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Early Childhood Teachers' Experiences with Overrepresentation of English Language Learners in Special Education Programs

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Tiffeny Sharpton

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Walden University

2024

Abstract

Early Childhood Teachers' Experiences with Overrepresentation of English Language
Learners in Special Education Programs

by

Tiffeny Sharpton

MEd, Valdosta State University, 2019

BAEd, Kennesaw State University, 2015

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Education

Walden University

May 2024

Abstract

The population of English Language Learners (ELLs) enrolled in kindergarten to second grade (K-2) in the Southern region of the United States has increased. K-2 teachers are challenged to serve ELLs in the regular education classroom and students are often being referred for special education services. There needs to be more literature on the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs and what teachers need to facilitate appropriate interventions for ELL students within the general education classroom. The conceptual framework that guides this study combines the theory of language acquisition by Cummins and the multitiered system of supports for ELLs by Hoover. Two research questions were focused on K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs and what teachers need to address the issue of overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs. An open-ended interview protocol was followed with 12 experienced K-2 teachers. Data were collected and analyzed using a thematic approach to identify codes, patterns, categories, and themes. The results of this study show the importance of communication with families, strategies used within the classroom, and the services that are offered to ELLs on their growth. This study has the potential to create positive social change by providing educators with insights based on K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education. Positive social change will occur when teachers use appropriate interventions with ELL students in the general education classroom.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my children: Ryan and Lindsay Sharpton, whom I love and would do anything for. They have encouraged me and been patient with all the long hours of work and weekends where we couldn't do anything because I had to work.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In this study, I focused on the overrepresentation of English language learners (ELLs) in kindergarten through second grade (K-2) special education programs. The study is important because of the gap in the literature on the overrepresentation of ELLs in early childhood special education programs. Researchers have suggested that research is needed on teachers' experiences with student placements and that this research is important because the overrepresentation of students in special education can be academically and psychologically harmful to students (Burr, 2019; Karvonen et al., 2021; Murphy & Johnson, 2020; Tankard Carnock et al., 2019). This study has the potential to create positive social change by providing educators with insight into experiences about the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education. Chapter 1 includes a review of the background literature, problem statement, purpose of study, and the research questions. There is an overview of the conceptual framework, nature of the study, assumptions, limitations, significance of this study, scope, and delimitations. There is also a section on definitions of important key concepts related to this study. I conclude with a summary of key points.

Background

The percentage of enrollment of ELLs in public schools in the United States increased in the fall 2019 (10.4%, or 5.1 million students) from fall 2010 (9.2%, or 4.5 million students). Researchers found that 792,000 ELLs enrolled in the United States between 2019 and 2020 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). The population of ELLs enrolled in primary-grade schools has increased recently (Ramírez et al., 2019).

The increase in the ELL population leads to an increase in the placement of ELLs in special education, but teachers' experiences on whether this has created an overrepresentation is unknown. Hulse (2020) suggested further research to explore the overrepresentation of bilingual students and what resources are available for them. Jozwik et al. (2020) found that further research is needed to understand how special education serves ELL students who may or may not have a disability placed in the special education class. Cioe-Pena (2020) said further research is needed into why ELL minority students are placed into special education and the way schools make decisions regarding the linguistic placement of these ELL students.

There is a lot of information about the increase of ELLs but little information about the early childhood education teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education (Barrio, 2021). The gap requires more research into rural counties early childhood education teachers' experiences of overrepresentation and what should be implemented to change this. Karvonen et al. (2021) stated the need for further research on the evaluation and identification methods used for identifying ELLs for special education and using teachers' experiences on how they can be improved. This study contributes to literature and potential social implications to improve the applicable placement of ELLs in special education and limit the potential of overrepresentation. The study contributes to literature related to the study's scope and creates positive social change within schools. The study allows the teachers' experiences to lead to more significant needs of ELLs being met in an appropriate manner that best suits them.

Problem Statement

The problem in this basic qualitative study is that K-2 teachers are challenged to serve ELLs in the general education classroom, and students are being referred for special education services. Researchers have noted that a growing number of ELLs are overrepresented in special education programs throughout the United States (Hulse, 2020; Karvonen et al., 2021; Murphy & Johnson, 2020; Ortogero & Ray, 2021). There needs to be more literature on the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs and what teachers need to facilitate appropriate interventions within the classroom. The overrepresentation of ELLs was noted by teachers in a rural southwestern district in the southern region of the United States. Based on the school grades report, 41% of the student population are identified as ELLs, with 8% of these ELLs receiving special education services. Hispanic students are the fastest-growing enrollments in rural counties over the last 3 years . Student demographics have increased from 2% to 4%, with one local school population rising from 23% to 25% Hispanic and another school from 36% to 40% Hispanic population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs and what teachers need to facilitate appropriate interventions within the classroom. The study has potential social implications for the appropriate identification and professional

development challenges teachers face when working with K-2 ELLs. This would also determine what teachers need to help those ELLs to be placed successfully or given appropriate interventions within the classroom. To fulfill this purpose and address the gap in research on the overrepresentation of ELLs for special education services, I conducted interviews with 12 K-2 teachers in 12 different rural schools in the Southern United States.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided this study as follows:

RQ1: What are K-2 teachers' experiences regarding the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs?

RQ2: What do early childhood teachers need to address the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this qualitative study is Cummins's (2010) theory of language acquisition and the multitiered system of supports for ELLs by Hoover et al. (2020). Cummins' theory looks at language broken down into categories to help teachers understand where students have language-learning needs. However, Hoover et al. pointed out how important it is to differentiate between learning differences and disabilities. The logical connections between the conceptual framework and the nature of my study include a look at how the multitiered system of supports (MTSS) for ELLs in rural schools does the following: (a) emphasizes the use of ELLs' native language, especially in the schools that teach through an ESL model; (b) gives increased attention to family

and community values and teachings in referral and instructional decision making; (c) increases attention is given to data and data teams influence instructional adjustments that benefit students; and (d) provide increased examples of school-wide cultural and linguistic responsiveness that extends beyond bulletin board displays of student learning. The theory of language acquisition was also be used to guide the study's methodology and address specific research questions related to the needs of ELLs in addressing their learning needs. As I explored teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELLs for special education programs in rural schools in the southern United States, the conceptual framework guided the design of the interview instrument and analysis of data collected from 12 K-2 teachers.

Nature of the Study

To address the research questions in this qualitative study, I used a basic qualitative study design with interviews that included collecting data through interviews with 12 K-2 volunteer participants from 12 different rural schools that enroll a highly bilingual student population in the southern United States, where I am not employed or known to potential participants. Ravitch and Carl (2021) stated that people use their experiences to understand people with self-reflection on different phenomena. I collected interview data on the experiences of teachers who work with ELLs identified as special education students making this qualitative research methodology the appropriate option for the study. Rubin and Rubin (2012) discussed interviews as a naturalistic research method because the researchers engage in dialogue with people with knowledge and experience in the researched area. I followed the Rubin and Rubin interview protocol for

using open-ended questions that lead to further questions to gather as much information as possible. I explored teacher experience based on their work with the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education, which makes a qualitative methodology the best fit.

Definitions

The definition of key concepts or constructs related to my topic is as follows:

Early childhood education (ECE): A group setting intended to effect developmental changes from birth to age eight (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2022).

Early childhood educator: A person who provides learning opportunities and supports the development and well-being of young children from birth through age eight while meeting degree requirements (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2022).

English For Speakers of Other Language (ESOL): English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) is teaching English to students whose first language is not English but who live in an English-speaking country. Most school districts have ESOL teachers working with the classroom teacher to support ELL students (Tuttle et al., 2021).

English language learners (ELLs): According to Byfield (2019) ELLs are students who are speakers of languages other than English. The United States Department of Education (2002) defined ELLs as “students whose language is a language other than English and whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language may deny the individual the opportunity to participate fully in society” (p. 69).

Special Education: Specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including— (i) Instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and other settings; and. (ii) Instruction in physical education (Individuals Disability Education Act, 2004).

Students with Disabilities: Students with learning disabilities need assistance with special education and programs identified as having a disability (IDEA, 2004).

Assumptions

This study is based on my assumptions. According to Burkholder et al. (2020), assumptions are needed to ensure that there is valuable research because of the study. The interviews with early childhood education teachers provided open, honest, reliable insight into their experiences of the overrepresentation of ELLs in Special Education. With well-written interview questions and being aware of my assumptions, my questions were reliable and free of bias. I kept a reflective journal to make sure no bias was involved. Ravitch and Carl (2016) suggested that it is important to identify one's assumptions when analyzing data and reporting findings. I am aware of my assumptions and reduced the influence of those assumptions on my study's findings.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs and what teachers need to facilitate appropriate interventions within the classroom. The scope included K-2 teachers from general education and special education classrooms in 12 different schools responded to interview questions related to the study. ELLs are

evaluated and placed in Special Education, which may lead to overrepresentation and misplacement. I interviewed 12 K-2 teachers from twelve different schools with high ELL populations. During the interviews, I asked participants questions regarding their experiences with the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs.

Volunteers were recruited through email addresses that are publicly available and found on school websites that indicate the teacher positions. A delimitation was the limited sample size due to the type of teacher used in the study. The study may contribute to qualitative research on the ways teachers can effectively teach ELLs who do not have disabilities by providing intervention strategies in the regular education classroom.

Limitations

The limitations, challenges, and barriers addressed while conducting this study included limited access to participants, ethical issues, and personal bias. To address the limited access to participants, I reached out through social media groups and other group sites with a pool of several teachers with publicly available email addresses. Working with teachers on their schedule and being available after school hours and on weekends allowed further access to a larger pool of teachers to interview. To address the ethical issues, I used an alphanumeric system to identify each participant, and only I have access to the names of the participants. I did not include demographic data on my participants in a chart, other than how they meet the criteria for participation in the study. I used audio recordings of the interviews and carefully transcribed the data myself by listening to the recordings, using iTranscribe, and checking the transcripts multiple times to make sure the information is complete and accurate. Lastly is the limitation of my bias with my

years of working with special education and ELLs. I have been a passionate educator and advocate for those students with disabilities and language barriers for many years. To address any bias, I kept a reflective journal of my thoughts, opinions, feelings, ideas, and experiences (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Burkholder et al. (2020) found that when keeping a reflective journal, a researcher is aware of their personal biases and find ways to avoid them.

Significance

This study is significant in that it identifies the experiences of teachers regarding the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs. Burr (2019) stated that when ELL students are placed in special education programs without needing those services, the students will often suffer because they lose out on receiving the ELL services they need. The findings of this study have the potential to change how teachers approach the future evaluation, training, and processing of students eligible for English as a secondary language. Becker et al. (2019) suggested making sure students who need further assistance are referred and placed in a class according to those needs is vital to the success of the student and program. Deepening learning will result from the study and help create a positive approach to what needs to be established or changed with the goals and design of the ELL program.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I introduce the topic and basis of my qualitative study. This chapter provides background for the problem explored, its purpose, the research questions addressed, the framework, and the impact of social change creates. The chapter also

provides the nature of the study and definitions of key concepts related to my topic.

Limitations were included with assumptions, scope, and delimitations to examine the study's boundaries and significance. In Chapter 2, I provide the literature relevant to the study in a comprehensive literature review. This includes synthesizing the studies related to my topic, framework, and problem.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem that I investigated in this basic qualitative study was that a growing number of ELLs are overrepresented in special education programs throughout the United States (see Hulse, 2020; Karvonen et al., 2021; Murphy & Johnson, 2020; Ortogero & Ray, 2021). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs and what teachers need to facilitate appropriate interventions within the classroom. In Chapter 2, I address the literature search strategy to clearly understand the study problem and framework that grounds the study. I completed an extensive search to ensure saturation was met.

