachers regarding who is responsible to implement RTI: the general education teacher or the special education teacher (Hazelkorn, Bucholz, Goodman, Duffy, & Brady, 2011). General education teachers in Texas, including ELL and bilingual teachers, are at the frontline of implementing evidence-based interventions. However, interventions and RTI-published research and policies are more common in the special education literature (Hazelkorn et al., 2011).

Hazelkorn et al. (2001) reviewed 128 articles published between 2003 and 2008 to study educators' awareness of developments and practices associated with RTI. The results of their analysis showed a broad array of publishing avenues to dispense literature on RTI to educators. Hazelkorn et al. noted, "In the first two tiers or stages, RTI is essentially a general education initiative" (p. 23). The most frequent journals publishing RTI studies were in the areas of special education, psychology, and leadership. This finding is important, because RTI is a general education initiative, not a special education one, as suggested by this singular publishing focus.

In further elaboration on who is responsible for RTI, Ortiz and Artiles (2002) noted that the referral process starts with teachers, administrators, and those from related services. Members of each of these groups share the philosophy that all teachers can learn and take the responsibility to create learning environments in which their culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students can be successful. School administrators and educators must provide students with ample educational opportunities for academic progress, along with interventions prior to considering special education. As Garcia and Ortiz (2006) elaborated:

> When schools offer an array of programs and services that accommodate the unique learning characteristics of specific groups of students, special education is less likely to

> be viewed as the logical alternative for students who are not successful in the general education classroom. (Garcia & Ortiz, 2006, p. 65)

Services and accommodations refer to interventions such as RTI within the general education classrooms, which provide all possible opportunities for academic success before considering special education. As soon as educators identify learning issues, they should implement early intervention strategies. Intervention assistance is a systematic application of intervention strategies in the general education classroom and assessment of the effectiveness of such strategies before referring a student for special education (Bahr, Whitten, Dieker, Kocarek, & Manson, 1999; Graden, Casey, & Christenson, 1985). Early intervention planning may include instruction that engages the student's prior knowledge, ensures active participation in all phases of the lesson, and provides a rich learning environment with images, models, verbal supports, and clear expectations (Seidlitz & Jones, 2012). Altogether, sufficient opportunity for academic success and early intervention strategies must be available to students demonstrating learning differences before considering special education; otherwise, there may be an overrepresentation of ELLs in special education.

Historically, disproportionate representation of ELLs in special education emerged as a concern due to inappropriate identification of CLD children. Umansky, Thompson, and Diaz (2017) posited that the contributing factors for the disproportionality included: (a) assessments and identification procedures that fail to distinguish typical learning trajectories for students acquiring English from atypical nonlanguage acquisition–related development, (b) explicit or implicit bias against ELLs, and (c) limited or delayed assessment of ELLs for special education services. The misidentification of students needing special education often stems from cultural barriers between students and teachers (Schultz & Simpson, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial for

schools and educators to have a good understanding of different languages and behaviors through culturally responsive pedagogy.

Culturally responsive teaching entails recognizing the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The significance of culturally responsive teaching for ELLs is inarguable. As Wang and Machado (2015) stated, these "pedagogical approaches employed by teachers can help students develop cultural competence, critical consciousness and the ability to interrogate the discursive structures; skills needed now more than ever, given the social trends and demographic shifts" (p. 1150). The integrated IAT and RTI process can provide ample time to support students who may need more intensive instruction and interventions before special education placement consideration.

According to De Valenzuela, Copeland, Qi, and Park (2006), the disproportionality of ELLs in special education relative to the general student population presents in two ways: underrepresentation (a lower number of a group of students in special education) and overrepresentation (a higher number of a group receiving special education services). Muñiz (2011) found special education disproportionality among Black and Hispanic students overrepresented at a higher rate in the largest school district in Texas than in the state overall. According to the National Education Association (2008), labeling students as disabled when they are not leads to unwarranted services and numerous concerns, including: (a) once students are receiving special education services, they tend to remain in special education classes; (b) students are likely to encounter a limited, less-rigorous curriculum; (c) lower expectations can lead to diminished academic opportunities; (d) students in special education programs can have less access to academically able peers; and (e) students with disability are stigmatized socially.

Referring a student for special education requires careful measures and professional decision-making. Misidentifying students as disabled when they are not can have harmful consequences to the student. Osterholm, Nash, and Kristsonis (2007) stated that labeling students as having special education needs results in "reduced or negative expectations, as well as negative stereotypes and attitudes," with "lower expectations often translat[ing] into reduced effort and lower achievement" (p. 5). Shifrer (2016) argued that classroom teachers' expectations are higher for low achievers without a disability than for students designated as having special education needs; as such, labels and designations of learning disabilities may disguise the real causes of learning differences, which can alter student perceptions and expectations.

During the 2009–2010 school year in a large school district in Texas, 16,503 students (8%) received special education services out of a total population of 202,773 (Muñiz, 2011). Although Black students comprised 27% percent of the student population, they made up 38% of special education students. In contrast, Hispanic youth accounted for 53% percent of students with disabilities and represented 62% percent of the district's student population. Thus, Hispanic students were disproportionately (over)diagnosed and Black students were disproportionally (under)diagnosed for special education services. These statistics indicate the need for a more systematic process for identifying students in this school district.

The ability to accurately identify at-risk ELLs is a major challenge (Khalaf, Santi, & Hawkins, 2015). Reasons for the problem include a lack of appropriate assessment tools for distinguishing between ELLs' difficulty in acquiring a second language or a language-based learning disability, and a lack of professional personnel who are aware of the unique needs of ELLs (Zehler, Fleishman, Hopstock, Pendzick, & Stephenson, 2003). As suggested by Ortiz, Wilkinson, Robertson-Courtney, and Kushner (2006), IAT documentation should be a

comprehensive student record-keeping system that includes information describing language dominance and proficiency over time, recommendation of bilingual education, and ESL placement. IAT documentation, such as a checklist kept in a communal file, is important should a student receive a later referral from another teacher. In addition, IAT members must understand and accurately interpret data unique to ELL students, such as the results of language proficiency assessments and design interventions that are culturally and linguistically responsive. Such information is important for the multidisciplinary team to make the appropriate intervention and placement (Ortiz et al., 2006).

A checklist is a powerful tool for teachers participating in and collecting data for the IAT meeting. A checklist may allow teachers to systematically organize information about a student. To gain a deeper understanding of students' learning needs, teachers need to obtain data from multiple sources, such as state assessments, classroom performance, behavior, and other relevant information (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2011). Determining whether an ELL has a learning disability can be challenging. According to IDEA (2004), the multidisciplinary team must be able to establish that the ELL's learning difficulties are not primarily the result of ongoing language acquisition. The IAT needs to distinguish language acquisition from learning disabilities, assess the quality of instruction in the students' classroom, and examine if students truly received an adequate opportunity to learn. A checklist can improve individual and group collaboration, such as in an IAT meeting to ensure teachers and administrators have addressed these points and prevent unnecessary special education referrals.

Research Questions

The overarching research question that guided the qualitative design for this study is:

RQ. What are the current practices of bilingual teachers when considering a bilingual student for special education assessment?

Three subquestions will contribute to answering this question:

SQ1. What are the lived experiences and perceptions of bilingual teachers regarding their teacher preparation and training in working with bilingual students and English language learners?

SQ2. How are bilingual teachers gathering information for the intervention assistance team meetings when a bilingual student shows characteristics of learning difficulty?

SQ3. How do bilingual teachers distinguish between language acquisition and learning disability?

Personal Context

I received my undergraduate degree in Spanish Literature and my Master's in Linguistics, with a concentration in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) from the University of Houston. As a graduate student, I taught beginner and intermediate Spanish at the University of Houston as a teaching assistant. Upon graduation, I taught middle and high school Spanish for 6 years in Houston, Texas. In addition, I have been teaching Spanish for the last 19 years as an adjunct professor at the University of Houston and the College of Biblical Studies-Houston. During my sixth year of teaching high school Spanish, I met an educational diagnostician and had an exciting conversation. The diagnostician told me about the shortage in educational diagnosticians with the ability to conduct assessments in Spanish. Therefore, I investigated the psychoeducational evaluation field and how my background in SLA would apply.

A few months later, in summer 2007, I earned acceptance into the Alternative Certification Program with a large urban school district to pursue a certification as an educational diagnostician. Out of many applicants, the district selected 10 former teachers with a master's degree, of which I was one. The program entailed 2 years of graduate-level coursework at Saint Thomas University in Houston; in addition, I had to complete 160 practicum hours with a certified educational diagnostician.

One of the primary responsibilities of this program was to follow and learn from mentors. My mentor was a veteran who had over 10 years' experience in the field of diagnosing students with learning disability. The first year of the program, I followed him and watched him conduct admission review and dismissal meetings, assess students, make classroom observations, lead RTI/IAT and multidisciplinary meetings, and extend extensive one-on-one time for questions. He was an exceptional mentor who patiently guided me to become a diagnostician. We worked on carefully reviewing the IAT process and exclusionary factors for the bilingual students and strived to better craft the process. The collaboration with my mentor helped me reflect and build new motivation to improve quality and best practices in addressing the needs of bilingual students in the IAT process.

I have been working as a Bilingual Educational Diagnostician for the Office of Special Education Services in Houston for the last 12 years. I have taught Spanish for 6 years and worked as a bilingual diagnostician for 11 years. My primary roles are to assist elementary schools with an IAT process, interact with parents and school personnel regarding student assessment, examine referrals, and assess students suspected of having a disability. I work with school personnel to ensure proper intervention is in place and students receive maximum opportunity for success, following federal guidelines and encouraging parental involvement in

the process. Based on this experience, I have become aware of the need for a best-practices guide for teachers to maintain the integrity and consistency of the IAT process.

I am currently a doctoral candidate pursuing my Doctor of Education degree at Texas A&M University in College Station. This year is my final year of the program. My personal experience as a diagnostician, the research training I have received, and the interviews I have conducted all helped me to determine to what degree classroom teachers are prepared for the IAT process when working with ELLs. Informed by these experiences and results, I have designed a checklist to prepare teachers for IAT meetings. I am interested in this area because I am an advocate for proper intervention and a critical member in the IAT process. I participate in the meetings, where teachers present cases of the students in question and their corresponding data. I want to ensure the teachers know what information to collect and bring to IAT meetings. The significant stakeholders in this study are the bilingual classroom teachers and school administrators.

Terminology

The following definitions of terms are applicable to this study:

English language learner. An ELL is an active learner of the English language who may benefit from different types of language programs (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008).

Free and appropriate public education. According to IDEA, school districts must provide FAPE to each qualified person with a disability who is in the school district's jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Individualized educational plan. An IEP is a written, legally required statement between a school district and student (and the parents or guardians) that specifies a child's unique learning plan. IEPs provide reasonable accommodations for physical disabilities, academic learning problems, inappropriate behavior, or social skills deficits (Ball, Rittner, Chen, & Maguin, 2018).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. IDEA is a law allowing for FAPE to eligible children with disabilities, ensuring special education and related services (IDEA, 2004).

Intervention assistance team. An IAT is a group of professional educators with diverse training and expertise who convene to discuss and initiate interventions for students in need of assistance and individualized services (Houston Independent School District, n.d.).

Response to intervention. RTI is a research-based approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs (Houston Independent School District, n.d.).

Second language acquisition. Requiring a meaningful interaction in the target language, SLA is the product of a subconscious process similar to the one children undergo when they acquire their first language (Krashen, 1988).

Closing Thoughts on Chapter I

As an educational diagnostician, I have gained invaluable personal experience assessing students and collaborating with teachers, administrators, and parents in the IAT process. This experience has been empowering me as an action researcher for the last 17 years. In the midst of the IAT process, ELL and bilingual teachers face numerous challenges in preparing for the IAT meeting (Ortiz et al., 2006). This research highlights the importance of implementing the appropriate support to ensure classroom teachers find answers to many questions addressing

ELLs' academic progress in the classroom. Through functioning IAT meetings, teachers receive administrative, instructional, and remedy support from school administrators, counselors, evaluation team members, and other teachers.

Bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) teachers will benefit from a checklist of what characteristics to look for and what information to collect before presenting a case in IAT meetings. Based on interviews with teachers and collaboration with school administration, the objective with this study was to develop a checklist to provide clear support in preparing bilingual teachers for the IAT meeting.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SUPPORTING SCHOLARSHIP

Introduction

Myers and Kline (2002) declared that IAT meetings allow educators to engage in a collaborative, problem-solving process to resolve student problems indirectly, through teacher consultation with a team. Myers and Kline reviewed bilingual education and other programs involving bilingual students and teachers in a large city in Texas, as well as the importance of implementing proper IAT in the schools. The researchers also studied the benefits of engaging the IAT in the referral process of bilingual students for special education, and the importance of language and culture when providing intervention with this group.

This record of study had a focus on preparing teachers for the IAT meeting by providing a best-practice checklist, so they could systematically collect data and conduct a functional IAT meeting to prevent unnecessary special educational referrals. In a special report conducted in a Texas urban school district, Gandhi et al. (2018) identified confusion about and inconsistent implementation of procedures associated with the determination of intervention and special education as the top concern. When ELLs are involved in the IAT, Ortiz and Artiles (2002) recommended personnel with knowledge in language acquisition must be present in the meetings. Similarly, Witt et al. (2004) documented the benefits of providing guidance for teachers in the data collection process for implementing any school-based intervention. Thus, the goal of this record of study was to provide bilingual and ESL classroom teachers a best-practice checklist. In this chapter, the relevant historical background, comparable empirical studies, and theoretical framework appear.

Relevant Historical Background

The concept of school-based intervention assistance teams as a prereferral intervention emerged in the 1970s (Chalfant, VanDusen Pysh, & Moultrie, 1979). A *teacher assistance team* is a school-based, problem-solving team giving teachers help from other teachers. In addition, members of the team provide help to other instructors regarding students with difficulties. Chalfant et al. (1979) focused on providing personalized services to mainstream students of regular education teachers who lacked training. The teacher assistance team was a means to build educators' confidence in carrying out this type of instruction. The team thus put a procedure in place that would provide the schools with immediate assistance instead of having to wait for the special education team. School-based intervention assistance teams point to consultation with IAT members as a strategy to improve the skills and abilities of general education teachers and other school staff to effectively work with students who display learning and behavioral concerns (Graden, 1988). Similarly, Dunn (1968) had suggested a change by saying "what is needed are programs based on scientific evidence of worth and not more of those founded on philosophy, tradition and expediency" (p. 11).

In a later study, Meyers, Valentino, Meyers, Boretti, and Brent (1996) found that in an urban school district, the process varies in combinations of child-centered (emphasis to change the child's learning), teacher-centered (persuading teacher's actions), and system-centered (changing the school, impacting students and teachers) endeavors. Regarding this format, Safran and Safran (1997) stated, "We hope that a combination of effective training, caring and skilled teachers and flexible administrators can help make prereferral consultation and IATs valuable tools to assist students at risk and educators in need of support." (p. 98). Stakeholder collaboration is the key to obtaining a functional IAT in the schools.

Under the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, states have the option of using RTI criteria as part of the identification process for special education. RTI is a scientific process useful to increase students' skill mastery. RTI is grounded in the core curriculum and general education teachers' use. The goal in implementing RTI is to provide adequate and appropriate instruction to ensure the success of all students.

Landmark Cases in Bilingual Education

On June 3, 1973, Texas Governor Dolph Briscoe signed the Bilingual Education and Training Act of 1973 into law. According to the Act, all Texas elementary public schools enrolling 20 or more children of limited English ability in a given grade level must provide bilingual instruction (Rodriguez, 2010). This law authorized use of a language other than English in the instruction, thus abolishing the English-only teaching requirement imposed by state laws dating back to 1918 (Rodriguez, 2010). In the early 19th century, English-only laws sanctioned punitive actions against Mexican-American students. For example, in 1970, the United Sates Commission of Civil Rights reported that many of these students faced fines for speaking Spanish in the schools, one cent per word, or were made to write "I must not speak Spanish," actions rationalized as pedagogical measures (Rodriguez, 2010).

The Supreme Court case (*Lau v. Nichols,* 1974) was an important decision regarding the education of language-minority students in the United States. The parents of Chinese-American students in the San Francisco United School District brought this case to the courts. Despite their lack of English proficiency, the children were in mainstream classrooms, where they received instruction that did not differentiate their proficiency from that of another native English-speaking student (Watson & Skinner, 2004). Justice William Douglass ruled, stating, "We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experiences wholly

incomprehensible and in no way meaningful" (Alexander & Alexander, 2005, p. 360). The U.S. Supreme Court thus guaranteed children access to a "meaningful education" regardless of their language background, an act that changed the instructional approaches for limited English proficient (LEP) and ELLs (Crawford, 1996). The *Lau* mandate was clear: "language-minority students must be ensured access to the same curriculum provide to their English-speaking peers" (Crawford, 1996).

In the 1980s, organized opposition to bilingual education policy increased significantly among politicians, educators, and parent groups (San Miguel, 2004). The English-only movement created more strict criticism of the effectiveness of bilingual education. According to the Baker and de Kanter (1981) report, effectiveness of transitional bilingual education was questionable, raising concerns about the cost of creating these programs and their ability to address the needs of children served by the schools (San Miguel, 2004). In *Castaneda v. Pickard* (1981), judges found Raymondville Independent School District in Texas guilty of not addressing the needs of ELLs as mandated by the Equal Education Opportunity Act of 1974. The Federal court eventually ruled the school district fell short of meeting Equal Education Opportunity Act requirements to provide appropriate action to address the needs of ELLs. *Castaneda v. Pickard* established a legal standard for "appropriate action" by schools: Educational programs for LEP students must be sound in theory, provide sufficient resources in practices, and undergo monitoring for effectiveness and improvement, when necessary (Crawford, 1996).

In *Gomez v. Illinois* (1987), the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals found that state education agencies as well as local education agencies are required under the EEOA to ensure schools are meeting the needs of LEP children. The new provision reinforced additional

professional development, increased attention to language maintenance and foreign language instruction, and supplied additional funding for immigration education. The NCLB Act of 2001 reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1968, which appropriated funds to states to improve the education of LEP students. Under NCLB, schools were to address the needs of LEP students to assist them in learning English and meeting challenging state academic content. Signed by President Obama in 2015 to replace NCLB, ESSA continued to require schools to report about the capabilities of their students, with significantly more power granted to the states. Specifically, schools have more authority under ESSA in how they account for student achievement, especially in the four key groups: students in poverty, minorities, students receiving special education services, and ELLs (Darrow, 2016).

English Language Learners

An ELL is an active student or adult learner of the English language who may profit from various sorts of language support programs; in the US, the term largely applies to K–12 students (Squire, 2008). When ELLs are in school, the interaction and integration of classroom activities, tools, and artifacts plays a fundamental role in the acquisition of skills and knowledge. New concepts must involve everyday life; instruction cannot be meaningful without incorporating the student's system of meaning and understanding (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Learning is the process of scaffolding new information with previous knowledge. To achieve desired mastery, the teacher proceeds through an unfolding of a student's potential by offering support for emerging concepts in line with students' cultural backgrounds (González et al., 2005).

English Language Learners with Disabilities

Each year, public schools in the United States serve a growing population of ELLs and students with disabilities. Under IDEA, U.S. school teachers and administrators have identified

more than six million students for special education and related services; in comparison, over 4.6 million students qualify as ELLs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). DeMatthews, Edwards, and Norton (2014) found that "lack of focus manifests in how states collect data related to ELLs and students with disabilities" (p. 30). No state currently collects data that identifies ELLs in special education as a specific subgroup, which makes examining issues associated with ELL special education difficult.