Literature Search Strategy

This literature review was conducted through an extensive search from Walden University's research database, which included Education Source, ERIC, Sage Journals, Academic Search Complete, Psychology, and Google Scholar, and met with the Walden Librarian. Articles were chosen from the database for this literature review from the last five years and were all peer reviewed. The search terms include different variations of keywords-*special education, early childhood, EL, ELL, English Language Learner, overrepresentation, overrepresentation, Special Education Placement, Evaluations, and culturally diverse learners*. In addition, I used Google Scholar to search for additional articles on the various topics of placement of ELLs in special education. Studies were published in the previous 5 years in peer-reviewed scholarly journals.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this qualitative study was a combination of Cummins's (2000) theory of language acquisition and Hoover's (2020) MTSS for ELLs. The theory of language acquisition outlines the differences in two types of language: basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)(Cummins, 2010). BICS examines social language, such as linguistic skills needed in everyday social interactions. CALP is the academic language that is used in the classroom across various contents. BICS is the language that is focused on at a younger age, usually between 6 months to 2 years old. CALP is the language that is focused on 5—7 years old once children start school. According to Cummins (2010), CALP is higher-level vocabulary and advanced skills used for listening, speaking, reading, and writing, where BICS is not cognitively challenging. The MTSS for ELLs is based on a tiered system to drive instruction and assist with ongoing assessment to monitor a student's progress and growth (Hoover et al., 2020). Tier 1 is implemented in the general classroom, Tier 2 requires more intense support to meet the academic needs, and Tier 3 in small group interventions to increase their learning needs. The MTSS model is meant to help ELLs with language proficiency because that impacts their ability to understand instruction and gain academic needs. Cummins (2010) examined language in categories to help teachers understand where their students are in their needs. He identified how ELLs become proficient in BICS years before they are proficient in CALP. Understanding communication requires minimal thinking whereas cognitively demanding communication requires a lot more and can show a learning need they may

not have but just need more time to learn. Hoover et al. indicated how important it is to differentiate from learning differences and disabilities. He stressed the importance of response to interventions being applied in the ELLs' first language to see where their abilities are, as well as tracking progress in the second language. The MTSS delivers a data-based response to intervention model provided at the school level. This model is layered and increases as the learner's ability grows. The logical connections between the framework presented and the nature of my study include a look at how the MTSS for ELLs in rural schools (Hoover et al., 2020) does the following: (a) emphasizes use of ELLs' native language, especially in the schools that teach through an ESL model; (b) gives increased attention to family and community values and teachings in referral and instructional decision making; (c) increases attention is given to data, and data teams influence instructional adjustments that benefit students; and (d) provides increased examples of school-wide cultural and linguistic responsiveness that extends beyond bulletin board displays of student learning.

Cummins (2010) discussed how ELLs need access to extensive higher order thinking reading of written text because that is where academic language is found. He considers the BICS which uses Anglo-Saxon words that are one to two syllables in length, versus CALP, which includes words that have three to four syllables in thinking about the extensive reading. He believed a less teacher-centered approach with language could lead to a high achievement and lead to a smaller gap that could potentially reduce the number of ELLs referred to special education.

Other Frameworks Considered

I considered several other theories before selecting the conceptual framework for my study. This included Vidal et al.'s (2023) bioecological model of human development. The bioecological model of human development includes the proximal processes, person, context (microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem), and time (Vidal et al, 2023). The model looks at students' interactions with their peers (Vidal et al., 2023). Vidal et al. (2023) further explored the complexities of social interactions, identified that social interactions suffer when there is a language barrier. The sociocultural perspective on learning and teaching is a joint activity with a variety of methods such as; zone of proximal development, more knowledgeable other peers, interaction, guided participation, and apprenticeship (Xu et al., 2022). The sociolinguistic view of second language learning includes variability, language in use, community of practice, repertoires of negotiable resources, and situated second language learning. Like sociocultural theory, which conceptualizes learning as “stretching across social and material environments” (Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 189), the bioecological framework systematically considers individual characteristics of the developing person, contexts (e.g., classrooms, homes, communities, and societies) and their relationships in providing resources for child development. The bioecological model of human development involves the proximal presses, person, context, and time, which also augments sociocultural theory in that it illustrates how child development takes place through “processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interactions between the person and its environment” (Vital et al., 2023, p. 38). Sociolinguistics, in turn, offers an even

narrower lens to examine the proximal processes from the trans-language strategies perspective (Roth & Lee, 2007). Considering teachers' interpretation and enactment of classroom ELL accommodations through the bioecological, as well as sociocultural and sociolinguistic, experiences might offer more profound insight into potentially long-lasting effects these enactments have on children's literacy and language development. For this study exploring teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELLs for special education programs in rural schools in the southern United States, the conceptual framework needed was one that examined language versus disability and supports for those ELLs. The framework was used to guide the design of the interview instrument and analysis of data collected from 12 K-2 teachers.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

In this section, I present research that relates to the challenges and experiences identification of ELLs and special education programs. The exhaustive search and review of current literature with some past literature helped my approach to addressing the existing gaps in the literature by data collection aimed at answering the research questions in this study:

RQ1: What are K-2 teachers' experiences regarding the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs?

RQ2: What do early childhood teachers need to address the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs?

A search of specific literature on current standards, qualifications, and research-based articles on identifying ELLs for special education. Researchers have found that

identifying ELLs for special education has been a struggle in the school systems (Hulse, 2020; Karvonen et al., 2021; Murphy & Johnson, 2020; Ortogero & Ray, 2021). Some of the challenges encountered in the literature are related to laws concerning special education and ELL, student background knowledge, programs available to support ELLs, teacher preparations, professional development, special education support, and parent engagement.

English Language Learners

ELLs are those learners whose primary language in the home is not English. The United States Department of Education (2002) states ELL is a student who has difficulty reading, speaking, writing, or comprehending of English due to their native language being something other than English. The number of ELLs in the United States increased from the fall of 2010 to the fall of 2019. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2022), in the fall of 2010 9.2% of students in the United States were ELL; this increased to 10.4% by fall 2019. The higher percentage rates were found in lower grades, with the highest number being 15% of kindergarteners. The NCES (2022) found Spanish was the home language for 3.9 million students identified as ELL, making up 75.7% of all the ELLs in the fall of 2019. The increase in ELLs in the classroom means that teachers need to be prepared and knowledgeable about supporting them to limit the chance of overrepresentation (Li & Peters, 2020; Okhremtchouk & Seelu, 2019).

Immigrant Population

In the state in the Southeastern United States where this study was conducted, there is a large immigrant population where one in 10 individuals were born in another

country (American Immigrant Council, 2021). This immigrant population was reported as 502,347 women, 493,737 men, and 67,989 children. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2023), there were more than 840,000 immigrant students in the United States. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) cares for unaccompanied children who are taken while crossing the border. Those children do not officially become enrolled in local schools but are provided educational services by the HHS (U. S. Department of Education, 2023). However, many immigrants in the state are documented workers or intend to become citizens of the United States and enroll their students in the public school system (State Department of Education, n.d.).

Education of English Language Learners

When it comes to educating ELLs, guidelines must be followed and laid out by the education departments nationally and by individual states. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2022) language assistance must be provided till the student is considered proficient in English. School districts can choose from programs designed from theory and research showing what is effective in practice. Some programs designed to help ELLs include social-emotional learning (SEL), research-based virtual educational programs for ELLs, the trans-language writing program, pull out, push-in program, and language assistant program. Li and Peters (2020) stated the importance of equipping educators with skills to effectively educate ELLs so that interventions are in place to address the language need and be able to identify if there is a learning delay. Ridley et al. (2019) pointed out the importance of getting to know each student their strengths and building solid relationships with their parents to help them socially and educationally.

When further educating ELLs or those who have a disability, there is a correlation found between the students' language development and their ability to learn material or how they learn information (Peng, 2022).

Social Emotional Learning

Olivo (2021) stated that culturally and linguistically diverse learners face challenges of complex social-emotional and socio-cultural needs than their peers. SEL focuses on five core ideas: relationship skills, self-awareness, responsible decision making, social awareness, and self-management (Becker & Deris, 2019). These focuses are beneficial in the academic and social success of diverse learners. Educators feel they are more helpful in meeting the needs of ELLs when more programs that cater to their unique cultural/linguistic needs are offered in the school (Becker & Deris, 2019). It was stated by Fettig et al. (2022) that additional research needs to be conducted on the social-emotional teaching approaches and how they change outcomes.

Translanguaging Writing Program

Williams (1980) first used the term “trans-languaging,” which is the strategy of allowing ELLs to write in two or more languages. It allows ELLs to capitalize on their existing skills and not hold them to just a single language (Williams, 1980). This enables those learners to use all their language skills to express themselves fully during the writing process. ELL learners are able to draft and figure out exactly what they want to say and gather feedback to build their confidence before writing the final draft. When students can use their entire language repertoire, it empowers them to reach their full potential and facilitate critical thinking. The Northwestern Evaluation Association

(NWEA, 2022) believed that students within the classroom can benefit from using trans-language strategies, which teachers should encourage as part of their writing program (Parmegiani, 2022; Sembiente et al., 2023).

Push-in and Pull-out Program

The push-in and pull-out models allow for the support of ELLs within the classroom or a smaller setting (Portela-Pruaño et al., 2022). Push-in is where an ELL specialist or certified educator goes into the general education classroom to provide additional support. The push-in model is successful when expectations are clear and transparent. Pull-out services are where an ELL specialist or certified educator pull ELLs to work individually or in a small group. Pull-out often provides a safe space for ELLs to receive more minutes of instructions from the ELL specialist than during push-in service (Lehman, C., & Welch, B.; 2022). Pull-out programs are great for additional support of English Language Learners and those with a disability, but often they are pulled during vital instruction time, which causes other issues (Cho et al., 2021).

Language Assistant Program

The language assistant programs allow ELLs to receive assistance to help ensure they attain English proficiency and help them gain knowledge to meet all academic content and achievement standards that all students are expected to meet (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). These programs improve English proficiency, allowing students to achieve higher educational outcomes (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2022). Many schools have implemented technology as a language assistant for ELLs (Weihong, 2022). Godwin-Jones (2022) found research on language assistance

programs using artificial intelligence to assist with ELLs writing and interpreting things given to them in English to their native language.

Migrant Education Program (Title I, Part C)

Migrant education programs are designed to help migrant children achieve a diploma through rigorous academic standards (Department of Education, n.d.). This program allows migrant children as they move between states to get the same rigorous academic standards and curriculum while providing services to meet each one's unique needs. This program provides direct instruction, online instruction, graduation planning assistance when time, health and dental care, clothing, transportation, and more as a migrant child progresses and succeeds in school. A software platform called Migrant Student Information Exchange (MSIX) is set up so that their information can be shared as the children move from state to state to ensure appropriate enrollment and placement (Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2021). The migrant education programs focus on students and parents, helping the parents' efficacy, behaviors, relationships with their child, and everyday stress (Lee, In-Sook & Kim, Eunjung, 2022). According to Zholdoshalieva et al. (2022), migrant education is essential because this population has grown over the past 10 years, and that at the end of 2021, the United Nations showed 27 million refugees and 53 million internally displaced persons. This growing population of immigrant people increases the number of those students in the classroom from those families.

Student Motivation

With all learners, it is important to build a relationship, but that becomes a higher importance when working with a learner with a language barrier. When building and developing a relationship with ELLs, show an interest in their lives and background to motivate them to be engaged in learning English (Bulazik & Boglages, 2020). Motivation is an essential factor in the success of learning. According to Bularzik and Boglages (2020), when students' were taught by a teacher who understood the importance of task-based instruction due to the relationships they built, it yielded higher motivation and confidence in students. Researcher Gao (2021) suggested the teacher-student relationship is an important foundation for creating motivation and an effective learning environment. There are two reasons that researchers Morgan et al. (2023) found this strategy motivational for ELLs to learn English. ELLs learn English to be academically successful, and the other is to understand the English culture. Creating motivation for ELLs to learn English will make it easier for educators to have a clear idea if a student is behind due to language or because some other issues or needs should be addressed (Morgan et al., 2023).

Language Education

There are several components when it comes to evaluating and teaching ELLs, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2022). The Equal Education Opportunities Act of 1974 prohibits states from refusing support or help to students due to race, color, sex, or national origin. This act mentions that schools are to overcome language barriers that impede a student's ability to participate within the classroom or

school. Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) The Bilingual Education Act looks at the potential disadvantages for non-English speaking students. The Bilingual Education Act began in 1968 to help schools by providing support and funding to provide services to students with limited English (National Association of Bilingual Education, 2022). Title VII was added to support professional development and increase the state's role in 1994. A section on the Improving America's Schools Act in 1994 addressed eligibility for services under Title I and gave an equal opportunity for those with limited English to gain eligibility the same as their English-speaking peers.

Special Education

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that began in 2004 through the Department of Education to ensure that all students receive a free, appropriate public education regardless of disability. According to the Department of Education, as of the 2020-2021 school year, 7.5 million children were eligible to receive services through this program. Children 3-21 are served under part B of the IDEA. IDEA was amended in 2015 with the Every Student Succeeds Act to state how disability does not take away from the rights of students to participate or contribute to society. It added that it is essential to ensure those with disabilities receive equality with opportunities, participation, living independently, and a chance for self-sufficiency. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, protects programs rights to receive Federal financial assistance. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 protects state and local government services whether they get Federal aid or not.

Special Education Laws

Laws in the education field help guide curriculum and instruction in the classroom as well as the school. Education laws cover everything from the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) 2017, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Family Educational Rights and Policy Act (FERPA), and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Each law protects the rights of students and their families to receive the best education possible (Department of Education, n.d.). The Department of Education was established in 1979 to set up programs through laws to support all students in school (Federal Education Laws Administered by the Department of Education, 2023). Storey (2023) points out how special education laws have changed through the years and that having laws that change as our learners' needs change has taken schools from segregating learners to finding ways to work with all learners in the general classroom. Other laws that the Department of Education handles are the ones pertaining to ELLs. Flores et al. (2023) discuss the importance of accountability for the educational laws when working with ELLs by considering specificity, consistency, authority, power, and stability.

Special Education Services

In Southern states, under IDEA, there are several services offered. Officials with the state's departments of education often point out there is difficulty in determining if a learning or behavior delay exists due to disability or language barriers (GaDOE, 2023). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), 792,00 ELLs enrolled in school in the United States were students identified with a disability. This represents 15.5% of the total ELL enrollment from the 2019-2020 report. 12 disability categories

qualify for services in Southern states; those are: autism spectrum disorder, deaf or blind, emotional and behavioral disorder, intellectual disability (mild intellectual disability, moderate intellectual disability, profound intellectual disability, and severe intellectual disability), orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, significant developmental delay, specific learning disability, speech-language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment. Accommodations and interventions must be provided to ELLs who show the possibility of delay in assessing where they are. Services are offered to those who show a delay and could be identified under FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education), but the student's language and cultural background should be attentively considered. The services offered under the federal special education law, IDEA, are related services that can vary and be individualized to each kid who needs them. Some services include speech-language and audiology, interpreting, psychological, occupational, and physical therapy, therapeutic recreation, counseling, medical, social work, parent counseling and training, and early identification and evaluation. It is important to know the difference between supports and services; supports change how and what students learn to help them succeed in school at the same learning level as their peers, and services are for students who need additional or extra help outside the general education which are provided through an IEP or 504 plan. While services are available, teachers have found it difficult to implement them due to their ability to access material and resources (Suhreinrich et al., 2021).

Early Interventions with ELLs

Early intervention in the years before kindergarten can affect the placement in special education classes in the early elementary years and potentially impact the misplacement that could occur. Research has stated the importance of interventions with ELLs establishing early literacy skills to enhance the chances for higher levels and delays (Hee Hur et al., 2020). Wackerle-Hollman et al., 2020 found methods used in preschool with ELLs to develop early literacy skills and when to intervene with interventions limiting learners that could be at risk later when they progress through school with higher literacy skills. Understanding the growth in bilingual ELLs across domains helps fill in learning gaps that could develop and lead to overrepresentation. High-quality interventions in their preschool years have been shown to directly impact their early elementary years (Odom et al., 2019). According to Nesbitt et al. (2022), the executive function skills in inclusive pre-kindergarten classrooms where copy design intervention skills were used showed significant increases in those executive functioning skills.

Assessing ELLs

Cho et al. (2020) studied how schools assessed ELLs in only English, even though that was their second language, not their primary one. When researching, they also found that the school was assessing using a psychologist who did not speak Spanish and no translator was used to help with any portion of the assessment. Roseberry-McKibbin et al. (2021) saw as the number of ELLs was increasing in schools, it increased referrals of those for special education. They examined how the assessment was biased because a pre-assessment of the students' language equivalency was never discussed.

Research also considered RTI (response to intervention) involved in supporting the ELL to see if higher academic achievement could be made before just referring to special education (Roseberry-McKibbin et al., 2021). With the growing culturally and linguistically diverse students and families, Lim et al. (2021) discussed how parents are to be involved in the decision-making process of identification, evaluation, and placement of students in special education classes according to the IDEA but that it is not being done as much as it was envisioned due to the language barriers. Cho et al. (2020) looked at how dynamic assessments had more value than traditional assessments for identifying ELLs who could be at risk for being identified with a disability when it is just a language barrier. An ELL student who is assessed an English assessment for special education and is placed in a special education class with services not needed reduces the ELL services they receive that are necessary (Burr, 2019). Barrio et al. (2020) looked at how the validity of the test and process lacked cultural understanding, accountability, and misinterpretation of policies that often affect the results and placement of ELLs in special education programs. Assessment and placement can often be affected by variables such as language that impact results and limit the support of those individual needs that could be addressed through interventions (Agran et al., 2020). Park (2020) found that when referring ELLs for special education services, it is more accurate when educators work and collaborate to limit the barriers of language and cultural misunderstandings that could arise.

Separating Language from Disability

When looking at disability versus a language struggle, various tasks should be considered that address the diverse linguistic, academic, cultural, emotional, and intellectual needs (Lopes-Murphy, 2020). Hulse (2020) considered how resources available for teachers to access when educating ELLs impact the amount of remediation that is given, which can lead to higher referral rates and overrepresentation in special education. Karvonen et al. (2021) stated that their research found many teachers did not view language and disability as two separate things and that their approach to instruction tends to follow that perception. When considering students, especially ELLs, it should be through the standard special education assessment and the lens of social, cultural, and historical (Conner et al., 2019). Farkas et al. (2020) examined how overrepresentation can be attributed to cultural differences. An asset-based approach, as stated by Park (2020), looks at a more accurate portrayal of what the student can do, and the deficits that arise can be attributed to some of the cultural misunderstandings in the school. It was considered by Cruz et al. (2022) that understanding the risk of disproportionality changes over time by considering the student's cultural background as it influences the assessment process. When looking at students with dual social identities and classifications, the school can inadvertently create a larger English struggle or create a disability that may not have been there before (Cooc, 2023). Cooc (2023) continued to say the inability to learn received ELL services can lead to a learning challenge requiring additional services.

Culturally Responsive

The U.S. Census Bureau (2019) stated one in every 4 children in the United States is of Spanish or Latin descent and this number represents about 23% of the school age population. Looking at culturally responsive teaching we connect a student's language, culture, and life with what they are learning at school. Making connections that mean something to the student improves the students depth of knowledge and understanding. When we consider cultural responsive approaches the impact of family interactions during meal times is a vital opportunity for improved vocabulary (Leyva et al., 2022). Yoon (2023) found 5 key principles of culturally responsive teaching: foundational knowledge of the student's home language; translanguaging space for the students to process information; implementing integrated approaches for content and language by making learning more active; multimodality for engagement allowing communication through verbal, visual, non-verbal, and auditory; and collaboration for the diverse needs by meeting with the bilingual teacher. Idrus and Sohid (2023) stated being culturally responsive goes beyond the education classroom or school but extends to other social contexts. The culturally responsive teaching approach looks to improve the whole student by enhancing their self-esteem, critical thinking, and their academic success (Yu, 2022).

Classroom Environment

When helping culturally and linguistically diverse students like ELLs, it is essential to have a welcoming classroom environment. As a teacher takes the time to know the learners and their background, it makes a big difference in the students learning. Gupta (2019) stated that bringing a student's culture into the classroom by

presenting information from their culture with various visuals and labeling them in multiple languages. Hence, they feel valued in the school creates a positive environment. One approach that has been researched is called code switching, where the teacher creates a supportive classroom environment, talking to the ELLs in their native language and English opening up opportunities for ELLs to be active participants in classroom discussions (Suh, 2020). When a teacher draws from the students' background, it creates an environment that can separate what is a language challenge and what goes beyond that to a greater need (Owens & Wells, 2021). Researchers Chahin et al. (2023) stated a classroom that builds on the cognitive strengths and social capabilities of the ELLs encourages the developmental stages of language acquisition to limit what may appear as a delay as they progress through school—creating a welcoming environment by knowing what pedagogical approaches to try within the classroom can help a teacher separate a language delay from a more significant issue requiring intensive interventions.

Resources

The increasing growth of ELLs in schools results in more resources and needs for the school to address the challenges that come with it. Evans et al. (2021) found that this increase in culturally and linguistically diverse learners requires culturally sensitive educational interventions. Efficacy within the schools for culturally responsive teaching was a struggle that Chu found due to limited opportunities and material offered for teachers as well as community members to promote successful ELL learning (Cho et al., 2021). Barrio (2021) considered how the lack of resources provided to teachers on understanding the knowledge and skills of culturally responsive practices and pre-referral

models for special education can create disproportionality. Graves and Bahous (2021) showed a need for professional learning on socio-emotional teaching and disciplinary efficacy to support teachers on effective approaches to working with ELLs. How ELL is defined within a school can impact the approach to the priority of special education over language, where clear resources for teachers on what to expect or look for can limit the inconsistency (Cooc, 2023). When teachers are provided with material to lead to classroom success and growth with ELL students, it can close gaps in the academic deficits that arise.

Multiple Modality Approach to ELLs

Multiple Modality is the three main ways students learn: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. When it comes to addressing ELLs needs, using multiple modalities is essential to address all their needs. All students have different learning needs, but challenges arise and are more prevalent when the learning needs of ELLs still need to be addressed. It is important when working with ELLs or the ELLs you believe might have a learning delay to take the time to learn them, understand their specific learning style, and teach using a variety of learning styles to meet the different needs of all (Beisly et al., 2023; Hsu et al., 2022).

Visual representation greatly impacts the cognitive and construction of knowledge, providing new thoughts or ideas for education (Zhang, 2022). The researcher went on to state an auxiliary and alternative communication approach could improve English teaching and change the traditional way English teaching has been. Using multiple modalities during instruction can significantly impact what the students absorb

and show where actual struggles might be instead of the struggles that come from not understanding the language. The use of multiple modalities extends to every content with a variety of different uses in each setting. Some of the main examples of the use of multiple modalities in English is producing digital texts, math constructs arguments using a variety of symbolic representation, and science will use models as visual representations (Grapin & Llosa, 2022).

Parent Engagement

When considering parent engagement, it is important to remember the success of any learner, but especially an ELL, is creating a partnership between the school and the parents. Parent engagement means working together to create a positive, goal-oriented relationship with shared responsibility and mutual respect (Administration for Children and Families, 2020). That partnership will promote equity, inclusiveness, and cultural and linguistic responsiveness when working with the English Language Learner. Parent engagement helps build a safe, welcoming, and trusting environment that fosters successful learning outcomes and finds new approaches to working with each student. When considering ELLs with disabilities, those relationships are vital because they can limit some biases that may exist in the dominant culture (Thurlow et al., 2022). A key factor when engaging parents of ELLs with disabilities is ensuring they have resources provided to them. Researchers state a few possible barriers they perceive to engaging parents: a) lack of communication, b) mutual respect, c) distrust, d) inadequate professional skills, e) lack of parity in power dynamics, f) low socioeconomic status (Thurlow et al., 2022). Understanding that while a family may be culturally or

linguistically diverse does not mean they do not know what is going on with their child; their voice is just as important to consider in discussions regarding the child's education. To allow all families to feel they are a part of their students' educations, schools need to make sure they have interpreters, written communication translated into multiple languages, and parent help and involvement programs (McCarthy et al., 2020; Sommer et al., 2020; Stauss et al., 2021).

Educator Preparation

Teachers are continuous learners from when we start school, and it continues long after graduation. Once a teacher begins working, it becomes known as professional development to improve and grow as professionals in the education field. The teacher preparation varies from university to university, with different approaches from hands-on in the field to reading and assignments within a classroom. The national average of teachers remaining in the field after five years is 50% because most become overwhelmed and unprepared (Morgan et al., 2020). Li & Peters (2020) said that educators in the general education classroom do not feel they are prepared with training or ongoing professional development opportunities to assist the needs and growing number of ELLs in the classroom. The growing demand for professional development to work with ELLs is a struggle because this population of students continues to increase, and they have a unique educational need. Educating ELL students requires effective training that supports and guides teacher approaches to creating inclusive learning environments to accommodate all needs of ELLs or ELLs with disabilities (Larios & Zetlin, 2023).