In fall 2015, the percentage of U.S. students enrolled as ELLs was higher for school districts in more-urbanized areas than in less-urbanized ones (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). ELLs comprised an average of 14% of total public-school enrollment in cities and 3.6% in rural areas (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). In the Texas urban school district of interest in this study, the ELL population was at 31% in 2017. In the United States, Spanish was the home language of 3.7 million ELL students in 2014–2015, which equaled 77.7% of all ELLs; Arabic (129,000), Chinese (104,000), and Vietnamese (85,000) were the next most common home languages (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). Urban areas had a higher percentage of the ELL population, a particularly interesting fact, as this study took place in an urbanized area in Texas.

The placement of ELLs in special education is arguably a complex issue, mainly because linguistic and immigration factors combine with the composite of cultural, socioeconomic, and ethnic influences (Klingner, Artiles, & Mendez Bartela, 2006); in other words, recognizing characteristics associated with learning disability and language acquisition can be quite difficult. ELLs who show signs of struggling to learn may require culturally responsive interventions by means of a cooperative teaching approach that integrates (a) students' background knowledge, (b) students' home and community structures that encourage them to draw on their personal

experiences in their own words, and (c) readings based on the students' cultural and linguistic experiences (Orosco & O'Connor, 2014).

Exclusionary factors, areas of the learner's background or experience that might influence performance, merit consideration before identifying a student as having a learning disability (Li, 2016). The definition of learning disabilities in IDEA contains an exclusionary clause: before school administrators determine whether a student has a learning disability, they must identify if the student has had sufficient opportunity to learn—defined as enough exposure to the English language and quality instruction in their native language, including adequate instruction in a language the student can understand, as well as linguistic support (Klingner & Artiles, 2003). The determination of learning disability must meet the following criteria:

> Must not require the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability and must permit the use of a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based interventions and may permit the use of other alternative research-based procedures for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability. (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 92411)

The IAT must rule out causes such as vision or hearing problems, cultural factors, environmental or economic disadvantages, and LEP as the primary reason for a student's difficulty before evaluating the student for a learning disability.

Teacher Preparation to Teach ELLs

Tigert and Peercy (2017) examined data from a large U.S. Mid-Atlantic research university specific to its teacher preparation program, which leads to obtaining Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages credentials. Data came from four teacher candidates observed in

their classrooms. These four participants were enrolled in a Master of Education in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages program consisting of 42 credits, with 6 credit hours designated for an internship and 36 credit hours of coursework focusing on language teaching methods, assessment of language learning, theory of second language acquisition, cross-cultural communication, and addressing the needs of diverse learners. Tigert and Peercy's findings showed that all teacher candidates felt their university coursework had not sufficiently prepared them to teach in the content areas. Educators struggled with teaching content when working with ELLs, stating that integrating content and language was difficult. The teacher candidates felt they lacked both the knowledge and means regarding how to teach specific content to students. During their internship, they relied on their mentor's expertise with some confusion.

Santibañez and Gándara (2018) administered a survey to 329 middle and high school teachers to investigate how well teachers were prepared to teach ELLs in a California school district. About 70% of respondents reported speaking another language, with Spanish being the most cited. The vast majority of survey respondents had cross-cultural language and academic development credentials. In rating their preservice preparation, most teachers reported it had not prepared them well to meet the challenges they faced in teaching ELLs. Over 70% of respondents felt ill-prepared to design formative assessment to monitor language development and to engage with parents of ELLs. The most cited challenge was "addressing the needs of English learners with multiple levels of English proficiency in the classroom" (Santibañez & Gándara, 2018, p. 17). In addition, more than 70% of the teachers reported being unprepared to engage with parents of ELLs.

Kolano, Dávila, Lachance, and Coffey (2014) mailed 252 survey packets to teachers in North and South Carolina involved in ESL licensure training programs. The purpose of this

study was to explore the effectiveness of teacher training programs and professional development experiences of teachers in these states. The survey included open-ended questions addressing perceptions and experiences teaching racially, culturally, or linguistically diverse students; additional questions pertained to overall opinions of teacher preparation for working with linguistically diverse students. Nearly 88% of the respondents addressed the inadequacy of their teacher training program in preparing them to teach ELLs.

Felman-Nemser (2018) stated that "teachers were unlikely to teach effectively unless they had access to serious and sustained learning opportunities at each stage in their careers" (p. 227). There is a continuum of learning at different stages of teachers' careers, such as the practice of teaching. Felman-Nemser assumed that learning to teach takes places over time, requiring instructors to access proper professional learning opportunities as part of the continuing work of teaching. Felman-Nemser claimed that "teaching happens in a particular context" (p. 227). Teachers can only learn from factors such as students, curriculum, school, and community when they become part of a school faculty, because this is where they find the direction of what to teach and start teaching (Felman-Nemser, 2018).

Differences Related to Language Learning and Learning Disabilities

There are many shared characteristics between ELLs and students with learning disabilities (Ortiz, 2006). Attempting to learn a new language can bring challenges; as such, it can be difficult to determine whether a student is going through the process of learning a language also has learning disabilities (Duquette & Land, 2014). Table 1 shows observed behaviors in students relative to language learning and learning disability settings.

Table 1

Probable Difficulties Related to Language Learning and Learning Disabilities

Evidence observed in behavior	Probable description in a language learning setting	Probable description in a learning disability setting
Places and forgets words; uses unknown words to replace other words	May not yet know word; may not have adopted the words or needs more practice of words	Has recollection/spoken language–processing complications
Is easily sidetracked	Does not comprehend; is burdened with new information; needs more visual/tangible support	Has an auditory processing problem, ADHD, or ADD
Has difficulty following directions	Does not understand vocabulary of the word problem; is not accustomed with the currency; has no previous knowledge with the content	Has difficulty with reasoning problems, a memory problem, sequencing issues; may not be able to generalize from previous examples
Is able to perform mathematics questions, but not solve word problems	Does not know terminology of the word problem; is not acquainted with the currency; has no previous knowledge with the content	Has processing or abstract reasoning problems, difficulty recalling information, sequencing issues; may not be able to generalize from earlier examples
Avoids writing	Does not have self-assurance or is not comfortable with having numerous drafts of work before the concluding version	Has difficulties with fine motor skills and inadequate with expressive language
Has difficulty in retelling a story in sequence or summarizing a plot	Is unfamiliar with too much of the vocabulary of the story	Has difficulty organizing ideas or processing problems

The American Institutes for Research Report

In spring 2018, the AIR published a report entitled *Special Education Program Review on a Texas Urban School District*. From June to November 2017, Gandhi (2018) gathered data from multiple sources: (a) student performance; (b) documents related to infrastructure, strategic planning, and policies; (c) the IEPs of 300 students with disabilities; (d) a survey of school staff and parents; and (e) interviews with both focus groups and school leaders. The AIR found 10 areas in need of improvement, the first being that "there is confusion about, and inconsistent implementation of processes related to intervention and special education identification" (p. 9). Slightly more than a third of the school staff from 27 schools (35% to 38%) reported their IAT often engaged in these IAT activities, which is positive; however, about a quarter of respondents stated their IAT never or only sometimes engaged in these activities (Gandhi, 2018).

The majority of respondents in the AIR report described their IAT as always or often effective in the following: intervening before academic or behavioral issues interfered with student learning (63%); supporting teachers to meet the needs of each student in accessing grade-level curriculum (68%); monitoring the effectiveness of interventions provided through the school's RTI process (66%); objectively identifying students' academic and behavioral needs based on universal screeners and other classroom and parent data (70%); and providing a systematic vehicle for school staff to refer students experiencing substantial behavioral or academic difficulties for a Section 504 or special education evaluation (74%). Section 504 is a part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that prohibits discrimination based upon disability. It is an antidiscrimination, civil rights statute that requires meeting the needs of students with disabilities as adequately as the needs of the nondisabled (Durheim, 2018). However, about one-third (27%

to 37%) of respondents reported the IAT never or only sometimes was effective in these areas, indicating room for improvement (Gandhi, 2018).

Further analysis of AIR interviews and focus groups with school-level staff provided evidence of inconsistency and confusion with respect to the IAT process. One interviewee suggested a pilot of the IAT process should have occurred ahead of time to "iron out the kinks" (Gandhi, 2018, p. 11). A campus IAT liaison remarked, "The whole process seems confusing, and I can literally feel like we have an understanding of it on our campus, but then you talk to the [diagnostician] and the License Specialist in School Psychology, and they're on a totally different page" (Gandhi, 2018, p. 11). Expected of the current study and the IAT checklist are the introduction of guidance, consistency, and better communication among the evaluation staff (licensed specialists in school psychology and educational diagnosticians).

Findings from the AIR also indicated a lack of communication (Gandhi, 2018). Participants in 13 of 27 focus groups or interviews about the IAT suggested the process was a means for special education referral—in other words, that an IAT meeting was needed before testing (Ghandi, 2018). IAT meetings must occur before testing and special education referral, and RTI can help determine if the child responds to scientific interventions (Hazelkorn et al., 2011). The IAT/RTI process should not serve as a means for special education testing, but for providing interventions to students to help them make academic progress. This objective contradicts the school district's guidance on the IAT meeting, specifically that "the team is focused on intervention as the goal, not referrals to special education" (Gandhi, 2018, p. 12). Instead, classroom teachers and school administrators often believe the IAT meeting is an automatic referral to special education testing (Ghandi, 2018).

Alignment with Action Research Traditions

In an education context, action research is about educators and teachers seeking to address their real-world issues. According to Reason and Bradbury (2001), action research combines theory, practice, action, and reflection with the participation of stakeholders who seek practical solutions; the practitioner is at the center of the issue. Burns (2010) defined action research as taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic attitude to exploring one's own work to identify an issue and examine it in collaboration with others.

There is a precedent in the literature for the application of action research in educational settings. Katz and Stupel (2016), for instance, used qualitative action research with open-ended interview questions to study the efficacy of six frustrated classroom teachers wanting to leave the field of teaching. Action research served to extract knowledge on teacher efficacy to analyze, describe, and identify the problem, with the purpose of developing a potential solution (Katz & Stupel, 2016). According to Katz and Stupel, "This methodology was selected because it provided the researchers with an opportunity to deeply understand the teacher's experiences through talking, listening and observing them in their authentic environment for a few hours" (p. 424).

In the present study, the action research approach allowed all stakeholders to discuss previous scholarship on IAT and how it has been helpful to them. Action research allowed me to define the exact question participants would like to answer, and then spend time discussing the potential benefits and pitfalls of the issue and solution. Action research also allows scholars to collaborate with other stakeholders. Driving the IAT are people who have a stake in the environmental issues under study, rather than outsiders such as sponsors or funders. Developing tools to prepare teachers for IAT meetings involves insiders, such as classroom teachers: those

most affected by the issue. In other words, IAT preparation requires collaboration in discussing, pooling skills, and working together. Such preparation should result in some action, change, or improvement on the issue under study.

Conceptual Framework

Explored in this study were the current practices of bilingual teachers when considering a bilingual student for special education assessment. Because this process is complex, a qualitative phenomenological method was appropriate to disclose how individuals who have lived those experiences interpret them (Merriam, 2011). The conceptual framework of this study was Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist framework. Similarly, Dewey (1897) explained constructionism by saying, "I believe that education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience; and that the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing" (p. 41). Therefore, a qualitative phenomenological research framework was most suited for this research study focused on capturing the essence of five elementary school teachers and their perceptions and lived experiences relating to their current practices in referring bilingual students for special education services. The qualitative phenomenological approach allows a researcher to "explore the meaning of several people's lived experiences around a particular issue or phenomenon" (Algozzine & Hancock, 2006, p. 8). Participants freely responded to open-ended questions, sharing general themes and introspective ideas based on the themes.

The topic of study—teachers referring bilingual students for special education assessment—was of personal interest to me, as a bilingual educational diagnostician with over 12 years of personal experience in elementary schools. Throughout the years the I observed the following evidence of teachers being unprepared: (a) uncertainty in instructing struggling bilingual students, (b) not gathering formal data or collecting appropriate information for the IAT

meetings when a bilingual student showed characteristics of learning disability, and (c) inability to distinguish between learning disability and language acquisition.

The conceptual framework of this study stemmed from three conceptual assumptions about ELLs and bilingual students. First, teachers who work with CLD students suggest additional professional development for teaching ELLs drawn from research-based instructional strategies (Franco-Fuenmayor, Padrón, & Waxman, 2015). Second, Witt et al. (2004) recognized the paybacks of providing direction for teachers in the data collection process for executing any school-based intervention. Teachers in the present study did not have any formal methods of collecting data and they all agreed that a formal documentation such as a checklist would be very beneficial. Third, according to Harrington and Gibson (1986), teachers obtain guidance in the IAT meetings in the development of appropriate interventions and receive feedback concerning their interventions. A functional IAT results in reduced frustration for addressing student problems because it allows for constructive collaboration with teachers to solve problems and gain significant knowledge in how to instruct and help ELLs, thus providing a support system for teachers (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989). My goal with this study was to improve individual and group collaboration of the IAT to address these points and prevent unnecessary special education referrals. A checklist can help guide teachers to systematically organize information about a student who may be struggling in their classroom.

Significant Research and Practice Studies

Classroom teachers must know what types of information, such as students' progress and academic difficulties, to bring to the IAT meetings. School personnel should consider language issues when determining special education eligibility for ELLs (Klingner & Harry, 2006). In a study of the special education referral process for ELLs, Klingner and Harry (2006) observed 19

child study team meetings and placement conferences of multidisciplinary team meetings for possible special education assessment. The researchers sought to observe to what extent the multidisciplinary team understood second language acquisition and whether language concerns were a part of the referral process. Findings indicated that, in practice, teams gave cursory attention to the process; however, most students received referrals for testing based on the supposition of low academic performance. Some school professionals were aware and knowledgeable of language issues, but many were not prepared. Language acquisition is critical to consider when reviewing IAT processes, because most ELLs' academic difficulties are language-related but not limited to basic reading skills, reading comprehension, or listening comprehension (Klingner & Harry, 2006).

Bilingual students referred for learning disability must receive assessment in both languages (Rhodes et al., 2005). However, Rhodes et al. stated that there are tendencies and practices in which evaluation teams skip this process due to lack of time or high caseloads. According to legal mandates such as IDEA, a public agency must evaluate a child with disability before determining special education eligibility. If teachers refer a student for language-related issues, they must consider several factors, one being the child's linguistic abilities and deficits in both native and second languages. As Rhodes et al. (2005) suggested:

> Is the problem apparent in both languages? If the apparent problem is noted only in English and not in the child's first language, it is most likely due to factors associated with second language acquisition than with a problem inherent in the child. (Rhodes et al., 2005, p. 81)

It is necessary to determine ELLs' language dominance prior to further assessment. Such determination is imperative to ascertain in which language to conduct the achievement and

cognitive portions of the assessment used to determine whether the student qualifies for special education services (Rhodes et al, 2005). Of determining proficiency among two languages, Rhoades et al. (2005) asked, "How else would an evaluator know how best to proceed, or which linguistic modality is more appropriate?" (p. 138). Prior to testing a bilingual student who speaks both English and Spanish, the evaluator must determine in which language the student is stronger. Furthermore, the manifestation of a specific learning disability cannot be due to only one language (Rhoades et al., 2005). Educators must document in both languages their concerns for the learning disability that prompted the referral. A true disability must be apparent in both languages; in other words, a child cannot be disabled in English and not disabled in the native language (Rhoades et al., 2005).

Communicating in a Language Parents Understand

Dunn (1968) critically pointed out the disproportionate number of minority students in special education. Fifty years later the same problem prevails in our schools. Hardin, Mereoiu, and Hung (2009) postulated that ELLs are overrepresented in special education due to misunderstandings related to cultural differences, a lack of special education staff with linguistic and cultural skills, and communication challenges such as language barriers between parents and schools. Hardin et al. assembled six focus groups with school administrators, teachers, and parents in two locations to investigate the referral process in the placement of prekindergarten ELL Latino children. One of the researchers' main purposes was to identify cultural and linguistic differences. Findings showed a chief contributor to disproportionality was the "insufficient numbers of bilingual professionals and trained interpreters: communication barriers and contradictory procedures that undermine meaningful partnerships with parents of ELLs" (Hardin et al., 2009, p. 94).

IDEA mandates parents' participation, thus enabling collaborative partnership with families. The local education agency is responsible for communicating in a language understood by the parent. Parents are legally mandated to participate in the identification and eligibility process, goal-setting, and placement stages of the IEP.

School personnel must learn how to communicate and practice cross-cultural communication (Harry, 2008). School staff must become aware of others' histories and cultures, allowing them to become aware of their own perceptions and prejudices (Harry, 2008). According to Hart, Cheatham, and Jimenez-Silva (2012), it is vital to ensure high-quality language interpretation for diverse students to create a functional collaborative team between school personnel and ELL parents. Schools must employ clerks and administrators who are sensitive to cross-cultural communication needs to avoid miscommunication.

The National Education Association (2008) pushes for more effective ways to approach effective interventions, because monolingual instructional programs are not effective when used for ELLs. In addition, school districts need to put guidelines and best practices in place that will assist school referral personnel to make better decision in the determination of ELLs for special education (Linn, 2011). According to Steeley and Lukacs (2015), "Policy-makers should establish guidelines based on best practices for including CLD parents in the special education and IEP process" (p. 29).

The IAT can help teachers design and implement interventions to improve the performance of ELLs who are experiencing academic difficulties, providing the support needed to resolve many such challenges within the context of general education (Kolano et al., 2013). If interventions are unsuccessful and teachers refer ELLs for special education, the IAT committee will inform parents, teachers, and school administrators that students did not make adequate

progress while receiving interventions in the general education classroom. Upon collecting all evidence proving the student did not respond to intervention, the district then makes a special education referral.

Kolano et al. (2013) conducted a study of 157 content-area teachers to examine perceptions of teacher training. Nearly all respondents reported a lack of emphasis on CLD students, as well as inadequate teacher-training programs in preparing them to teach ELLs. Some teachers voiced concerns about the lack of critical materials and in-depth discussion regarding topics and teaching strategies when working with ELLs (Kolano et al., 2013). Findings showed that teachers felt unprepared to work successfully with ELLs. The study has significant implications in the state of Texas, where the percentage of students identified as ELL grew from 15.9% in 2006–2007 to 18.9% in 2016–2017. The lack of emphasis on CLD teacher training will directly impact the growing ELL population.

Nilsson, Kong and Hubert (2016) studied the challenges a first-time English teacher in the United States faced in implementing the culturally responsive teaching practices she had learned in graduate school into her secondary-level ELL class. When the teacher finished her coursework and contacted her former professors for advice, the professors thought this would be a good opportunity to explore ways to support the teacher as she applied knowledge gained from her college studies. The teacher had completed a 14-week online course in language and culture as required for being a teacher education candidate and was now teaching an ELL Advanced Language and Literature course in a major metropolitan area with 12 students from various socioeconomic levels. The findings of this study showed that the teacher faced strategy- and language-related issues because of both student culture and school environment. Nilsson, Kong and Hubert concluded that the transfer of the knowledge learned in the college course in

culturally responsive practices is possible, but a network of support from professors may be helpful.