Summary and Conclusion

In Chapter 2, I provided an exhaustive literature review addressing the research related to the challenges and experiences in identifying English Language Learners for special education programs. Some topics discussed are student motivation, classroom environment, student background knowledge, assessing, interaction and discussion, multiple modalities, review and assessment, English language learners with disabilities, different resources available to ELLs, strategies for working with ELLs, teacher preparation, the role of the English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) teacher, and parent engagement. My rationale for selecting these variables is related to the phenomenon of interest: what are early childhood teachers' experiences on the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs, and what practices do early childhood teachers need to intervene in the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs and what teachers need to facilitate appropriate interventions within the classroom. Two areas of interest in this study are (a) K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs in the Southern region of the United States and (b) what they need to facilitate appropriate interventions within the classroom. In Chapter 3, I describe the research design and rationale, explain my role as the researcher, and address the methodology I used. I also discuss the recruitment of participants, the instrument used for data collection, the data analysis, and issues of trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

Two research questions based on the conceptual framework and relevant literature in the field guide this study:

RQ1: What are K-2 teachers' experiences regarding the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs?

RQ2: What do early childhood teachers need to address the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs?

The central concept I investigated is the perception of the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education and how practices need to change to intervene in identifying ELLs in special education programs. Researchers have suggested that teacher experiences on student placements are important because the overrepresentation of students can be

academically and psychologically harmful for students (Burr, 2019; Karvonen et al., 2021; Murphy & Johnson, 2020; Tankard Carnock et al., 2019). In the review of the literature, Karvonen et al. (2021) found teachers generally do not view disability and language needs as separate, and due to that, the approach that instruction/identification takes follows that thought process. Without support from educators in the classroom to meet some of the language needs, the delays can become greater and present as a disability that may not be genuinely there (Karvonen et al., 2021).

The Research Tradition

The research tradition or design for my study is a basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews with 12 K-2 teachers from general and special education classrooms in 12 different schools. The rationale for choosing the basic qualitative research design approach was it best aligned with my research problem, purpose, and research questions (see Burkholder, 2020). This design focuses on the person's interest and how they view things (see Burkholder, 2016). Since the purpose of a qualitative research design is to explore the experiences and views of others, it was the most appropriate for this study because it allowed me to acquire information and understanding of the experiences of early childhood education teachers who work with ELLs and students with disabilities. Understanding the world and how people make sense of the experiences they have in the world is what researchers Merriam and Tisdell (2016) have found is the purpose of qualitative research. This type of research is used to help understand human actions through open-ended questions (Schwandt, 2015). A basic qualitative approach is the researcher using the participant's situation or phenomenon,

meaning it is used as an instrument to gather more profound understanding, inductive, and the results are descriptive (Merriam, 2018). When using a basic qualitative approach, Merriam (2018) points out that the researcher seeks to understand a phenomenon, process, perspective, and views of those involved in each or all areas. Researchers suggest that to reach data saturation, it is best to have between 12 participants in a qualitative study (see Creswell, 2013).

My rationale for choosing a basic qualitative research design using semistructured open-ended interview questions is that it offered more significant opportunities for in-depth results on experiences of early childhood education teachers on the identification of ELLs for special education programs than other designs. As Turner (2010) discussed, this approach is slightly structured but still allows for some flexibility to have informal conversations. Since I am looking at participants' experiences, this allowed for more in-depth discussion in a more relaxed format. This format also allowed me to take the questions that have been formatted and adapt them when needed to address the participants personally and get a greater depth of knowledge. The data collection method and open-ended interviews were aligned. Other qualitative designs I considered were ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory. Ethnography looks at the cultural meaning and focuses on an in-person field study with immersion through participant observation (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). This type of research uses interviews and informal conversations to study social/cultural groups that seek to understand those groups better. With ethnography, the researcher also participates in the group to better understand an insider perspective of those groups. This approach does not apply to my study or the

basic qualitative research because I am using open-ended questions to gather information and am not an active participant in the study myself. Phenomenology looks at lived experiences and phenomena and collects data through interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The phenomenology approach is good at looking at what an experience means to a specific group but could be better for a more comprehensive picture of understanding (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Grounded theory would not work for my study since it does not use descriptive approaches as a basic qualitative design with open-ended interviews (see Creswell, 2013). Grounded theory is not the best fit because it is designed to help develop theory and does not use open-ended interviews like the basic qualitative design (see Yin, 2014). The basic qualitative research allows focus on a small sample size of 12 participants, with data being collected until saturation is reached.

Role of Researcher

As the researcher, I am responsible for all facets of the study: interviewing, recording, journaling, transcribing, coding, and analyzing data provided by 12 early childhood teachers from 12 different rural school districts in the United States. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), researchers are active participants in their research; their personalities, knowledge, curiosity, and sensitivity all impact the quality of the work and perceptions. The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to assess the experiences and feelings of study participants and understand people's feelings regarding their experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Researcher Bias

I have a personal bias because I am passionate about providing appropriate, effective support to multilingual learners. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) stated that humans have a natural bias, but as researchers an obligation to recognize and monitor those biases. As the primary instrument for data collection was interviews, my role and experience could have impacted my judgment when asking for and analyzing the data results. Honesty is critical in collecting data from various sources; I put aside what I already know to create an effective data analysis process and avoid bias (see Islam et al., 2022).

Methodology

To address the research questions of this basic qualitative study, I interviewed 12 K-2 special education and ESOL teachers until saturation was reached. Volunteers were recruited from rural school districts where I am not employed in the United States with a high enrollment of bilingual students and special education programs.

Participant Selection

Interviews included collecting data through interviews with 12 K-2 volunteer participants from 12 different rural schools with an enrollment of 15-20% of bilingual students in the southern United States. I am not employed at any of the schools were participants teach nor was I known to potential participants. I used publicly available emails and social media groups to post a flyer asking for participants interested in being interviewed for my study to reach out to the email on the flyer. Ravitch and Carl (2021) stated that people use their experiences to understand people with self-reflection on

different phenomena. My study collected interview data on the experiences of teachers who work with ELLs identified as special education students made qualitative research methodology the appropriate option for this study. Rubin and Rubin (2012) discussed interviews as a naturalistic research method because the researchers engage in dialogue with people with knowledge and experience within the researched area. I followed the Rubin and Rubin interview protocol for using open-ended questions and questions that lead to further questions to gather as much information as possible. I explored teacher experiences based on their experiences with the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education, which made a qualitative methodology the best fit. I recruited kindergarten, first, and second-grade teachers, including multigrade level teachers of ESOL from different rural school districts in the United States. Recruitment was conducted through publicly available emails. Volunteers were asked to respond to a flyer by email if they were interested in participating in my study.

Data Analysis Plan

Data was analyzed by coding to identify patterns, categories, and themes that address early childhood teachers' experiences on the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs and practices early childhood teachers need to intervene in the identification of ELLs in special education programs. I used a reflective journal to document the interviews. Each interview was recorded and transcribed using iTranscribe online software to clearly reflect what the interviewee stated. In my first data analysis phase, I used descriptive coding, which involves reading through qualitative data and coding it according to the topic (see Saldaña, 2021). I designed a table for interview data

and assigned an alphanumeric code to each educator. Rubin and Rubin (2012) noted that coding is finding and labeling the concepts, themes, events, and examples in your transcripts that speak to your research questions. I manually coded the data using Braun and Clarke's (2006) step-by-step data analysis approach to analyze the interview transcripts. The steps include: (a) becoming familiar with the data by reading and understanding exactly what is stated, (b) generate initial codes for organizing data and keeping personal information separate, (c) search for themes by finding common ideas throughout each interview to group thoughts, (d) review themes, (e) define and name themes using the common ideas found throughout the interviews, and (f) produce a scholarly report.

Issues of Trustworthiness

With a basic qualitative study, it was important to establish the validity or trustworthiness of the findings to ensure rigor and truth in the study's research. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated when multiple methods of data collection are used; it affirms the findings are faithful and honest to the participants' experiences. To address the issue of trustworthiness, the study was carefully aligned with well-established research methods, conducting interviews with a variety of educators across different organizations, becoming familiar with each educator, including relevant and grounded research questions, and debriefing with peers and peer feedback (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

For this study, I recorded the interviews and took anecdotal notes to ensure the information shared was captured accurately with what each participant said. I had member checking at the end to check the interview summary to ensure that the data

collected is valid and is interpreted clearly without bias. Member checking allows the participant to ensure throughout the process that the information they shared was interpreted accurately, portraying their point of view (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This process allowed them to read over the summary of their interview for accuracy, and I reviewed any feedback they provided and reflected on making the changes needed to keep the results accurate to their point of view while maintaining contact with them to inform them of the outcomes of the analysis of the data. This process enhances the validity and trustworthiness of the research study results.

Trustworthiness has four elements to establish confidence in the results of the qualitative study: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability (Shenton, 2004). These strategies give insight to help guide researchers to ensure trustworthiness in a study. Each area provides another layer in the qualitative research to have credibility and rigor.

Credibility

Credibility is how much truth is in the research findings. Credibility is the researcher's ability to take the complexities within a study and deal with those patterns that aren't easy to explain (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Research by Merriam looked at the credibility in comparing how aligned the data is collected to reality (Shenton, 2004). For ensuring credibility, the area that should be considered the highest priority is creating trustworthiness. Things a researcher should consider in making sure the research method fits with the concept being studied, establishing familiarity with the persons or organizations from whom the data will be collected, careful selection of participants to

limit researcher bias, triangulation, finding a way to create honesty with participants being interviewed, open-ended questions to not lead a participant to a response, debriefing, peer review, and reflection.

Credibility is examining the truth in what is measured through research findings. Establishing credibility through debriefing after the interviews, engagement throughout the interview, recording the interview, reflective journal, and interview transcription. Credibility in this research study was created by interviewing 12 K-2 early childhood education teachers from different rural school districts in the United States while recording, transcribing, and keeping a reflective interview journal. Before the interviews were conducted, I provided participants with interview questions to review. After the interviews, I arranged a time to meet and debrief with each participant.

Transferability

According to Guba (1981), transferability is developed by descriptive and context-relevant statements. The basis of qualitative research is fidelity to the interviewees' experiences and cannot be directly applied to other settings or contexts. Research shows that some transferability to different contexts is supported. To work toward transferability, I worked with an expert panel who reviewed my interview questions to check for validity and reliability to address the research questions.

Dependability

Dependability is about the stability of data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Miles et al. (2014) discussed how dependable qualitative research is when it becomes consistent and stable over time. Dependable research requires reasonable arguments, data collection for

your argument, and then presenting data consistent with your argument. To create dependability within this study, I explained the steps through each process to explain why my method was chosen, the context, and the study population.

Confirmability

Guba (1981) quantitative research has a level of objectivity but does not claim to be objective. Qualitative research seeks to find research that is more confirmable data that is free from researcher bias. Qualitative research understands that there is some subjectivity but that it should be able to be confirmed. With confirmability, we investigate how our bias influences our interpretations of the data collected. To ensure confirmability within the study, I kept a reflection journal to address potential biases and help avoid them.

Ethical Procedures

An informed consent (Appendix D) is an agreement to gain access to participants' data. To further inform consent each participant was provided an explanation of the purpose of the study, interview questions, and all ethical procedures in place, including confidentiality. The informed consent outlined the goals, amount of time, methodology of the study, an explanation that participation is voluntary, participant's right to no longer be involved at any time, list risks and benefits, and cover how the data collected will be used and shared. Additional permission to record and transcribe the interview was collected before the start of any interview, and a copy was shared at the conclusion. The consent was emailed to participants ahead of time and reiterated throughout the interview process. I took steps to ensure participants were treated respectfully and valued. Walden

University guidelines stated by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) were followed using the designated consent forms provided through Walden. I worked with Walden University for approval before interviews began. I do not have any ethical concerns about data collection because participant selection was from areas I have no affiliation with. All data collected through email with personal information or responses to interview questions was kept confidential. The data will be discarded after the Walden requirement of 5 years is met, with information remaining confidential until then. After approval of the dissertation, material used to collect information during the interview, such as reflective journal, notes, recordings, and transcriptions will be destroyed.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs and what teachers need to facilitate appropriate interventions within the classroom. In Chapter 3, I describe the research design and rationale, explain my role as the researcher, address the methodology I use, and discuss the process that I followed to recruit participants, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, and the issues of trustworthiness. In Chapter 4, I present my data collection, processing, and analysis process and give my study findings.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs and what teachers need to facilitate appropriate interventions within the classroom. I recruited 12 early childhood education teachers from different schools: five special education teachers, six ELL teachers, and one early intervention practices (EIP) teacher. All teachers were recruited from rural counties in the southern region of the United States. Teachers were recruited through various platforms (email, LinkedIn, Facebook). As required by Walden University, I sent out an email, and if a teacher responded with the words "I consent" I responded with another email following up on participant requirements and asked for the best dates and times for the interview. I sent an email thanking them with the Zoom link for the meeting. Interviews were conducted via Zoom with an audio recording that was then transcribed using the iTranscribe processing program. I analyzed the transcripts for open codes, patterns, and categories to identify themes (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). In Chapter 4, I provide study results, describe the teacher demographics, and explain data collection and analysis. I also outline the results and provided evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

I conducted Zoom meeting interviews using an open-ended approach from my personal office. During the interviews the door was closed to ensure participants' confidentiality and that there were no interruptions. I used alpha numeric codes to identify participants, Interview Participant 1 (IP1) and so on for all 12 participants.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed using word processing software, then data was coded. To my understanding, no outside conditions influenced participants or their experiences during the study. I created a code book, which was a compilation of interview data collected from participants during the interviews.

Demographics

In this section, I present the demographic data for the 12 participants in this study. Table 1 shows the collected demographic data for the participants.

Table 1
Research Participant Demographics

| Participant | Years in Field | Grade Level | Type | Sex |
|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-----|
| IP1 | 7 years | 2 | Sped/EL | F |
| IP2 | 9 years | 2 | EL | M |
| IP3 | 14 years | K | Sped | F |
| IP4 | 8 years | 1 | EL | F |
| IP5 | 9 years | K-5 | EIP | F |
| IP6 | 10 years | 1 | Gen Ed w/EL | F |
| IP7 | 15 years | K | Sped | M |
| IP8 | 10 years | 2 | EL | F |
| IP9 | 10 years | 2 | EL/Sped | F |
| IP10 | 19 years | K-1 | EL | F |
| IP11 | 7 years | K | Sped | F |
| IP12 | 4 years | K-2 | EL | F |

Five special education teachers, six EL teachers, and 1 EIP teacher were interviewed using an open-ended approach. Teachers were from 12 different schools in rural counties in the southern United States. Teachers met all qualifications for this study, including working with ELLs and special education students.

Data Collection

After obtaining approval from the Walden University IRB (Approval No. 12-07-23-1000099), I recruited 12 early childhood education teachers through teacher contacts,

social media teacher groups, and professional organizations from 12 different schools. To collect data in this study, I conducted a basic qualitative study with interviews using an open-ended method. I conducted about three interviews a week for 4 weeks. Before each interview I would log on to the Zoom session about 15 minutes early to test all technology and have everything prepared. I used the Interview Protocol for Teachers (see Appendix B) to ensure I followed the approved process. I informed all participants I would be recording on a tape-recording software app from my phone to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Once I began the interview and I started recording I asked participants to state if they still consented to the interview and reminded them the interview was voluntary so it could be stopped at any point. I explained I would be taking the recording and transcribing them to download and analyze, using code techniques to ensure confidentiality.

Each interview was approximately 45-60 minutes uninterrupted using the questions approved by Walden IRB. At the end of each interview, I reminded participants that at any point if they had questions to contact me, and I thanked them for their participation. There were no variations in my data collection process from the original plan presented in Chapter 3. I did not encounter any unusual circumstances during the data collection process.

Data Analysis

To conduct data analysis, I followed the process recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2012), noting that coding is finding and labeling the concepts, themes, events, and examples in the transcripts that speak to the research questions. It is the job of the

researcher to make sense of the information shared by the participants. For this study, it was the process of creating categories and themes from the responses participants gave when answering the interview questions. I manually coded the data using Braun and Clarke's (2006) step-by-step data analysis approach to analyze the interview transcripts. The six steps recommended by Braun and Clarke are described below.

Step 1: Becoming Familiar with the Data

When becoming familiar with the data first I started by transcribing the interviews from the recordings. Once the interviews were transcribed I took the time to read and re-read the responses to the interview questions to get ideas for possible codes that could be used or expanded upon.

Step 2: Generate Initial Codes

After each interview I downloaded the recording to transcribe them for analysis. I was then able to organize each transcript into a word document table for thematic analysis. As I became familiar with the data collected through the interviews I was able to notice patterns from multiple participants. These patterns allowed me to begin the open code process with supporting information shared from the participants through the research questions found in Table 2. After a few interviews were inserted into the word document, I began going through pulling out important points shared and highlighting keywords. I then went through bolding important phrases that reflected the thoughts shared by the participant's perspectives, looking for similarities or patterns. It was easier to do a couple interviews at a time to analyze the data than wait till all 12 interviews were completed and try to analyze it at that point.

Table 2
Examples of Open Codes

| Sample Code | Participant | Sample Excerpt |
|--------------------|-------------|--|
| Anchor Charts | IP5 | "I always have anchor charts, because I always like to point back, and even just as a visual of the poster, but also of where it's located, because then I'll see kids while they're working immediately shift their heads to it." |
| Scaffold | IP8 | "Kids are getting an opportunity to talk to multiple students throughout their lesson and then again, those sentence stems I think that to me that is the easiest way to scaffold for EL students, for students with IEPs, for shy students I mean even students who, just are afraid of talking but really moving away from that raise your hand to answer thing and more elbow partners discussed with your neighbor and using strategic placements of students, so these kids have an opportunity to talk to each other without feeling on the spot." |
| Co-Teaching | IP4 | "We do a lot of scaffolding, a lot of station teaching, rotation teaching, splitting up with my co teacher and making sure that they're differentiated based on their skills, and making sure we give them the materials that they need to be successful." |
| Self-Contained | IP3 | "Some students are put in self-contained as early intervention and exit by 2 nd grade which makes it questionable if they needed special education to begin with." |
| Access Test | IP9 | "They are grouped based off their access score, which they can have a level between zero and six, and based off the access for determines need of their can-do indicators." |
| Google Translate | IP1 | "The EL teacher uses Google Translate, which I do too, but, she will pull them, to the back table, and she will use Google Translate to translate the lesson, to them about what they should be doing. At the same time, she will have them to use Google Translate to ask any questions that they have about the language. When they first got to my classroom, she would take pictures using a group Google Translate to translate what we were reading to Spanish so they could read it in Spanish." |
| Visuals | IP3 | "The visuals are a huge part, especially with communication, trying to do speaking and communicate their wants and needs." |
| Pull Out | IP8 | "She's got resources and co-taught for reading, writing, and math, and she has an EL segment, so the argument is looking at this poor child spending so much time out of the classroom she's not, being immersed in the language around her peers." |
| Push In | IP10 | "The push in is only provided at the request of administrators and the district in our county because intensive pull-out services is what is more focused on otherwise." |
| Translator Service | IP12 | "In order to communicate with the parents, you have to request the translator. Sometimes that takes a couple days. And if it's like an assignment that's time sensitive, it's kind of hard to get that information out in a timely matter." |
| Pictures | IP6 | "In the classroom, we would make sure that we had readily available any vocabulary, content, vocabulary that might be new. We would have access to that with pictures and different ways for them to look at resources to kind of help them bridge that gap with what we were learning." |
| Chunking | IP7 | "I am going to make the information as bite size as possible using a variety of differentiation and assessing in their native language to see where they truly are." |

Step 3: Search for Themes

When looking at the data collected after being organized into open codes I noticed categories to organize the data and began to find emerging themes. This approach allowed for me to create a map of ideas with the entire data grouped in a clear organized manner. I would step back and look at my study with the codes and data shared by the participants continuing to highlighting and bold key phrases. I took the time to look at the responses and how they fit with the research questions of the study to see what categories would emerge to find possible themes and document them in the table below.

Table 3
Examples of Open Codes and Categories

| Category | Code | Participant | Excerpt |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|--|
| Communication | Translator | IP12 | “In order to communicate with the parents, you have to request the translator.” |
| Assessment | Access Test | IP9 | “They are grouped based off their access score, which they can have a level between zero and six, and based off the access for determines need of their can-do indicators.” |
| | Evaluation | IP9 | “The school psychologists have evaluations in Spanish and can speak Spanish but the low incident languages are a bigger concern because there is no one that can evaluate them in their native language. They also have no evaluation available for those low incident languages and have to give the English evaluation.” |
| Strategy | Visual | IP2 | “I use visuals they can relate to like measuring cups in math so they see objects they recognize and see the different sizes as we talk about it.” |
| | Scaffold | IP8 | “I think that to me that is the easiest way to scaffold for EL students...is partners discuss with their neighbor and use strategic placements of students, so these kids have an opportunity to talk.” |
| Services | Push In | IP10 | “The push in is only provided at the request of administrators and the district in our county.” |
| | Pull Out | IP8 | “This poor child is spending so much time out of the classroom she's not, being immersed in the language around her peers.” |
| | Self-Contained | IP3 | “Some students are put in self-contained as early intervention and exit by 2 nd grade which makes it questionable if they needed special education to begin with.” |

Step 4: Review Themes

When I looked at the data, I began trying to discover a phrase or sentence that described the code best. I looked to examine if the themes align with codes that have been pulled from the data shared by the participants. In looking for themes to use, I had to refine the specifics to look for the overall story that the data tells. When considering themes, there must be enough data to support them, or they will just collapse into another theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Looking to see if the themes being considered could be combined or form a pattern is a key component of this step. This step allows for time to look at the validity of the potential themes with reflecting back to the data to ensure the meaning is being reflected appropriately.

Step 5: Define and Name Themes

In this step the data, categories, and potential themes are refined further to present the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). When the theme is refined it is making sure to identify what each theme is truly about to determine the aspect of the data each theme represents. By going back to the data using the extracts for each theme I could organize them into coherent reflections of what the participants were trying to say. In the presentation of the themes using the excerpts from the data, it should be presented as given not paraphrased (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This is important when presenting the ideas to give the overall information about the data shared from the participants in relation to the research questions that are being examined. In re-evaluating and organizing the categories presented three themes emerged. I worked back and forth

analyzing the codes and categories to the theme and back reviewing them again. See themes in Table 4.

Table 4
Categories and Themes

| RQ1: What are K-2 teachers' experiences regarding the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs? | |
|---|--|
| Categories | Themes |
| Communication | Theme 1: Parent-teacher communication has an influence on student placement in special education programs. |
| Strategies | Theme 2: Teacher strategies have an effect on student achievement and growth in different environments. |

| RQ2: What do early childhood teachers need to address the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs? | |
|---|--|
| Categories | Themes |
| Services | Theme 3: Early childhood teachers need English as a Second Language and Special Education Services to support ELLs in the classroom. |

Miriam and Tisdell (2016) pointed out the importance of comparing the codes into smaller groups of categories to attempt to find the themes to answer the research question.

Step 6: Produce a Report

My data analysis began with each of these steps referring to the data shared from each participant, using the data to identify codes, comparing the codes and data to find categories, and then further examining all the information to find the emerging themes that share a clear understanding of what the participants shared. The data collected was examined numerous times and reflected upon to avoid missing any important or valuable

information shared. Reflection, member checking, and continuous examination of the data were used to ensure credibility in the evidence presented. During the analysis of the data in this study, no discrepant cases were found.

Evidence Of Trustworthiness

With this qualitative study, it was important to establish the validity or trustworthiness of the findings to ensure rigor and truth in the study's research. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that when multiple methods of data collection are used it affirms the findings are faithful and honest to the participants' experiences. Trustworthiness is important to how the research was conducted and how it impacts the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the data.

Credibility

Credibility is how much truth is in the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is the researcher's ability to take the complexities within a study and deal with those patterns that are not easy to explain (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Research by Merriam looked at the credibility in comparing how aligned the data is collected to reality (as cited in Shenton, 2004). The credibility was ensured by using established research methods, interviewing multiple participants from a variety of backgrounds in K-2 settings, creating familiarity with the participant, using appropriate questions, and constantly reviewing data through the process (see Shenton, 2004). To ensure credibility in this study, I conducted a basic qualitative study with 12 early childhood education teachers from 12 different schools: five special education teachers, six EL teachers, and one EIP teacher in different rural counties in the southern region of the United States. Before each interview,

I thanked them for their participation and I reviewed the consent form with them again and their right to stop the interview at any point or ask questions, and informed them the interview would be audio recorded to ensure their comfort with me and the process. I then began asking a series of interview questions that aligned to the research questions of the study and offered prompts for further clarification and details when needed. At the end of each interview, I thanked them again for their participation and made sure they knew to reach out at any time if they had further questions or something they felt they wanted to add. I kept a journal of notes during the process to use for reflection for the purpose of the study.