Franco-Fuenmayor et al. (2015) conducted a study of professional development opportunities for bilingual and ESL teachers. A majority of the teachers suggested they needed more professional development in "specific strategies, practical solutions, hands-on /real world examples on how to implement the program broken down by grade level" (p. 347). Franco-Fuenmayor et al. suggested additional professional development for teaching ELLs be research-based instructional strategies. In addition, the researchers suggested implementing strategies for gathering specific suggestions from the teachers about what areas of professional development they need.

Review of the Effectiveness of Existing Programs

RTI provides a model that requires early preventive measures, instead of waiting for the student to fail (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2010; IRIS, 2014; Van De Walle et al., 2013). Implementing an intervention procedure in the school requires collaboration from the group of professionals (e.g., teachers, administrators, evaluation specialists) who understand students' academic needs. Each student brings a different level of knowledge, skills, and culture to the initial classroom experience, challenges regularly encountered by highly trained educators.

An IAT provides constructive collaboration with teachers to solve problems and share knowledge in how to instruct and help ELLs. Teachers obtain guidance in the development of appropriate interventions and receive feedback on their own interventions, especially when assessment team members provide support. Chalfant et al. (1986) investigated the effectiveness of school-based problem-solving teams. Teachers who comprise the teams meet on a scheduled basis to discuss students with the possible need for special education referrals. Chalfant et al.

compared 13 elementary schools with problem-solving models after 3 years' implementation against 13 elementary schools without problem-solving models. The results showed that both group of schools significantly decreased in student referrals; in addition, there were no significant referral differences between the schools. The researchers suggested the lack of difference in number of referrals between the schools is possible because all school psychological services staff participated in team-building activities and provided as much consultation to the schools as possible.

In addition, intervention is extremely effective in reducing the number of inappropriate referrals to special education (Ogonosky, 2007). A functional IAT results in a reduction of frustration for addressing student problems and provides a support system for teachers (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989). In other words, teachers and schools can benefit from a functional IAT, because it enables constructive collaboration with instructors to solve problems and gain significant knowledge in how to instruct and help ELLs.

Including special education personnel in IAT meetings increases both the meeting effectiveness and the retention rate in schools (Burns, 2001). Burns researched 25 public elementary schools in an urban setting, 13 of which had an established IAT that included special education personnel (special education teachers or school psychologists) and 12 that had no special education personnel. Findings showed the former group of schools had a significantly lower retention rate than the other group (Burns, 2001). Schools that established IATs including special education personnel had lower retention because the special education referral rate was lower. It is important to involve special education personnel in the IAT when the school faces referral processes for ELLs with possible learning disabilities. The evaluation team can be a

tremendous addition and aid in determining the need of special education evaluation for the students (Burns, 2001).

Hite and McGahey (2015) researched elementary schools in which teachers expressed concern that students were not demonstrating mastery on the state criterion-referenced tests, despite receiving appropriate instruction. Teachers also worried that students were not displaying positive attitudes toward learning and school in general. Thirty-two fifth grade students of varying academic abilities and ethnicities participated in this study, the purpose of which was to measure the success of the RTI among other factors that influence student performance. Hite and McGahey compared competency test scores from students not in the RTI program in third grade, and then identified in the RTI program in fourth grade. Results showed that students performed better on state-mandated tests after receiving explicit instruction designed by the RTI program. In addition, students' perceptions of themselves and their academic abilities increased because of improved problem-solving abilities. The purpose of this study was to measure the success of the RTI among other factors that influence student performance. Hite and McGahey suggested that "academic success is reportedly affected by socioeconomic status, parental involvement, motivation, academic discipline and self-efficacy, while many of these factors are out of the control of school personnel, interventions used were making positive impact on student test scores" (p. 38).

RTI is a component of IDEA as a strategy for early identification of students with learning disabilities, especially to prevent overidentification due to an inappropriate diagnosis. Of the eight areas of eligibility in special education for learning disability, six are related to reading development: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. IAT and RTI can not only help with earlier

identification of students with learning disabilities in the general education classroom, but also provide much-needed intervention services for at-risk students (Worrell & Taber, 2009). In 2017, the Urban School of Texas announced it would enhance teacher training and resources to build more effective problem-solving teams for overseeing academic and behavior interventions (Houston Independent School District News Blog, 2017). This new initiative involves the appointment of campus-based liaisons at all campuses to work closely with IAT managers in assisting teachers with strategic instructions. In leading this initiative, the director of intervention has given structure to the intervention process in the district, providing the necessary problem-solving team effort that uses data to meet each student's unique needs (Houston Independent School District News Blog, 2017).

Challenges in the Implementation of RTI

Implementing RTI within a school system is a multidimensional process. Many schools already have an intervention program in place; the adjustment process of moving from existing practices to newly developed initiatives can bring challenges. A lack of coherence may constrain the transformative process and limit the sustainability of the intervention progression (Kozleski & Huber, 2010). Interpreting the difficulty in fully implementing and transitioning the RTI in the schools is a challenge, Kozleski and Huber (2010) suggested, "RTI must be seen as an activity system nested within a larger system of influences and practices" (p. 259), including general and special education. RTI requires collaboration between both special and general education departments along with ELL and general education teachers.

Another challenge in implementation is the teachers' perception that RTI is a new program added to existing practices (Kozleski & Huber, 2010), when in fact it is an integral part of an improvement plan and an important component of assessing students. Such erroneous

perceptions can result in teachers' lack of focus and effort in implementing the proper intervention to ensure success. Teachers at the Urban School of Texas found fidelity challenges in the intervention process. According to the Ghandi (2018), the IAT focus group and principals could not describe the process clearly. One educator related:

> The five years I've been here, I think we've had four different IAT chairs, which causes a lot of breakdown. You have a kid who's struggling, and it just seems the process, the flow chart of implementing interventions, what that looks like, making sure the parents understand that we're starting to help your kid. It doesn't mean we're going to test them right away. There's a timeline involved providing some interventions before we just go test happy. That entire IAT process, I think it's very muddy. It's confusing as an insider. I think as a parent it's very confusing. (Ghandi, 2018, p. 14)

The constant change and turnover of IAT chairs causes inconsistency. In addition, the process is not clear, and the parents need more clarification regarding the timeline for student assessment (Ghandi, 2018). Another IAT member described the following:

> Questions that you want answered, if you ask the same question to two different people, you'll get two different answers in many cases. A process on my last campus and a process on this campus [is] largely left up to the campus. (Ghandi, 2018, p. 14)

The aforementioned IAT member identified evaluation team members as providing inconsistent information—namely, offering different responses to the same question.

Pyle (2011) found one of the main challenges teachers encountered was "the lack of coherence between the elements of the model and existing instructional practices" (p. 8). This problem was connected to the differing goals of progress monitoring and existing assessment procedures. The study was conducted in five elementary schools to describe the perspectives of

teachers who participated in the implementation of RTI and issues they encountered due to the lack of coherences between RTI and special education. Primary classroom, special education, literacy, and ESL teachers participated in this study, along with special education consultants, school psychologists, and speech and language pathologists. The study indicated an overemphasis on assessment, teaching demands, conflicting initiatives, systemic incoherence (e.g., teachers asked to change what they do), and issues of identification and support (e.g., teachers were busy providing services to legally obligated special education students, leaving no time for students who required RTI).

IATs implement RTI with evidence-based practices infused with culturally responsive pedagogy, having the potential to decrease the overrepresentation of the CLD students in special education (Montalvo, Combes, & Kea, 2014). RTI should prevent underachievement and support students before they experience significant failure. The RTI framework shows promise in accomplishing two important goals for CLD students. First, it offers them an opportunity to improve their English literary skills via evidence-based practices (Morris & Cortez, 2008); second, it provides a systematic approach for addressing the disproportionate representation of CLD learners eligible for special education services (Shealy & Callins, 2007).

Garcia and Ortiz (2006) stated that teachers should know how to interpret the life experiences of CLD students as instructional assets rather than deficits for remediation. As such, educators should use this information to develop culturally responsive pedagogy. According to Garcia and Ortiz, there is a critical need for teachers to recognize the emotional needs, cultural norms, and social behaviors that influence CLD students' learning.

Vygotsky (1978) was one of the early psychologists to postulate sociocultural theory. According to this theory, cognition materializes through reciprocal activity between an

individual and the social context, mediated by cultural knowledge, tools, symbols, and artifacts. When children initiate social interaction within a culture and are open to acquiring more knowledge, everyday experiences begin to transform their cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, the IAT/RTI models should provide a sociocultural interface that allows contextualization between school literacy, curriculum, and students' prior knowledge (Klingner & Edwards, 2006).

Because children's cognitive development is a product of social, cultural, and other tools, RTI should promote these elements. The premise with RTI is to move away from focusing on the student's deficit and head toward improving the instructional context. However, there are many challenges associated with the complex interaction between the pedagogical and contextual nature of the CLD learner (Orosco, 2010). The success of CLD students in the RTI model may depend on how well teachers and school personnel understand and implement these learners' sociocultural experiences and evidence-based practices (Orosco, 2010).

The sociocultural information of CLD students is critical in the implementation of interventions and possible special education evaluations. Aceves and Orosco (2014) argued the need for teachers to review the following: language use or preference, social affiliations (e.g., friends and relationships), daily life experiences (e.g., food, responsibilities, and chores), culture (e.g., traditions, identity, and values), and communication style. Areas of sociocultural information and awareness such as these can provide meaningful insight into designing appropriate classroom curriculum, helping teachers to scaffold instruction to a more appropriate academic level (Orosco, 2010). Sociocultural information of CLD students is extremely important when considering special education assessment. This information includes language of preference, language best dominated, daily costumes, and cultural orientation, all of which are

important in the selection of assessment tools. Ultimately, the review should include tools and procedures designed to reveal the students' previous knowledge and understanding, thus allowing teachers to utilize their own valuable strengths (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006). Norms and expectations in performance may vary depending on the students' cultural backgrounds and experiences, a variation that some school professionals may ignore (Klingner, 2005). Teachers having knowledge of CLD learners' sociocultural backgrounds can help in the development and implementation of a more student-centered and balanced, culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogical IAT and RTI to prevent misdiagnosis of CLD students for special education services (Proctor, Graves, & Esch, 2012).

Closing Thoughts on Chapter II

Over the 2014–2015 school year, the ELL population was higher in urbanized areas in the United States than in rural ones. ELLs comprised an average of 14.2% of the total public-school enrollment in cities, ranging from 10.3% in small towns to 16.8% in large cities. ELL enrollment in the Urban School of Texas was 64,524 in 2014–2015. Approximately 56% of students in bilingual programs and 48% in ESL programs showed improvement in their English language proficiency on the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System in 2014–2015, numbers revealing much room for improvement. In total, the special education population in Texas was 53.2% Hispanic, 37.5% Black, and eight percent White

Various instructional opportunities such as classroom activities and artifacts contribute in ELLs' acquisition of skills and knowledge (González et al., 2005). Therefore, new lessons must incorporate real-life situations and meaningful activities rather than rote memorization and repetition. In addition, teachers must be able to extract students' previous knowledge and culture to help them achieve mastery (González et al., 2005).

Research on the RTI framework with ELLs shows promise and an opportunity to improve English literary skills via evidence-based practices (Morris & Cortez, 2008). Also promising are systematic approaches for addressing the disproportionate representation of CLD in special education (Shealy & Callins, 2007). Preparing classroom teachers for the IAT can have positive impact in improving ELLs' literacy skills and decreasing their disproportionate representation in special education.

CHAPTER III

SOLUTION AND METHOD

Proposed Solution

General confusion exists in implementation of the IAT in the Urban School of Texas. Ghandi (2018) found inconsistent knowledge hampering IAT implementation across schools, noting that "limited evidence of data-driven decision making" was taking place (p. 47). The proposed solution in this study was to equip classroom teachers to know what information to collect and bring to IAT meetings when working with ELL and bilingual students. The anticipation is that with increased active participation in the IAT process, teachers will build confidence and receive the necessary support to work with bilingual students. According to Merriam (2011), qualitative research is appropriate for obtaining an understanding of how individuals interpret experiences they have lived. Qualitative methodology is an appropriate platform for capturing key elements of the human experience (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Therefore, a qualitative phenomenological research design was best suited for this study to capture the perceptions and lived experiences of five elementary-level bilingual teachers related to their current practices when referring ELLs for special education.

In this study, the collective shared experience came from being teachers in elementary school. I used open-ended questions to allow participants to freely respond, elaborating as needed. Open-ended questions are appropriate for participants to share general themes and introspective ideas based on the themes (Creswell, 2012).

This qualitative phenomenological study consisted of in-depth interviews with five bilingual (Spanish–English) teachers working with ELLs at the elementary-school level. I recorded and transcribed the teacher interviews, subsequently analyzing and coding them into

themes, which were sufficient to develop a framework for assessing the student. Data analysis entailed becoming familiar with the data by reading and rereading, writing down impressions, and determining which information had value. I focused the analysis on key questions based on the subquestions, subsequently coding the data by identifying themes, or performing thematic analysis. Finally, I interpreted the data to explain the findings by theme.

Language Programs in the Urban School of Texas

The Urban School of Texas includes bilingual and ESL education and alternative language programs for all students identified as ELL, immigrant, migrant, or refugee students. One of the programs overseen by the district is the Dual Language Immersion Program, which begins in prekindergarten and continues through fifth grade. The teachers in this program deliver instruction in two languages, English and Spanish, to students who are native speakers of either language. The program has a solid academic foundation in both languages. In this classroom, a combination of native Spanish speakers and native English speakers learn together to develop bilingualism (Center for Applied Linguistics, n.d.).

The district's Transitional Bilingual Program serves Spanish-speaking students identified as LEP, gradually transferring the students to English-only instruction. This model provides instruction in literacy and academic content areas through the medium of the student's first language, coupled with English language development. English instruction increases gradually through grade levels K–2, with instruction presented in a 50% Spanish, 50% English format by third grade. In fourth grade, students receive reading and mathematics instruction in Spanish, with science, social studies, and English literature taught in English. In fifth grade, teachers deliver language arts, reading, mathematics, and science instruction in English, with social studies and Spanish literature remaining in Spanish. The gradual increase through the grade

levels is appropriate, because students learn information better in the language in which they are more proficient, which increases their motivation and confidence in academic learning (IRIS Center, n.d.). Introduction of the second language is simultaneous with ongoing instruction in the first language. Instruction in Spanish also continues, however, because a high level of competency with the first language facilitates acquisition of the second language (Cummins, 2000). ELLs who meet exit criteria can leave the program at any time with reclassification as non-LEP; however, students can remain in the program with parental consent. According to Texas Education Agency's guidelines, the school district may reclassify an ELL as being proficient in the English language if the student is ready to participate in a regular, all-English setting and demonstrate satisfactory performance in the areas of listening, speaking, and English reading and writing. The list of approved tests for assessment of ELLs is available on the Texas Education Agency website. The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System, one of the tests used to exit students, measures the extent to which the student has developed oral, reading, and written language proficiency and specific language skills in English (Texas Education Agency, 2019). The design of ESL programs is such that ELLs receive instruction in English through the content areas using ESL methods, making ideas and concepts comprehensible. In the Cultural Heritage Bilingual Program, speakers of Vietnamese identified as ELLs receive primary language support for literacy and concept development while they acquired English in an ESL instruction setting.

The school district under study has a population of 35,301 students, of whom 55% are economically disadvantaged, 55% are at risk of dropping out based on state-defined criteria, and 33% are LEP. Only 65% of the district's high school graduates enter a college program and 35% enter the workforce. The average SAT score is 1038 compared to the State of Texas average of

1019. The demographic composition is 55.6% Hispanic, 31.2% White, 6.7% Black, 6.3% Asian, and 0.2% Native American. The school district's goal is for all graduates to complete a technical certification, military training, or two- or four-year degree. One objective of the school system is to provide students from poverty with the support and the same opportunities for success after high school as students from higher-income homes.

The elementary school within the school district has an enrollment of 660 students from prekindergarten to fifth grade. According to a 2017 Texas Education Agency report, 81.5% of the students are economically disadvantaged compared to 59% in the state of Texas; 63.6% are ELLs, whereas the Texas average is 18.9%; and 7.3% are receive special education services compared to the Texas average of 8.8%. The demographic composition is 87.1% Hispanic, 5.6% White, 3.8% Asian, 2.6% Black, and 0.3% American Indian (Texas Education Agency, 2018).

Site Permission

The Urban School of Texas recognizes the need for continued research in education. The department of Research and Evaluation examines applications from graduate students, colleges, and other organizations seeking permission to conduct research in, or use data from, the school district. Any study that involves observation and interviews is subject to the approval process.

The first step in obtaining site permission was to submit a completed application to the district's Research and Evaluation department director. Information provided included the list of campuses the researcher would like to approach for conducting the study, which included four elementary schools selected based on the number of bilingual students. This application required the signature of the researcher, faculty sponsor, and department chair.

Also submitted to the Research and Evaluation director was a copy of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) exemption (see Appendix A) from Research Compliance & Biosafety at

Texas A&M University, as well as interview questions and letters to the teachers and administrators. Informed consent forms included the purpose of the research and use of the findings, what participation would involve, and the possible benefits for teacher participants. There was also a statement of confidentiality. Once the district approved the application, each principal had discretion to participate in the study. I approached the principals of the four elementary campuses directly to obtain final approval to conduct research. Every correspondence included a copy of the district's approval letter. After I had made multiple attempts to contact principals, only one agreed to participate.

In the initial meeting with the principal, I had received a list of potential bilingual teachers as candidates to be part of the study. The principal, who served as my field advisor, assisted in participant selection. The principal carefully selected teachers in various grade levels and with varying levels of experience. This aligned with Creswell's (2007) suggestion regarding the importance of selecting appropriate candidates for interviews and using criterion-based sampling to obtain qualified candidates to improve credible information.

Participants

The participants in this study were five bilingual teachers at the elementary school under study. Bilingual teaching experience ranged from 1 years to 18 years across the sample, with a median length of 9 years. Teachers ranged in age from 24 years to 61 years, with a median of 32 years. Bilingual teachers are responsible for all duties assigned to a regular classroom teacher, but they teach in two languages (Gentile, 2018). The goal of the school district is to provide ELLs a multicultural and biliterate personalized learning experience to succeed academically. Findings from each participant are by pseudonym, not actual name.

Anna, who is Hispanic, is a bilingual teacher now in her 13th year. She developed her passion for education watching her sister teach and helping peers with schoolwork. Anna said, "My friends would ask me, 'How did you get it [understand the lesson]?' And I would explain my way and they would get it. I liked that feeling; that's why I pursued teaching, as well." She finds satisfaction when she sees the progress in her students improving their scores on the standardized tests. When she prepares for the IAT to discuss and refer a student for special education assessment, Anna takes her own informal notes. When asked if a checklist would be helpful, her response was, "I would love a checklist and a section where you can write anecdotal [evidence]."

Belinda has been teaching for 15 years in the same elementary school from kindergarten to second grade, and always in the bilingual classroom. She was born in Colombia, where she worked as a speech therapist before immigrating to the United States. She believes bilingual teachers make an important impact in the lives of ELLs because the ELL population in the US is growing.

Anna's greatest joy as an educator is when she helps ELLs transition to become fluent in English, thus closing the academic gap. As an example, she recalled working with an ELL student: "I would sit with her and do an accommodation; I would read in English and ask questions, so she would understand.... she did pretty good and she is in fourth grade now." Anna stated that her preservice training provided limited usable information and she would like to see more professional development in which teachers with master's degrees would model pedagogical methodologies and strategies. She has participated in IAT meetings twice this school year to refer struggling ELLs, but she would like to have a checklist because teachers

only have a general way to gather information. She said, "[The checklists] are general, but we need something more specific that would help teachers."

Clara, who is Hispanic, is in her second year working as a bilingual teacher. She obtained her teacher preservice training from the University of Houston-Downtown, where she wishes there were more practicum hours. Her participation with IAT included working with counselors, teachers, parents, and someone from special education. About documenting struggling students with academics (whether language acquisition or learning disabilities), she said, "I don't have a system. I know a lot of teachers have journals . . . I write down notes, sticky notes on my computer and later read about it, something like that." When asked if a checklist to collect data would be helpful, she responded, "Yes, that would be very helpful."

Diana was a math, science, and physics high school teacher in her country. She was born in Argentina and lived in Colombia before coming to the United States. She hoped to teach the same subjects at the high school level, but due to her limited English ability, she decided to teach in the elementary level. She has been a teacher in first and second grades for 15 years. Diana said the testing and referral process for special education takes too long: "[It] is about one year. [It] should be short[er], I think; that would help the student." She expressed that having a guiding checklist to collect data to bring to IAT would be helpful and that she would specifically know what information to gather. She said, "So when you go to the IAT, you could say, 'Here is my checklist documentation.'"

Elena has been teaching as a bilingual instructor for seven years. She was born in Houston, Texas, and grew up speaking English and Spanish. Elena has participated in IAT meetings and referred several students for special education assessment, which she believes takes a long time. "I think our district needs to do a better job in . . . speeding up the process," she said.

Elena does not have any formal instrument to document students who are struggling academically. When prompted if a formal checklist guiding would help her with collecting information before IAT, she immediately said, “Yes, definitely.” Table 2 shows an overview of the five teacher participants and the grade levels they teach.

Table 2

Participants

Teacher name	Grade level taught
Anna	First grade
Belinda	Kindergarten
Clara	Fourth grade
Diana	First grade
Elena	Second grade

Proposed Research Paradigm

This qualitative phenomenological research study entailed the use of interviews comprised of predetermined and open-ended questions (see Table 3) and follow-up probes. The rationale for qualitative research is to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participant’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge (Patton, 2002). The goal of these semi structured interviews was to examine the perceptions and experiences of bilingual teachers in gathering information to present to the IAT. Furthermore, interview responses provided insight into how the teachers approached distinguishing between language acquisition and learning disability in bilingual students. The phenomenological qualitative research method was

appropriate for interaction analysis and interviews with five bilingual (Spanish) teachers working with ELLs at the elementary school level.

Methods

As the researcher in this qualitative study, I served as a data collection instrument, subsequently analyzing collected responses and determining meaning. I conducted interviews with five elementary bilingual teachers to examine their current practices when considering an ELL student for special education assessment. I collected the data through open-ended interview questions with all teachers, and then analyzed the reoccurring themes to derive findings and address the overarching research question. As Agee (2009) described, "Qualitative research questions, then, need to articulate what a researcher wants to know about the intentions and perspectives of those involved in social interactions" (p. 432). The overarching research question of this record of study guided the collection of core information, providing the foundation for the interview questions. Richards (2005) stated that in a qualitative investigation, a researcher must have a plan to start the research. The overarching question was more than just intellectual curiosity or passion, but the byproduct of directly interacting with stakeholders in the IAT.

Instrumentation. Interview questions were open-ended to allow respondents to choose their words when answering questions (McNamara, 2009). I structured the questions based on McNamara's (2009) qualitative interview design guide, which provided recommendations in creating useful research questions for interviews. These recommendations were that (a) wording should be open-ended, (b) questions should be as neutral as possible, (c) the researcher should pose questions one at a time, (d) wording of questions should be clear, and (e) the researcher should be careful about asking *why?* questions. In the current study, open-ended questions

allowed participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desired; it also enabled the researcher to ask follow-up, probing questions.

Interview questions centered on the overarching research question, which was, "What are the current practices of bilingual teachers when considering a bilingual student for special education assessment?"

There were three subquestions, as follows:

SQ1. What are the lived experiences and perceptions of bilingual teachers regarding their teacher preparation and training in working with bilingual students and English language learners?

SQ2. How are bilingual teachers gathering information for the intervention assistance team meetings when a bilingual student shows characteristics of learning difficulty?

SQ3. How do bilingual teachers distinguish between language acquisition and learning disability?

Answering these questions required allowing participants to express their experiences and expertise. The school principal reviewed the interview questions, providing expert review and feedback. The bilingual teacher participants selected taught at an elementary school in the Houston area. Interview questions are as follows.

1. Why did you want to become a teacher and work with bilingual students?
2. How long have you been a teacher and in which schools?
3. What grade levels have you taught?
4. If I were to walk into your classroom, how would it look different from another classroom?

5. What has been your greatest success in working with bilingual students or English language learners?
6. A colleague comes to you and says they believe an English language learner student needs intervention or referral. How would you respond?
7. How would you document when a student is showing characteristics of learning difficulty?
8. How do you distinguish between language acquisition and learning disability with your bilingual students?
9. How has your teacher training prepared you for working with bilingual students?
10. How have you participated in intervention assistance team meetings? What is this process like?
11. Can you talk about your intervention assistance team members? How supportive are they?
12. Do you think it would be helpful to have a guide or checklist to help you collect student information?
13. What supports need to be in place for you to be a successful bilingual teacher?

Data collection. To begin the study, I obtained informed consent from each teacher. I then asked the teachers about their training level in identifying elementary students with learning disabilities. I investigated whether teachers were aware of what characteristics they should look for in elementary students suspected of learning disabilities. I posed interview questions to address whether teachers knew what documentation to bring to IAT meetings. To ensure accuracy, I digitally audio-recorded all interviews. Each interview lasted 60 minutes.

Data Analysis Strategy

Upon the conclusion of each interview, I transcribed the recording verbatim using a simple computer software program called Transcribe. The use of Transcribe entails uploading the audio file, and then using a workflow tool to control the audio. Transcribe includes a set of keyboard shortcuts to stop, slow down, rewind two seconds, and fast forward two seconds.

Thematic analysis is a means to identify and analyse patterns of meaning in a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). With the use of thematic analysis, a researcher can confirm which themes are important to the study (Daly et al., 1997). I used thematic content analysis to analyze the texts and stories from interviews, beginning with verbatim transcription. The six phases of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis plan are, become familiar with the data, create initial codes, search for themes, define theme and write-up (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The analysis began with me reading and rereading the transcriptions and taking notes to become familiar with participant responses. Step 2 consisted of coding to reduce the data into smaller portions and meanings (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). During thematic analysis, I coded each segment of data that was relevant to the research question. I used open coding, creating labels for data while working through the process. I did not approach data analysis with preset codes; rather, I developed codes as I reviewed participants' words, modifying them as necessary. In Step 3, the codes examined fit into themes. For example, several codes were related to teacher preparation and training to teach bilingual or ELL students. I grouped these into initial theme called Teacher Preparation. In Step 4, I reviewed the initial themes identified in Step 3. Table 3 is an example of open coding.

Table 3

Open Codes for Subquestion 1: What are the lived experiences and perceptions of bilingual teachers regarding their teacher preparation and training in working with bilingual students or English language learners?

Open code	Examples of participants' words
Training	"A lot of theories"
Preparation	"Not enough practice"
Program	"I think it helped a little"
University	"I don't think the university really prepared"

According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), in coding, researchers should ask the question, "Do they make sense?" and gather all the data this is relevant to each theme. With the use of the qualitative data analysis software program NVivo 12, I read the data I had assigned to each theme to ensure the material truly supported the theme. Step 5 allowed me to define themes to confirm their meaning and how they related to each other; this helped make connections to use in the thematic analysis. In the analysis, a researcher looks for common themes, a precise pattern of meaning found in the information (Joffe, 2012), comparing them from one participant to another. The final step entailed writing the results. Table 4 shows the timeline for development of this record of study.

Table 4

Research Timeline

Date	Action
September 2017	Urban School of Texas research application submitted
October 2017	Urban School of Texas research application approved Develop interview instrument
December 2017	Received IRB approval Meet with field advisor (school principal) Interview teacher 1
January 2018	Interview teacher 2
March 2018	Proposal approved
April 2018	Meet with field advisor (school principal) Interview teacher 3 Interview teacher 4 Interview teacher 5
May 2018	Transcribe data
June 2018	Analyze data First round of coding (dependability)
August 2018	Second round of coding (dependability)
September 2018	Determine themes
October 2018	Determine themes
November 2018	Develop checklist Delphi review round of checklist
December 2018	Final Delphi review round of checklist
January 2019	Create final checklist

Trustworthiness

Leung (2015) suggested that researchers begin by asking if the tools, processes, and data are valid and appropriate for their study. In order to establish trustworthiness of this record of study's findings, the researcher implemented methods presented by Guba (1981). To ensure

credibility, peer debriefing was employed during the study. I developed the research question and subquestions by participating in peer debriefings with the record of study committee. For example, one-on-one teacher interviews were open-ended using the same set of questions; this type of questioning allows participants to share as much detailed information as they wish and permits the researcher to ask probing questions (Turner, 2010). The following steps guided thematic analysis codification: become familiar with the data by reading and rereading transcripts; create general initial codes; search for, review, and define themes; and write up the results. To increase dependability, I created an audit trail (interview notes, transcripts, theme tables) by providing detailed processes of data collection, thematic analysis, and data strategy. The audit trail process included obtaining consent and recording each interview on a digital device. To improve confirmability (also known as objectivity in quantitative studies), the author compared data to ensure this study could be repeated.

The choice of qualitative methodology was appropriate for answering the research questions. The research design enabled exploration and understanding of the phenomenon in question. McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, and Maurer (1994) found that using situational and job-related questions produced the best results for research compared to administrative purposes. In other words, McDaniel et al. proposed that interviews conducted for research purposes are more structured compared to queries in the private sector (e.g., business, employment, and other industries).

To obtain participants, I first consulted with the school principal. The goal was to recruit a group of teachers with various experiences, such as number of years teaching bilingual students, training, and preparation in different grade levels. Five participants were an appropriate sample size to perform an in-depth study of the phenomenon. As outlined by Steber (2017),

conducting one-on-one, in-depth interviews contributes to better rapport and more insightful responses, facilitating follow-up questions. On the same topic, Dworkin (2012) said, "In-depth interview work is not as concerned with making generalizations to a larger population of interest and does not tend to rely on hypothesis testing but rather is more inductive and emergent in its process." (p. 3). As such, the aim of in-depth interviews is to generate themes and subsequently analyze the relationships between them.

Dependability is analogous to stability of the data over time (Polit & Beck, 2014). The use of dependability served to increase confidence in the results. To increase dependability of the findings, I coded all data more than once. After a 2-month break from the first round of coding, I conducted a second round of coding, following the same format as the first round and using NVivo 12 again.

To determine the percentage agreement between codes, I calculated the ratio of all coding agreements over the total number of disagreements observed. Table 5 shows the dependability between the first and second rounds of coding.

Table 5

Dependability: First Round vs. Second Round

Codes	Frequency (Time 1)	Frequency (Time 2)	Agreement
Gathering data for IAT	7	7	1
Distinguishing SLA and LD	7	6	0
Teacher preparation to teach ELLs	7	7	1
Need for a checklist	8	8	1

In the codes of *gathering data for IAT*, *teacher preparation to teach ELLs*, and *need for a checklist*, the first and second round of coding produced the same numbers of frequency and agreement; however, the *distinguishing SLA and LD* code resulted in disagreement. This process yielded a dependability of 75% of the data, indicating there was disagreement in only 25% of the data. Because each interview was unique, achieving dependability was a concern due to differences between interviewer and interviewee (Conway, Jako, & Goodman, 1995). Although not a deliberate effort to elicit inconsistency, threats to dependability are inherent due to the nature of qualitative inquiry and the interview process. Other factors that could cause dependability concerns were that the teachers had different levels of education, experiences, and teaching philosophies. To maximize dependability, each participant received the same questions in the one-on-one interviews.

Ethical Considerations

Each teacher participant received a copy of the informed consent form (see Appendix B); in addition, I reviewed the consent document with the school principal. The informed consent form provided a thorough explanation of the study so each teacher understood what participation would entail. Participants received as much time as needed to review the form and decide. Upon signing the document, participants received a copy to keep for themselves.

All research materials will remain private, including audio recordings of interviews, researcher notes, signed informed consent forms, and others. No identifiers linking participants to this study will appear in any public or publishable report. Research records remain stored securely, with only the faculty and I having access. All related computer files are password-protected in a locked office space. Representatives of regulatory agencies, such as the Office of Human Research Protections and entities such as the Texas A&M University Human Subjects

Protection Program, may access the records to ensure proper operation of the study and information collection.

The Delphi Technique

The Delphi technique entails the involvement of experts to provide guidance and test statements to achieve consensus on certain topics (Iqbal & Pipon-Young, 2009). As such, the Delphi technique served as a tool to create the checklist. The Delphi technique steps are (1) select a group of participants or panelist who are experts in the area, (2) the method requires two or more rounds of panelist to review the drafted checklist, panelist consisted of bilingual educational diagnosticians, a licensed specialist in school psychology, and an IAT chairperson (3) the ideas and comments from round one helped with the design of the final checklist, (4) the panel and comments from round one helped with design of the final checklist (5) the comments and reviews of the panelist underwent careful review of find consensus (Iqbal & Pipon-Young, 2009).

The expert panel comprised a bilingual educational diagnostician, a bilingual licensed specialist in school psychology (LSSP), and a bilingual IAT chairperson. Prior to the first round of review, the group answered three questions: (a) How would the checklist help the IAT? (b) Is there anything you would like to include in this checklist?; and (c) Is there anything you would like to edit or correct? In the first round of review, the bilingual educational diagnostician provided two key ideas and comments for the checklist: to make the checklist available to all elementary teachers and not only bilingual instructors, and to ask teachers to bring student work samples. The IAT chairperson had one suggestion, which was to make the checklist user-friendly and concise, because teachers do not have the time to complete long, complex forms. The LSSP suggested including the number of years the student received instruction in the bilingual or ESL

classroom. After I considered and implemented their suggestions, the panelists reevaluated the checklist and had no further suggestions.

Limitations

One of the limitations encountered during this study was the time-consuming process in scheduling interviews with the teachers and finding appropriate times to meet. The interviews took place during and after school. Meetings with the teachers were at times difficult to schedule; however, they were very enthusiastic to participate and passionate about both teaching and students. The second limitation was the choice of only bilingual teachers for interviews, when nonbilingual teachers also work with ELLs in the Texas urban school district. A study with nonbilingual teachers would reveal if the same concerns exist. Also uncovered in such an inquiry would be how teachers received training to work with ELLs and collect information when considering a student referral for special education assessment. Expanding the sample population may have revealed whether teaching ELLs in urban schools is a concern for all instructors, not just bilingual ones. Also answered might be whether nonbilingual teachers should be able to distinguish between learning disability and language acquisition.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter III

The proposed checklist and research methodology may provide support to the teachers working with bilingual students who plan to introduce a student's case at the IAT meeting. Using the qualitative method for this study was appropriate to build an in-depth understanding of interviewees' experiences. The use of predetermined, open-ended interview questions allowed the teachers to share their knowledge and understanding about preparing for an IAT meeting and what student information to collect. Coding of interview transcripts took place using thematic analysis with the aid of NVivo qualitative data analysis software. I coded the transcripts twice

utilizing the Delphi technique sequence to increase dependability. After 2 months had elapsed, recorded transcripts enabled a review for consistency and dependability. It was important to keep all transcripts organized and in a safe place, not only for the sake of confidentiality, but because a second review was essential to improve consistency. The results of the interviews and coding confirmed the need for a checklist that will assist teachers in distinguishing whether a special education referral is appropriate for bilingual students in the classroom, helping them to collect useful information for the IAT meeting.

Chapter 4 includes a presentation of the data according to emerging themes from the interviews. Interview data proved sufficient to answer the research and sub research questions. Categorization into relevant themes was indicative of current practices of bilingual teachers when considering a bilingual student for special education referral.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction to the Analysis

This chapter presents the results of the five in-depth, one-on-one interviews conducted to answer the overarching research question: "What are the current practices of bilingual teachers when considering a bilingual student for special education assessment?" Specifically, addressing this question was by means of three subquestions, which also contributed to developing the checklist to guide teachers in collecting data for IAT meetings. The subquestions were as follows:

SQ1. What are the lived experiences and perceptions of bilingual teachers regarding their teacher preparation and training in working with bilingual students and English language learners?

SQ2. How are bilingual teachers gathering information for the intervention assistance team meetings when a bilingual student shows characteristics of learning difficulty?

SQ3. How do bilingual teachers distinguish between language acquisition and learning disability?

I conducted five interviews with bilingual elementary school teachers working with ELLs, collecting information related to these research questions. Audio-recorded interviews underwent transcription for accuracy of data analysis, with subsequent thematic analysis. The first step in thematic analysis is to become familiar with the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017), reading and rereading transcripts and making note of early impressions. The second step is to generate initial codes and organize the data in a meaningful and systematic way (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Accordingly, I used NVivo 12 to code text from the transcripts that seemed

relevant to or specifically addressed the research questions. Step 3 was to look for themes (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017), which emerged from examining the codes. When organized, the themes revealed information appropriate for addressing the research questions. Statements that were not representative of or aligned with this study's questions were not fundamental and thus eliminated. For example, discussions about teachers' desire to change the physical aspects of the classroom were irrelevant to the research question. Ultimately, the data collected fit into themes, with subsequent assembly into the related views from each participant. The themes that resulted from the analysis of participants' feelings, awareness, and practices appear in Table 6.

Table 6

Themes Within Posed Research Subquestion Codes

Subquestions		
SQ1. What are the lived experiences and perceptions of bilingual teachers regarding their teacher preparation and training in working with bilingual students and English language learners?	SQ2. How are bilingual teachers gathering information for the intervention assistance team meetings when a bilingual student shows characteristics of learning difficulty?	SQ3. How do bilingual teachers distinguish between language acquisition and learning disability?
Feel inadequate to teach ELLs	Informal methods of gathering data	Distinguishing based on grades, opportunities and intervention
Teachers bridging the gap between preparation and practice	Teacher's perception of IAT process and familiarity	Informal assessment and observation of the students in the classroom

It is important to note the difference between feelings and practices. As related to the data in this study, *feelings* means intuitive knowledge or ability. Alternately, *practices* are those that teachers carry out or apply. As defined in this study, *awareness* means knowledge and

understanding that something is happening or exists. *Foundation to teach* refers how the teachers feel about the courses, preparation, training, and student teaching they received during their university years.

Research Subquestion 1

The first research subquestion for this study was, "What are the lived experiences and perceptions of bilingual teachers regarding their teacher preparation and training in working with bilingual students and English language learners?" SQ1 probed the teacher's preparedness and if they felt ready to teach and work with bilingual or ELL students. Findings appearing according to themes that emerged from the interview data were: (a) feeling inadequate to teach ELLs and (b) teachers bridging the gap between preparation and purpose. Teachers bridging the gap between preparation and practice are those attempting to self-teach and seeking assistance from colleagues and mentors.