Transferability

According to Guba (1981), transferability is developed by descriptive and context-relevant statements. The basis of qualitative research is fidelity to the participants experiences and cannot be directly applied to other settings or contexts. In this study, I interviewed a group of early childhood education teachers working with ELLs, Special Education, or both who may be able to relate to the findings of the study. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated the importance of creating transferability with in-depth descriptions of the data and variations in the participants selected which I strive to do in my research. I provided clear detailed accounts of the perceptions of early childhood education teachers who work with special education and ELLs. Using the detailed description of the data and analysis for how it will support future research and how the themes from the data correlate to the responses of the participants.

Dependability

Dependability is about the stability of data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Miles et al. (2014) discussed how dependable qualitative research is when it becomes consistent and stable over time. To ensure dependability in this study, I interviewed early childhood education teachers from different rural counties in the southern United States working with special education or ELLs. Participants were recruited from twelve different schools across the rural counties of the southern United States with a minimum of 5 years teaching experience in public schools.

Confirmability

Guba (1981) quantitative research has a level of objectivity but does not claim to be objective. Qualitative research seeks to find research that is more confirmable data that is free from researcher bias. To ensure confirmability in the study, I reviewed the interview questions and kept a reflective journal to keep my bias from influencing any of the research. I ensured that the findings were supported by data and my views did not influence any results by reflecting on whether the findings were based on my interest and bias or shaped by the participants responses.

Results

The results of this study are based on data analysis of 12 audio recorded interviews using 9 interview questions with the tenth question asking participants for any additional information they would like to include (see Appendix A). Interview questions one through five answered research question 1, and interview questions six through nine answered research question 2. Interview questions were formed to align with Cummins's

(2010) theory of language acquisition and Hoover's (2020) multitiered system of supports for English language learners.

Theme 1: Parent-Teacher Communication has an Influence on Student Placement in Special Education Programs.

Theme 1 answered research question 1 by suggesting that parent teacher communication is instrumental in the impact on student appropriate placement and success. Participants in this study describe the various methods of communication with students and families whether that is in the classroom or in meetings with parents. There are various forms of communication from online, google translate, or translators.

Communication

Participants discussed various means of communication and the importance it has on student placement and success. Some of the forms of communication discussed by participants were online modes, google translate, and translator services. IP6 shared her experiences with the challenges lacking fluid communication with the parents on student success stating, "It would have been a lot better if they were able to have the support at home to kind of reiterate what we were doing in class, or support what we were doing in class on their success." IP4 shared her challenge when sending work home with families of native language speakers because translation services are available for calls and meeting its not there when they have homework to do. She stated, "When I send homework to do with them, they don't understand it because it's not their native language."

Communication is key to a student's success and appropriate placement within a variety of services. IP12 talked about the challenges with the translation services that are available within her school, explaining:

In order to communicate with the parents, you have to request the translator. Sometimes that takes a couple days. And if it's like an assignment that's time sensitive, it's kind of hard to get that information out in a timely matter. While some people in the school could translate they prefer us go through the proper channels to use the translation service they provide through the county.

IP1 stated one support she tries is:

Students will use Google translate when they come up to the desk and point to let me know that he needs to see the iPad and he knows how to get on translator and have the language go from Spanish to English to assist with his communication. He will then stand there and wait for me to answer him by switching the iPad, back to translate English to Spanish.

IP6 attempts using an online approach stating:

I communicate with the parents through the class dojo, so they're able to interpret our different messages, and they can see me online, but that's our main source of communication with the families but with the student, I don't feel like I've been doing a lot of remediation with them at all.

IP11 talked about how the communication is important in IEP meetings because to understand what is being explained to a parent about their learner and placement can be difficult to anyone but especially those with a language barrier. She continued to state:

An IEP in general, there's a lot of terminology that English speakers don't understand, and so it was hard for them to understand. Or even if, you know, when she was picking her child up, trying to talk to the mom, trying to relay everything that was going on, she would mostly just smile and say, okay, thank you, or just say yes.

Theme 2: Teacher Strategies Have an Effect on Student Achievement and Growth in Different Environments.

Theme 2 answers research question 1 by suggesting the need for a variety of strategies and approaches to working with ELLs and ELLs with IEPs on student growth. When using effective strategies it can impact potential challenges they could face. Participants identified several strategies used when working with ELLs on IEPs and those who aren't yet on the achievement and growth the learners have. According to participants, achievement can be impacted on the services, strategies, and environments they are in.

Strategy

When working with ELLs it is vital to think about the impact that appropriate strategies can have on learner success. Looking back to research by Vygotsky (1978) to more current research by Alghamdy (2024), understanding strategies when working with ELLs and the approach to using them are key parts of student success. IP2 shared,

Teachers must intentionally plan the lesson to reach all learners, so it requires a lot of thinking ahead on vocabulary and building background looking at various strategic approaches.

IP8 explained:

Kids are getting an opportunity to talk to multiple students throughout their lesson and then again, those sentence stems I think that to me that is the easiest way to scaffold for EL students, for students with IEPs, for shy students I mean even students who, just are afraid of talking but really moving away from that raise your hand to answer thing and more elbow partners discussed with your neighbor and using strategic placements of students, so these kids have an opportunity to talk to each other without feeling on the spot.

IP7 continued the same theme by stating, “I am going to make the information as bite size as possible using a variety of differentiation and assessing in their native language to see where they truly are.” Looking further at strategies within the classroom, teachers discussed the different approaches to the strategies to use within their classrooms. There are various classroom strategies to support the different needs of ELLs and students with IEPs. Many of the participants talked about how important visuals are to help her learners be successful.

IP1 stated:

My former principle he had us to make cards to label around the classroom, like the door. And so we would have it in several languages plus the English and the desk and the board, just the common things that we have around the room we have in English and then we also have it translated into the other main languages that we have besides Spanish.

IP2 shared, “I use visuals they can relate to like measuring cups in math so they see objects they recognize and see the different sizes as we talk about it.” Following the same thought a key visual discussed by IP5 was the use of anchor charts. She continued:

I always have anchor charts, because I always like to point back, and even just as a visual of the poster, but also of where it's located, because then I'll see kids while they're working immediately shift their heads to it.

The participants discussed how a main strategy they used within their classrooms to ensure better understanding for the learning of the ELLs in their classes were creating hands on approaches. This strategy will allow teachers to see where the students understanding is and where a delay could possibly be. IP2 talked about the success in classroom in the following way: “Success in my classroom is about hands on versus just giving it all to them as a whole group and hoping that they get it.” Continuing with strategies, IP11 stated:

We did do a lot of acting things out, hands on videos, songs, dances, pictures. It was very much like the whole brain learning. The visuals would sometimes have both English and Spanish on them but often there is just English.

Theme 3: Early Childhood Teachers Need Schoolwide English as a Second Language and Special Education Services to Support ELLs in the Classroom.

Theme 3 addressed research question 2. Participants discussed how access testing impacts the services that are provided to ELLs and ELLs with IEPs. Participants found that the various services provided to ELLs can often be determined by the assessment or evaluation that the assessor uses with them.

Assessment

Participants discussed the influence state access testing has on the services ELLs can receive. When an ELLs access score is received by a school, do those scores influence the type of services they are eligible for or consider looking beyond language to a learning delay if problems persist.

IP5 discussed assessment stating, “The ELL teacher will try to push in to work with higher level EL students when they can and will pull out newer or lower access scored Els.” IP9 continued the thought stating:

They are grouped based off their access score, which they can have a level between zero and six, and based off the access for determines need of their can-do indicators.

Evaluations

Participants discussed the evaluations that help get some learners ELL support but they also have evaluations for assessing student’s for special education. The evaluations can determine the special education support and placement the students can receive. Schools have psychologist that come in to complete student evaluations. IP1 discussed the criteria of her county on referring for evaluations stating:

The county ask us not to refer any new to the country students for evaluation for the first 2 years they are in school. After the 2 years we would meet with a counselor to come up with a plan to address the students deficits. Then we will meet back after 30 more days to look at evaluation and getting a psychologist involved.

IP9 stated:

The school psychologist have evaluations in Spanish and can speak Spanish but the low incident languages is a bigger concern because there is no one that can evaluate them in their native language. They also have no evaluation available for those low incident languages and have to give the English evaluation.

Services

All 12 participants discussed the different options offered within their schools for working with ELLs and ELLs with IEPs to help their growth and success. Participants saw everything from the way they were assisted to the classroom setup they were placed in.

IP1 stated:

I have an EL certified teacher who comes to my room, my building actually has a total of five certified EL teachers who all day they provide services to a certain grade level so kindergarten has their own EL, first second third and fourth grade each has their own EL teacher and so the EL teacher goes to classes throughout the day to support English Language learners and they sometimes will pull out, sometimes they will pull students out of the classroom to provide services as well.

IP10 discussed the push in model in her school stating, “The push in is only provided at the request of administrators and the district in our county because intensive pull-out services is what is more focused on otherwise. “The other popular model discussed by participants was pull out model. IP8 talked about the impact it had on one of her students, she said:

She's got resources and co-taught for reading, writing, and math, and she has an EL segment, so the argument is looking at this poor child spending so much time out of the classroom she's not, being immersed in the language around her peers.

IP4 stated:

We do have an ESOL teacher who pulls students who are identified in receiving those ESOL services each week. She pulls them once a week for usually 30-to-45-minute segments to work with them.

The participants also discussed the different classrooms that their schools use to enhance the success of the ELLs in their school. They discussed two styles of classrooms a self-contained class and a coteaching model class. IP3 stated, "Some students are put in self-contained as early intervention and exit by 2nd grade which makes it questionable if they needed special education to begin with."

IP4 discussed the co-teaching model stating:

We do a lot of scaffolding, a lot of station teaching, rotation teaching, splitting up with my co teacher and making sure that they're differentiated based on their skills, and making sure we give them the materials that they need to be successful.

Discrepant Cases

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) wrote about the data that challenge a researcher's expectations or that oppose a researcher's ideas as being discrepant. Researchers should seek data that challenges the contributions of others in helping to rule out discrepant cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During the analysis of the data in this study, no discrepant cases were found.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I introduced the qualitative study providing the results of the data collection analysis including participant demographic and teaching assignment, their years of experience, and affiliation with ELL or special education. Data collection steps and analysis were modeled after Braun and Clarke (2006). The 12 participants data was analyzed noting emerging codes, patterns, categories, and themes. Three themes emerged through the process of analyzing the data and identifying categories. Theme 1 and 2 addressed RQ1: What are K-2 teachers' experiences regarding the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs? Theme 1 suggested that Parent-teacher communication has an influence on student placement in special education programs. Theme 2 suggested that teacher strategies have an effect on student achievement and growth in different environments. Theme 3, addressed RQ2: What do early childhood teachers need to address the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs? Theme 3 is early childhood teachers need schoolwide English as a Second Language and Special Education Services to support ELLs in the classroom. Teacher-school support and services given to ELLs in the classroom are paramount to student success. Teachers' responses in this study overwhelmingly indicated strong commitments to serving ELLs regardless of the educational programs they were in.

Theme 1, emerged from teachers' responses to interview questions about communication between teachers and EL students and their parents. Teachers indicated the inability to clearly communicate due to language barriers creates problems with achieving clear understanding about what each learner needs. Teachers explained the

importance of communication with parents which can, when effective, leads to the success and growth of ELLs in the classroom. Parents, not being able to understand the information shared by the teacher, leads to gaps and the inability of the parents to offer support to the learner at home. The second theme to emerge is that teachers' intentional planning and use of strategies can impact the gaps that present themselves to separate the language from the disability. According to the teachers, when various strategies were in place, it allowed more growth and learning for the students on their level in a way they understand while removing some of the barriers from not knowing the language.

Teachers saw using the various strategies they could impact the possible identification for a service that may still need to be needed or identify when a service could be needed sooner. Theme 3 that emerged was the way access testing impacted services provided to ELLs and how services needed could require more intensive support than the school was able to identify. Teachers described how the ELL services and special education services can often impact each other. The influence of ELL services can limit that time it takes to assess a learner for special education or place them in the wrong environment too soon.