Theme 1: Feel Inadequate to Teach English Language Learners

For this study, one of the common themes that emerged for Research Subquestion 1 pertained to teachers' preparation and training to teach bilingual students or ELLs. Accordingly, each participant shared whether the preparation and training were helpful. Out of five teachers, only one found the preparation and training adequate. Responses regarding teacher preparation adequacy appear in Table 7.

Table 7

Subquestion 1, Theme 1: Feel Inadequate to Teach English Language Learners

Sense of adequacy	Number of responses
Adequate	1
Inadequate	4

About teacher training, Anna said, “I think it helped a little.” She expressed the difference between teacher preparation and the real world, noting that the in-service and the classroom reality are entirely different. Working as a teacher in a real classroom and being in a classroom preparing to become a teacher are sometimes disparate stages in education. Anna continued, “[It] is different when you’re working; you’re in the reality of the situation.” In the same response, she added, “I think gave me the basic—probably the opportunity [for] how can I handle [students] and how can I get help.”

Belinda discussed her preservice training, saying, “I went to [University of Houston-Downtown]. I think it was very good. We had a year and half in the classroom. I wish there were more in-depth [instruction] in foundation of literacy; I think it was glossed over.” In response to a follow-up question— “Do you feel you get enough support when you see a student with learning disability?”—she responded:

> We used to have a lot of manpower, but after 2011, there were a lot of cutbacks, and it feels like a skeleton crew. We used to have this thing called “reading recovery,” which is very good for those kids without reading [abilities]. It was one child at a time, ideally: small group setting and be pulled out.

Belinda expressed a desire for more training in addressing difficult students. She identified a lack of focus in reading and writing to help improve the development of students’ thinking and learning.

Clara also attended University of Houston-Downtown, at which she felt there was a shortage of practice:

> The program—we started in the classroom right away, the last year, the last three months, and we [did] student teaching; that helped a lot. Organizing small groups—we do a lot of theories and things like that . . . not enough practice.

Clara identified a discrepancy in teacher certification during her preservice preparation. She spent two full semesters in an ESL classroom when she was training to become a bilingual teacher. However, she was little perplexed, because the mentoring ESL teacher was not ESL certified, but rather had bilingual certification. "I had to be in ESL classroom, but the teachers were bilingual certified—somehow it counted—so I wasn't fully with bilingual students." Clara had concerns about whether she spent her practicum hours in the correct classroom; further, she did not spend her practice hours with bilingual students. She wished there had been a year of student teaching, not moving from classroom to classroom during the program. It would have helped, she added, "to see the progress in the students [by staying] longer in one school."

If she were to train other ELL teachers, Clara would recommend having high expectations of the students, giving them plenty of opportunities and teaching with an open mind. "I believe we don't give opportunities to kids, and probably that's a problem. Teachers are not open-minded . . . always give a lot of high expectations because the kids can do it; keep pushing and trying."

Diana had been teaching for 15 years. She used to teach environmental science at the college level in her native country of Argentina; when she arrived in the United States, her goal was to teach high school math, chemistry, and physics. However, because she was not proficient in the English language, she opted to teach elementary students. She said that high school teachers must write more, and with her pronunciation, it is easier to teach in elementary school. When asked how she felt about her preparation and training to teach bilingual or ELL students

(SQ1), she related having a lack of special education preparation and training. Diana wished the district would provide training to close the gap:

> I always say I want staff development for special education, but the district is not able [to provide such training] for normal teacher[s]; that kind of staff development [is] for the person . . . in . . . special education. I don't know why. But I think that we need more help, because there are some dyslexic students, [who are] not very easy to recognize.

She added that she receives staff development for math, science, reading, and writing "all the time—but [nothing] for special education."

For Elena, working as a teacher assistant was more helpful than being in the classroom during her teacher preparation. She shared:

> To be honest, I don't think [I was prepared to teach ELL students]. . . . What helped me was . . . I was a teacher assistant for seven years. I think this experience helped me [know] what to do with the kids. . . . I don't think the university really prepared teachers for that.

Elena shared that her experience as an assistant gave her the needed background to succeed; in turn, her willingness to become better helped her to become a better teacher.

Theme 2: Teachers Bridging the Gap Between Preparation and Practice

Anna stated that to grow as a teacher and improve takes proactivity in seeking assistance and self-teaching. "If you know how to get help, work in teams, if you keep updating [by] going to training and [professional development] and [know you] really need help with this—[that's what it takes] just to become a better teacher."

To improve her practice, Belinda identified one area in which she would like more training: "Definitely foundation in literacy in both languages because we're moving to 50/50

model." The 50/50 model means teachers provide at least 50% of instruction in English, in combination with the 50% of Spanish students receive in her class. Belinda expressed concern that some bilingual teachers' first language is Spanish, and they are not familiar with English literacy. "Bilingual teachers need to know English phonetics," she stressed.

Clara felt it would be very helpful to have someone to model the theoretical information teachers receive in professional development. She learns and receives great teaching ideas, but explained that when teachers return to their classrooms, they do not know how to implement the ideas. To remedy the gap between preparation and practice, Clara argued that teachers preparing themselves for teaching was a means for them to get better at teaching. She specified that her preparation and training were not as helpful, because most of her schooling was not in education. With regard to receiving help from other teachers, Clara said, "At the beginning, I didn't receive [any], but then because I want to know, another teacher helped me; now I know better."

Elena expressed a desire for more training in teaching strategies. She stated the following:

> I think training in guided reading . . . What techniques are they using, what activities are they using doing small group—more like small-group instruction, so that kind of support and training . . . differentiation, training and maybe ESL strategies, what support to give to the students. I've seen new teachers: They try their best; they just don't know. They just sit a child in front of board with just letters and letters and letters, no visuals at all. Things like that—that kind of support... how to help... ESL kids.

Research Subquestion 2

The second subquestion for this study was, "How are bilingual teachers gathering information for the intervention assistance team meetings when a bilingual student shows

characteristics of learning difficulty?" Answering this subquestion required probing for an informal method of collecting data for the IAT. I sought to uncover what methods classroom teachers were using and if they had any formal way of gathering information. Two themes emerged from this question: (a) informal methods of gathering data and (b) teachers' perceptions of IAT process and familiarity.

Teacher's data-gathering for IAT meetings entails having a method to document, collect, and bring student information; however, there is not an official process or checklist in place for collecting such data, as confirmed by interview responses. Nevertheless, teachers bring information they identify as helpful, such as reports, report cards, journals and notes, and anything else that might show student progress. Teachers' perceptions of and familiarity with IAT processes pertain to the educators' awareness what IAT meetings entail, who participates, and the function of the meeting.

Theme 1: Informal Methods of Gathering Data

This was the first theme that emerged in response to SQ2. In exploring this question, I sought to uncover evidence on what information teachers had to help them make a sound decision on whether the student should continue with intervention or move to special education assessment. A summary of responses appears in Table 8.

Table 8

Subquestion 2, Theme 1: Informal Methods of Gathering Data

Methods for gathering data	Number of teachers' responses
Formal	0
Informal	5

Anna identified her methods as "formally guided reading in small group; running records. . . formal test[s], checkpoints, so we can look if the student is making progress." With regard to having an official form to gather the documentation, she said, "I think we have those forms I [am] told, but they're very general." Returning to her IAT preparation, she added, "So, all the assessment we give to the students, results—I brought all the journals, the work that we did together, and show them the progress."

Belinda related her data-gathering method to be a "guided reading notebook, and then I give them review[s] I write, my own little checklist." In the absence of an official or formal way to gathering students' progress or struggles, Belinda created her own checklist to assist with information-gathering. Clara, said she does not have any formal means of collecting information:

> I don't have a system; I'm trying to organize with that in my career. I know a lot [of] teacher[s] have journals, something I've been working on. I write down notes, sticky notes on my computer, and later read about it. Something like that.

In the absence of a formal method of documentation, Clara collects student data "informally in the classroom, [and] formally [through] guided reading in small group[s]."

Diana said she brings report cards and work samples to IAT meetings, along with student grades and other strategies:

> Report, report card, writing sample. . . reading comprehension, grade, testing on in [test grades]. That is a first one. The second one, I need to have a process for the sixth week or strategy used with the person and if they have success or not.

Despite this list of information, she does not have a checklist to help her organize information into a single document.

Elena said she has her own list of what to bring to IAT meetings. She shared her materials: “All the assessment we give to the kids; I brought all the journals, the work that we did together and show the [student’s] progress.” The work samples are useful to the IAT, providing valuable information for the evaluation team.

Theme 2: Teachers’ Perceptions of Intervention Assistance Team Process and Familiarity

The second theme pertains to the teacher’s awareness of the IAT process and other facts about the meetings, such as who takes part. To delve deeper into this topic, I asked a follow-up question: “How do you feel about the IAT process and who participates in it?” Anna responded:

> We have an administrator, principal, AP, counselor—those are the main ones. The teacher, sometimes the other teachers involved, sometimes speech [therapists] can be there, diagnostician, psychologists—I have seen that, [as well as] people outside the school; it depends. I believe that they are [a] very supportive part of the school, because [they] not only do this as a committee, they keep track of that [IAT process] and give recommendation[s]. Maybe you can go this path, and we can meet in 4 months. I believe [it] is very helpful.

When asked about IAT awareness and usefulness, Belinda presented an opposite opinion from Anna. Belinda does not feel like IAT has been useful. The teacher stated, “Basically I do my own [mediation]; all my students get my interventions.”

With regard to her awareness of the IAT, Clara started by listing the members: “counselor, teacher, parent, and someone from special education”; however, she failed to mention that a school administrator (principal or assistant principal) must be present. She discussed one struggling student in particular. To further explore this topic, I asked, “Have you thought about bringing this student to IAT when they are struggling?” She responded, “I haven’t,

because I know this student can do it; I think its task avoidance. So, for this student, I started a folder and I [gave] him a sticker; it's been working, but this week was hard."

Clara has taken the initiative to provide intervention and collect data in the folder. She is hopeful the student is capable of making progress, as she felt the child was simply avoiding classroom work. The next query pertained to her hesitance in participating in IAT meetings due to the lack of training. "Have you taken any courses to prepare for the IAT?" I asked. She responded, "No. I would like them to put more emphasis in special education. We only took one class and more classes will be good. We need help how to teach in special education."

Asked about her perceptions of IAT process, Diana said:

> We meet with the assistants and the parent, and the parent gave the permission to the test and then the person is testing the student. My only concern is that process is long—[it] is about 1 year. [It] should be shorter, I think, to help the student.

Elena's response was similar to Diana's, in that she also said the process was too lengthy:

> So they took notes, we met with parents, we brought this case to the district . . . and they did a follow-up, and I think the child did [qualify] in second grade. It was a long process; I think it was too long. We gave him what he needed in the classroom. But, I don't know—I think our district needs to do a better job in following up in speeding up the process. I know they have to wait [until] the child is [a] certain age because it can get confusing, but still.

Diana shared that the student she referred started to receive special education services in the next grade level. She also mentioned that sometimes a student needs to wait to be a certain age to start receiving special education services.

Research Subquestion 3

The third subquestion was, "How do bilingual teachers distinguish between language acquisition and learning disability?" This question referred to the teachers' ability to distinguish whether a bilingual student has a learning disability or is still learning the language. Two themes emerged from this interview question: (a) distinguishing based on grades, opportunities, and interventions and (b) informal student assessment and observation.

The first theme entailed differentiating based on the grades, opportunities, and interventions students received to improve and progress. Students received ample opportunities and interventions to make progress in language acquisition; in the absence of progress, however, some teachers referred students for special education. The second theme was related to teachers making informal assessments and observations of students in the classroom and noticing any abnormal reactions during instruction.

Theme 1: Distinguishing Based on Grades, Opportunities, and Intervention

In SQ3, the predominant theme was how teachers were distinguishing between learning disability and language acquisition by examining grades, opportunities, and classroom intervention. There is, however, no formal method for all instructors. Table 9 shows whether teachers were aware or unaware of distinguishing learning disability and language acquisition.

Table 9

Subquestion 3, Theme 1: Distinguishing Based on Grades, Opportunities, and Interventions

Awareness	Number of teachers' responses
Aware	0
Unaware	5

Anna related her concerns about deciding to refer a student for special education services:

> I think students need time—you're not working, you're spending too much time doing homework, a lot of accommodation. . . I believe at that time, [if] the grades don't go up, you try to give him more opportunity. I think that's the point you have enough documentation to bring to the staff and recommend the student. But [it] is not to qualify, but to find out and try to help him more, find out what is going on.

The way Belinda distinguishes between learning disability and language acquisition is by reading students the material in English. If they struggle with the target language, she puts them in small groups to help with the problem. If the students continue to struggle, then she provides more translation. At that point, if the students are still showing difficulty, then she determines the student shows characteristics of learning disability.

Clara said when the teacher is spending an additional time with the student, providing extra accommodation without seeing progress, then she has enough evidence to bring to the IAT to discuss different methods to help the students. Clara indicated:

> We work in team[s]. If I knew that student and that student is bilingual, I can . . . talk to him in Spanish if they have a background in Spanish. I can find out what could be the problem, if it is the language and maybe there could be something else. Maybe I can be a help.

Clara further noted that a weak first language does not mean the student should receive a referral for special education; rather, she views this weakness as a lack of opportunity. She likes to spend time with struggling students to get to know them.

Diana discussed her differentiation process. "I think that when I teach, they learn faster, more quickly [than having a] learning disability. [For a] learning disability, [instructors] need to

teach one, two, three, four, say multiple times in a row." Diana advocated for the use of different strategies to explain new concepts. Elena identified the need for intervention when "you know you've provided support to the child," such as accommodation in their first language; however, if there is no progress, then most likely the student needs further intervention and potential referral.

Theme 2: Informal Assessment and Observation of Students in the Classroom

Belinda said she performs an informal assessment by first reading to bilingual students in English, and then placing them in small groups. At that point, she said, "We work together and we target the problem. Or if it is the lack of English, I translate three out of four [words] to [help them] master the skill." Then, Belinda said, she observes their behavior: "I look at their eyes; I can tell when they get it and pay attention." She identifies students with disability as those who appear unfocused and unengaged, saying, "Those students with disability tune out very quickly in English; they're not even engaged in their first language. They're distracted in listening."

Clara said that seeing certain behaviors in bilingual students when reading and writing in English affirms the presence of a learning disability. She identified these characteristics as appearing:

> mostly in language arts. When it comes [to] language arts, the student is able to express how he/she feels, but they [have a] harder time reading and writing. Just decoding, reading fluently—they stop; they think it's the end of sentence; [they struggle with] long words.

Reviewing transcripts pertaining to this subresearch question confirmed that teachers do not have a research-based tool, such as a checklist, to help them distinguish between second language acquisition and learning disability. The data collected in response to these questions factored into creation of an IAT checklist to help them provide information for disability identification.

Research Question

Thematic analysis of transcripts from the individual interviews was sufficient to answer the overarching research question: "What are the current practices of bilingual teachers when considering a bilingual student for special education assessment?" This broad question led to three subquestions regarding the specifics of the study, which helped focus the scope of the study and answer the overarching question. The research question also provided direction for the specific data to collect regarding how bilingual teachers feel about preparedness in teaching ELLs, how they gather information for IAT meetings, and how they differentiate between language acquisition and learning disability. The answers presented for each of the subquestions confirmed the need for teacher guidance.

The bilingual teachers expressed shortcomings in teacher preservice preparation and the lack of orientation in gathering data for the IAT. Also revealed was that teachers do not have a consistent method to distinguish between learning disability and language acquisition. Four out of five teachers expressed that their teacher preparation or training was inadequate. "I think they gave me the basics," offered Anna in response. Clara said she wished her preservice education required a full year of training in a single classroom, instead of transitioning after a semester to another classroom, where teachers had to build relationships with students again. She recalled her placement in an ESL classroom when the training purpose was for bilingual certification. The answers to this question revealed information on the lack of preservice preparedness when working with ELLs.

Also explored was how bilingual teachers gathered information for IAT meetings when a bilingual student showed characteristics of learning difficulty. I wanted to learn about how and

what the teachers were collecting for the IAT meetings. These data presented key information for answering the overarching research question and helped shape the checklist development.

When prompted on how they gathered information for IAT meetings, all five participants related not having a formal method of collecting materials. Clara quickly responded to this question by sharing a personal lack of formal data collection means, despite other teachers having journals. She added that she takes notes on memo pads and put them on her computer monitor. Clara did not have any guidance or practice in collecting proper data that would lead to evidence of struggling students. Elena said that she brought work samples and notes. Belinda expressed, "I just write my own little checklist." Diana said she feels confident with her documentation and data-gathering, despite the lack of a formal document. Elena brings assessment results, journals, and other work samples that are useful for the IAT; however, she lacks a formal means of documentation guiding her in key elements to consider when distinguishing between learning disability and language acquisition.

The third sub research question was, "How do bilingual teachers distinguish between language acquisition and when a student is having a learning disability?" In response to SQ3, the teachers in this group related being largely unaware of the differences between learning difficulty and learning disability. Anna said she puts struggling students in small groups to see how they work; she also helps them with translation. Belinda stated, "The one learning English will respond in Spanish just like any other student, and they'll start watching me and are attentive when I speak." The teacher explained these students make good eye contact to stay involved with the lesson. In this way, Belinda relied on the student's response and would discern that students were paying attention by looking at their eyes.

Also, with regard to SQ3, Clara related that students with a learning disability quickly become disengaged when the lesson is in English and not their first language. “They are distracted in listening,” she said, and they have difficulty in completing the assignments. This teacher paid attention to how the student reacted to instruction by noticing the student’s response and engagement. Diana replied similarly on how students react and behave: “I think that when I teach, they learn faster, more quickly that learning disability. . . [Instructors] need to teach one, two, three, four, say multiple times.” Elena responded that, with regard to distinguishing between a student who is learning the language or is showing characteristics of a learning disability, a teacher first needs a comprehensive overview of the student’s ability after providing accommodation in the first language. She added, “If that child does not comprehend” when all the support is in the first language, then the student may have some learning difficulties.

Need for a Checklist

All five bilingual elementary teacher participants indicated the need for a best practice guide and checklist to collect data for IAT meetings. Table 10 provides an overview of responses.

Table 10

Need for a Checklist

Checklist Needed	Number of teachers’ responses
No	0
Yes	5

Anna indicated she uses an informal form, albeit one that does not fully meet her needs:

> [The checklist is] very general; we have to have something more specific that would help the teachers, and I believe the program. [The] ESL program needs to have more support [and] development. The program is changing; we are becoming [a] dual-language class.

Belinda added, "I would love a checklist and a section where you can write anecdotal, what the child can and can't do." Clara also responded in the affirmative, saying, "Yes, that would be very helpful." Diana replied, "Yes! So when you go to the IAT, you could say, 'Here is my checklist documentation.'" Elena also felt a formal checklist would be "perfect," but asked, "What's the next step for us? We need someone to come and help the teachers; there [needs] to be a follow-up."

Four teachers had experience referring students to IAT and special education services. One participant has taught for only 2 years and has not referred anyone; however, she has started the process for one student struggling with reading. During the interviews, participants expressed they would like to have more training in their teacher preparation courses with regard to special education and how to work with students with learning difficulties. This study's findings confirmed the need for a guiding checklist for documentation collection before IAT meetings. Elena said, "Right now, I don't know if I'm doing the right thing or not. But with the checklist you're talking about, I could collect a lot of objective information."

Checklist Development

Hales, Terblanche, Folwer, and Sibbald (2008) stated that "a checklist is an organized tool that outlines criteria of consideration for a process" (p. 32). Checklists serve as reasoning aids to guide users through accurate task completion; as such, their development involves a systematic and comprehensive approach (Hales et al., 2008). A checklist should be a support and

resource by delineating and classifying items as a list, a format that streamlines conceptualization and recall of information and that has proven effective in various aspects of routine improvement and error prevention and management (Hales, 2008).

The development of the IAT checklist (Appendix C) for this study was adapted from Table 1 (Hamayan, Marler, Sanchez-Lopez, & J. Damico, 2007). The intent of the original table by Hamayan et. al was to serve as "springboard" for ELL teachers to develop their own clarification for difficulties observed in the students (p. 39). In the development of the checklist, I considered culturally responsive pedagogical approaches to include students' cultural references as much as academic background (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Therefore, in the IAT checklist, background information such as schooling, history and teacher's perception of parental engagement were included. These points are important because they will provide additional information about the student in addition to the academic difficulties.

The thematic analysis of interview responses showed a need to address the following points:

- Additional professional development when working with bilingual students or ELLs
- Lack of a formal system for collecting data for IAT meetings
- Awareness and guidance in distinguishing between learning disability and language acquisition

The checklist design (see Appendix C) was such to enable a defined action for the IAT meeting, guiding teachers in what type of information to collect. Three experts in the field—a bilingual educational diagnostician, an LSSP, and the IAT chairperson—reviewed the checklist. Creation of the checklist entailed five steps, (1) development of draft checklist based on the thematic analysis results, (2) Delphi review rounds, (3) design of the final checklist, (4) final

Delphi review round and (5) creation of the final checklist (J. Schmutz, W. J. Eppich, F. Hoffmann, E. Heimberg, and T. Manser, 2014).

Interaction Between Research and Context

This study addressed a needed area in schools identified by Hernandez, Ramanathan, Harr, and Socias (2008), who wrote: "Interventions aimed at improving the quality of the referral and identification processes may minimize inappropriate identifications and possible unintended consequences" (p. 64). The school district studied is in a large city in Texas. Approximately one-third of the district's PK-12 students are LEP, with over 50 languages spoken. About 35.4% of students were enrolled in bilingual and English language learning programs. Such population allowed for exploration of an important area of needed improvement in the district: preparing bilingual teachers for the IAT by assisting them in collecting useful data to prevent unnecessary special education referrals (Hernandez et. al., 2008). The most helpful stakeholder in this process was the campus principal, who not only embraced the study, but facilitated recruitment by providing a list of possible teachers willing to participate in the interviews. The principal also explained the school's intervention and referral process and assisted with construction of the interview questions. The principal was the ideal field supervisor, always available to give feedback and ideas. In addition, it was a rewarding experience to meet the five teachers and interview them about their experience with IAT. Every teacher had a unique background and personal story.

Upon receipt of the results of the study, the school principal had only positive reactions. Perceived as a useful guide for the IAT, these results led to reflection on means of process improvement. The school principal mentioned potential training for the teachers utilizing the

checklist. Also suggested was including interviews with parents in further studies. Further discussion of this recommendation appears in Chapter 5.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter IV

The individual interviews clearly confirmed the need for a checklist to assist teachers in collecting better data before attending the IAT meeting. The overarching research question led to the three subquestions focusing the essentials of the study to answer the overarching question. Such guidance provided a path for appropriate data collection. A proper process and uniform documentation will lead to more successful interventions, which will help determine whether a student merits referral for special education assessment. None of the participants had a formal document to use. Participating teachers overwhelmingly agreed on the need for a research-based checklist to assist in differentiating between characteristics of learning difficulty or language acquisition and guide them along the process for intervention.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

To address the learning challenges of ELLs and prevent unwarranted representation of these students in special education, the school's IAT uses the RTI model—a "process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention" (IDEA, 2004)—which scholars have identified as the most promising approach to support early intervention in the general education setting (Abou-Rjaily & Stoddard, 2017). Classroom teachers need support and adequate tools to help them distinguish between language acquisition difficulties and learning disabilities when working with ELLs (Zehler et al., 2003). A checklist can advance individual and group collaboration in an IAT meeting to address central arguments and avoid unnecessary special education referrals. In a qualitative study, the researcher is often the core instrument of data collection and analysis. I conducted all interviews with bilingual elementary teachers to better understand the current practice regarding IAT and the need for a checklist.

The five bilingual elementary teachers who participated in this study indicated they would like to have a checklist to help them collect documentation for the IAT meeting. One interviewee noted that, although there is a form she uses, it is too general; as such, she would like something more specific. Another teacher said she simply uses sticky notes, which she posts on her computer monitor. The school district has neither formal methods of data collection nor a guide for the teachers on what type of data to collect. The checklist will guide and assist teachers in making the right decisions, adding consistency and formality to the process of data collection.

Another teacher expressed that having a section for the teachers to write notes or anecdotal evidence on the checklist would be helpful. Four teachers had experienced referring

students to IAT and special education services; however, they would still like to have a simple and specific checklist. The interviews also revealed that participants desired more training in special education and how to better assess students with learning difficulties in their teacher preparation courses.

Discussion of Results in Relation to the Extant Literature or Theories

For each research question, I describe the ways the results of this study confirmed or extended knowledge. I interpreted the findings in the context of the constructivist conceptual framework, as introduced by Vygotsky in 1978. Following is a discussion of results in accordance with the subquestions that guided this study.

Existing Literature in Relation to Research Subquestion 1

Allowing for the acquisition of information about teachers' preparation and training when working with bilingual and ELL students, SQ1 was, "What are the lived experiences and perceptions of bilingual teachers regarding their teacher preparation and training in working with bilingual students and English language learners?" During data analysis, two themes arose related to feeling inadequate to teach bilingual students or ELLs and bridging the gap between preparation and practice. The findings of this study confirm and extend that found in the existing literature.

The theme of feeling inadequately prepared aligns with findings by Tigert and Peercy (2017). In their study, all teacher candidates indicated a belief that their university coursework did not prepare them to teach in the content area. Instructors struggled with teaching content when working with ELLs and integrating language. Santibañez and Gándara (2018) surveyed 329 secondary teachers to investigate their preparation for teaching ELLs. Over 70% responded

that preservice preparation had not equipped them for designing formative assessment to monitor language development and engage with ELL parents.

Regarding SQ1 of this record of study, four out of the five teachers interviewed responded that their university coursework and classroom training did not prepare them well. Kolano et al. (2014) explored the effectiveness of teacher training programs and professional development experiences of 157 teachers in North and South Carolina. The survey included open-ended questions about perceptions and experiences teaching linguistically diverse students. Nearly 88% of the teachers discussed the lack of emphasis on CLD students and the inadequacy of their teacher training program in preparing them to teach ELLs.

Professional development in the school districts play an important role in filling the gap between preparation and practice, particularly because teacher certification programs lack groundwork for future ELL teachers (Gándara & Santibañez, 2016). In 2018, Santibañez and Gándara surveyed in excess of 550 teachers in Los Angeles, a school district with more ELLs than any other in the US. The researchers found an average of 17 hours per year devoted to instruction for teaching ELLs, a number that teachers expressed was not sufficient. In the same survey, Santibañez and Gándara asked about the challenges of teaching ELLs and the support that would be most helpful. The majority of respondents identified weakness in teacher preparation as the failure to prepare instructors to engage with parents of ELLs; only 35% responded that their program had prepared them well or very well. About 75% of the teachers reported a desire for more ELL-focused professional development, with the greatest need conveyed by the least-experienced teachers.

Santibañez and Gándara next asked what would be the most useful in coping with the challenges of teaching ELLs; the most common response was “observe other highly effective

teachers, work with a mentor or coach, and participate in a professional learning community" (p. 35). The researchers added:

> If we take teachers at their word, the most effective ways to improve instruction of ELLs may be to provide the time for teachers to observe exemplary lessons, discuss what they have seen, and practice under the watchful eye of a coach or mentor. (Santibañez & Gándara, 2015, p. 36)

One finding Gándara and Santibañez did not expect was the "almost nonexistent role that school principals played in providing support for new teachers of English language learners" (p. 36). Gándara and Santibañez asked them to reflect on when they started teaching ELLs and to consider what helped them most with challenges; teachers identified principal's support last.

Similarly, I asked participants in this record of study what kind of professional development would be helpful. Anna stated:

> I can say the opportunity [for] someone to model for us, we listen in training—awesome ideas, very good ideas. But sometimes we go back to the classroom, we try to do it [implement the new lesson] with the students; sometimes we don't know how to do it. But if we could have someone show us . . . that would be helpful.
>
> Gay (1995) found that "The benefit of having models and mentors, as opposed to relying on abstract ideas, is that they present an actual embodiment, a living example of the theoretical principles of good teaching" (p. 104).

Participants in the present study also stated that the real work and preparation are two different situations; even so, preparation provided a basic understanding. Belinda said she hoped for more in-depth training in the foundation of literacy; another teacher, Clara, felt the practice was not enough. Elena shared that her experience as a teacher assistant helped more than the

university coursework. This is in line with Felman-Nemser (2018), who asserted, “Teachers were unlikely to teach effectively unless they had access to serious and sustained learning opportunities at each stage in their careers” (p. 227) in recognition of the continuum of learning. Assumed in the present study was that learning to teach takes places over time. In addition, teachers need access to proper professional learning opportunities as part of their continuing work.

Existing Literature in Relation to Research Subquestion 2

SQ2 was a means to explore how teachers prepare data for the IAT: “How are bilingual teachers gathering information for the intervention assistance team meetings when a bilingual student shows characteristics of learning difficulty?” Two themes emerged from this question: informal methods of gathering information and teachers’ perception of IAT process and familiarity.

The teachers were gathering material for the meetings; however, they did not have any formal way of collecting information or know precisely what material to bring to the IAT. They made their own decisions to bring student work samples, informal notes, journals, and test scores. Prior to determining whether an ELL shows characteristics of a learning disability, teachers and other evaluation professionals need to ensure common second language acquisition factors are not responsible for the students’ difficulties in the classroom (Honigsfeld & Cohan, 2010).

Distinguishing students struggling with language acquisition and learning difficulty is a complex issue, with linguistic and immigration factors compounded by cultural, socioeconomic, and ethnic influences (Klingner et al., 2006). Differentiating between characteristics associated with learning disability and language acquisition can be quite difficult; hence, documenting and

collecting information also becomes a challenge. Hoover, Baca, and Klingner (2016) similarly stated, “Once an English learner has been identified as struggling, the documentation using quantifiable data becomes essential for making informed multi-tiered instructional and/or special education referral and eligibility decisions” (p. 143). Information-gathering is an important component of making the decision.

Cohan and Hongisfeld (2008) conducted a series of workshops with teachers, speech pathologists, guidance counselors, and ESL and general education teachers on how to effectively teach ELLs with learning disabilities. During these workshops, the group of professionals expressed their inability to differentiate between language development and learning disabilities. Teachers reported being unsure about distinguishing language acquisition and learning disabilities, with some of them relying on a gut feeling about certain students. Based on their findings, the researchers created a prereferral data collection tool for ELLs with a possible learning disability, meant for completion by multiple professionals (e.g., teachers, evaluators, etc.).

Cohan and Hongisfeld (2008) next conducted a pilot study utilizing the data collection tool in school districts, finding the tool could: (a) create a common language within the school district, (b) offer comprehensive data on a child, and (c) work toward a universal plan to prevent ELLs’ overrepresentation in special education. Some teachers worried it might be difficult to gather information from parents with language-barrier issues and hard-to-locate transient families and guardians. Even so, Cohan and Hongisfeld produced positive findings upon providing a formal data collection tool to professionals.

None of the five participating bilingual teachers in this record of study had a formally documented means to collect student information for IAT meetings; rather, they have been

assembling their own information in the form of sticky notes, journals, student work samples, and test scores. Similar to this situation, Hoover et al. (2016) found "the documentation of the effectiveness of prereferral interventions was less formal than we tend to see in the delivery of contemporary multi-tiered instructional models" (p. 144). Unfortunately, this outdated trend continues within the present group of five bilingual teachers. Delivering a functional IAT depends upon providing teachers with a proper or formal way to collect data.

Endeavoring to learn a new language brings challenges, and it can be difficult to determine if an ELL student also has learning disabilities (Duquette & Land, 2014). Therefore, a checklist is a dependable means for teachers to collect data for the IAT meeting. An evidence-based checklist can help teachers gain a deeper understanding of students' learning needs. Teachers need to collect data from multiple sources, such as state assessments, classroom performance, behavior, and other relevant information (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2011).

Existing Literature in Relation to Research Subquestion 3

SQ3 was, "How do bilingual teachers distinguish between language acquisition and learning disability?" It is important to consider whether teachers are aware of how to make this distinction. The first theme that emerged was distinguishing ELLs and language acquisition based on grades, opportunities, and intervention; the second theme was informal assessment and observation. According to Hamayan, Marler, Sanchez-Lopez, and Damico (2013), "Teachers are likely to choose special education as the source of support for ELLs" (p. 1). In the current study, not all teachers had a system or awareness of distinguishing between language acquisition and learning disability. Cohan and Honigsfeld (2008) found that teachers reported being unsure about distinguishing language acquisition and learning disabilities. Teachers relied on gut feelings

about certain students, and some were frustrated at the school district for limiting student referrals to special education. In some instances, the classroom teachers must delay making a special education referral to observe if the student will make further progress.

It is difficult to determine when an ELL has a learning difficulty, because the characteristics of acquiring a second language are in many ways like those of learning disabilities (Ortiz, 1997). It is particularly challenging to identify what kind of services to provide when there are other contributing factors, such as deficiencies in the teaching–learning environment (Wilkinson, Ortiz, Robertson, & Kushner, 2006). According to Klingner, Urbach, Golos, Browenell, and Menon (2010), teachers spend little time teaching reading comprehension strategies to their students. Instructors are more likely to ask reading comprehension questions about the book they read. Only a handful of students responded to reading comprehension questions, leaving the teacher unaware of another students' comprehension.

In contrast, Herrera, Perez, and Escamilla (2015) asserted that many ELLs understand more than they can demonstrate orally or in writing in English; as a result, teachers might think ELLs understand very little, when, in fact, they are comprehending a good quantity of material. Klingler et al. (2010) added:

> Teacher[s] might also draw the wrong conclusions about [English learners'] comprehension if they pay more attention to students' grammatical errors, their accents when speaking, or the mechanics of their writing than they do to the substance of their responses. (Klingler et al., 2010, p. 92)

When referring a student for language-related issues, classroom teachers must be aware of several factors. First, instructors need to be conscious of the child's linguistic abilities and deficits in both native and second languages. Rhodes et al. (2005) suggested asking:

> Is the problem apparent in both languages? If the apparent problem is noted only in English and not in the child's first language, it is most likely due to factors associated with second language acquisition than with a problem inherent in the child. (Rhodes et al., 2005, p. 81)

Furthermore, the manifestation of a specific learning disability cannot be due to only one language (Rhodes et al., 2005). The concerns for learning disability that prompted the referral must be apparent in both languages. In other words, a child cannot be disabled in English and not disabled in the native language.

Therefore, a functioning IAT brings together the classroom teacher, the referral team that includes the school administrator and evaluation specialists, parents, and counselors. Chalfant et al. (1986) identified an IAT as providing constructive collaboration with teachers to solve problems and gain significant knowledge in how to instruct and help students. Hazelkorn et al. (2011) found most of the literature on IAT appears in special education journals, even though it is general education teachers who initiate the IAT and RTI processes.

Participants in the present study said they sometimes conducted an intervention on their own because the campus IAT is not informative. In the same way, Franco-Fuenmayor et al. (2015) found most of the teachers suggested a need for more professional development in implementing strategies, including real-world examples broken down by each grade. One participant mentioned she does not receive any instructional feedback for the struggling student. Franco-Fuenmayor et al. recommended additional professional development for teaching ELLs using research-based instructional strategies. The researchers also proposed implementing strategies for gathering specific suggestions from the teachers about what professional

development areas they need. All teachers expressed hope that bringing quality data and information to the IAT meeting will lead to constructive educational feedback and support.

The bilingual teachers in the present study practiced different ways to differentiate language acquisition from learning difficulty. The most common methods were as follows: (a) implement accommodations in the classroom and wait for grades to increase; (b) break up groups based on the language of dominance, whether English or Spanish; (c) differentiate based on reading and informal observation and intervention; (d) contrast the learning progress between students and then determine if the progress is prolonged, which would suggest a learning disability; and (e) make the determination when accommodations in the first language lead to no noticeable progress. A formal checklist can help the teachers to have a common language and unity in presenting students to the IAT, which will provide better guidance in the IAT's decision-making process.

Discussion of Personal Lessons Learned

I learned many things throughout this record of study. First, I encountered some resistance in obtaining permission to research the topic of referring students for special education services. When I started this study, Texas was going through a review by the Department of Education for underserving students with special needs; school districts were therefore reluctant to be open and allow me to conduct my research. I had contacted and applied to four school districts in the greater Houston area, but only one accepted my proposal and gave me permission to research. Despite multiple attempts to reach the other three school principals, I did not receive a reply. I maintained my focus, however, as it is necessary to improve IAT presentation and bring positive impact, so students receive the correct intervention and services.

The interviews I conducted with the five teachers were meaningful and insightful. I remain grateful for how gracious and generous with their time the participants were. The school principal was extremely welcoming and willing to assist me with this project. I was very fortunate to have met a group of passionate educators for this study, in addition to a strong leader, the principal, who believes in research and how it can help teachers and schools.

Next, I learned the five teachers interviewed were somewhat reluctant to participate in IAT meetings because the process to refer a student for special education assessment is too lengthy. Instead, they shared, they need help much more quickly. Teachers count on assistance from the district level to bring support to their classroom and the IAT meetings, and special education is one source of relief.

Another aspect I learned is to maintain my determination to finish. To arrive at the point of this record of study, I first completed formal coursework, and then a week-long preliminary examination that I had to pass and defend while finishing a yearlong internship under the field supervisor. On top of this workload, Hurricane Harvey hit Houston and flooded our home, forcing my family and me into temporary housing for 6 months. Obtaining IRB from Texas A&M University was also a long process, requiring four revisions and 71 pages of application. One more hurdle was to create the proposal for research and defend in front of the committee. It is imperative to learn to persevere during the long process of a doctoral program.

I also learned to be ready for changes, delays, and disappointments. I had to change the topic of my study due to some unforeseen circumstances. I learned patience in facing long periods of waiting for responses from institutions, departments, and the school district.

Writing a record of study is a piecemeal process. In my first semester, a professor said that this program is “like eating a big, juicy steak.” Students cannot eat the whole steak in one

bite; consumption must be one piece at a time, divided into small parts. It is easy to become overwhelmed when thinking about the project. However, I found it helpful to make a daily checklist, one item at time, and then execute actions by setting deadlines.

Lastly, I improved my ability to communicate about the research I am passionate about. It is easy to get lost in the stress of writing such a long assignment, but I was able to let my passion convert these findings into a formal academic document. I have learned how to state clear statements about the problem, purpose, and methodology of this effort. I am now more equipped to advocate for ELLs and prevent unnecessary special education labeling.