In Chapter 4, I addressed what measures were taken to ensure trustworthiness within the research, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research data. I presented the results with quotes from specific participants to justify the selected themes. In Chapter 5, I review the interpreted findings of the study, limitations, make recommendations for future research, and discuss the potential for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs and what teachers need to facilitate appropriate interventions within the classroom. I interviewed 12 early childhood education teachers from different schools: five special education teachers, six EL teachers, and one EIP teacher in rural counties southern region of the United States. Interviews were conducted via Zoom with an audio recording that was then transcribed using iTranscribe processing program. During the data analysis process three themes emerged to address the two research questions: (a) parent-teacher communication has an influence on student placement in special education programs, (b) teacher strategies have an effect on student achievement and growth in different environments, and (c) early childhood teachers need English as a Second Language and special education services to support ELLs in the classroom.

I chose to study this topic because of my passion for ensuring the needs of all learners are met. I shared my concerns with the growing number of ELLs and it being the fastest growing number of enrollments in counties over the last 3 years. I began specifically concerned with the placement of those with language barriers in special education classrooms and the interventions given to them. In Chapter 5, I present the interpreted findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, social change, implications, and my conclusions.

Interpretation of Findings

After IRB approval, I conducted 12 interviews using open-ended interview questions. I interviewed five special education teachers, six EL teachers, and one EIP teacher with a minimum of 3 years teaching experience. Interviews were conducted through Zoom and were each a minimum of 45 minutes.

Teachers were interviewed using nine open-ended interview questions to give insight into K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs and what teachers need to facilitate appropriate interventions within the classroom. Teachers agreed to be interviewed giving insight into their work with special education and ELLs. After analysis of the codes, categories, and themes, findings show a correlation to Cummins's (2010) theory of language acquisition and the MTSS for ELLs by Hoover et al. (2020), the conceptual framework for the study, and research presented in the literature.

Theme 1: Parent-Teacher Communication has an Influence on Student Placement in Special Education Programs.

Theme 1 emerged from participants' responses that communication struggles between teachers and EL students and parents creates problems with clear understanding of what each learner needs. Teachers explained the importance of communication with parents on the success and growth of ELLs in the classroom. Parents not being able to understand information shared from the teacher leads to gaps and the inability for the parents to offer support to the learner at home. Teachers' explanation of the communication, specifically between families and teachers, align with that of Cummins

and how language is broken down with student language learning needs with support from parents. Parent engagement means working together to create a positive, goal-oriented relationship with shared responsibility and mutual respect (Administration for Children and Families, 2020). To allow all families to feel they are a part of their students' educations, schools need to make sure they have interpreters, written communication translated into multiple languages, and parent help and involvement programs (McCarthy et al., 2020; Sommer et al., 2020; Stauss et al., 2021). IP1 explained,

The main challenge is the lack of support from the parents. A general education child can go home, and their parents can help reinforce what we've done in the day and help with homework and read to the student. A family that does not speak English, and they can't support the child at home and reinforce what you've done in school is a large challenge.

IP4 provided a similar explanation,

A big challenge is parent communication and is being able to really work together with parents to make sure that we're on the same page. I think a lot of times, one of my toughest students to deal with and to get through to is an ELL student, and mom and dad don't understand what I'm trying to tell them.

Cummins (2010) MTSS identified how ELLs become proficient in BICS years before they are proficient in CALP. Understanding communication requires minimal thinking whereas cognitively demanding communication requires a lot more and can

show a learning need they may not have but just need more time. This communication skill is built beginning with communication with the families. IP5 explained,

I always feel bad after a conference or meeting with a parent, feeling like, I know that was interpreted, but do they really understand what some of that means. I mean, it's our teacher jargon that we're around it all the time, but even if it's put in a different language I don't know if they really understand.

Parents cannot help their child if they do not understand their needs or the teacher's concerns.

According to Terantino (2024), communication creating parental involvement is what will lead to positive outcomes for students with rising academic achievement, literacy proficiency, and math growth. Because communication is such a vital part of all areas of growth for ELLs the tools a teacher uses such as class Dojo can be instrumental. IP6 explained how she uses the software by stating,

I communicate with the parents through the class dojo, so they're able to interpret our different messages, and they can see me online, but that's our main source of communication with the families but with the student, I don't feel like I've been doing a lot of remediation with them at all.”

The communication is a vital part in the success in the classroom and the growth a student has and their future. This finding was supported by Lim et al. (2021) in the discussion of how parents are to be involved in the decision-making process of identification, evaluation, and placement of students in special education classes is needed but not done often due to these communication barriers. Teachers shared the

challenges of communication with families and the influence it has on the students learning. Teachers' communication with families has a large impact on what happens in the classroom and possible delays an ELL could face. When considering ELLs with disabilities, those relationships with parents and teachers are vital because they can limit some biases that may exist in the dominant culture (Thurlow et al., 2022).

Theme 2: Teacher Strategies Have an Effect on Student Achievement and Growth in Different Environments.

Working with ELLs and ELLs with IEPs the use of strategies can influence the success across all environments. It is important when teachers are working with ELLs or the ELLs they think might have a learning delay that they take the time to know the student, understand their specific learning style, and teach using a variety of learning styles to meet the different needs of all (Beisly et al., 2023; Hsu et al., 2022). Visual representation greatly impacts the cognitive and construction of knowledge, providing new thoughts or ideas for education (Zhang, 2022). IP1 stated:

We make cards to label around the classroom, like the door. And so, we would have it in several languages plus the English and the desk and the board, just the common things that we have around the room we have in English and then we also have it translated into the other main languages that we have besides Spanish.

IP1 identified how the visual are important but it is also important to not just use them in Spanish but prepare for all language learners that could be in the classroom. According to Zhang (2024), working with ELLs is a multimodal activity focusing on areas such as speech, writing, gesture, gaze, movement, and visual. Many teachers shared their varying

uses of strategies within their classroom to work with ELLs to decipher between the language and possible learning needs. IP5 stated,

I always have anchor charts, because I always like to point back, and even just as a visual of the poster, but also of where it's located, because then I'll see kids while they're working immediately shift their heads to it.

Different kinds of learners need different methods of support and finding what works is a key component in the success of those learners.

The use of strategies across different environments is supported by Hoover et al.'s (2020) theory using differentiated supports and interventions in their first language so you know where they are and can help them grow. Cummins's (2010) supported the idea of understanding the difference in basic communication language and helping ELLs learn a deeper understanding of academic language through various supports. Gupta (2019) stated that bringing a student's culture into the classroom by presenting information from their culture with various visuals and labeling them in multiple languages is a good way for the ELLs to grow. Visual representation greatly impacts the cognitive and construction of knowledge, providing new thoughts or ideas for education (Zhang, 2022).

Theme 3: Early Childhood Teachers Need English as a Second Language and Special Education Services to Support ELLs in the Classroom.

According to participants, providing the appropriate supports to ELLs can make all the difference in the success and placement of students. Hoover et al.'s (2020) MTSS is a leveled model that supports the learning with a variety of services depending on the tier of support they need. IP5 shared, "The ELL teacher will try to push in to work with

higher level EL students when they can and will pull out newer or lower access scored Els.” Additionally, IP7 explained:

A lot of times they're pulled out of class, or they're getting extra resources to help with their language acquisition, as English is usually their second language, but it's not a lot of emphasis by teachers to address their teaching needs as part of their pedagogy in class.

According to the research, pull-out programs are great for additional support of ELLs and those with a disability, but often they are pulled during vital instruction time, which causes other issues (Cho et al., 2021). IP8 noticed:

She's got resources and cotaught for reading, writing, and math, and she has an EL segment, so the argument is looking at this poor child spending so much time out of the classroom she's not being immersed in the language around her peers.

With the unique educational needs, the struggle for ELLs to access the curriculum in the general classroom can be a struggle (Li & Peters, 2020). IP8 shared, “They're putting them into Tier 2, or Tier t3 through our MTSS process, and they're not necessarily addressing the EL needs first.”

When separating the language from the need, it can impact when a student is then evaluated and what service they would receive. Barrio et al. (2020) looked at how the validity of the test and process lacked cultural understanding, accountability, and misinterpretation of policies that often affect the results and placement of ELLs in special education programs. IP7 shared his thoughts stating:

A teaching knowing the student to know how much of it is a cognitive thing, how much of it is a learning thing and how much of it is a language thing. I don't think teachers all the time have the patience to be able to dive into being able to assess and pull apart, which is which, which really goes into knowing your students and when to take next steps.

Researcher Park (2020) found that when referring ELLs for special education services, it is more accurate when educators work and collaborate to limit the barriers of language and cultural misunderstandings that could arise. IP3 shared, "Some students are put in self-contained as early intervention and exit by 2nd grade which makes it questionable if they needed special education to begin with." When we look at assessing students for special education services different schools have different approaches and ideas on when to assess and when it is time. Research shows when looking at students with dual social identities and classifications, the school can inadvertently create a larger English struggle or create a disability that may not have been there before (Cooc, 2023). IP5 shared:

I do feel like placement can come too quickly, especially situations where you don't know exactly what's going on at home, like they might speak English very clear like you wouldn't even realize that they can speak in a other language or another language is spoken at home.

Researcher Nicolaescu (2024) discusses strategies to adapt skills in educational subjects that support all learners to grow with variety of choices, responsibility, and critical thinking. Various teachers shared the importance of implementing strategies and

placement of ELLs in the appropriate environments to support their growth. Additionally they discussed the importance of placement with the services in place that will build on the students success and not limit them from their potential by placing them in a service that is not needed.

Findings and Conceptual Framework

The findings of this study are supported by the conceptual framework. Cummins's (2010) theory of language acquisition looks at the importance of separating the academic language and the social language to help students advance their skills. Supported further by Hoover et al (2020). theory for the multitiered system of supports to meet the needs of ELLs where they are. Teachers suggested the importance of communication, strategy, and services are important in the development, growth, and evaluation of ELLs. This follows the thoughts of Cummins's theory of communication enhancing academic proficiency with the support of Hoover et al. theory of the multitiered system of supports in giving the ELLs the services they need to be successful in the school environment.

Teachers shared that the process for communication with families, strategies used within the classroom, and the services that are offered to ELLs directly affects the growth and success of those learners with the referral process of further services and evaluations needed. The teacher strategies that are used each day in the classroom build on the delays that a language barrier could have and begin to separate the language delay from the cognitive delay. Based on Cummins's and Hoover et al. conceptual theories, providing communication support to families, implementing various strategies within the

classroom, and providing appropriate level of services to ELLs can separate the language delay from the cognitive delay.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study include the researcher bias and small sample size. I am passionate about providing appropriate, effective support to multilingual learners and this can create a bias but with being aware of that possibility I was able to use a reflective journal to ensure data was not influenced by researcher bias. The sample included five special education teachers, six EL teachers, and 1 EIP teacher. While the interviews with the 12 participants from different schools met saturation further interviews could have provide more insight. The findings of this study may not apply to all schools throughout the United States because early childhood education students may not lack English language development skills in other regions of the United States. This may limit some of the transferability.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations for further research resulting from the data collection and analysis. Teachers expressed concern for training and relevant professional development opportunities in the counties with growing ELL populations who may have not have a ELL population before. Li & Peters (2020) discussed a greater effort needs to be placed on how teachers are prepared with supporting the growing ELL populations learning through professional development. Nicolaescu (2024) emphasized how important training is for adapting material, changes in diversity, supporting communication, motivation, and applying knowledge. IP2 shared his concern stating, “I

think there needs to be more professional development because things and approaches are always new and changing but where I teach is more concerned about making teachers happy and they complain if they have too much professional development.” Further professional development can help teachers understand the separation between the language and cognitive needs. Hulse (2020) considered how resources available for teachers to access when educating ELLs impact the amount of remediation that is given, which can lead to higher referral rates and overrepresentation in special education.

Implications

There are social and educational implications for this study related to teachers preparation for addressing ELLs and ELL programs. Teachers provided insight into their experience and challenges with working with ELLs and supporting their families. Teachers discussed the communication, service, strategies, and support they have when addressing those with English as a second language. There are educational implications because the information from this study is a starting point for conversation for the approach of professional development, resources, and strategies to be used in schools. Additionally, information on services and the approaches to placing ELLs on IEPs could change the number of students evaluated and what the guidelines are for evaluation. The study also has social implications for stakeholders suggesting they may consider teacher perceptions of their challenges to meet the needs of the ELLs and communicate effectively with the families and the stakeholders can then support the learner's language and educational needs. In addition, further research on the ELLs families' feelings of

evaluations, assessment, and placements should be considered. Families' feelings and considerations have both social and educational implications.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 teachers' experiences with the overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs and what teachers need to facilitate appropriate interventions within the classroom in the rural southern region of the United States. This study addresses the gap in current research. While some research has been conducted on the increase of ELLs little information about early childhood education teachers' experiences of overrepresentation and what should be implemented to change this. Teachers explain that communication and service has created a discrepancy between identifying students with a language delay versus a cognitive disability. Teachers also identified strategies they use within their classrooms but the need for further resources and support.