Implications for Practice

President Obama signed ESSA into law in 2015 to replace NCLB. ESSA allows schools to have more authority in how they account for student achievement, particularly in the following subgroups: students in poverty, minorities, students receiving special education services, and ELLs (Darrow, 2016). The outcome and performance of ELLs has become part of the State Performance System. Under ESSA, a school will not receive a high rating if one of its subgroups fails across the board. Specific to this study, if ELLs are not performing well in a school, the government will flag that school for targeted improvement. In this case, school leaders must draft a plan for improving results, even if students in the other subgroups are high-performing (Mathewson, 2016).

One of the major implications for practice with this study is that a functional IAT results in reduced frustration for addressing student problems; in addition, teachers can benefit from a constructive collaboration to help students (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989). The provision of a checklist should result in an improved IAT process to make sure all-important areas receive consideration. Findings from this study indicate the need for improvement in providing practical support to

bilingual classroom teachers seeking intervention for struggling students. The ELL student population has been growing for the past decade (NCES, 2018) and the IAT process needs to become more consistent; one means of doing this is adopting a best-practices checklist.

The data collected in this study show important means of improving the IAT practices with bilingual students. First, participant responses clearly indicated teachers need a research-based checklist to assist them in compiling the correct information before attending IAT meetings. Furthermore, this research shows the checklist can guide teachers to note major characteristics to determine whether the student is still acquiring a language or is having learning difficulties.

The study also underscored the need for further teacher preparation deemed when working with ELLs. One teacher who participated in this study expressed some confusion when placed with ESL students during her in-service hours when she was working on a bilingual certification. Similarly, another teacher said she would prefer to stay in one classroom for an extended time and get to know the students instead of moving around.

The checklist is limited to an initial guide and basic characteristics; the intent is not to determine disability. Many factors could influence an unwarranted special education referral and disability designation. The checklist is to provide initial guidance to the teachers, assessment teams, and school personnel to compile important information and increase collaboration in the IAT meeting.

Recommendations

Results in this study revealed that teachers believed their teacher preparation and training in working with bilingual students or ELLs were inadequate. One of the participants, Anna indicated her desire to observe someone model effective instructional strategies in the classroom.

To bridge the gap between teacher preparation and practice, I offer the following overarching recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Offer focused professional development and training for teachers of bilingual and English language learners.

Recommendation 2: Conduct substantive research on IAT processes, with the goals of identifying best and evidence-based practices for teachers and increasing involvement of parents throughout the process.

The opportunity for more substantive research on IAT efforts remains, such as how to conduct IAT meetings. Participants in this study expressed that sometimes only the administrator is present in the meeting. Ortiz (1997) identified the need for teachers to notice the academic struggles present in both languages; as such, bilingual teachers need further training in second-language learning, so they are better equipped. A need exists for in-service training in the IAT process, something participants in this study said they had never received. Moreover, school districts should take advantage of technology to create online professional development and training on IAT processes. Further research should include the parents of at-risk ELLs. Along this line of inquiry, scholars should investigate how actively schools are involving the parents in the IAT process. Also, to be determined is whether ELL parents from low-socioeconomic levels are properly informed about the process, including having an awareness of possible admission to special education and its implications. In addition, school districts should seek consent and provide parents with meaningful opportunities to be involved and contribute crucial information about their children's needs (Rinaldi, Ortiz, & Gamm, 2019). More specifically, the following related recommendations should also be considered:

Recommendation 3: The checklist itself also requires further research. For example, future scholars may wish to alter the length and language of the tool. It is important the checklist not be time-consuming to complete and written in a language easy to comprehend by classroom teachers. Individuals must be mindful about the classroom teachers completing these forms; even though the goal is to gather as much information as possible, the document should also be purposeful and concise. Thus, further research is warranted to evaluate the usefulness and feasibility of the proposed checklist.

Recommendation 4: I also recommend a study consisting of interviews with members of the assessment team involved in the IAT. Members of this team are the educational diagnosticians responsible for performing the psychoeducational assessment; the Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP) is liable for conducting the emotional and behavior assessment; and the speech language pathologist must perform the speech assessment. Interviewing this group should provide great insights regarding what type of information they expect from teachers prior to conducting the assessment. Other questions answered by such a study may include: (a) What are some determining data from the classrooms teachers that could help the evaluation professionals move forward with assessment? (b) How should the teachers collect data from the classroom? and (c) What type of assistance can the assessment experts provide to the teachers during interventions? I believe this information will better set expectations for the teachers and provide the necessary guidance to refine data collection. In fact, I would be personally interested in interviewing this group in the future to collect key information in the referral process for the students.

Recommendation 5: In addition, I recommend a checklist or other means of accountability to verify the presence of participating members in the IAT. Whether the case is for an ELL or non-

ELL, certain school personnel must be present. In an IAT, a teacher, school administrator, language proficiency assessment committee representative (if the student is bilingual), and an assessment team are all needed. The presence of the language proficiency assessment committee representative is essential when determining action for a bilingual student. Accountability by requiring meeting participants to sign in may help to ensure the necessary personnel are present to protect and provide the right services to the student.

Recommendation 6: Another recommendation is to ensure the checklist is classroom-teacher responsive—in other words, both concise and comprehensible.

Recommendation 7: In future studies, parents should be participants. Parents are crucial contributors of the IAT process, and it will be insightful to explore their perceptions and views. Hardin et al. (2009) suggested ELLs are overrepresented in special education due to misunderstandings related to cultural differences and language barriers between parents and schools. Further investigation in schools engaging parents in the IAT process and communication dependability is warranted.

Recommendation 8: Last, I recommend studying veteran teachers (those with 5 or more years of experience) to investigate what types of training and professional development they would like to receive from the school district. I was able to include this topic briefly in my study, but it was not a recurring theme. However, it would be helpful to discover professional development needs directly from more experienced teachers and the reasons for their suggestions.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter V

In this study, classroom teachers expressed a clear need for a checklist to help them collect important data on bilingual and ELL students for IAT meetings. None of the five bilingual teachers interviewed had a formal document guiding them to distinguish between

language acquisition and learning disability. The teachers ranged in years of experience and age. Despite their differences, all participants exuded passion and pride in teaching bilingual students.

As ELL populations continue to grow in the United States (NCES, 2015), the need has never been greater to prepare classroom teachers to teach culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Such professional development is especially beneficial when ESL students struggle with learning and other systems regarding academic interventions. Teachers must be prepared to collect student data, particularly when students are exhibiting learning difficulties and intervention is needed. The IAT process brings together a team of educators to build a problem-solving, collaborative group. The point of this study was to underscore the importance of classroom teachers' data collection, which provides key elements for student intervention and referral.

Significant implications for practice are twofold. First, under ESSA, every school must incorporate ELLs' performance in the state performance system, and a functional IAT can improve interventions and proper referrals of ELLs. Second, implementing a research-based IAT checklist will ensure the collection of crucial data to improve the fidelity of IAT meetings.

The process of writing a record of study from the coursework, research proposal, preliminary examination, IRB approval, internship, interview, and so much more has been an amazing journey. Patience, perseverance, and determination seem to be key aspects of this process. My hope is that findings from this study will improve the IAT process by equipping classroom teachers with a checklist to facilitate data collection, thus avoiding unwarranted special education referrals of ELLs.

REFERENCES

Abou-Rjaily, K., & Stoddard, S. (2017). RTI for students presenting with behavioral difficulties: Culturally responsive guiding questions. *International Journal of Multicultural Education, 19*(3), 85-102. doi:10.18251/ijme.v19i3.1227

Aceves, T. C., & Orosco, M. J. (2014). *Culturally responsive teaching* (Document No. IC-2). Retrieved from University of Florida, Collaboration for Effective Educator, Development, Accountability, and Reform Center website: http://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/tools/innovation-configurations/

Agee, J. (2009). Developing qualitative research questions: A reflective process. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 22*(4), 431-447. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390902736512

Alexander, K., & Alexander, D. (2005). *American public school law* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thompson West.

Algozzine, B., & Hancock, D. (2006). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Hoover, J. J., Baca, L. M., & Klingner, J. K. (2016). *Why do English learners struggle with reading?: Distinguishing language acquisition from learning disabilities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Bahr, M. W., Whitten, E., Dieker, L., Kocarek, C. E., & Manson, D. (1999). A comparison of school-based intervention teams: Implications for educational and legal reform. *Exceptional Children, 66*(1), 67-83. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001440299906600105

Baker, K. A., & De Kanter, A. A. (1981). *Effectiveness of bilingual education: A review of the literature* (Report No. 215-010). Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED215010.pdf

Ball, A., Rittner, B., Chen, Y., & Maguin, E. (2018). Impact of individualized education plans on academic success of youth with early onset schizophrenia. *Journal of Evidence-Informed Social Work, 15*(5), 534-549. https://doi.org/10.1080/23761407.2018.1487356

Bradley, R., & Danielson, L. (2004). The office of special education program's LD initiative: A context for inquiry and consensus. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 27*(4), 186-188. https://doi.org/10.2307%2F1593671

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brown-Chidsey, R., & Steege, M. W. (2010). *Response to intervention: Principles and strategies for effective practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Burns, A. (2010). *Doing action research in English language teaching. A guide for practitioners*. Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Burns, M. (2001). Effectiveness of special education personnel in the intervention assistance team model. *Journal of Educational Research, 92*(6), 354-356. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220679909597619

Center for Applied Linguistics. (n.d.). Bilingual and dual language education. Retrieved from http://www.cal.org/areas-of-impact/english-learners/bilingual-and-dual-language-education

Harrington, R., & Gibson, E. (1986). Preassessment procedures for learning disabled children: Are they effective?. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 19*(9), 538-541. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F002221948601900904

Chalfant, J. C., VanDusen Pysh, M., & Moultrie, R. (1979). Teacher assistance teams: A model for within-building problem solving. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 2*(3), 85-96. https://doi.org/10.2307%2F1511031

Cohan, A., & Honigsfeld, A. (2008). Needs are special. *Language Magazine, 8*(4), 18-21. Retrieved from https://www.languagemagazine.com/

Council for Exceptional Children. (2019). IDEA. Retrieved from https://www.cec.sped.org/Policy-and-Advocacy/Current-Sped-Gifted-Issues/Individuals-with-Disabilities-Education-Act

Conway, J., Jako, R., & Goodman, D. (1995). A meta-analysis of interrater and internal consistency reliability of selection interviews. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 80*(5), 565-579. https:// doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.80.5.565

Crawford, J. (1998). Language politics in the U.S.A.: The paradox of bilingual education. *Social Justice*, *25*(3), 50-69. Retrieved from http://www.socialjusticejournal.org/

Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters.

Darrow, A. (2016). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): what it means for students with disabilities and music educators. *National Association of Music Education, 30*(1) 41-44. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1048371316658327

DeMatthews, D. E., Edwards, D. B., & Nelson, T. E. (2014). Identification problems: US special education eligibility for English language learners. *International Journal of Educational Research, 68*(8), 27-34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2014.08.002

De Valenzuela, J. S., Copeland, S. J., Qi, C. H., & Park, M. (2006). Examining educational equity: Revisiting the disproportionate representation of minority students in special education. *Council for Exceptional Children, 72*(4), 425-441. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001440290607200403

Dewey, J. (1897). My pedagogic creed. *School Journal,* 54, 77-80. Retrieved from http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm

Dunn, L. (1968). Special education for the mildly retarded: Is much of it justifiable? *Exceptional Children, 35*(1), 5-22.

Durheim, M. (2018). A parent's guide to Section 504 in public schools. *Great Schools*. Retrieved from https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/section-504-2/

Duquette, C., & Land, M. (2014). Strategies for teaching reading to English language learners with learning disabilities. *LD@School*. Retrieved from https://www.ldatschool.ca/strategies-for-teaching-reading/

Felman-Nemser, S. (2018). What does research tell us about educating mainstream teachers to work with ELLs?. *Educational Forum, 82*(2), 227-234. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2018.1420872

Fletcher, J. M., Coulter, W. A., Reschly, D. J., & Vaughn, S. (2004). Alternative approaches to the definition and identification of learning disabilities: Some questions and answers. *Annals of Dyslexia, 54*(2), 304–331. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11881-004-0015-y

Franco-Fuenmayor, S. E., Padrón, Y. N., & Waxman, H. C. (2015). Investigating bilingual/ESL teachers' knowledge and professional development opportunities in a large suburban school district in Texas. *Bilingual Research Journal, 38*(3), 336-352. https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2015.1091049

Gándara, P., & Santibañez, L. (2016). The teachers our English language learners need. *Educational Leadership, 73*(5), 32-37. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership.aspx

Gandhi, A., Bailey, T., Bzura, R., Jackson, D., Pfannenstiel, K., Mouoneke, A., & Thompson, L. (2018, February 22). Houston special education program review. *American Institutes for Research.* Retrieved from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d1070de3df288e33e0cc3b/t/5aa43ec553450a41561c381a/1520713417957/AIR_HISD+SPED+Review_02-22-18_FINAL.pdf

García, S., & Ortiz, A. (2006). Preventing disproportionate representation: Culturally and linguistically responsive prereferral interventions. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 38*(4), 64-68. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F004005990603800410

Gay, G. (1995). Modeling and Mentoring in Urban Teacher Preparation. *Education and Urban Society. 28*(1), 103-118.

González, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Graden, J. L. (1988). *Prereferral evaluation studies: A research synthesis*. Prepared for the Office of Special Education Programs. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Graden, J. L., Casey, A., & Christenson, S. L. (1985). Implementing a prereferral intervention system: Part I. The model. *Exceptional Children*, *51*(5), 377-384. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001440298505100502

Guba, E. (1981). Annual Review Paper: Criteria for Assessing the Trustworthiness of Naturalistic Inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology*, *29*(2), 75-91.

Hales, H., Terblanche, M., Folwer, R. & Sibbald, W. (2008). Development of medical checklist for improved quality of patient care. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care, 20*(1), 22-30. https://doi.org/10.1093/intqhc/mzm062

Hamayan, E., Marler, B., Sanchez-Lopez, C., & Damico, J. (2007). *Special education considerations for English language learners: Delivering a continuum of services*. Philadelphia, PA: Caslon Publishing.

Hardin, B. J., Mereoiu, M., & Hung, H. F. (2009). Investigating parent and professional perspective concerning special education services for preschool Latino children. *Early Childhood Education, 37*(2), 93-102. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-009-0336-x

Harry, B. (2008). Collaboration with culturally and linguistically diverse families: Ideal versus reality. *Exceptional Children, 74*(3), 372-388. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001440290807400306

Hart, J., Cheatham, G., & Jimenez-Silva, M. (2012). Facilitating quality language interpretation for families of diverse students with special needs. *Preventing School Failure, 56*(4), 207-213. https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2011.645910

Hazelkorn, M., Bucholz, J. L., Goodman, J. I., Duffy, M. L., & Brady, M. P. (2010, December). Response to intervention: General or special education? Who is responsible?. *Education Forum, 75*(1), 17-25. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2010.528552

Hernandez, J. E., Ramanathan, A. K., Harr, J., & Socias, M. (2008). Study of the effects of an intervention to reduce the disproportionate identification in the category of emotional disturbance in the Los Angeles Unified School District. *Journal of Special Education Leadership, 21*(2), 64-74. Retrieved from http://www.casecec.org/resources/jsel.asp

Herrera, S. G., Perez, D. R., & Escamilla, K. (2015). *Teaching reading to English language learners: Differentiated literacies* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Hite, J., & McGahey, J. (2015). Implementation and effectiveness of the response to intervention (RTI) program. *Georgia School Counselors Association Journal, 22*, 28-40. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1099646.pdf

Honigsfeld, A., & Cohan, A. (2010). Piloting a pre-referral data collecting tool: A documentary account. *Insights on Learning Disabilities, 7*(1), 15-28. Retrieved from http://www.ocmboces.org/tfiles/folder2743/Insights%203-2010%20Honigsfeld%20and%20Cohan%20(1).pdf

Hoover, J., Baca, L., & Klinger, J. (2016). Why do English learners struggle with reading?: Distinguishing language acquisition from learning disabilities. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Houston Independent School District. (n.d.). Interventions office. Retrieved from https://www.houstonisd.org/Page/137083#calendar256024/20190821/month

HSD News Blog. (2018, March 8). Report shows HISD has taken steps to improve special education program. Retrieved from https://blogs.houstonisd.org/news/2018/03/08/american-institutes-for-research-report-shows-hisd-has-taken-steps-to-improve-special-education-program/

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. (2004). Retrieved from https://sites.ed.gov/idea/

Iqbal, S., & Pipon-Young, L. (2009). The Delphi method. *Psychologist, 22*(7), 598-601. Retrieved from https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/getfile/1783

IRIS Center. (2019). Page 2: The IQ-achievement discrepancy model. Retrieved from https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/rti01/cresource/q1/p02/

Isensee, L. (2017). English learners were hurt the most when Texas limited special education. *Houston Public Media*. Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/05/31/521940884/english-learners-were-hurt-the-most-when-texas-limited-special-education

Kamenetz, A. (2018). Department of Education finds Texas violated special education law. National Public Radio. Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/01/11/577400134/texas-violates-federal-law-education-department-finds

Katz, S., & Stupel, M. (2016). Enhancing elementary-school mathematics teachers' efficacy beliefs: A qualitative action research. *International Journal of Mathematics Education in Science and Technology*, *47*(3), 421-439. https://doi.org/10.1080/0020739X.2015.1080314

Khalif, S., Santi, K., & Hawkins, J. (2015). How to identify and support English language learners at-risk for reading difficulties: An overview of the response to intervention program model. *Journal of Education and Human Development, 4*(2), 43-52. https://doi.org/10.1177/00222194060390050201

Klingner, J. K., Urbach, J., Golos, D., Brownell, M., & Menon, S. (2010). Teaching reading in the 21st century: A glimpse at how special education teachers promote reading. *Learning Disabilities Quarterly*, *33*(2), 59-74. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F073194871003300201

Klingner, J. K., & A. J. Artiles. (2003). When should bilingual students be in special education?. *Educational Leadership, 61*(2), 66-71. Retrieved from https://nepc.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/Report_5.pdf

Klingner, J. K., Artiles, A. J., & Mendez Bartela, L. (2006). English language learners who struggle with reading: Language acquisition or LD?. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 39*(2), 108-128. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F00222194060390020101

Klingner, J. K., & Harry, B. (2006). The special education referral and decision-making process for English language learners: Child study team meetings and placement conferences. *Teachers College Record, 108*(11), 2247-2281. Retrieved from https://nepc.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/publications/10.1.1.548.1121.pdf

Klingner, J. K., & Edwards, P. A. (2006). Cultural considerations with response to intervention models. *Reading Research Quarterly, 41*(1), 108–117. https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.41.1.6

Kolano, L. Q., Dávila, L. T., Lachance, J., & Coffey, H. (2014). Multicultural teacher education: Why teachers say it matters in preparing them for English language learners. *CATESOL Journal, 25*(1), 41-65. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1111871.pdf

Kozleski, E. B., & Huber, J. J. (2010). Systemic change for RTI: Key shifts for practice. *Theory into Practice, 49*(4), 258-264. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2010.510696

Krashen, S. (1988). Second language acquisition and second language learning. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall International.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Learning Disability Association of America. (2018). Your chances of knowing someone with learning disabilities are very good: Did you know?. Retrieved from https://ldaamerica.org/support/new-to-ld/

Lee, A. (2019). Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): What you need to know. Retrieved from https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/your-childs-rights/basics-about-childs-rights/individuals-with-disabilities-education-act-idea-what-you-need-to-know

Leung, L. (2015). Validity, reliability, and generalizability in qualitative research. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care, 4*(3), 324-327. https://dx.doi.org/10.4103%2F2249-4863.161306

Li, C. (2016). Addressing the IDEA exclusionary clauses when assessing English language learners for specific learning disabilities. Retrieved from https://www.wsasp.org/resources/Documents/Spring%20Lecture%20Series/2016/Li%20-%20Addressing%20IDEA.pdf

Linn, D. (2011). Representation of English language learners in special education programs in Texas. *National Teacher Education Journal*, *4*(2), 35-40. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1043&context=jma

Lodico, M., Spaulding, D., & Voegtle, K. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2005). *Second language research: Methodology and design*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in*

Higher Education, 3(3), 3351. Retrieved from http://ojs.aishe.org/aishe/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/335/553

Mathewson, T. (2016, October 18). 4 Ways ESSA will change how schools serve ELL students. *Education Dive.* Retrieved from https://www.educationdive.com/news/4-ways-essa-will-change-how-schools-serve-ell-students/428266/

McDaniel, M., Whetzel, D., Schmidt, F., & Maurer, S. (1994). The validity of employment interviews: A comprehensive review and meta-analysis. *American Psychological Association, 79*(4), 599-616. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.79.4.599

McNamara, C. (2009). General guidelines for conducting interviews. Retrieved from https://managementhelp.org/businessresearch/interviews.htm

Merriam, S. B. (2011). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Meyers, B., Valentino, C., Meyers, J., Boretti, M., & Brent, D. (1996). Implementing preferral intervention teams as an approach to school-based consultation in an urban school system. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 7*, 119-149. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532768xjepc0702_2

Montalvo, R., Combes, B., & Kea, C. (2014). Perspectives on culturally and linguistically responsive RTI pedagogies through a cultural and linguistic lens. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning, 4*(3), 203-219. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1065903.pdf

Morris, P. B., & Cortez, V. L. (2008). Response to intervention/3-tier reading model: Building RTI capacity online. Retrieved from http://resources.buildingrti.utexas.org/pdfv/response_to_Intervention_Reading.pdf

Muñiz, D. (2011, June). Special education: To what extent was disproportionality in special education identification, placement, and out-of-school suspension evident in 2010?. [Evaluation brief]. *Houston Independent School District Bureau of Program Evaluation, 5*(2), 1-6. Retrieved from https://www.houstonisd.org

Myers, J., & Kline, C. (2001). Secondary school intervention assistance teams: Can they be effective?. *High School Journal, 85*(2), 33-42. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/40364370

National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2011). *Using student achievement data to support instruction decision making.* Alexandria, VA: National Association of Elementary School Principals. Retrieved from https://www.naesp.org

National Center of Education Statistics. (2019). Fast facts: English language learners. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=96

National Council of Teachers of English. (2008). English language learners: A policy research brief produced by the National Council of Teachers of English. Retrieved from http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/PolicyResearch/ELLResearchBrief.pdf

National Education Association. (2007). Truth in labeling: Disproportionality in special education. Retrieved from https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/mf_hispanicfocus07.pdf

National Education Association. (2008). Disproportionality: Inappropriate identification of culturally and linguistically diverse children, Retrieved from http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/mf_PB02_Di sproportionality.pdf

Nilsson, N. L., Kong, A., & Hubert, S. (2016). Navigating the challenges of becoming a culturally responsive teacher: Supportive networking may be the key. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 41*(8), 1-21. Retrieved from http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol41/iss8/1

No Child Left Behind Act, (2002) Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml

Houston Independent School District News Blog. (2017). New structure to strengthen student interventions. Retrieved from http://blogs.houstonisd.org/news/2017/08/07/new-structure-to-strengthen-student-interventions/

National Center for Education Statistics. (2019, May). Children and youth with disabilities. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgg.asp

Ogonosky, A. (2007, October). RTI: Making it work. Presentation at a Region XIV Education Service Center Workshop, Abilene, TX

Orosco, M. J. (2010). A sociocultural examination of response to intervention with Latino English language learners. *Theory Into Practice. 49*(4), 265-272. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2010.510703

Orosco, M. J., & O'Connor, R. (2014). Culturally responsive instruction for English language learners with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 47*(6), 515-531. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022219413476553

Ortiz, A. A. (1997). Learning disabilities occurring concomitantly with linguistic differences. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 30*(3), 321-332. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F002221949703000307

Ortiz, A., & Artiles, A. (2002). *English language learners with special education needs: Identification, assessment, and instruction.* Washington, DC: Center for Applied

Linguistics and Delta System Co., Inc. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED482995.pdf

Ortiz, A., Robertson, P., Wilkinson, C., Liu, Y., McGhee, J., & Kushner, M. (2011). The role of bilingual education teachers in preventing inappropriate referrals of ELLs to special education: Implications for response to intervention. *Bilingual Research Journal, 34*(3), 316-333. https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2011.628608

Ortiz, A. A., Wilkinson, C. Y., Robertson-Courtney, P., & Kushner, M. I. (2006). Considerations in implementing intervention assistance teams to support English language learners. *Remedial and Special Education, 27*(1), 53-63. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/07419325060270010601

Ortiz, A. A., Wilkinson, C. Y., Robertson-Courtney, P., & Kushner, M. I. (2006). Considerations in implementing intervention assistance teams to support English language learners. *Remedial and Special Education, 27*(1), 53-63. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F07419325060270010601

Osterholm, K, Nash, W., & Kristonis, W. (2007). Effects of labeling students "learning disabled": Emergent themes in the research literature 1970 through 2000. *Focus on Colleges, Universities, and Schools, 1*(1), 1-11. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c633/302d0df9f9d07030242d9e366257ebe91c24.pdf

Polit, D., & Beck, C. (2014). *Essentials of nursing research: Appraising evidence for nursing practice* (8th ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Wolter Kluwer/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Posny, A. (2019). Response to intervention. *RTI Action Network: A Program of the National Center for Learning Disabilities*. Retrieved from http://www.rtinetwork.org/index2.php?option=com_content&task=emailform&id=249&itemid=1

Proctor, S., Graves, S., & Esch, R. (2012). Assessing African American students for specific learning disabilities: The promises and perils of response of intervention. *Journal of Negro Education, 81*(3), 268-282. Retrieved from https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-22/edition-7/delphi-method

Pyle, A. (2011). Considering coherence: Teacher perceptions of the competing agendas of RTI and an existing special education model. *Exceptional Educational International, 21*(3) 66-81. Retrieved from http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/eei/vol21/iss3/6

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Restori, A. F., Katz, G. S., & Lee, H. B. (2009). A critique of the IQ/achievement discrepancy model for identifying specific learning disabilities. *Europe's Journal of Psychology, 5*(4), 128-145. https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v5i4.244

Rhodes, R., Ochoa, S., & Ortiz, S. (2005). *Assessing culturally and linguistically diverse students*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Richards, H. V., Brown, A. F., & Forde, T. B. (2006). Addressing diversity in schools: Culturally responsive pedagogy (practitioner brief series). Tempe, AZ: National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems.

Richards, L. 2005. *Handling qualitative data: A practical guide*. London, England: Sage.

Rinaldi, C., Ortiz, S., & Gamm, S. (2019). RTI-based SLD identification toolkit: Considerations for English language learners. *RTI Action Network*. Retrieved from http://rtinetwork.org/getstarted/sld-identification-toolkit/ld-identification-toolkit-considerations-for-ell#Expertise

Rodriguez, R. (2010). Bilingual education. *Handbook of Texas Online.* Retrieved from https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/khb02

Rosenthal, B. (2016). Explainer: Texas was educating 30% fewer special education kids. Here's how we figured out why. *Houston Chronicle*. Retrieved from https://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Explainer-How-we-know-the-reason-for-the-drop-in-13146843.php

Safran, P., & Safran, J. (1997). Prereferral consultation and intervention assistance teams revisited: Some new food for thought. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 8*(1), 93-100. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532768xjepc0801_5

San Miguel, G. (2004). Contested policy: The rise and fall of federal bilingual education in the United States. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press.

Santibañez, L., & Gándara, P. (2018). Teachers of English language learners in secondary schools: Gaps in preparation and support. Civil Rights Project. Retrieved from https://escholarship.org/content/qt6c95c6bx/qt6c95c6bx.pdf

Schmutz, J., Eppich, W. J., Hoffman, F., Heimberg, E., & Manser, T. (2014). Five steps to develop checklists for evaluating clinical performance: An integrative approach. *Academic Medicine, 89*(7), 996-1005. https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000000289

Schultz, E., & Simpson, C. (2013). Factors influencing teacher behavior with students with diverse learning and behavioral needs. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, *Spring/Summer,* 118-131. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=EJ1135529

Seidlitz, J., & Jones, C. (2012). *RTI for ELLs: Considerations for success with diverse learners*. Austin, TX: Canter Press.

Shealy, M., & Callins, T. (2007). Creating culturally responsive literacy programs in inclusive classroom. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 42*(4), 195-197. https://doi.org/10.1177/10534512070420040101

Shifrer, D. (2016). Stigma and stratification limiting the math course progression of adolescents labeled with a learning disability. *Learning and Instruction, 42*, 44-57. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2015.12.001

Speece, D., & Ritchey, K. (2002). Early identification of reading disabilities: Current status and new directions. *Assessment of Effective Intervention, 29*(4), 13-24. https://doi.org/10.1177/073724770402900404

Squire, J. (2008). English language learners. National Council of Teachers of English. Retrieved from http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/PolicyResearch/ELLResearchBrief.pdf

Steeley, S., & Lukacs, K. (2015). Cultural and linguistic diversity and special education: A case study of one mother's experiences. *International Journal of Special Education, 30*(2), 20-31. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1094799.pdf

Texas Education Agency. (2019). Bilingual and English as a second language education programs. Retrieved from https://tea.texas.gov/Academics/Special_Student_Populations/Bilingual_%E2%80%93_ESL_Education/Bilingual_and_English_as_a_Second_Language_Education_Programs/

Texas Education Agency. (2018). 2017-2018 School Report Card. Retrieved from https://TXSchools.go

Tigert, J., & Peercy, M. (2017). Preparing to teach both content and language: Four ESOL teacher candidates' experiences. *TESOL Journal, 9*(3), 542-556. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.358

Turner, D. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *Qualitative Report, 15*(3), 754-760. Retrieved from http://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1178&context=tqr/

U.S. Department of Education. (2010, August). Free Appropriate Public Education for Students with Disabilities. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html

U.S. Department of Education. (2016). Assistance to states for education of handicapped children: Procedures for evaluating specific learning disabilities. Retrieved from https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/12/19/2016-30190/assistance-to-states-for-the-education-of-children-with-disabilities-preschool-grants-for-children

Umansky, I. M., Thompson, K. D., & Díaz, G. (2017). Using an ever–English learner framework to examine disproportionality in special education. *Exceptional Children, 84*, 76-96. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0014402917707470

Van de Walle, J., Karp, K., & Bay-Williams, J. (2013). *Elementary and middle school mathematics: Teaching developmentally*. New York, NY: Pearson.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind and society. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wang, P., & Machado, C. (2015). Meeting the needs of Chinese English language learners at writing centers in America: A proposed culturally responsive model. *Journal of International Students, 5*(2), 143-160. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1060052.pdf

Watson, T. S., & Skinner, C. H. (Eds.). (2004). *Encyclopedia of school psychology* (pp. 174-176). Boston, MA: Springer. Retrieved from http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-0-387-22556-2_12#

Wilkinson, C., Ortiz, A., Robertson, P., & Kushner, M. (2006). English language learners with reading-related LD: Linking data from multiple sources to make eligibility determinations. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 39*(2), 129-141. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F00222194060390020201

Witt, J. C., VanDerHeyden, A. M., & Gilbertson, D. (2004). Instruction and classroom management: Prevention and intervention research. In R. B. Rutherford, M. M. Quinn, & S. R. Mathur (Eds.), *Handbook of research in emotional and behavioral disorders* (pp. 426-445). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Worrell, J. L., & Taber, M. (2009). Special education practices in China and the United States: What is to come next?. *International Journal of Special Education*, *24*(3), 132-142. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ877945.pdf

Zehler, A. M., Fleischman, H. L., Hopstock, P. J., Pendzick, M. L., & Stephenson, T. G. (2003). *Descriptive study of services to LEP students and LEP students with disabilities*. Washington, DC: Department of Education. Retrieved from https://ncela.ed.gov/files/rcd/BE021199/special_ed4.pdf

APPENDIX A

IRB EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

December 08, 2017

Type of Review:	Submission Response for Initial Review Submission Form
Title:	Preparing Teachers for the Intervention Assistance Team in the Elementary Schools
Investigator:	Monica Neshyba
IRB ID:	IRB2017-0778M
Reference Number:	063523
Funding:	None
Documents Reviewed:	IRB Application v. 1.4 InformedConsent(3.0) v. 3.0.0 Interview Process v. 1.0 Yoo Joe_Research_Spring Branch v. 1.0 Interview Guide v. 1.0 Record of Study Proposal-Signed (Dept Chair) Site Authorization Form Recruting Letter v. 1.0 Site Authorization FBA
Special Determinations:	None
Risk Level of Study:	Not Greater than Minimal Risk under 45 CFR 46 / 21 CFR 56

Dear Monica Neshyba:

The HRPP determined on 12/08/2017that this research meets the criteria for Exemption in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b) under Category 2: Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior unless, the information is obtained in an identifiable manner and any disclosure of the subjects responses outside of research could reasonably place the subject at risk..

Your exemption is good for five (5) years from the Approval Start Date. At that time, you must contact the IRB with your intent to close the study or request a new determination.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Administrative Office at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636.

750 Agronomy Road, Suite 2701
1186 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-1186

Tel. 979.458.1467 Fax. 979.862.3176
http://rcb.tamu.edu

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

Project Title: Preparing Teachers for the Intervention Assistance Team in the Elementary Schools

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Mr. Seung Yoo (Joe), a doctoral student attending Texas A&M University. **The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether to take part. If you decide you do not want to participate, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits.**

Why Is This Study Being Done?
The purpose of this study is to equip classroom teachers to know what information collect and bring to the IAT meetings, and how the IAT process can provide constructive collaboration when working with ELLs.

Why Am I Being Asked to Be in This Study?
You are being asked to be in this study because of your role in the classroom working with ELLs.

How Many People Will Be Asked to Be in This Study?
Five classroom teachers will be invited in this study.

What Are the Alternatives to Being in This Study?
None; the alternative to being in the study is not to participate.

What Will I Be Asked to Do in This Study?
You will be asked to participate in an interview about your awareness of what characteristics to look for in ELLs lacking academic progress and how to actively participate in the IAT process. Your participation in this study will consist of an interview, which will be no longer than 60 minutes. After you read this information sheet, you will determine your consent to participate. Audio recordings of the interview will be made. Audio recordings will then be stored in a secure location to which only the researchers have access.

Are There Any Risks to Me?
The things that you will be doing are no more or greater than risks that you would come across in everyday life. Your participation will be confidential, and your interview will be kept confidential. Although the researchers have tried to avoid risks, you may feel some questions asked of you may be stressful or upsetting. You do not have to answer anything you do not want to.

Will There Be Any Costs to Me?
Aside from your time, there are no costs for taking part in the study.

Will I Be Paid to Be in This Study?
You will not be paid for being in this study.

Will Information From This Study Be Kept Private?

The records, including audio recordings of the interview, will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the study researcher, Seung Yoo (Joe), and faculty committee, Dr. Trina Davis and Monica Neshyba, will have access to the records.

Information about your questionnaire will be stored in computer files protected with a password in a locked office space. Information about you will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law. People who have access to your information include the principal investigator and research study personnel. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly.

Information about you and related to this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law.

Who May I Contact for More Information?
You may contact the principal investigator, Mr. Seung Yoo (Joe), M.A.., to tell him about a concern or complaint about this research at joeyoo@tamu.edu or 832-462-9861.

For questions about your rights as a research participant; or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program office at 979-458-4067 or toll-free 1-855-795-8636, or contact them by e-mail at irb@tamu.edu.

What if I Change My Mind About Participating?
This research is voluntary, and you have the choice whether or not to be in this research study. You may decide to not begin or to stop participating at any time. If you choose not to be in this study or stop being in the study, there will be no effect on your relationship within your Career and Technology Student Organization. By completing the questionnaire, you are giving permission for the investigator to use your information for research purposes.

Thank you,

Mr. Seung Yoo (Joe)

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

The procedures, risks, and benefits of this study have been told to me and I agree to participate in this study. My questions have been answered. I may ask more questions whenever I want. I do not give up any of my legal rights by signing this form. A copy of this consent form will be given to me.

_____

Participant Signature Date

INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT:
Either I have or my agent has carefully explained to the teacher the nature of the above project. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the person who signed this consent form was informed of the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation.

_____ _____

Signature of Presenter Date

_____ _____

Printed Name Date

APPENDIX C

CHECKLIST

IAT MEETING CHECKLIST

For Bilingual and ELL Teachers (K-5)

Instruction: *Classroom teacher should complete and bring this form to the IAT meeting.*

Student Name_____ ID#_____
Grade_____ School_____
Teacher _____ Date _____

IAT MEETING PREPARATION

Meeting Information

☐ Date: _____

☐ Time: _____

☐ Room: _____

Baseline Data

☐ STAAR Test

☐ TELPAS

☐ High Frequency Words

☐ Grades

☐ Attendance

☐ Other

Meeting Information

☐ Parent/guardian contacted

☐ Special education members contacted

☐ School administrators (AP, counselors, nurse)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Parent/Guardian Engagement

☐YES ☐ NO Parents/guardian consistently communicate with school staff

☐YES ☐ NO Parent/guardian volunteer his/her time in school

☐YES ☐ NO Parent/guardian help children with school work

☐YES ☐ NO Parent/guardian are active in school-related decision making

Schooling

☐YES ☐ NO Student began formal schooling in the United States.
If yes, how many years? _____

☐YES ☐ NO Child attends school regularly

History

☐YES ☐ NO Parents denied bilingual/ESL program

*What is the primary language spoken at home?*_____

DATA GATHERING

The following questions will help identify probable difficulties related to language acquisition and learning disabilities.

Questions	Typical language acquisition situation and developing ELLs	Description of ELLs who may have a learning disability
a. Does the student forget words?	☐ May not yet know word; may not have adopted the words or needs more practices of words	☐ Has recollection/spoken language processing complications
b. Is the student easily sidetracked?	☐ Does not comprehend; is burdened with new information; needs more visual/tangible support	☐ Has an auditory processing problem (easily bothered by sudden or loud noises), the student is easily distracted (ADHD)

c. Does the student have difficulty following directions?	☐ Does not understand vocabulary of the word problem; is not accustomed with the currency; has no previous knowledge with the content	☐ Has difficulty with reasoning problems; a memory problem; sequencing issues; may not be able to generalize from previous examples
d. Is student able to perform mathematic questions, but not solve word problems?	☐ Does not know terminology of the word problem; is not acquainted with the currency; has no previous knowledge with the content	☐ Has processing or abstract reasoning problems; difficulty recalling information; sequencing issue; may not be able to generalize from earlier examples
e. Does the student avoid writing?	☐ Does not have self-assurance or is not comfortable with having numerous drafts of work before the concluding version	☐ Has difficulties with fine motor skills and inadequate with expressive language
f. Does the student have difficulty in retelling a story in sequence or summarize a plot?	☐ Is unaware with too much of the vocabulary of the story	☐ Has difficulty organizing ideas or processing problems

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

_____

_____

_____

_____