As presented in the literature review in Chapter 2, and the seminal work by Cummins (2010) and Hoover et al (2020). that follow the work on tier support, language broken down into various categories, and differentiating between learning differences and disabilities. Through a variety of resources including technology, training, and inclusive teaching strategies teachers can more effectively separate the language need for the learning need. Larios and Zetlin (2023) further discussed the effective education of ELLs comes from additional training and support to create a better understanding of what delays exist. The teacher participants interview for this study outlined the issues they face: the communication with students and their parents, services in and out of the

classroom, and strategies being implemented each day to help ELLs be successful but despite these challenges each teacher strive to develop inclusive lessons to facilitate the needs of all ELLs with or without IEPs.

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Appendix A: Alignment of Conceptual Framework & Interview Questions

RQ1: What are early childhood teachers' experiences on the overrepresentation of ELLs for special education programs?

RQ2: What practices do early childhood teachers need to intervene in overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs?

| Conceptual Framework | Interview Questions | RQs |
|--|--|-------------------|
| Theory of language acquisition by Cummins (2010) and the multitiered system of supports for English language learners by Hoover et al. (2020). | IQ1: Please tell me about your teaching assignment with ELLs. | RQ1 |
| | IQ2: Please describe how the special learning needs of ELLs are addressed in your school? | RQ1 |
| | IQ3: What are your experiences on the placement of ELLs in special education programs; is this placement warranted? | RQ1 |
| | IQ4: What are your experiences of successes that teachers encounter when teaching ELLs who are on IEPs? | RQ1 |
| | IQ5: What are your experiences of challenges that teachers encounter when teaching ELLs who are on IEPs? | RQ1 RQ2 RQ2 |
| | IQ6: Please describe the inclusive practices used within your classroom. | RQ2 |
| | IQ7: Tell me about the multiple modalities you use within your classroom to teach ELLs who are on IEPs? | RQ2 |
| | IQ8: What strategies do you use to build background knowledge to give ELLs access to the general curriculum? | |
| | IQ9: Describe how you design interactive lessons to increase student discussions and address the learning needs of ELLs? | |
| | Q10: Please add any other thoughts you would like to include. | |
| Inclusive Practices | | |
| Multiple Modality | | |
| Background Knowledge | | |
| Lesson Design | | |

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Teachers

IQ1: Please tell me about your teaching assignment with ELLs.

I heard you say Can you tell me more about

IQ2: Please describe how the special learning needs of ELLs are addressed in your school?

Please give me a specific example of

IQ3: What are your experiences on the placement of ELLs in special education programs; is this placement warranted?

Please give me a specific example of

IQ4: What are your experiences of successes that teachers encounter when teaching ELLs who are on IEPs?

Please give me a specific example of

IQ5: What are your experiences of challenges that teachers encounter when teaching ELLs who are on IEPs?

I heard you say Can you tell me more about

IQ6: Please describe the inclusive practices used within your classroom.

I heard you say Can you tell me more about

IQ7: Tell me about the multiple modalities you use within your classroom to teach ELLs who are on IEPs?

Please give me a specific example of

IQ8: What strategies do you use to build background knowledge to give ELLs access to the general curriculum?

Please give me a specific example of

IQ9: Describe how you design interactive lessons to increase student discussions and address the learning needs of ELLs?

Please give me a specific example of

Q10: Please add any other thoughts you would like to include.

Appendix C: Open Codes

Examples of Open Codes

| Code | Participant | Excerpt |
|----------------|--------------------|--|
| Hands On | IP4 | “Success in my classroom is about hands on versus just giving it all to them as a whole group and hoping that they get it.” |
| | IP11 | “Some of the phonics lessons are scripted but I add in hands on or acting out pieces to increase the understanding for all learners.” |
| Anchor Charts | IP5 | “I always have anchor charts, because I always like to point back, and even just as a visual of the poster, but also of where it's located, because then I'll see kids while they're working immediately shift their heads to it.” |
| | IP6 | “I felt like once we had her placed and they were really able to help scaffold some things for her she was able to progress.” |
| Scaffold | IP7 | “I'm going to scaffold for you just to look and see what you're learning in your home language, but I'm going to give you auditory possibilities when it comes to of hearing things in English and then following along visually.” |
| | IP8 | “Kids are getting an opportunity to talk to multiple students throughout their lesson and then again, those sentence stems I think that to me that is the easiest way to scaffold for EL students, for students with IEPs, for shy students I mean even students who, just are afraid of talking but really moving away from that raise your hand to answer thing and more elbow partners discussed with your neighbor and using strategic placements of students, so these kids have an opportunity to talk to each other without feeling on the spot.” |
| Co-Teaching | IP4 | “We do a lot of scaffolding, a lot of station teaching, rotation teaching, splitting up with my co teacher and making sure that they're differentiated based on their skills, and making sure we give them the materials that they need to be successful.” |
| Self-Contained | IP8 | “I've seen more success for our ELL students who are in self-contained classrooms, rather than our students who are getting co taught support.” |
| | IP3 | “Some students are put in self-contained as early intervention and exit by 2 nd grade which makes it questionable if they needed special education to begin with.” |
| Access Test | IP5 | “The ELL teacher will try to push in to work with higher level EL students when they can and will pull out newer or lower access scored Els.” |
| | IP9 | “They are grouped based off their access score, which they can have a level between zero and six, and based off the access for determines need of their can-do indicators.” |
| Online | IP6 | “I communicate with the parents through the class dojo, so they're able to interpret our different messages, and they can see me online, but that's our main source of communication with the families but with the student, I don't feel like I've been doing a lot of remediation with them at all.” |
| | IP1 | “Parents are offered online classes to learn English through the school to attempt to bridge the gap and help them be able to work with their child at home.” |

| | | |
|--------------------|------|--|
| Google Translate | IP1 | <p>“The EL teacher uses Google Translate, which I do too, but, she will pull them, to the back table, and she will use Google Translate to translate the lesson, to them about what they should be doing. At the same time, she will have them to use Google Translate to ask any questions that they have about the language. When they first got to my classroom, she would take pictures using a group Google Translate to translate what we were reading to Spanish so they could read it in Spanish.”</p> |
| | | <p>“Students will use Google translate when they come up to the desk and point to let me know that he needs to see the iPad and he knows how to get on translator and have the language go from Spanish to English to assist with his communication. He will then stand there and wait for me to answer him by switching the iPad, back to translate English to Spanish.”</p> |
| Visuals | IP3 | <p>“The visuals are a huge part, especially with communication, trying to do speaking and communicate their wants and needs.”</p> |
| | | <p>“I use visuals they can relate to like measuring cups in math so they see objects they recognize and see the different sizes as we talk about it.”</p> |
| Pull Out | IP11 | <p>“The school had pull out service for older students but would not provide service at a young age because they were just learning to talk according to the school.”</p> |
| | IP10 | <p>“In my school they only pull out students in the lower grades and by the time they get to 3rd grade they don’t use that model anymore”</p> |
| | IP8 | <p>“She’s got resources and co-taught for reading, writing, and math, and she has an EL segment, so the argument is looking at this poor child spending so much time out of the classroom she’s not, being immersed in the language around her peers.”</p> |
| Push In | IP10 | <p>“The push in is only provided at the request of administrators and the district in our county because intensive pull-out services is what is more focused on otherwise.”</p> |
| | IP12 | <p>“The school uses several push in models in the school since they prefer not to pull students out so they use the immersion setting.”</p> |
| Translator Service | IP4 | <p>“We have a translator service, so it’s a phone number that we call with a school code, and it connects us to whatever language we need.”</p> |
| | IP12 | <p>“In order to communicate with the parents, you have to request the translator. Sometimes that takes a couple days. And if it’s like an assignment that’s time sensitive, it’s kind of hard to get that information out in a timely matter.”</p> |
| Vocabulary | IP5 | <p>“I would use vocabulary picture cards putting a visual with that content I would say I was good about that in science and social studies which it ended up helping all students.”</p> |
| | IP6 | <p>“In the classroom, we would make sure that we had readily available any vocabulary, content, vocabulary that might be new. We would have access to that with pictures and different ways for them to look at resources to kind of help them bridge that gap with what we were learning.”</p> |
| Chunking | IP7 | <p>“I am going to make the information as bite size as possible using a variety of differentiation and assessing in their native language to see where they truly are.”</p> |
| | IP12 | |

| | | |
|-----------------|-----|--|
| | | “We start with the simple skills such as skip counting or repeated addition then build up from there to work on multiplication skills. We break it down into smaller pieces to gain deeper understanding.” |
| Differentiating | IP5 | “They need more undivided individual attention and it's hard to meet demands if you have a room of ELLs, gifted, and gen ed to get to everyone to give them the time they need. The time feels so short, but then also the time as a teacher to make sure you're differentiating for it all and giving each of the kids what they need.” |
| | IP7 | “Differentiating your lessons anyway based on student interests, content and readiness always feel like if you hit on kids' interest, if you pay attention to what they are interested in, it's going to give you more information to assess.” |

Appendix D: Open Codes and Categories

Examples of Open Codes and Categories

| Category | Code | Participant | Excerpt |
|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|--|
| Communication | Online | IP6 | “I communicate with the parents through the class dojo, so they're able to interpret our different messages, and they can see me online, but that's our main source of communication with the families but with the student, I don't feel like I've been doing a lot of remediation with them at all.” |
| | Google Translate | IP1 | “Students will use Google translate when they come up to the desk and point to let me know that he needs to see the iPad and he knows how to get on translator and have the language go from Spanish to English to assist with his communication. He will then stand there and wait for me to answer him by switching the iPad, back to translate English to Spanish.” |
| | Translator | IP12 | “In order to communicate with the parents, you have to request the translator. Sometimes that takes a couple days. And if it's like an assignment that's time sensitive, it's kind of hard to get that information out in a timely matter.” |
| Assessment | Access Test | IP9 | “They are grouped based off their access score, which they can have a level between zero and six, and based off the access for determines need of their can-do indicators.” |
| | Evaluation | IP9 | The school psychologist have evaluations in Spanish and can speak Spanish but the low incident languages is a bigger concern because there is no one that can evaluate them in their native language. They also have no evaluation available for those low incident languages and have to give the English evaluation. |
| | | IP1 | “The county ask us not to refer any new to the country students for evaluation for the first 2 years they are in school. After the 2 years we would meet with a counselor to come up with a plan to address the students deficits. Then we will meet back after 30 more days to look at evaluation and getting a psychologist involved. “ |
| Strategy | Hands On | IP4 | “Success in my classroom is about hands on versus just giving it all to them as a whole group and hoping that they get it.” |
| | Visual | IP2 | “I use visuals they can relate to like measuring cups in math so they see objects they recognize and see the different sizes as we talk about it.” |

| | | | |
|---------|----------------|------|--|
| | Anchor Chart | IP5 | “I always have anchor charts, because I always like to point back, and even just as a visual of the poster, but also of where it's located, because then I'll see kids while they're working immediately shift their heads to it.” |
| | Scaffold | IP8 | “Kids are getting an opportunity to talk to multiple students throughout their lesson and then again, those sentence stems I think that to me that is the easiest way to scaffold for EL students, for students with IEPs, for shy students I mean even students who, just are afraid of talking but really moving away from that raise your hand to answer thing and more elbow partners discussed with your neighbor and using strategic placements of students, so these kids have an opportunity to talk to each other without feeling on the spot.” |
| | Chunking | IP7 | “I am going to make the information as bite size as possible using a variety of differentiation and assessing in their native language to see where they truly are.” |
| Service | Push In | IP10 | “The push in is only provided at the request of administrators and the district in our county because intensive pull-out services is what is more focused on otherwise.” |
| | Pull Out | IP8 | “She's got resources and co-taught for reading, writing, and math, and she has an EL segment, so the argument is looking at this poor child spending so much time out of the classroom she's not, being immersed in the language around her peers.” |
| | Self-Contained | IP3 | “Some students are put in self-contained as early intervention and exit by 2 nd grade which makes it questionable if they needed special education to begin with.” |
| | Co-Teaching | IP4 | “We do a lot of scaffolding, a lot of station teaching, rotation teaching, splitting up with my co teacher and making sure that they're differentiated based on their skills, and making sure we give them the materials that they need to be successful.” |
